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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, June 22, 2006

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 22, 2006

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

• (1005)
[English]

PRIVILEGE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a somewhat sad moment as I have to rise on this question of privilege. Obviously I do not take this course of action very often in this place, yet what occurred at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development yesterday causes me and others within this place to worry about both the ability of members to do their business in this place and the ability of committees to do the work that the House has commanded them to do.

Yesterday, at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, a motion of mine that called on the Government of Canada to remove the environment minister from her cabinet post due to gross incompetence was to be debated.

The Conservative chair of the committee, after consultation with the clerk of the committee, and even invoking an apparent consultation with yourself, Mr. Speaker, ruled that the motion was in fact in order.

NDP members were very careful in crafting this motion. We took the time for due deliberation and consideration in making sure that all was correct so we could debate the issue that we wished to present to the committee, with some hope of bringing it back to this place so that all members could debate its merits. The Conservative members challenged the chair for partisan reasons and, in an ironic twist of events, something that still to this moment confuses me, the Liberal members on that committee sided with the Conservative members, voting against a motion that was clearly in order.

An hon. member: They sided with the Conservatives in the last election.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Being partisan is not part of the business of this, but the travesty of what happened at the committee raises larger

questions surrounding the fundamental rights of a member in committee.

I do not dispute the notion around here that “the minority has its say and then the majority can have its way”. That is a fundamental principle of democracy. The problem here is that the government and the official opposition have decided that the majority should be used to deprive the minority of its right to speak. That is a violation of my constitutional rights in this place.

Mr. Gary Goodyear: You're speaking right now.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nathan Cullen: This point seems to cause incredible derision. I note that if the members of the committee do not agree with my motion they can vote against it, as is clearly their right.

I believe that this place is for reasoned debate and informed decision, but what happened yesterday in the committee was the use of procedure to declare a clearly in order motion unilaterally out of order. That denied me my right to be heard and to have the voices of those who sent me here heard. The majority of the committee denied me the ancient right of free speech, a moment to debate the issue before us, a motion that was clearly in order, as the clerk and the Conservative chair chose.

Mr. Omar Alhabra: That's called democracy.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: It seems that the continuation of the prohibition of my right to speak is being enacted yet again by both the official opposition and the government trying to heckle down what is a reasonable point.

When a motion is brought forward and is in order, as was ruled by the Conservative chair of the committee and referenced by the Speaker of the House, and then is ruled out of order by some sort of partisan collaboration, it is unappealing, to say the least.

I am appealing to you today, Mr. Speaker, to stand by your advice to the chair of the committee, declare my motion in order and ask the committee to consider this motion at its next meeting. Let the members of the committee actually debate the subject, if they will and, at the very worst, they might even learn something.

Parliament is a place where we need to be able to exchange ideas and represent the views of those who sent us here. The Speaker's role is partly to defend my ability as a member of this place to speak for my constituents.

Privilege

Your role, Mr. Speaker, is also to follow the spirit of the rules we have adopted for ourselves. All members in this place adopted those rules in order to conduct themselves in a way that Canadians would wish.

Standing Order 117 states:

The Chair of a standing, special or legislative committee shall maintain order in the committee, deciding all questions of order subject to an appeal to the committee;—

Mr. Speaker, if you were to look at the blues from yesterday's committee hearing, you would clearly see that the chair decided the motion to be in order. The committee then decided that the chair's ruling should be overturned. I am left in limbo by this procedural tactic.

I can see how the general application of this standing order is there to protect the committee from a bad chair or to allow a committee some latitude, but I refer the Speaker to Standing Order 116 as well, which states:

In a standing, special or legislative committee—

Mr. Omar Alhabra: Let's call an election.

● (1010)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: The members of the official opposition can continue to heckle and prevent me from simply stating a case. It is quite remarkable.

—the Standing Orders shall apply so far as may be applicable, except the Standing Orders as to the election of a Speaker, seconding of motions, limiting the number of times of speaking and the length of speeches.

I cannot see how this standing order would allow a committee to deny a motion that meets all the procedural tests of Marleau and Montpetit or the 6th edition of Beauchesne or the standing orders themselves and for it to be unilaterally declared out of order.

I believe that Standing Order 116 clearly would suggest that what is procedurally acceptable as a motion should meet the standards of this chamber, not the star chamber that my committee became yesterday. I therefore ask for your assistance, Mr. Speaker.

When a majority is used to abolish the rules and deprive me of a fundamental right to hold the minister to account, our system has fallen into disrepute. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to see the prima facie case in my question of privilege, have the committee look at the motion, have the system that has allowed this travesty to be reviewed at the procedure and House affairs committee, and help restore my faith and that of the people who sent me to this place.

I am prepared to move the motion mentioned in my letter or whatever appropriate motion you advise if you decide my case is just.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my comments will be brief, because what has just taken place here is clearly neither a question of privilege nor, for that matter, a point of order, but simply a grievance by the hon. member who is unhappy with a decision that was properly taken at the environment committee. I will make just the two points.

First, it is well established in the procedure and practices of the House that the rulings by committee chairs can be appealed and

overturned by the committee. The hon. member just mentioned Standing Order 117, but Standing Order 117 also states that the chair shall decide "all questions of order subject to an appeal to the committee". So in this respect there is nothing objectionable about a decision taken by the environment committee yesterday.

Second, Mr. Speaker, you have commented on many occasions that you are very reluctant to intervene in the affairs of committees, as committees are masters of their own proceedings and only in extreme circumstances would the Speaker want to intervene in committee decisions. I would submit that this issue certainly does not meet that standard, as this decision taken by the committee is clearly consistent with the procedures of the House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate today about what happened yesterday in the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

I have been on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development for nine years. Never have I seen such a disgraceful scene in that committee. My colleague introduced a motion that the clerk and the chair of the committee had deemed in order. The Speaker of the House of Commons was also of the opinion that this motion was in order.

There are limits. The government, with the complicity of the Liberal Party of Canada, in a highly partisan move, decided to use unacceptable means to ensure that this motion, which the Speaker of the House of Commons and the committee chair had decided was in order, would be overturned by the government, with the help of the Liberal Party of Canada.

In my opinion, this is a partisan tactic. Some parliamentarians used it to avoid expressing their opinion and their views on the substance of the motion. Their purpose was to use the procedure to avoid having to speak about the substance of the issue.

This creates certain precedents. We could review a bill, and an opposition party could decide to introduce amendments that the Speaker, the clerk and the committee had decided were in order. The government could decide that these amendments were not in order and, with the help of some opposition parties, could overturn that decision.

What is important is that the chair should uphold our rights. What happened yesterday is not acceptable. I feel that the hon. member has the right to make his motion, whether or not we support that motion. That is not the issue. I feel that when, in a parliamentary committee, a member introduces a motion that the clerk, the committee chair and the Speaker of the House have decided is in order, the member's most fundamental right is to be able to debate that motion in committee.

Routine Proceedings

●(1015)

[English]

Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in terms of the content of the motion, we certainly had no argument with it. We would not defend the competence of the Minister of the Environment to any degree. However, there is nothing special about the Minister of the Environment when it comes to the incompetence of ministers of the government. We would be spending all our time in committee dealing with those sorts of issues if that was what committees were designed to do.

Nor are we convinced that replacing this particular incompetent minister with another incompetent minister—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Don Valley West is rising to address the question of privilege that came up. Discussion of the merits of the motion or the competence of ministers is irrelevant at this point. I want to hear his comments about the question of privilege that has been raised by the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, but I think we had better stay away from the other stuff.

Hon. John Godfrey: Mr. Speaker, our view is that it is not the role of parliamentary committees to determine which minister shall survive and which minister shall go. It is the role of parliamentary committees to have a principled, serious look at the work of the government and, through that, judge the competence of the ministry and the minister.

That is what we were doing yesterday afternoon. We were reviewing the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, an incredibly important piece of legislation that we have to look at. It is not our job to indulge in end of term gimmickry. Our job is to be there to do the work. If the chamber wishes to pronounce on the government, if the House wishes to do that, there should be a motion to that effect.

We think that is the role of committees, not this end of term stuff.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there is no appeal to you on this because there is no report to you from the committee on this. You have nothing to judge. Had you had a report from the committee, you might have something to judge, but I maintain that the committee is master of its own affairs and its own business. A ruling of the chair was appealed and the appeal was upheld. End of story. We have no business discussing this matter further.

[Translation]

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the hon. members for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and Don Valley West for their comments. This was much appreciated by the Chair. I went over the letter I received from the hon. member, earlier this morning, and I read something about everything that happened in committee.

[English]

What I think is very clear in the circumstances is that the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley is unhappy with the decision the committee made on the appeal that was made to the committee from the decision of the chair. But as pointed out by the government House leader and the hon. member for Don Valley West, appeals from committee chairs are strictly permitted under the rules of the

House. The Standing Orders say that chairs of committees make procedural decisions subject to an appeal to the committee, and there was an appeal to the committee and the appeal was successful.

I realize the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley may feel that his ability to move a motion in the committee is thereby impinged, but this is not an uncommon practice in our committees. Indeed, appeals from decisions of chairs have happened before, many times over the years, and have resulted in what could be perceived as a perfectly correct procedural decision by a chair being overturned and reversed, so that the committee is doing exactly the opposite of what was intended by the motion, or something has happened as a result of this decision that changes the whole intent of the motion put to the committee.

And yet, these things happen. The member invites me to intervene and overrule the ruling of the majority on the committee as sort of a court of appeal from a decision of the committee. Tempting as it is for a Speaker to become a court of appeal of committee decisions, I can only imagine the objections hon. members would make if there were appeals to me to change the wording in reports and make them more or less acceptable to me rather than to the committee, or perhaps even possibly to the House, thereby furthering debate in the House on a committee report because I changed the words to suit what I thought was the intention of the committee or what I thought would be a better report.

I cannot do these kinds of appeals. I do not believe it is the position of the Chair to do that. What the Chair must do is ensure that committees act within the rules, but that is normally done when a committee files a report and there is an argument about the report and whether the report is proper or not. Then, maybe, the Speaker has some decision or some possibility of intervening, but not in the event of a decision made in the committee.

The committee is master of its own proceedings. It has made a decision. The hon. member clearly objects to it. I invite him to take up the matter with the committee once again, because in my view that is the proper venue for his complaint in this case. I do not believe he has raised a question of privilege.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

●(1020)

*[English]***PRIVACY ACT**

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the annual report on the Privacy Act of the Auditor General of Canada for the year 2005-06.

[Translation]

This document is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

INVESTIGATIVE HEARINGS AND RECOGNIZANCES

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) it is my pleasure to table, in both official languages, the annual report concerning investigative hearings and recognizances, with conditions, December 24, 2004 to December 23, 2005.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of tabling, in both official languages, copies of a report written by Mr. Michael Coyle, assistant professor, Faculty of Law, University of Western Ontario, entitled, "Results of Fact-Finding on Situation at Caledonia".

* * *

RECOGNIZANCE WITH CONDITION

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two documents to present today.

I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2005 annual report concerning recognizance with condition, arrests without warrant issued pursuant to section 83.3 of the Criminal Code.

This report is designed to provide statistics on the number of times a peace officer arrests an individual without a warrant in order to prevent a terrorist attack from occurring and the number of cases in which the arrested person was released by either a peace officer or a judge.

* * *

CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, copies of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service 2004-2005 public report.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-22, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (age of protection) and to make consequential amendments to the Criminal Records Act.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (criminal procedure, language of the accused, sentencing and other amendments).

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas, Canadian section, respecting its participation in the 14th executive committee meeting held in Washington April 11 and 12, 2006.

● (1025)

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report on the participation of Senator Jerry Grafstein, the co-chair of the Canada-U.S. interparliamentary group, at the "Fresh Water for the Future: Policies for Sustainable Water Management in Canada" policy research initiative to the Privy Council Office, Gatineau, Quebec, May 8 through May 10, 2006.

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present in the House, in both official languages, the report of the parliamentary delegation of the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the fifth ordinary session of the Pan-African Parliament in Midrand, South Africa on May 1 and 2.

* * *

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs entitled, "Improving the Integrity of the Electoral Process, Recommendations for Legislative Change".

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of this committee for their incredible teamwork. This was a non-partisan effort to improve democracy in Canada by improving the voter and the electoral system. Specifically, I would like to thank the substitute members who came out for some of the extra meetings when the original members were very busy with other work. I thank them for all their hard work and, indeed, the staff as well. The committee worked very hard with a number of extra meeting. It is not only a privilege to present this report but it was a privilege to work with this team.

In accordance with Standing Order 109 the committee requests a government response to the report within 120 days.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, an interim report with respect to the review of sections 25.1 to 25.4 of the Criminal Code, "Protection of Persons Administering and Enforcing the Law".

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in relation to the request for the withdrawal of the response to the report entitled, "Our Cultural Sovereignty—The Second Century of Broadcasting", made by the committee in its third report to the House.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the fifth report later this day.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, entitled, "Immediate Moratorium on Deportation of all Undocumented Workers".

In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government provide a comprehensive response to the report.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present today, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

The committee has studied the Canadian Wheat Board and has agreed to report it.

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on International Trade, on the softwood lumber agreement between Canada and the United States.

* * *

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-343, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (motor vehicle theft).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise today. This is the first private member's bill I have introduced in my career as a member of Parliament.

The bill is in response to a growing concern in Regina and throughout my riding of Regina—Qu'Appelle with the alarming rate of car theft. Regina at various times has been the car theft capital of Canada. We have experienced various rashes of criminal gangs

Routine Proceedings

stealing cars for either joyriding or to strip them down and sell them. Unfortunately, our legal system does not have a lot of deterrents for those criminals.

The bill would establish a three strike system. On the person's third conviction or any subsequent conviction thereafter, the case will be prosecuted by indictment and there will be minimum prison sentences. What it means is that no longer will criminals be able to steal several cars and not ever face any prison time. The bill establishes a clear signal that on the third offence the person will go to jail.

I appreciate the support of my colleagues on this bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

• (1030)

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-344, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (Employment Insurance Account and premium rate setting) and another Act in consequence.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to introduce my first bill. This bill addresses an issue that affects many people in the riding of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. It also affects everyone grappling with the horrible problem of an employment insurance fund that over time, over a number of years, accumulated some \$50 billion. The unemployed of yesterday and today are victims of this situation.

This can also be a message of hope for some workers who are in very difficult situations. I am referring to the people in the riding of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine in particular who are working in the crab or shrimp industry, for example, at E. Gagnon et Fils in Gascon and at Marinar in Rivière-au-Renard.

If the bill passes, it will correct an injustice and allow employment insurance to be managed more appropriately.

The Conservative Party already voted in favour of the bill at second reading during the last Parliament. I think we can count on their support again today. If they are consistent with their previous decision, we could easily pass this bill to correct an injustice and help the unemployed.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-345, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (appointment of special counsel).

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, last week the Supreme Court of Canada held hearings challenging the constitutionality of security certificates. It is well-documented that the present process in place for issuing security certificates and detaining individuals without the right to see the evidence against them denies an individual due process. The process needs to be consistent with charter principles, and I believe that we can accomplish that and restore public faith in our system.

My bill would make it mandatory for a special counsel to be appointed in order to scrutinize the evidence and the methods used to gather that evidence against an individual detained on a certificate. The purpose of the special counsel would be to ensure all constitutional and charter rights of the detained individual are respected. The bill makes the special counsel a representative of the public interest rather than the individual in order to avoid a conflict of interest that could arise from solicitor-client privilege.

There are extreme views on both sides of this very sensitive issue. There are those who want to see national security trump all individual rights, while there are those who would like to see the security certificate process abolished completely. I believe the government needs to find a more balanced approach. It needs to balance national security concerns with individual rights, and I believe this bill would accomplish that.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

•(1035)

The Speaker: I would remind hon. members that on the introduction of private member's bills, it is a brief summary of the bill. We are getting into longer summaries it seems to me this morning.

* * *

STATE IMMUNITY ACT

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-346, An Act to amend the State Immunity Act and the Criminal Code (terrorist activity).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of all Canadians to introduce a bill entitled, an act to amend the State Immunity Act and the Criminal Code, terrorist activity.

The bill would amend the State Immunity Act to prevent foreign states that engage in terrorist activity from claiming immunity from the jurisdiction of Canadian courts. It also amends the Criminal Code to provide victims who suffer loss or damages as a result of terrorist activity with a civil remedy against the person or state who engaged in the terrorist activity.

The legislation is far superior and more comprehensive than anything ever tabled in this House. Terrorism is not a victimless crime and the victims and their families must be ensured that their rights are protected.

I thank the member for Cambridge for seconding my bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-347, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (keeping child pornography in a manner that is not reasonably secure from access by others).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today on behalf of the residents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to introduce a bill entitled “An Act to amend the Criminal Code (keeping child pornography in a manner that is not reasonably secure from access by others)”.

There is no doubt that our children are our most precious resource. As parliamentarians, our commitment to Canada's future must begin by protecting the innocence of our children and bringing violators of that innocence to justice.

The bill would amend the Criminal Code to make it an offence for anyone to possess child pornography regardless of how it is obtained. It will also ensure that anyone gaining access to the material or failing to prevent others from accessing the material will be liable under the Criminal Code.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION ACT

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-348, An Act respecting conscientious objection to the use of taxes for military purposes.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to again introduce a private member's bill which would allow Canadians who object on conscientious or religious grounds to paying taxes for military purposes to have a prescribed percentage of their income tax diverted into a special conscientious objector account.

The bill would recognize the deeply held views often related to deeply held religious convictions of some Canadians that participating in any way in the activities of war and the accumulation of weapons sanctions and perpetuates killing and violence. The bill would provide an important option for conscientious objection and ensure that the tax dollars of those Canadians who hold these beliefs are spent for peaceful purposes.

A particular feature of the bill is that the regulation should be developed in consultation with organizations including the Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, the Quakers; the Conference of Mennonites in Canada; Conscience Canada; Mennonite Central Committee Canada; and Nos impôts pour la paix.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

•(1040)

PATENT ACT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-349, An Act to amend the Patent Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is the second time I have introduced this legislation into the House of Commons.

Routine Proceedings

It deals with patent protection and also the issue of evergreening where legal loopholes extend the patent protection of certain drugs that then cost Canadians significant sums of money, not only to individuals but also in employment benefit plans as well as the organizations that actually provide that across the country.

This will lower drug costs, provide fairness, and make us more similar to the United States. The Americans actually have a more progressive generic drug industry because they have enacted legislation to stop the legal litigation. Most important, it will promote innovation.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage presented to the House earlier this day be concurred in without debate.

(Motion agreed to)

FINANCE

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with several motions all dealing with committee travel.

There have been discussions among the parties and if you were to seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent to the following motion. I move:

That, during its consideration of matters pursuant to Standing Order 83.1, the Standing Committee on Finance be authorized to adjourn from place to place within Canada and to permit the broadcasting of its proceedings thereon, and that the necessary staff do accompany the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

HUMAN RESOURCES, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among all the parties and if you were to seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, in relation to its study on employability in Canada, six members of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities be authorized to travel in October and November 2006 to the following locations: first, to St. John's, Halifax, Montreal, and Toronto; and second, to Vancouver, Calgary and Saskatoon; and that the necessary staff do accompany the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among all the parties and if you were to seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, in order to attend the conference of the Canadian Association of Public Accounts Committees, 10 members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be authorized to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island from September 10 to 12, 2006, and that the necessary staff do accompany that committee.

(Motion agreed to)

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among all the parties and if you were to seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move that notwithstanding the order made on Tuesday, April 25, 2006 the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security be authorized to continue its deliberations relating to the review of the Anti-Terrorism Act beyond June 23, 2006 and to present its final report no later than December 22, 2006.

The Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

PETITIONS

CHILD CARE

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think it is appropriate to end this session where we began, listening to the voices of Canadians who, through petitions, express their support for a universal, publicly administered, not for profit, quality child care system in this country.

The petition I am presenting today is signed by many people in my constituency and other parts of Winnipeg who are very concerned about the government's failure to ensure a proper investment in child care and that the \$1,200 allowance per child under the age of six is not a child care program but an income program.

They call upon the government to provide the necessary investments to build an affordable, accessible, community based child care system, and to ensure fair and effective income support programs for Canadian families.

● (1045)

AGE OF CONSENT

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand in the House to present a petition signed by a number of my constituents from Castor, Round Hill as well as many from Killam and Lougheed area.

This petition recognizes the fact that protection of children from sexual predators is a top priority of the federal government. It recognizes that the Canadian Police Association, a number of provincial governments, and parliamentary committees favour raising the age of consent.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners call on our government to take all measures necessary to immediately raise the age of consent from 14 to 16 years of age. Certainly, that is something about which the House has heard a lot and we will continue to keep bringing it forward.

CHILD CARE

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition on the issue of child care.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to work together to provide the provinces and territories with annual funds of at least \$1.2 billion a year to build a high quality, accessible, affordable, and community based child care system. This petition is from my region, the Regional Municipality of Waterloo. Most of the petitioners are from the riding of Kitchener—Conestoga.

[*Translation*]

CHILD LABOUR

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table a petition signed by more than 14,000 individuals asking the government to promote the International Labour Organization's Convention 182 on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour so more countries will ratify it and so those that have will apply it effectively.

The goal of the initiative undertaken by Amnesty International and Children's Care International is to build awareness of the worst forms of child labour, such as slavery, prostitution and exploitation, which can have a negative impact on their health and safety.

I am therefore proud to table these signatures in this House.

[*English*]

MIDDLE EAST

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these petitioners strongly support the government's decision to cut off both diplomatically and financially the Hamas government in the Palestinian territories. They believe that Canada should stand four square behind the Middle East's leading democracy in Israel and that Canada should not finance a terrorist-led regime.

The petitioners also resent very strongly CUPE's decision to boycott products that emanate from that leading democracy, the state of Israel. I am proud to support them in introducing this petition.

[*Translation*]

CHILD LABOUR

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member for Québec has given me a mission I am pleased to undertake, which is to table a petition signed by more than 1,000 individuals from her riding or the Quebec City region who are asking the government to promote the International Labour Organization's Convention 182 on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

This initiative was undertaken by Amnesty International and Children's Care International. I supported this initiative along with my colleagues, the members for Joliette and Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher. The purpose of this petition is to build awareness of the worst forms of child labour, such as slavery, prostitution and

exploitation, which can have a negative impact on their health and safety.

In all, 14,000 individuals have signed this petition. I am therefore tabling these signatures in the House.

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition from over 500 citizens of the Ottawa area calling upon Parliament to make climate change one of the top priorities of the government, to renew Canadian legal obligations under the Kyoto protocol, and to take action to reduce emissions, reinstate climate change programs and let the Canadian people know immediately the made in Canada plan.

REFUGEES

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions on behalf of the member for Elmwood—Transcona .

The first is from a number of people from Elmwood—Transcona who are calling on Parliament to welcome a stranger and significantly increase the number of refugees that Canada accepts annually; lift barriers that prevent refugees from reaching Canada; provide international leadership to address the causes that force people from their homes and prevent them from returning; reform Canada's refugee and immigration programs to ensure full access to due process and fundamental justice in a speedy way; and include measures to help newcomers integrate into Canadian society.

• (1050)

HAZARDOUS PRODUCTS

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from people in Elmwood—Transcona who are concerned about the importation of dog and cat fur.

They draw Parliament's attention to the fact that dogs and cats are being brutally slaughtered for their fur. They call on the government to provide a legal remedy to prevent these products from entering the country and to ban the importation of dog and cat fur.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions from people in my constituency of Burnaby—Douglas.

The first calls on Parliament to achieve multi-year funding to ensure that publicly operated child care programs are sustainable for the long term; to protect child care by enshrining it in legislation with a national child care act to be the cornerstone of Canada like the Canada Health Act; and to help end child poverty by using the \$1,200 allowance to enhance the child tax benefit without taxes and clawbacks.

HAZARDOUS PRODUCTS

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from folks in Burnaby.

It calls on the House of Commons and Parliament to recognize that human and environmental health should take precedence in legislative decision making as well as in the product approval process when it comes to the use of pesticides. It calls for a ban on the use of chemical pesticides for cosmetic purposes, and it calls on Parliament to enact legislation applying the precautionary principle with regard to restricting future allowable uses of pesticides in order to minimize the risk to human and environmental health.

VISITOR VISAS

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition calling on the government to adopt private member's Motion No. 99 which would lift visitor visa requirements for Croatian nationals visiting Canada for business trips and family visits such as weddings and funerals. Adopting Motion No. 99 would bring our visitor visa regime in line with that of the United Kingdom which lifted visitor visa restrictions for Croatia back in March.

I might add that Croatia is in the process of joining the EU and is participating in NATO's membership action plan.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present in the House a petition on the subject of child care, an issue which is important to many Canadians. The petition comes from the people of the riding of Ottawa West—Nepean.

PARKS CANADA AGENCY

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of many residents of Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, I present this petition calling on the minister responsible for Parks Canada Agency to permit a corridor through Terra Nova National Park for snowmobile users.

The residents of the Eastport Peninsula and surrounding communities are encumbered by the Terra Nova National Park. Currently, park rules state that snowmobiles and other all terrain vehicles are not permitted within the boundaries.

The Terra Nova Trailriders, on behalf of the residents of Eastport Peninsula, Glovertown and Charlottetown, are requesting equal, fair treatment and a corridor through Terra Nova National Park for their snowmobiling enjoyment.

The petition has been certified and contains 496 names. It is my responsibility and honour to table it here today.

CANADA POST

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to table a petition on behalf of the constituents of Windsor West with regard to the Government of Canada instructing Canada Post to maintain, expand and improve its network of public post offices.

It is important to note that while Windsor West is a predominantly urban riding, post offices in communities throughout this vast land help us overcome differences in distances and play a key role in our socio-economic life by providing the infrastructure. Healthy communities need to thrive and businesses need to grow.

Routine Proceedings

It is a recognition that urban Canadians understand that rural and other post offices have a significant effect on the socio-cultural values that Canadians cherish. The government needs to live up to its commitment to keep post offices open for all Canadians, whether they be in urban or rural ridings.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to present a petition from about 75 Canadians with heritage from Vietnam.

The petitioners bring the attention of the House to a document called "Manifesto 2006" which, among other things, describes circumstances in Vietnam with respect to freedom of information, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion. They urge that Vietnam move toward adoption of these fundamental rights. They ask the House to call upon the government of Vietnam to give its utmost consideration to this document.

* * *

● (1055)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 37, 47 and 51.

[Text]

Question No. 37—**Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With regard to the Canadian Heritage program entitled "Encounters with Canada": (a) when was the initial decision made to cancel the Canadian Unity Council; (b) what factors went into making this decision; (c) when was the decision made to continue funding the program; (d) what factors went into making this decision; (e) under what section of the department is the program now functioning; (f) what changes to the structure or mandate will the program see as a result of the recent transition; (g) will the program be running at its full capacity this year; and (h) what are the details of the commitment to the future of the program in terms of dollars to be spent annually and the number of years the program will be maintained?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the answer is as follows: a) The Canadian Unity Council, CUC, is a non-profit organization with charitable status. The minister advised the CUC on March 16, 2006, of the decision to discontinue funding to the CUC. The CUC continues to operate.

b) The factors considered in making this decision were: the need to take a fresh look at building a strong, unified Canada through a cooperative approach to federal-provincial relations; and the need to find alternative delivery vehicles to better respond to Canada's diverse youth population and their needs.

c) Upon the discontinuation of funding to the CUC, the Government of Canada committed to continuing to support youth programming in Canada. On April 24, 2006, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women addressed a group of Encounters with Canada participants and confirmed the government's intention to continue funding a renewed Encounters with Canada program.

Routine Proceedings

d) Factors considered in the decision to continue funding a renewed Encounters with Canada include: the importance of investing in Canadian youth, to encourage youth to know their country, and to engage youth in major questions facing our nation. The Government of Canada recognizes the importance of programs like Encounters with Canada that give young people a chance to meet, learn and grow together.

e) Encounters with Canada is not a government program but is a program of the CUC. The Youth Participation Directorate of the Citizen Participation Branch of the Department of Canadian Heritage manages a contribution agreement with the CUC to fund this program.

f) No major changes to the structure or mandate of the program are anticipated.

g) The Government of Canada has committed to providing support until the completion of the program cycle for this school year and summer as scheduled. It is expected that a renewed Encounters with Canada will proceed this autumn under a new delivery organization.

h) Once a new organization takes charge of Encounters with Canada we expect that it will apply for funding. A decision on funding will be made once a request is received.

Question No. 47—Ms. Olivia Chow:

With respect to Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on May 2, 2006 (Budget Implementation Act), which only allocates \$1.4 billion of the \$1.6 billion allocated in Bill C-48, An Act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make certain payments, adopted in 2005, for affordable housing, what has happened to the remaining \$200 million in affordable housing funding secured in bill C-48?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the budget tabled in the House of Commons on May 2, 2006 outlines the government's commitments with respect to Bill C-48, An Act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make certain payments. Contingent on sufficient funds being available above \$2 billion from the federal surplus for 2005-06, the Government will provide provinces and territories one-time additional funding of \$1.4 billion to address short-term pressures in affordable housing.

In deciding how funds are to be allocated under Bill C-48, the government has balanced its priorities against its available resources, taking into account both existing levels of financial support and where it intends to dedicate its resources in the future.

The funding authority provided under Bill C-48 is discretionary. By providing \$1.4 billion for affordable housing the government has chosen to meet a substantial part of the funding authorized through Bill C-48.

Question No. 51—Mr. Bill Casey:

With regard to the potential risks to human health and the environment from the spreading of industrial and human wastes on agricultural lands: (a) what studies have been undertaken by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to evaluate the level of risk to rural or urban communities from the spreading of these materials; (b) have any CFIA studies been conducted aimed at ascertaining the level of risk from the application of rendering process materials on agricultural lands, including materials that may have originated from bovine or poultry species; (c) have any discussions taken place between the CFIA and the Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour regarding risk assessments related to the land applications

of rendering plant materials and, if so, what conclusions were gathered and will there be follow-up discussions or joint actions between the CFIA and the government of Nova Scotia based on these conclusions; and (d) what actions have been taken by the CFIA to minimize the risk of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) materials being spread with other waste materials on agricultural lands?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the answer is as follows: a) The CFIA is working with other government departments, Environment Canada, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada, to develop a common strategy to assess the potential risks associated with the spreading of industrial and human wastes on agricultural lands by conducting research projects and developing effective regulatory mechanisms. CFIA also conducts product safety assessments on fertilizer and supplement products on case-by-case basis. These assessments include an evaluation of risk to human, animal and plant health and the environment associated with the fertilizer and supplement product. The scope of CFIA's authority to regulate the spreading of industrial and human wastes on agricultural lands is defined by the Fertilizer Act and regulations. The Fertilizer Act and regulations allow the CFIA to regulate the importation and sale of fertilizer and supplement products directly, but not their use or disposal. When industrial or agricultural waste is sold or imported for the purpose of application to agricultural lands as a fertilizer, the product is subject to the *Act and Regulations*. Pursuant to the regulations, all fertilizer products must be safe, with respect to human, animal and plant health and the environment, efficacious when used as directed and properly labelled as to avoid misrepresentation in the marketplace. Compliance of commercial fertilizers with the prescribed product safety and efficacy standards is verified through marketplace monitoring activities which include inspection, product sampling and analysis as well as label verification. A number of CFIA monitoring programs specifically target risks associated with the application of industrial and waste products to agricultural lands, heavy metal content and pathogen contamination. This said, the limited scope of the CFIA's regulatory authority in this area requires that it work closely with stakeholders, the public and other government departments, provinces and municipalities to achieve comprehensive mitigation of risks associated with application of biosolids on agricultural lands.

b) With respect to the land application of poultry materials, in 2004 the Animal Health Risk Assessment Division of CFIA conducted risk assessments and provided scientific advice documents on the efficacy of composting as a method of disposal for material infected with avian influenza viruses, highly pathogenic avian influenza, H7N3. The results of the assessments demonstrated that the release of avian influenza viruses from composted poultry carcasses and manure is negligible, "the event would be virtually unlikely to occur". This represents the lowest of seven risk estimate categories the CFIA applies in its animal health risk assessment process.

The risk of exposing cattle to BSE through the use of various destruction and disposal methods of cattle tissues potentially infected with BSE was evaluated by the CFIA in 2005. One of the techniques assessed by the agency was the land application of waste water treatment solids recovered from abattoir and rendering plant operations which process cattle and cattle byproducts. In BSE-infected cattle, specified risk materials, SRM, are tissues, like the brain and spinal cord, which contain the vast majority of the infectious agent that causes BSE. As it was anticipated that some rendering operations in Canada may, once the proposed federal feed restriction enhancements come into effect, specialize in the rendering of solely cattle SRM, an assessment of BSE risk to animal health posed by the spreading of such solids was included in this project. The draft assessment concluded that the estimated risk of BSE transmission from this practice in a Canadian context would be negligible.

Furthermore, the CFIA has been engaged in conducting research to support the regulatory initiatives in the area of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies and avian influenza. The following projects have been completed or are ongoing to assess the various disposal methods for the contaminated livestock and poultry waste: (1) Development and evaluation of composting strategies as a means for the safe disposal of animal carcasses from transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (2001-2005); (2) The fate of avian influenza viruses during composting of chicken carcasses and manure (2005-2007); and (3) On site composting for bio-containment and safe disposal of infectious animal carcasses and manure in the event of a bio-terrorism attack (2005-09). In addition, another project has been recently approved and work is planned to start soon to develop methods to destroy and measure abnormal prion protein and infectivity during composting of carcasses and high risk materials of animals infected with transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (2006-2009).

c) The CFIA has been actively engaged in discussions with both the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Marketing and the Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour regarding the practice of spreading rendering process materials and biosolids on agricultural land. In 2005, the CFIA participated in a public biosolids science forum and subsequent stakeholder's meeting sponsored by the Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour. Most recently, the CFIA has agreed to participate in a biosolids science committee currently being assembled by the Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour to provide scientific and technical advice to their biosolids advisory committee. The CFIA is also engaged in national initiatives that focus on the regulation, management and use of waste-derived materials including the Canadian Biosolid Partnership.

d) As part of the enhanced feed ban regulations proposed by the CFIA in December 2004, cattle SRM tissues would be prohibited from use in animal food as well as fertilizers and fertilizer supplements in Canada. This prohibition would serve to keep potentially BSE-infected feeds and fertilizers off farms. In addition, a system of CFIA-administered permits has been proposed to control the collection, conveyance, treatment, disposal or destruction of SRM via rendering, composting, landfilling, incineration or other methods. Should a rendering facility choose to accept and process cattle SRM tissues once the enhanced restrictions come into effect,

Routine Proceedings

any rendering process materials, including protein meals, recovered solids from waste water treatment or composted SRM tissues, would require disposal or destruction in accordance with the CFIA permit conditions as well as provincial and municipal requirements. The permitting scheme allows for an added level of control and risk mitigation while the research projects and collection of empirical data are underway (see section c). Furthermore, according to the proposed enhancements all fertilizer and supplement products containing prohibited materials will require additional precautionary statements on the label that preclude their application to pasture land or other grazing areas for ruminants.

* * *

[English]

STARRED QUESTIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Starred Question No. 18.

[Text]

Question No. 18—**Mr. Todd Russell:**

With regard to the Goose Bay Diversification Fund, announced by the Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency on November 24, 2005: (a) how many applications or proposals have been received in respect of this fund, and, of those, how many have been (i) accepted, (ii) rejected, (iii) otherwise treated; and (b) what has been the total contribution to each of the accepted applications or proposals?

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, insofar as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, ACOA, is concerned, no applications or proposals have been received in regard to a Goose Bay diversification fund, because a program was not established.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURN

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 39, 42 and 43 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

[Text]

Question No. 39—**Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With regard to television programming shown on all standard Canadian private broadcasters: (a) has the government collected cumulative and individual statistics of their percentage of Canadian programming and, if so, (i) what are they, (ii) what are the most recent cumulative and individual statistics on the percentage of Canadian programming shown during primetime, (iii) what are the most recent cumulative and individual statistics on the breakdown of type of Canadian programming that is being shown during and outside of primetime, (iv) what are the most recent statistics on the percentage of Canadian programming that is actually being watched both during and outside of primetime; (b) are private broadcasters receiving government funding for the purposes of promoting Canadian programming and, if so, what are the specifics of this funding; and (c) what is government's plan for promoting Canadian programming in the future and what specific initiatives are being planned to guarantee a healthy future for Canadian programming by private broadcasters?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 42—**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:**

With regard to the government's agreements with the provinces for funding for affordable housing: (a) what are the exact parameters of the agreements with each province specifically; (b) what restrictions, if any, will be placed on the money spent; (c) how is affordable housing defined; (d) can money be used to upgrade current housing stock or is it strictly for new housing; and (e) will the government maintain previous multi-year housing agreements?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 43—**Hon. Geoff Regan:**

With regard to the announcement, in the 2006 Budget, that all income from scholarships will be exempt from taxation starting in 2006 instead of exempting only the first \$3,000 of scholarship income: (a) how many students received more than \$3,000 of income from scholarships in 2004 or the last year for which information is available; (b) how many students identified in section (a) had net income of more than the Basic Personal Exemption; (c) what was the average income of the students identified in section (b); and (d) what was the average income tax paid by the students identified in section (b)?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES AND TUNNELS ACT

Hon. Tony Clement (for the Minister of Transport) moved that Bill C-3, An Act respecting international bridges and tunnels and making a consequential amendment to another Act, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an absolute pleasure to rise in the House and speak for the third time to Bill C-3, the international bridges and tunnels act. This is a great bill for Canada and for many people throughout Canada. It sets some great standards, which I will go into during my speech. I am sure every TV set in Windsor right now is tuned in to see the bill

passed by all parties, which have worked cooperatively to get this done.

This is the third time I have spoken to the bill. As the name suggests, it deals with Canada's international bridges and tunnels. These international bridges and tunnels are found in three provinces, Ontario, New Brunswick and Quebec. They link Canada with many states such as New York, Michigan, Minnesota, Maine and Vermont. This is very important legislation because many of these crossings are the busiest between the United States and Canada.

This is the third bill of its kind to be introduced. Former Bill C-44 and its predecessor former Bill C-26 were introduced in Parliament by the previous Liberal government. We are ready to put the bill through the House. The Conservative government gets things done.

The former bills sought to amend the Canada Transportation Act, Canada's framework transportation legislation. They were too large and cumbersome to get through. That is why our government, in trying to get results, took this portion out of it, dealing only with bridges and tunnels along with various other amendments.

The Liberals will try to take credit, as they usually do, but the Conservative government has taken action on the bill and on this important issue to Canadians, especially to the people in Windsor since that crossing is undergoing some re-evaluation at this stage.

Both of the previous Liberal bills died on the order paper, Bill C-44 in November 2005. The provisions dealing with international bridges and tunnels in those former bills were a small part of the overall amendments being proposed. These amendments and provisions have now been introduced in the form of a stand-alone bill that focuses only on international bridges and tunnels.

While Bill C-3 borrows some of the legislative provisions from the previous bills, the actual provisions have been reworked and at least two new provisions have been added because of some deficiencies in the previous bills.

As everyone in the House knows, including most people who are listening today, the sections 92(10) and 91 of the Constitution give exclusive jurisdiction to the federal government for international bridges and tunnels. Despite this exclusive legislative authority, no law in the history of Canada has ever been adopted that applies to all international bridges and tunnels and sets out how the federal government may exercise that authority. That is why Bill C-3 is so important.

Most of today's international bridges and tunnels were brought into existence by individual acts. Each one deals with inconsistencies in the other acts. This will bring some cohesion to the legislation itself and deal with international bridges and tunnels, as should be done, in one piece of legislation that would govern all.

Government Orders

The schedule attached to the bill sets out 53 special acts, that is 53 times the House had to deal with different bridges and tunnels, many of which were adopted shortly after Confederation. These are almost 100 years old. As such, they have other language in them, which does not deal with some of the realities of today. After September 11, 2001, safety and security of our international border crossings, of our trade route and of our citizens has become a very important issue. Now our government is finally acting on it and we will get some results.

In addition to confirming the federal government's jurisdiction with respect to international bridges and tunnels, the bill also proposes to introduce rules that will apply to all existing and future international bridges and tunnels. It will modernize the special bridge and tunnel acts to which it makes reference.

Bill C-3 sets out a formal administrative process for approving the construction of all new international bridges and tunnels and for alterations to existing structures, thereby replacing the need for the government to pass special legislation every time something needs to be done to one of these important crossings.

• (1100)

The bill would also give the government the power to make regulations in areas such as maintenance and repair, safety and security and operation and use of the crossings, with the goal of adopting standards or best practices in these areas. That would be applicable to all international bridges and tunnels no matter where their location or who owned them.

It is important to the people of Windsor that we get this legislation through. Then the maintenance and repair, the safety and security and the operation of tunnels and bridges will be governed by the federal government consistently across the country.

As I indicated before, two provisions were not contained in the previous bill. The first is a technical provision that deals with crossings over the St. Lawrence. It serves to remedy a provision contained in the Navigable Waters Protection Act to allow for approval of the new international bridges and tunnels that cross the St. Lawrence River. Presently there are three international bridges across this river, all of which are in Ontario.

As a new low level bridge is being planned for Cornwall, I can imagine the folks in Cornwall are also looking intently at the screen today as this will greatly simplify an already very complex procedure.

The second new provision deals with transactions that affect the ownership or operation of an international bridge or tunnel. Bill C-3 proposes that these transactions first, be subject to government approval. Second, it sets out an administrative process which deals with the approval of it, similar to that proposed for applying for new construction or alterations. This is an extension of the federal government's jurisdiction in the area of international bridges and tunnels and, more important, its corresponding responsibilities to keep Canadians safe and secure.

For instance, regardless of who the owner is, these structures are relied heavily on by Canadians. In fact, the federal government has a responsibility. Members of all parties have a responsibility to push the legislation through as quickly as possible because we have been

without it for so long. Canadians need to be kept safe and secure. It does not matter who owns and operates these bridges. All maintenance, repairs and alterations have to be done in the national interest. That is why the bill is so important.

These are not ordinary assets. The federal government must at all times know who owns and operates these structures and be advised and approve any proposed change in ownership or operation. With so many vehicles and so much trade crossing these bridges, we need to ensure those trade routes remain viable and in the best interests of Canadians.

These are vital links not only for trade, but for tourism as well. The federal government has the responsibility to protect the asset and protect the people who use the asset. If there were ever any doubt of the importance of this, during second reading I gave some impressive statistics, and I would like to share those again with the House.

Over \$530 billion in goods are traded annually with the United States. Of that, \$1.9 billion per day goes across those bridges. Almost all of that is transported by truck. We also heard the importance of our rail systems, which are responsible also for shipping approximately 270 million tonnes of freight per year and carry many millions of passengers across these international bridges. This rail link goes as far as the Gulf of Mexico, as far south as Mexico, so it is a very important link.

Considering the transportation industry employs over 830,000 Canadians, it is therefore not hard to imagine the financial impact on our economy if these links were put in jeopardy in any way. I would suggest that we in the House would be negligent not to put this legislation through, now that we have the opportunity, especially for the folks in Windsor. It is a danger to leave these vital links unguarded.

It goes without saying that we must promote trade and ensure that our borders are safe and secure. Many of the existing international bridges and tunnels have implemented security measures, but we need consistency along that so there is a certain level and threshold that is kept to ensure Canadians are as safe as possible and that our vital links are kept as safe as possible.

There are some measures also to increase traffic efficiency. These serve as good examples for us, but we need to share these good examples with all international bridges and crossings so we get the best result for Canadians. The proposed bill will enable the government to achieve its goal of securing the borders in a way that will not distract from our trade goals which are so important.

• (1105)

I will quickly summarize the various legislative steps through which Bill C-3 has already passed and explain why it is here today. The bill was introduced on April 24, 2006. It was debated over a two day period at second reading ending on May 1, after which members voted to send the bill for review to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities of which I am a member. During the months of May and June the standing committee met to on six separate occasions discuss the bill.

Government Orders

Does that not show government working well? The bill was introduced on April 24 and here we are today trying to push the bill through on the very last day of the spring sitting. This speaks to the great work that the Conservative government is doing.

During this time the committee heard from several witnesses. The committee heard from Transport Canada officials involved in drafting the bill and developing the policies that the bill seeks to define. The committee also heard from Mr. Tom Garlock, the president of the Bridge and Tunnel Operators Association. That association represents over 10 organizations responsible for the largest and the busiest international bridge and tunnel crossings.

The committee also heard directly from one of the members of the Bridge and Tunnel Operators Association, the Canadian Transit Company, the owner and operator of the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, which of course is very important, as represented by Mr. Matthew Moroun and Mr. Dan Stamper, its president.

The committee heard from Phil Benson, a lobbyist for Teamsters Canada.

The committee heard from a large gamut of people. It had professionals in to provide an opinion. The main concern expressed by the BTOA was the potential financial impact. That is something private companies would be concerned with. The association wanted to make sure that the government's ability to intervene would not cut into profits. At the same time, the government wished to have a balance. We wanted people to cross as efficiently and effectively as possible, keeping in mind security and safety.

The Prime Minister and this government listened. As a result the government brought forward its own motion to amend the toll provisions to suggest alternative language that would address the government's desire to safeguard against toll increases or decreases that would have a negative effect on traffic. This government listened and acted in the best interests of stakeholders and Canadians. We found a compromise.

The result of this amendment is the new clause 15.1. The issue of consultation was also debated in the committee. In fact, the result of these amendments and debates led to a second government amendment, the addition of subclause 15(2), which would require the government to consult with stakeholders on issues of operation and use, which of course is very important to stakeholders. That this government would listen to them speaks to the quality of the government itself.

On this issue I feel the need to make a few comments. At report stage the member for Windsor West delivered a very passionate speech on this very topic. I feel that, putting aside political rhetoric, it left the public with the impression that this government did not believe in public consultation, which is simply not the case, and that it would not be undertaking any type of consultation in the processes set out in the bill. I have laid out the groundwork for that. We have already consulted with many people in drafting the bill. We have consulted with experts. It is simply not true. The Prime Minister and this government listens. We will do what is in the best interests of the people of Windsor and Canadians all across the country.

The committee referred to the numerous types of consultations that will and must take place under the bill and under other existing

legislation by reason of issues raised by the bill. For example, before a new bridge or tunnel is built, a very lengthy and thorough environmental assessment must take place. What could be more important than consulting with the members of a community, the stakeholders and governments on the environmental impact? There is nothing more important as far as the government is concerned. We care about the environment.

Public consultations are an important and integral part of this process. Also, any regulation taken under the bill is subject to the federal regulatory process as set out in the Statutory Instruments Act. Before regulation comes into force, this process requires that consultations with the public be held. Yes, it is already required that consultations with the public be held.

In fact, before Bill C-3 was introduced, Transport Canada consulted with many stakeholders in connection with proposed legislation and their concerns were dealt with when possible. The key is that the government is going to protect Canadians and protect the trade of Canadians.

I understand that similar consultations will be undertaken when it comes time for preparing the regulations under the bill. This government is accountable and transparent to taxpayers. The government is not allowed to run fancy free. We will not do that, as some members opposite suggest. There are constant checks and balances in the system and many opportunities for the public, including all levels of government, to express their concerns.

● (1110)

The issue of the transportation of dangerous goods was also brought forward and we discussed it at length. While this issue did not result in an amendment, I will repeat to the House what I said to my fellow committee members. Transport Canada is reviewing the current regulations to do with dangerous goods transportation to see that this issue is properly addressed because we want to keep Canadians secure. In the meantime, the bill as worded would actually permit the adoption of regulations on this issue.

In addition to this amendment, several minor technical amendments were made to the bill. The details of these amendments are contained in the committee's report to the House.

This brings us to where we are today. I am asking members to support the government on this bill, to support Canadians, to support the people of Windsor, to pass the bill in order to get the job done for Canadians. When it comes time to vote, we need to put party rhetoric aside, put party politicking aside and pass this bill to keep safe and secure the transportation of goods across the borders.

According to our Constitution, international bridges and tunnels are the federal government's responsibility. Obviously, they are the federal government's responsibility because one voice is needed to guarantee the safety and security of Canadians. Currently no legislation exists that sets out the manner and the extent to which the government may be involved in matters relating to international bridges and tunnels. What could be more important? I would suggest at this stage, nothing. This includes important matters such as maintenance, safety and security that are of concern to all Canadians who use these structures.

Government Orders

This is a great bill and I look forward to all parties supporting it. The extent to which the government can get involved will be addressed in the regulations that will be adopted under this legislation. The government will look again to stakeholders, as we always do, and invite their comments with the view to addressing their particular concerns at that time.

I would therefore encourage all members of the House to put aside politics. I would ask them to support the people of Windsor, to support Canadians, and support all people using the international bridges and tunnels. Let us pass the bill so that our colleagues in the Senate can start the process of reviewing it without delay. In that way we will be one step closer in the long process of making this important bill law.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the parliamentary secretary that Bill C-3 is very important not only for Canada but also for those residents who live near border crossings across this country. There are 24 crossings which are international bridges or tunnels that are significant to this specific legislation.

I reside in a municipality where there is a concentration of border crossings. We have significant issues with regard to the process followed on Bill C-3. What we thought was going to happen was potentially a deal to accommodate some of the local concerns regarding problems experienced at the border. We also wanted to make this the best bill possible. That is important to note. The parliamentary secretary talked about the urgent nature of this bill as well as the suggestion of being neglectful if we do not pass this bill at this time.

Of those 24 international bridges and tunnels, 22 of them actually have ownership that is governed either through the state or federal government on the American side, and on the Canadian side it is the federal government, the province or even municipalities that are owners-operators and active managers of border crossings. That leaves two private facilities that are currently without legislation because they are private property. They are subject to different laws of this land, but they do not have the degree of scrutiny that is important.

I was hoping the government would move toward accommodating actual consultation as a full component of the process. We were able to achieve that at committee for the operational use of the international bridges and tunnels. Once again, it is not a veto. In previous legislation which is being replaced, that was and is the case. There could be local vetoing with respect to some changes.

In terms of compromise, what we asked for is guaranteed consultation in the sale of the property of the bridge or tunnel and also for the construction and alteration which affects the roads in the area and the connecting interlinking highways to the bridge that could be municipal domain or another level of government domain.

Why can we not include those two elements that would actually make a harmonization of the bill? There should be a consultation process that allows the minister to at least have some direction, but at the same time does not bind him or her and more important, has municipalities and local governments as partners of a process to ensure safe, secure and fair trade in our communities.

•(1115)

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, first, the division of powers is the federal government's responsibility. It is the federal government's responsibility to protect Canadians. Second, there is environmental legislation already in place that requires consultation. The Statutory Instruments Act already requires consultation.

There were a couple of problems with the amendment proposed. The first problem was found the very night we actually made an amendment, just a few nights ago, when we were trying to push this bill forward. The wording was wrong. It stated that the minister actually had to consult before he received an application. Obviously, he cannot consult until he receives an application. We amended that.

Then we found another problem. The amendment wanted us to consult with all levels of government and it has to be, by the Supreme Court of Canada, meaningful consultation. It cannot just be a phone call to ask how it is going today; it has to be meaningful consultation. There are very stringent guidelines.

Let us talk about what a government is. Oxford defines a government as the action or manner of governing a state, organization or people. It has a very wide definition. Some possibilities are: the provincial government; the federal government; school boards; cities, and sometimes four or five could be involved with one particular bridge, but it could be as many as seven or eight cities because they just have to be affected; municipalities; aboriginal bands; chambers of commerce; federal departments; provincial departments; downtown business associations; farming organizations; trucking organizations; et cetera. There are many different forms of government.

The amendment was brought forward too late. The member knows he should have brought it forward in committee, but it was a last-minute thought. We understand that happens sometimes, but it has not been thought out.

The key here at this stage is to get it done, to get it in place. There are already all sorts of consultation processes that must be done by the government. Let us help the people of Windsor. Let us put this legislation through now before it is too late.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities means by an old bridge. He mentioned this at the beginning of his speech.

The Bloc Québécois believes that this is an important bill. It is odd to think that a bridge is old when it was built 75 or 100 years ago. Major structures such as bridges and tunnels—but bridges, especially—last for centuries, because they can be repaired more or less eternally. Thus, I would first like to know what he means by an old bridge and what he intends to do with older bridges.

Furthermore, does this bill provide for the investment of funds? Is there political will to help people or will the responsibility be passed on to the provinces and municipalities?

Lastly, can he explain why he thinks the Quebec bridge has been painted and is working properly? This is what he said yesterday.

Government Orders

• (1120)

[English]

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify my comments. I was speaking of the bridge that this Conservative government is trying to build with Quebec. Obviously we are building it with Quebecers and Quebecers have a lot of faith in this government because of what we are doing.

I actually did not hear the question entirely yesterday and I apologize for the confusion, but I can assure the member that all steps are being taken to make sure that the actual owner and controller of that bridge will do what is required and will take that rusty bridge, paint it and make repairs to it.

That is the very point I make about this particular bill, how important it is to the people of Canada. Even though it is not an international bridge, how important is it to the people of Quebec? It is very important, just as the international bridges and tunnels are very important to the people of Canada for trade, tourism, and just to go see friends and family.

What I meant by old is that many of these bridges were constructed well before I was born and well before the member was born. We have to have the ability to inspect. We have to have the ability to know what is happening with the bridges because they are so crucial to the country. Whether they be 50, 100 or 150 years old, the key is that they are safe, that they are secure and they are kept in proper working condition. That is what we want for the Quebec bridge, which is so important to Quebecers, so important to this Conservative government which is working for the Quebec people.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Windsor West raised some very valid concerns about consultation. The parliamentary secretary seems to be seized of this issue that too much consultation is a bad thing, and I do not think my colleague from Windsor West would agree with him.

I do agree with my colleague that some levels of government that he sees as being burdensome would not necessarily be bound by the amendment that my colleague is seeking. For instance, I personally do not consider chambers of commerce to be levels of government. Maybe in my hon. colleague's world chambers of commerce are considered levels of government, but not where I come from.

However, he is right when he says that consultation has a legal meaning. The term consultation means more than simply posting a notice on a telegraph pole telling people what the government intends to do. That is not genuine consultation. Consultation implies some meaningful exchange and some accommodation of what one has heard. A town hall meeting cannot simply be called, an announcement made about what is going to be done and then claim that consultation was done with the town of Windsor or the town of Niagara Falls about one's intentions for the international crossing. That, in and of itself, is not good enough.

Would my colleague agree that consultation is a good thing and that it is something we can never have too much of, short of grinding a project to a halt? However, nobody would take it to a ridiculous extreme. Would he also agree that the definition of consultation, in its broadest sense, must incorporate some meaningful exchange of information and accommodation of the other person's point of view?

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, it was not my definition that came up with all those examples. I am not allowed to use props but it was the *Oxford English Dictionary* that gave me that definition. I do believe that the wording right now is far too wide. Consultations would take place over a long period of time.

Let us get back to what the bill is about. It is about the safety and security of Canadians. What could be more pressing than that? The minister needs to react today on certain factors and certain things, not in six or eight months or six or eight years once the legal challenges have gone through and once all the other consultations have gone through. The bill would allow the government to do what is necessary to keep Canadians safe and secure and to ensure those trade routes stay open. The buck has to stop somewhere and it stops here with the government.

On a side note, a member of this House has given an undertaking to that member that there will be consultations on the bridge in Windsor. I would trust any member from this side of the government. Their word is their bond and they will follow through.

Nothing could be more important than putting this bill through and ensuring the people of Canada are safe and secure. We already have an environmental act and a statutory interpretation act. We have acts in place that require the consultations the member is asking for. It would be duplicating a process that is already in place and would require far too much in the way of balance, which is the safety and security of Canadians which this government guarantees to do and to work in the best way we can to get it done.

• (1125)

[Translation]

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise here this morning to speak to the House on Bill C-3, respecting international bridges and tunnels.

As we have already heard, there are currently 24 bridges and tunnels along the 6,400 km of border that separates Canada from the United States. These bridges and tunnels have different owners: 22 are publicly owned, while two others, along with five rail bridges and tunnels, are privately owned.

[English]

In order to emphasize for the House just how important this bill is for Canada, let me state again for the record several key points about the subject of this legislation.

First, international bridges and tunnels play an indispensable role in Canada's transportation network. They facilitate a large portion of our vastly successful international trade. As one of the most trade dependent nations on the face of the earth, the role of international bridges and tunnels to our economy can hardly be overstated.

Second, some 13 years after the Liberal government signed onto the North American Free Trade Agreement, trade between Canada and the United States has increased rapidly, year after year. We know that trade increases averaged more than 6% per year over the last decade, thanks, at least in part, to NAFTA and of course the ingenuity and the commitment of the Canadian people.

Government Orders

Third, we also know that the great majority of Canadian exports into the United States go by rail or by truck, particularly in crossings between Ontario, New York and Michigan. This is extraordinarily important when we consider the role, for example, that the auto industry and the auto parts industry play in the context of central Canada's economy. As the jurisdiction that now produces cars more efficiently than any other single nation state in the world, it is extremely important that we ensure that transportation between our two countries remains unimpeded.

The reality of modern business practice now compels most companies to minimize their inventory and, in fact, many companies today track their inventory in live time as it is shipped or delivered. This just in time inventory management practice and system has swept through most economic sectors and has met with success in large part because companies count on seamless, continent-wide transportation and delivery systems.

Fourth, as I mentioned previously, in 2005 our bilateral trade exceeded \$580 billion. Every single day trade between the United States and Canada exceeds \$1.6 billion. One study rightly suggests that if Canada does not properly operate and maintain its existing stock of international bridges and tunnels and go further and consider developing new such crossings, then Canada might lose up to 70,000 jobs by 2030 and possibly forgo almost \$22 billion in production.

To quote my colleague, the hon. member for Outremont, when he was the minister of transport he made it clear that what was needed was to give to federal government, finally, the legislative authority required for effective oversight of these international bridges and tunnels to ensure the interests of Canadians were protected.

The parliamentary secretary was right in reminding the House that this was, in large part, the work of the previous Liberal government. It was our government's work in this area which culminated in an understanding that we must make more coherent our overall approach to these vital structures.

It is no secret that this bill is identical in purpose to legislation that our government brought to the House on two separate and previous occasions. Here is the chronology of what has brought us to the debate this morning. It began with the Canada Transportation Act amendments that were very much along the lines of the current Bill C-3 we are debating. These were tabled as part of Bill C-26 during the second session of the 37th Parliament when our party formed the government.

• (1130)

It is extremely important to remind Canadians that the current Prime Minister and the rest of what was then the Canadian Alliance Party were not interested at all in working for those amendments and they voted against them at second reading. To this day I am unsure as to what the rationale, if any, was at that time.

In the 38th Parliament we tabled Bill C-44, which included the very same amendments, and once again the opposition of the day, now the government, found little, if any, merit in our proposals, as it did with so many good Liberal bills on the order paper at the time, choosing instead to bring down the government with the help of the

NDP and the Bloc Québécois and, in effect, for a second consecutive time, kill the legislation.

As we know, outspoken members of the Conservative government are fond of the preposterous and now ridiculous claim that previous Liberal governments did nothing. The introduction of Bill C-3 is a clear statement for Canadians by the current government, in actions rather than words, that the previous Liberal governments were working in the interests of all Canadians.

I want to thank the Minister of Transport for this vote of great confidence. I am sure he and his parliamentary secretary would be willing to give credit where credit is due. At its core, Bill C-3 is the exercising of the federal government's constitutional powers. These are outlined in sections 91(29) and 92(10) of the Constitution Act of 1867.

However, for everyday Canadians who are watching, from Cornwall to Windsor, at every place where there might be such an international crossing, this bill reaffirms our government's investment in the safety and security of this country.

Although at first blush the bill would appear to invest, in an almost unfettered way, authority in the governor in council or the Minister of Transport when it comes to all matters dealing with international bridges and tunnels, but closer examination suggests that it achieves the right balance; a balance between the free movement of people, goods, services and the need for emergency powers, standards for building, owning, financing or operating such a bridge or tunnel but all the while building in safeguards to protect against excessive control and appropriate security standards.

For example, under the bill no one would be able to build, change or alter an international bridge or tunnel without getting approval. Most Canadians would consider that to be more than obvious, but this is a hallmark feature of the previous Liberal government's approach to this issue. I would expect no less from the current government than to cut and then to paste these sections into the new bill.

A transparent and predictable approvals process is set out in Bill C-3, including the need for documentation, giving very wide scope for the imposition of any terms and conditions that the Crown, on behalf of the people, considers appropriate.

When it comes to maintenance or repairs, the Minister of Transport would be authorized to order any action of an owner or operator to ensure that for Canadian businesses and citizens the bridge or tunnel is kept in good condition.

Perhaps of all the parts of the bill I am most supportive of is the work done by our government and taken up by the Conservative government, which is now reflected in the bill, and it deals with the issuance of letters patent for incorporation. In simple terms, this allows for the creation of a new company or corporation which could build or operate an international bridge or tunnel. This is not unimportant going forward with the growth of our economy and the concentration of trade with the United States.

Government Orders

•(1135)

Our government worked very hard to ensure a high degree of specificity around any new company that might get into the business of building a bridge or a tunnel. We went as far as to require approval for the number of directors on a corporate board. The current bill reflects this. We are asking to see their powers and duties. We are demanding that a code of conduct would apply to such directors and officers. Finally, the terms of ownership of the corporation would be spelled out in black and white for all Canadians.

We went further to protect Canadians. It is reflected in the bill that we believed then, as we do now, that the government should be in a position to revoke letters patent of incorporation that had been previously granted. This is a strong power vested in the Crown, but one that we felt at the time, and we still agree, might be necessary in the case of risks associated with the free flow of goods, of people or security. As well, we provided very onerous duty of care provisions for any directors or officers of corporations in the international bridges or tunnels business.

All in all, our foundational work, which underpins the bill, reflects the fact that it is simply appropriate for the federal government to oversee international bridges and tunnels. Other orders of government would expect that their national government would have these powers. Canadians who are watching would assume that their federal government was looking after these matters because they deal with one other country in particular.

To pick up on a comment I made earlier, for all their allegations about a government that apparently did nothing for 13 years, a blame game theme that is wearing thin for most Canadians, it is terribly ironic that the new government continues to take our substantive work for the underpinnings for the bill. This is not the first time that Liberal ideas have been begged, borrowed or stolen, or usually adopted, and neither will this be the last.

Canadians could be forgiven for concluding, from its stance on the bill and so many other actions, that the Conservative government speaks out of both sides of its mouth. It wants Canadians to believe a fundamental falsehood: that the heavy lifting and the substance of our time in government simply did not occur. So it is important, I think, to be very honest about the bill.

As the minister is well aware, and as we have just heard in previous exchanges, there is a lingering debate in the House about the provisions in Bill C-3 that speak to the issue of consultation. That is to say, should the Minister of Transport ultimately authorize, for example, the construction of a new bridge or the expansion of an existing tunnel, what might be the obligations on the minister to consult with other orders of government and any other interested parties such as banks, finance companies, corporations, international owners and national owners?

Some have argued that municipal or provincial governments ought to have some form of veto. I have not heard that yet on the floor of the House, but some do argue that municipalities or provincial governments ought to have some form of veto on pursuing such a project. Others have said that compelling private parties, the proponents of projects to build a bridge or a tunnel, to be

consulted by the minister might compromise what those private parties describe as trade secrets. I think it is very unfortunate that the government, in its approach to this debate, has not at all enlightened the House with respect to the specific issue of consultation.

•(1140)

It also did not illuminate the state of the debate when it comes to mandatory or discretionary consultation requirements, but instead has chosen to generate more unproductive heat. In this, I think, the government has failed, and its continuing partnership with the New Democratic Party in particular, a partnership referred to just yesterday by the Prime Minister as one that might keep his government afloat until 2009, appears to not be so amicable today.

That being said, I look forward to supporting Bill C-3. In sum, with this bill I think that our previous government crossed the Rubicon and moved as a government to tie together our social, environmental, trade, economic and security concerns as they relate to our outstanding relationship with our southern neighbours. Bill C-3 is at its heart another example of the Liberal legislation that for 13 years has strengthened the Canadian economy and defended Canadians against threats to their safety, their security and their mobility.

I commend the government for choosing a modest and well-founded work for its second bill this session. Working as a good faith opposition in a minority Parliament, I can assure everyone in this House that we will not play games with what is clearly a bill in Canada's public interest.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise and ask my colleague a question. I listened to his thoughtful debate. He did an excellent job of looking at the history of this bill and its failure to make it through the parliamentary process. I think one of the reasons why it is still struggling today is that it is still an incomplete bill.

One of the things I would like to note, and one of the concerns we New Democrats still have, is the issue of consultation. We know that there now is going to be consultation, provided because there was a hard-fought amendment in committee with regard to the operations of the facility.

We still fail to understand why it is inconsistent to have the same for the sale and also the alteration and construction. Once again, we are not seeking a veto. We are just asking that the consultation process be regulated and well defined so that it will be more helpful.

I would like to quote the member for LaSalle—Émard, the former prime minister, who said on March 13, 2004, "We are not going to do this unless it really conforms to what the people of the city want". So now we have done this and it is a question of determining how exactly the city wants to see us do it. This is not going to be imposed. It is an absolute guarantee that is it not going to be imposed, yet this legislation allows for that process to happen.

Government Orders

I would like my hon. colleague to expand upon this dilemma, because really what ends up happening is that the minister becomes the unilateral authoritarian with regard to the ultimate decision. There are some processes such as environmental processes and whatnot, but they are quite different from community consultation. Once again, why can we have that for operational use on the facilities of tunnels and bridges, but we cannot have the same for the sale and resale and, lastly, the alteration and construction? All we are seeking is consultation, not veto.

• (1145)

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, I do want to pick up on the theme of consultation because it is interesting to note this morning the extent to which it is driving a wedge between two parties which have formed an obvious partnership over the last several months together in the House, both of which have gone public now to explain to Canadians what that partnership means and why it is important for them.

But let me go to the specific question of consultation. I commend the NDP for raising the question of consultation. Our Liberal government was the government that transformed the relationship and the approach to other orders of government, particularly cities. We were the government that launched the cities deal. We were the government that launched infrastructure funding. We were the government that invested massively in public transit, in water systems and in waste systems.

We were the government that was brought down by the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Conservatives, and now we have a situation where a government that might have been perhaps more receptive to the notion of outreach to cities and provinces is now the official opposition. So first let me say that it is rich for the NDP members to not remind Canadians that they had and have some responsibility for putting into government a Conservative regime which, in the last election, was not endorsed by 37 mayors of the largest cities of this country.

However, given that we are talking about consultation, I think there is a duty here on the New Democratic Party, on this member in particular and his colleagues, to put forth with clarity here what it is they are trying to achieve. It is one thing to say that we are going to hold town hall meetings in an affected community and perform, as I think the member's colleague mentioned earlier, what I describe as flash card consultation, that is, now we see it and now we do not, we take under advisement; go back into the kitchen cabinet and make a decision.

There are provisions, it is true, in other federal, provincial and municipal legislation and bylaws that will compel a degree of consultation with the affected community. This is true, but there is a question that concerns me the most about the member seizing upon consultation with a specific and separate order of government, i.e. the cities in particular and the city of Windsor in particular. The question that concerns me, having seized upon that, is that the member has not at all brought clarity to the question of the impacts on private parties.

What does it mean if the minister is compelled? What does it mean that the minister "shall" consult with private parties? What are the legal ramifications of such consultation? What are the litigious

possible outcomes derived from such possible consultations? What about trade secrets? What about enforcement?

All of these things have not been debated. I think it is a little disingenuous of my colleague to seize upon the municipal consultation question, which I deeply respect and am deeply concerned about, without bringing forward a fuller gamut of solutions to deal with the impacts of instructing a minister of the Crown that he or she would be obliged to perform some kind of consultation.

Yes, there is some legal definition around consultation as rendered by courts at different levels, but I think it is important now to circumscribe this. I am looking for more clarity.

• (1150)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the first time I met my hon. colleague he was the chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. We were in a public debate on CPAC, I believe, on some environmental issue. At that time, I am sure he would have been adamant that groups and private organizations would be consulted thoroughly in dealing with something as major as the infrastructure we are talking about. There seems to be a bit of a contradiction between who he was then and who he is now.

I do have a specific question about the Liberals generally, I suppose. I noticed a bit of a backhanded aside blaming the NDP for the Liberals losing power. That seems to be a theme that the Liberals never lose an opportunity to raise. I think they should get over it. It was the people of Canada who unelected the Liberals, not the New Democratic Party.

I do have a question that is specifically related to one of the hon. member's Liberal colleagues. Does he know or can he share with us why the Liberal member for North Vancouver introduced a motion at the committee that would allow a bridge or a tunnel to be twinned without any environmental assessment? I presume the member for North Vancouver was talking about the Lions Gate Bridge, perhaps, from Vancouver proper to West Vancouver.

I cannot imagine anybody having that mindset about any structure over open water. I come from the building industry and I know the lengths that we go to and the hoops we have to jump through to build over open water to ensure that contamination does not take place from that activity. Perhaps he could explain that to me without the jabs about the NDP somehow being responsible for bringing down the former Liberal government.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, first, my views about consultation in a previous life and my views about consultation in this life remain unchanged. In fact, if we want to talk about environmental considerations, there are extremely onerous environmental assessment standards across the country, primarily provincial but some federal. My views on the need to achieve sustainable development in the way we pursue international bridges and tunnels remains unchanged.

Government Orders

Second, with respect to my colleague from North Vancouver who tabled the motion, I am afraid I was not a member of the committee at the time that motion was tabled. I did not have the privilege of hearing about it nor debating it, but I would remind the hon. member, if I understood his recollection of the motion, it had nothing whatsoever to do with international bridges and tunnels. We are debating international bridges and tunnels here today.

Third, with respect to what I said moments ago, I will repeat it for the record. It is incumbent upon those members of the New Democratic Party who are concerned about the consultation question to answer some fundamental questions that are more complex than simply saying that any city where a bridge or tunnel is located ought to be, should be or must be consulted. It is not that simple. This is not a simple business and it is incumbent upon the NDP and particularly on the private sector side to explain to the House and to private sector actors precisely what the impacts of their calls for change would be.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for the unanimous consent of the House to share my time with the hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the House give unanimous consent for the member for Alfred-Pellan to split his time with the member for Brome—Missisquoi?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Robert Carrier: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak today about Bill C-3, an act respecting international bridges and tunnels.

Since this bill incorporates part of Bill C-44, which was introduced during the 38th Parliament and which the Bloc Québécois supported, we naturally support this bill. However, we do have some reservations, which I will explain later.

This is the first time the Government of Canada has put legislation in place to allow it to exercise its authority over international bridges and tunnels. The new government tells us it wants to ensure that the security, safety and efficient movement of people and goods are in accordance with national interests. The events of September 2001, it must be noted, made clear the importance of protecting these vital infrastructures.

The proposed amendments would give the Government of Canada new and broader legislative powers to oversee approvals of international bridges and tunnels. These amendments would give the government power to approve, on the recommendation of the Minister of Transport, the construction or alteration of international bridges and tunnels and to formulate regulations governing the management, maintenance, security, safety and operation of these structures. The bill would also authorize the federal government to approve the sale or transfer of ownership of international bridges and tunnels. Note as well that it would strengthen federal government oversight of all new and existing international bridges and tunnels in order to better protect the public interest and ensure the flexible flow of international trade.

There are currently 24 international vehicular bridges and tunnels and five international railway tunnels linking Canada and the United

States. These bridges and tunnels carry the vast majority of international trade between Canada and the United States and play a vital role in Canada's transportation system. Although only one bridge of minor importance is located in Quebec, the Bloc Québécois still recognizes the relevance of this bill. As we have always done in the past, we are making a constructive contribution to the development of government policies that benefit the entire population.

For example, during committee review of the bill we realized the significance of the new law we are discussing today when we learned that the Ambassador Bridge linking Windsor, Ontario, to Detroit, Michigan, in the United States, is privately owned by an American corporation. The current owner is opposed to this bill and we believe that the Canadian government must have oversight and jurisdiction over all international links between the two countries.

What concerns Quebec the most about this bill is a provision affecting international bridges and tunnels on the St. Lawrence River. These provisions correct the legislative anomaly in the Navigable Waters Protection Act which requires a permit for all work affecting navigable waters but which does not authorize the issuance of permits for the St. Lawrence River. This anomaly became apparent when plans for the highway 30 bridge crossing the St. Lawrence south of Montreal were being studied.

The minister declared, in his speech of April 28, that any new crossing over the St. Lawrence would be subject to federal approval. In the past, the federal government has too often demonstrated arrogance toward Quebec and its areas of jurisdiction. We need only think of the choice of Mirabel as the site of the new airport dictated by the federal government against the wishes of the Quebec government at that time.

The Quebec government plans the use of its land and we would not be in favour of the federal government exercising its authority to prevent Quebec from exercising its own powers.

• (1155)

I therefore hope that, in confirming this approval, the federal government takes account of the advice and concerns made known by the government of Quebec, in compliance with the fields of jurisdiction of all the levels of government.

While the bill corrects a legal void in the area of international bridges and tunnels, is designed to make those structures more secure, and has the consent of local stakeholders, it leaves us with certain reservations.

In the context of the international bridges and tunnels regulations, the bill seems to us to grant the government very broad, quasi-police powers, for example, a power to investigate without warrant and a very summary power of seizure.

The government is assigning itself legislative powers, but the financial responsibility lies on other shoulders. Ultimately, we believe that this situation can lead to disputes.

We note that responsibility for international bridges and tunnels lies within the exclusive legislative jurisdiction of the federal government under the British North America Act of 1867.

Government Orders

However, in most cases the Canadian portions of these structures are owned by the provinces. We should therefore ensure that the regulatory and financial implementation of this bill takes place in collaboration and in negotiation with the provinces.

In his speech of April 28, the minister stated that the federal government will be able to ensure that environmental assessments of international bridges and tunnels are conducted in accordance with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, when appropriate.

What does the minister mean in adding “when appropriate” to the end of his sentence?

Once again, it is important to us that the minister take account of the powers of Quebec, that he respect the fact that the environment is a jurisdiction shared between the federal government and the provinces, and that he not necessarily have the last word in this matter.

We have consulted the Bureau d'audiences publiques du Québec, the BAPE. In the wake of those consultations, we note that the agreement between that organization and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency is yielding good results and that the fields of jurisdiction of each of the agencies are being respected. Given the declared openness toward Quebec, we would like that respect to continue to be applied to the bill we are studying today at third reading.

The issue of fields of jurisdiction was also raised many times in committee, during the clause-by-clause adoption of the bill that is before us today. We have said that we place our confidence in the minister in certain emergency situations when he would assume exceptional powers in a major crisis.

In conclusion, the Bloc Québécois will support the bill at third reading, even though it is a very partial solution to the many remaining transportation problems that need to be resolved in Quebec and in Canada.

•(1200)

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my curious observation about what is happening is the fact that the bill contains prescriptive clauses that would allow for some consultation. In my speech I will expand a bit on what is happening in my jurisdiction in terms of the process right now with the Detroit River international crossing or DRIC formula that is occurring.

Nevertheless, with regard to the sale, ownership, alteration and construction, the bill provides no opportunity for the province of Quebec to be consulted unless the minister decides to do so. It does not prescribe anything in particular. I am surprised the Bloc would accede such jurisdiction to the federal government. I thought it would be seeking similar assurances.

I am simply arguing that the minister has to provide that as part of the process and that it is done in a way that is accountable and transparent. It is not even a veto. I cannot quite understand the Bloc position that it would not want to seek that as a base minimum.

It is important to note that the Minister of Transport would become the ex officio for all of this. The minister would become the individual who could do whatever he or she wanted without any of

the due processes. I would be interested to hear why the Bloc is willing to accede such jurisdiction to the federal government without any conditions whatsoever.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Carrier: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Windsor West for his question.

As I said in my remarks, part of the consultation and negotiation remains to be done. At present, we have faith in the government. We have to depend on the good intentions of the federal government when it comes to negotiations with the provinces, especially regarding legislation that involves areas where jurisdiction is shared by the provinces and the federal government.

The Bloc Québécois approves of the bill because it acknowledges that these are international structures. The United States is Canada's immediate neighbour, so it is to be expected that the government will have control of and be able to legislate in relation to these international structures, which are—as regards the Canadian part—currently owned either by the provinces or by private companies. In the Bloc's view, it is completely illogical to be at the mercy of a private company that could decide what it is going to do with its bridge, and how it is going to maintain it, in this way.

The Bloc Québécois will be following how the law is administered closely, as a precaution, in cases where there are financial implications. We have noticed one flaw in this regard. If something that the federal government requires to be done involves very large sums of money, then in my opinion there might have to be a special agreement in cases where the body that owns the bridge is unable to assume the costs of the federal government's requirements in full.

•(1205)

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise the issue of jurisdiction again, an issue that was much talked about this morning.

In Quebec, municipalities are considered to be creatures of the provincial government. As such, municipalities do not have direct relations with the federal government. In fact, we hope there will be as little of that as possible. The last government began creating relations with municipalities by giving funding to them directly. The Bloc has always believed that the money should go to Quebec, so that it can distribute it to its subordinate bodies, the municipalities. Federal-municipal consultations are not something that we are interested in seeing.

Accordingly, I would like to ask the hon. member for Alfred-Pellan whether he thinks that the approach taken between the federal government and Quebec might be different, in terms of consultations.

Mr. Robert Carrier: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Brome—Missisquoi for his question.

Government Orders

Respect for jurisdiction over different areas is a very important question for Quebec. However, Quebec still depends on the federal government living up to this obligation. For various reasons, the federal government encroaches on the provinces' jurisdictions. For example, the federal government currently gives out bursaries, and this is not something over which it has jurisdiction. In fact, it is an interference in a matter under provincial jurisdiction, education. It also encroaches on the jurisdiction of all the provinces over health, having recently proposed the Canada health agency. These are cases where it is important to preserve the provinces' jurisdiction over these areas.

In the case of international bridges, we hope that the government's intentions are good.

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois recognizes the federal government's constitutional jurisdiction over bridges and their modern extensions, such as tunnels. In our view, Bill C-3 fills a legal void in the area of international bridges and tunnels. We think that this bill has an important purpose because it aims to improve the security of these major structures. I should say first of all, though, that there are not a lot of them in Quebec. We will return to this.

In terms of regulating international bridges and tunnels, this legislation will provide what could be called watchdog powers that are a bit like police powers, and we are opposed to that. A government should not only be used, as the federal government proposes, to exercise a power of investigation without a warrant or a power of arbitrary seizure. It seems to us that more complete regulations might be less restrictive and would still make it possible to maintain control over our bridges without having to get involved in such difficult situations.

So the government gives itself very broad authority to legislate but leaves the financial responsibility to others. This could potentially lead to a conflict of interest.

There is only one international bridge in Quebec—that has been said and I mention it again—and that is the Glen Sutton bridge leading to East Richford. It belongs to Quebec and Vermont. It is a metal girder bridge built around 1929. That is not very old, therefore, but its design might be a bit old-fashioned. In view of how long some medieval bridges have lasted, though, it might still be good for quite some time. It crosses a small river, the Missisquoi, and is about 150 feet long. Trucks take it without any apparent problems. So it is in good condition. It could obviously benefit from some renovations. At the present time, though, the municipality of Sutton is responsible primarily for snow removal and sanding in the winter, while the Vermont authorities do the rest.

The bridge is inspected jointly by the owners, that is to say, Quebec and Vermont. When repairs are needed, it is apparently the municipality of Sutton that takes care of them. However, the advice comes from Quebec and we think that it is quite good. Vermont covers 70% and Quebec 30%. The Quebecers in Sutton are not really very interested in Bill C-3 if it does not include any financial assistance. This is obviously not really the purpose of the bill because in Quebec we have only this little bridge.

In the case of this single bridge we have, it is certainly not necessary to simply be told what to do. That may be more important for Windsor than for us.

Obviously, it is our view that, if any bridges crossing the seaway were to be constructed, the plans and the entire project should be prepared by Quebec and would require nothing more than federal approval. We consider that to be proper.

That is how we see this bill. It would satisfy certain needs that we wanted met when the bill was being drafted. As the parliamentary secretary repeated earlier, we wanted to enhance the security around these bridges, as the terrorist incidents of 2001 have placed certain of these structures in some danger. I see no way in which the bill, in its present form, is going to be able to protect the bridge between Sutton and East Richford.

The exclusive legislative jurisdiction of the federal government includes responsibility for harmonizing international bridges and tunnels, but not necessarily for protecting bridges. It is not necessarily because of the terrorist incidents that this legislation is being developed. It is intended far more to harmonize bridges, particularly the 19 bridges in Ontario.

• (1210)

At present, however, they do not have clearly defined legislative and regulatory authority to administer these crossings. That can be done only with funding. If there are no funds, the problems cannot be resolved.

According to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, there is no process at the moment for approving the construction of new bridges or tunnels or modifying existing ones. In the past, construction of a bridge was always effected through legislation. If a complete plan is presented for a new bridge, we in Quebec would like a response: yes or no. We do not want municipal consultation or consultation with masses of people.

Quebec is capable of managing bridge construction on its own. What we want the federal government to say is yes or no: this bridge is safe or it is not.

This is not at all the case for Glen Sutton and East Richford, where there is a little 150-foot bridge.

The fact remains that it is Quebec that looks after its bridges and will look after other international bridges in the future. The Vermont bridge is maintained in the proportion of 30% by Quebec and 70% by Vermont.

The bill contains novel provisions, one of which is approval of transactions affecting ownership. We have some questions about why land transactions will be at issue even before the project is completed.

We also have changes of operator or control. That can cover a lot of ground. When we start controlling who operates a bridge, all sorts of abuses may follow.

Government Orders

In addition to confirming the role of the federal government in relation to international bridges and tunnels, what we have is the federal government issuing guidelines regarding approval of the construction of a bridge or tunnel or the alteration of existing structures, imposing conditions relating to the maintenance and operation of bridges, approving transactions that change the ownership, operator or control of a bridge, and guaranteeing the security and safety of renovations, and that all adds up to still more centralization in Ottawa.

This brings us to the fact that, according to clause 6, “No person shall construct or alter an international bridge or tunnel without the approval of the Governor in Council”, and that, under subclause 4 (4), “approval may”—or may not—“be given ... to the site or plans of an international bridge over the St. Lawrence River”, and that, according to clause 14, the government may make regulations respecting the maintenance and repair, operation and use, and safety and security of international bridges and tunnels.

As well, the government will be given very broad police powers, for example to investigate or simply to seize.

Fortunately, there are positive sides to this bill, because we do not find some parts of it very attractive. We will be voting for this bill because it contains some very valuable clauses, which I will describe.

Clause 17 provides that, “If the Minister is of the opinion that there is an immediate threat to the security or safety of any international bridge or tunnel, the Minister may make directions—”. We are entirely in favour of this clause, which is an excellent one.

The approval of the government is needed for the transfer of the ownership, control or operation of an international bridge or tunnel, under clause 23. We consider this clause to be excellent as well.

A Crown corporation may be established to administer an international bridge or tunnel, under clause 29. In our view, this is another extremely worthwhile clause.

To summarize, we support this bill, because it gives us an opportunity to submit complete projects to the federal government. We are much less impressed by the fact that someone is always going to be checking that our bridges are safe. We are capable of doing that ourselves. We are not at all open to the idea of holding consultations with municipalities; that may work just fine in Windsor, but it does not work in Glen Sutton.

• (1215)

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with regard to consultation and the Bloc position, I am rather startled that it would actually abandon that so easily in this process. We had a previous agreement to put forth two amendments at report stage that would have fixed this problem. I thank the Bloc for that as well as the Liberal Party. The government originally agreed to that formula and then pulled back at the last minute. Twice it did that with respect to fixing this problem.

It is not just a municipal issue. It is local governments. Quite frankly, municipal governments are creatures of the provinces.

I understand the member's point and he is right to note that even in Ontario, the city of Windsor or other municipal governments are under the jurisdiction of the province as well as the boards of trustees for the school boards. They are all creatures of the province, determined by specific legislation. I know the situation is the same for Quebec.

I am still rather confused about the Bloc allowing this intrusion. It is not a veto power we are seeking here. At least the province of Quebec would be at the table and part of the process for the elements of border crossings. Why would it be a bad idea to have the province enshrined in terms of that process? If not, the Bloc will never take power as a federal body, just by sheer numbers let alone anything else. It will always have to depend upon another federalist party to offer the possibility of being consulted, as opposed to having that as part of a prescribed mandate.

• (1220)

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his pertinent comments.

We in Quebec believe ourselves capable of building and maintaining bridges. The federal government must have a say in accepting, rejecting or verifying what we are doing, but it must not dictate what Quebec should do. In my opinion, this bill was not created in order to allow Ottawa to tell us what to do, although it could be interpreted that way.

We prefer to regard it in light of a province's full capacity to build and maintain a bridge. We believe that the federal government's responsibility consists in accepting or rejecting a province's plans. We do not have to participate in a commission, where we will always be a minority, I might add. We believe that it would be much more practical to implement a plan. The province submits a plan to the government that is either accepted or rejected. If Ottawa does not accept it, the province submits another plan. But the details are not discussed in committee.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his presentation.

My question for my colleague is simple. The principle must be understood: international bridges and tunnels are matters of exclusively federal jurisdiction. For too long now, governments of this House have been encroaching upon provincial jurisdictions.

The political parties must recognize, as the Bloc Québécois does, what the Constitution of 1867 did. Bridges and tunnels are a matter of federal jurisdiction. The problem lies in the fact that, since 1867, the federal government has off-loaded its responsibilities for these structures. They have become property of the provinces or municipalities, or private property. Currently, there are serious security concerns. Since September 2001, security has become a problem. The government is now trying to take back this area of jurisdiction.

Does my colleague recognize the federal jurisdiction and provincial responsibility for the structure, and will he acknowledge that security is a federal responsibility?

Government Orders

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for allowing me to clarify.

In the introduction of the speech I made earlier, I mentioned that the Constitution of Canada clearly established under which jurisdiction border crossing works fell, works such as bridges, and their modern offshoots, tunnels. According to the Bloc, every jurisdiction is clear. Dealing with bridges is a federal jurisdiction.

In that sense, the bill is reintroducing what had been dropped. The Bloc is in favour of this bill. Nonetheless, it finds there should be no consultation with the municipalities since they fall strictly within provincial jurisdiction.

We believe the provincial government can propose a plan to the federal government, which will have the final say on that plan.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise to speak to Bill C-3, an act to amend the International Bridges and Tunnels Act.

It is important to note that there have been many debates that I have been part of in this House of Commons related to bridges and borders. This one is very important not only to my constituency of Windsor West, the ridings of Windsor—Tecumseh and Essex but also across the country. The New Democratic Party acknowledges that this bill has some very important elements that are coming forward.

It is interesting to note the sense of urgency that has dawned upon this House related to the acts of September 11, 2001. There is no doubt that those events changed our lives forever and require a change in civil society in terms of regulations and how we go about planning our security in Canada. We support all those measures, but it is 2006. Why has this bill not come forward before?

That is important to note because it is a debate that has happened before with regard to the urgency and obstruction. However, at the same time, we as parliamentarians are very interested in having the best bill come forward, and having safety and security measures that actually mean something. For that to happen, this bill has to change because the people on the ground know safety and security in their communities just as well as anybody else here in Ottawa.

It is important to recognize that New Democrats are not calling for a veto. We do not want to be obstructionists whatsoever in this cause and effort. We are calling for prescriptive measures that will allow for a better process, a better bill, and greater safety, security, trade, flow of traffic, and environmental conditions in our communities that will allow all of us to prosper.

If I were to sit silently and not raise these concerns in this House, I would be neglecting the needs, the wishes, and the purpose for which the residents of Windsor West have sent me to this place. I have been involved with this issue as an elected politician since 1997. I can tell members that the things I am suggesting here today are fair, honest and sincere, and they come with elements of compromise on all sides.

There is no doubt that some of the ideas that we had proposed for this legislation could not take place at this point in time, and we withdrew those elements. They were specific amendments that were

taken back because the government had good reasons. However, it has no good reason to deny the two changes that New Democrats seek to make a better bill. That is important to acknowledge.

I must take some issue with the idea that we are trying to create an unwieldy process that has no model and no ability to function.

The Detroit River international crossing project partnership is meeting on a regular basis. This is a joint partnership with federal and state partners on the U.S. side and federal and provincial partners on the Canadian side. They have regulatory meetings on a regular basis. They have outreach. They have prescribed timelines. They have community involvement. There is engagement.

I am somewhat critical of some of those elements, but there is a process underway right now that could be a model for these things. That would be part of the regulations. We want the best dialogue possible, and more importantly, trust.

Quite frankly, I am not categorizing the Minister of Transport, saying that we as Canadians cannot trust him and his decision-making ability. I am not personalizing that element whatsoever. I am saying that Bill C-3 is deficient in that it does not provide an obligatory aspect for consultations with organizations, and more importantly, all levels of government that have a vested interest in the health and safety of their communities. That is something that will go on for many years.

What I have learned, and maybe it is the cynic in me, is never to trust people hundreds or thousands of miles away for decisions in one's local community with no guarantee of at least being talked to on a regular basis or of having a vested part of the whole project. That is what is going to make secure, safe and prosperous trade.

It is interesting to note that we have heard a dressing down of other elected officials, whether they be from a school board, or whether they be from a municipality or province. Windsor West, for those who are not aware, has 10,000 international trucks that traverse through this community on a regular basis. Fighting between a Liberal and a Conservative government put a federal highway out in a farmer's field and never connected the several kilometres to the most important border crossing in Canada.

● (1225)

The federal and provincial inter-wrangling at that time left us with a municipal connecting highway, a road, to this crossing. Because of that, we have a series of infrastructure deficiencies that were never adjusted when we signed NAFTA. We watched the trade flow increase significantly year after year and as a city council we raised the alarms. Street after street after street that became clogged, congested and affected received no support from provincial and federal governments to the degree that was necessary to fix the problems. I would be neglectful if I did not fight for those individuals.

All I am asking for in this process, and we have it, is the operational element. It is interesting to note that we have a new clause regarding operational aspects, but if it becomes a road alteration or a change of ownership, we would want to have that operational element.

Government Orders

There are several schools that are affected on one road, a highway, and a couple of other routes that are being proposed for border crossings: Brock, Bellewood, Roseland, Oakwood, Marlborough, St. Francis, St. James, J.E. Benson. These are all primary education facilities. Forester and Assumption are secondary schools. It is interesting to note those two because all I am asking for is that the school board trustees, for example, the school board, at least have a voice, some point of input. Border crossing proposals, be they from the private sector or from the federal and provincial sector, have had significant impacts on the properties of those two high schools.

Once again, all I am asking for are those operational elements.

There is no doubt whatsoever that this bill has some good changes that have merit. Safety and security are issues that are very important.

When I walk out onto my doorstep and look down the street, I see the Detroit River. From my backyard, I can see the Ambassador Bridge. Just a few hundred yards away from me is the CP Rail tunnel. Just down another two kilometres is the Detroit-Windsor tunnel. About five kilometres in the other direction is the Detroit-Windsor ferry. These four crossings account for 42% of the nation's trade in my riding.

Why do I feel so strongly about these clauses and these amendments I have been seeking? I do not want another Canadian community, whether it be in British Columbia or New Brunswick or Quebec to ever have to go through what my constituency is now experiencing. That is important to note because I have seen what it has done.

We literally have studies under way right now with children wearing oxygen and other respiratory measurements when they go to school because of the contaminants and the pollution hazards.

Just today alone, CUPE public safety officers on the bridge filed for a study to be done on breast cancer because of the pollutants and toxins from trucks that are traversing the border and are stationary as they are processed to cross the border.

So, there are significant elements as well as international trade. There is nobody who more sincerely wants to have that trade moved freely, thoroughly and securely than the residents of Windsor where we have our auto industry. Our auto industry provides significant economic benefits not only to our individuals and our community but also to this country.

We want that to prosper, but not at the expense of our children and people in the community. We do not want outsiders imposing things with unilateral decision making processes that do not include us.

Once again, all we are asking for in this bill is consultation. Previously, there was that element with regard to the bill. We understand that things change. We understand that it is comprehensive for all of Canada, but we want to make this better for all.

I do want to talk a bit about the area and some of the failings of this bill that the government has not brought forward in a sense of urgency and that is the public border authority.

Our area in Windsor has four crossings, as I have noted. They are very significant. They involve everything, from the movement of

toxic materials and hazardous waste to goods and services and people traversing for employment.

Ironically, we have, for example, people who have credentials that are recognized in the United States, be they doctors, lawyers and other types of technicians for communications industries, who cannot work in Canada on a regular basis. Thousands of nurses go back and forth across the border into the United States on a regular basis.

We understand that we must work together. We are seeking here an overall coordination of the actual infrastructure. It is interesting to note that of the 24 international crossings, as noted earlier, 22 have public ownership in one aspect or another, either on the American side or the Canadian side.

• (1230)

Often they also have border authorities that joint manage them, whether it be in Sarnia, the Blue Water Bridge area, Fort Erie or the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission, where the committee heard from Mr. Tom Garlock who brought to attention of the committee an error in the bill. I give the government credit for rectifying it to ensure they could prosper under this new act.

However, at the same time, in Windsor there is private ownership of the most important asset crossing our country. We have private ownership of a hazardous material ferry operation. We have private ownership of a rail tunnel. We have public ownership of the Windsor-Detroit tunnel. However, there is no overall coordination for these elements. The government still has not brought forward anything to ensure we have efficient trade.

That is why we are asking for this consultation. It is important to note, for example, a change of ownership. Why do we think people should be at least consulted? Say the bridge owner has pecuniary interests in certain economic institutions or other types of businesses. Currently the Ambassador Bridge was bought by a business person who is involved in the transportation industry. There is a whole series of competition issues that need to be discussed and resolved. The potentials are out there. I do not suggest that anything has been done wrong right now, but about the future? Why can there not be that consultation with other proponents being a part of that?

Alteration and construction are critical. Local governments are not backwater places where incompetent people fill rooms and do nothing. People on the streets know the roads, know the services and are paid to represent the people to do so in the best interests of those individuals. Often they have the best solutions to move traffic through their communities that people in other jurisdictions do not know. They deserve the right to be heard, and we witnessed this.

The previous government offered to build a Canadian highway on our waterfront. We have fought for years to have this land become a part of our diamond, our park system. I discussed putting this road on the waterfront with a bureaucrat. It is amazing. Those are the things we are looking to avoid.

Government Orders

People in the municipality or the province have some good solutions. We also understand when those roads connect or are under construction, that has an effect. An important part of the mandate and process would be to avoid time lags and overlaps in construction. We know on the American side there will be construction on the Ambassador plaza side. That will reduce I-75 to a one lane entrance exit, which will be significant because it could back up traffic. It will certainly back it up to the plaza. We are glad the Ambassador Bridge has expanded its plaza to a certain degree to accommodate some of that, but it has repercussions on the city of Windsor, especially if we have other problems.

For example, during 9/11, when the bridge was closed in many respects, trucks were lined up down the 401. The government solution of the day was to put out porta-potties for the truckers. There still is no action plan to deal with those situations right now, despite my asking the previous administration a number of times.

We also have upcoming construction on the Windsor-Detroit tunnel plaza. Both of these border crossings are symbiotic. One affects the other, and it affects Sarnia.

When there is alteration and construction, we need to ensure the timelines are there. The city of Windsor is will be doing the construction on the Windsor plaza. It has timelines that require not only budgeting from the province of Ontario and the federal government, but also the municipality. If we do not appropriately plan these things, it will lead to problems.

It is about respect and partnership. Motion No. 3, moved by the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and passed, states:

That Bill C-3, in Clause 15, be amended by adding after line 25 on page 7 the following:

Before recommending that a regulation be made under subsection (1), the Minister shall, if in his opinion such is necessary having regard to all the circumstances, consult with the other levels of government in which an international bridge or tunnel is situated and any person who, in the opinion of the Minister, has a direct interest in the matter.

• (1235)

We do that on operational aspects. That is why I was surprised. Maybe it is coming from the bureaucrats or lawyers, I do not know. I do not understand this. I had discussions with the government and it looked like there was a deal. We had all party consent. The bill could have passed by now and it would be all over. However, it pulled back from the deal not only once but twice.

Items were dropped. The NDP had four report stage motions that night. The government said Motions Nos. 2 and 5 were not good. It gave us some good reasons for it and they were dropped. We have not heard the same reasons for these motions because they are consistent with the motion passed at report stage.

I would like to thank the other opposition parties for supporting it. We could have passed the bill with those amendments and would have been done with this already. Until we have some changes, I cannot sit in this place and feel comfortable as a representative of my community with a bill that does not live up to full measure.

The bill has some very important elements to it. We recognize that. We certainly look forward to working with the government on

improving those things. We do not have any intent to make this bill worse. I have talked to lawyers with regard to what we are doing, and I still cannot understand the government's position on this.

Other important matters need to be discussed with regard to the bill. New Democrats want to see other changes on border crossings. We would like to see some real changes in border authorities in the future. We would like to see the introduction of some of the elements from the government. We are hoping to put forth legislation. We are working on some right now. We would like to see that happen and there is sincere interest for this.

Second, we would like to see the creation of community reinvestment funds to ameliorate areas that are affected by border congestion and problems. For a number of years people in my area have been pushing for a community investment fund that would deal with the remediation of environmental and other concerns, from toxins and pollutions to the effects of border crossings in those communities. We believe we can accommodate these things without putting a burdensome element on any sector, including the public, the traverses of those crossings, and the people who manage those facilities.

I want to deal somewhat with current protection elements that are in the process now. I do not disregard what the government has said with regard to environmental assessments. It is important that there will be a process that allows for some consultation. It is very prescriptive and limited in some respects, but it happens. There can be public discourse and that is not a bad thing. However, it is important to note the restriction on that. It does not allow for the full consultation from the top down, from the minister to the province and, hopefully, the municipal level of governments as well.

I will conclude by saying that is a good example. A Liberal member in committee, I believe the member for Vancouver Island North, introduced a motion that would have allowed the twinning of border crossings without any environmental assessments. That is why we believe consultation should be built into this process so we do not have these circumstances in the future. Even the parliamentary secretary picked up on that right away and did a good job on it. He recognized the risks of that. That is why we believe it should be part of the process.

Therefore, I move the following amendment:

That Bill C-3, An Act respecting international bridges and tunnels and making a consequential amendment to another Act, be not now read a third time but be referred back to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities for the purpose of reconsidering clauses 7 and 24 with a view to examine the balance between the rights of the Minister and the needs for consultation with other levels of government and affected communities.

• (1240)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The amendment is in order.

• (1245)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for Windsor West for the dedication and the commitment he has shown on this issue, and also for recommending a way forward from this point. The member spent the bulk of his speech pointing out the reservations that he had with Bill C-3 going forward unamended as it was.

Government Orders

From what I understand from the member's remarks, we also recognized and paid tributes to some of the very necessary aspects in Bill C-3. The member's concern can be embodied in dealing with the two clauses separately.

Given that the member had to terminate his speech by moving the motion, could take the opportunity to explain the impact of the amendment that he has recommended in reconsidering clauses 7 and 24? Does that mean that the rest of the bill could go ahead? Is it only clauses 7 and 24 that would be referred back to the committee? Could he perhaps expand on the strategy here?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, the whole bill would go back to committee, but we would specifically examine clauses 7 and 24. The motion also indicates quite strongly that it is unnecessary to deal with other matters in the bill. We have shown that there is some wide range support for it. I think all members of the House would see that as well.

It is important to note that we have tried to work with the government extensively. I give the government credit, it did hold meetings with us and consulted us. At the end of the day, the government never listened to that consultation. This is what gives me great concern. All I am asking for is a guarantee of consultation.

Even if the bill were to go forward with my amendments, there is no protection, ultimately, of what could happen in the community. The only protection would be due process. To give support to the bill, we need that important component in it. That is all we seek.

I have been criticized for not moving amendments earlier, but the process is the process. The amendments have been on the order paper for weeks, especially the report stage amendments.

The government had an idea and an indication of my concerns during the process. This is why the NDP would like to clean up those two elements. That is all it would be. This is similar to the deal that we thought we had with the government. The government along with other opposition parties went back on the deal. They supported the unanimous consent. We would have passed the bill in its entirety.

By cleaning up those two elements, it will give us a sense of comfort. More important, it will provide a better bill, not only for my constituents of Windsor West, but for all Canadians across the country.

It is a healthier environment when we can lay out the elements of consultation and what that means. That builds partnerships. Partnerships are very important. The movement and the secure and free flow of goods and services through our communities to the United States is paramount to our country's success, and we have to manage that on a regular basis.

I have often argued for a public border authority in the Windsor region, based upon the principle that we need to operate the border as a business, one that is efficient and one that has rules, regulations and oversight. Right now we do not do that in my constituency. That is why it is important we have these clauses. They build the natural partnerships that are important.

This is also about accountability as well. The people who throw up their hands and say there will be lawsuits, are the people who are not interested in consultation anyway. They are looking for weasel

ways to get around having to hold meaningful discussion in the first place. We can do that. It happens on a regular basis. We can have those types of consultations, discussions and prescriptions and they can be done in a thoughtful and progressive way and in partnerships.

It is not a partnership when we allow a minister to become the unilateral authority without any accountability whatsoever. All we are asking for is to have this as part of this bill, hence the amendment I have proposed.

• (1250)

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member recognizes that it took a member of the Conservative government to worry about the environment and ensure nothing would be done without an environmental assessment. This speaks volumes about this Conservative government and its interest in the environment.

I wonder if the member could answer a question about environmental legislation. In my speech I referred to environmental legislation that we already have that requires consultation in relation to what the member is asking for. Quite frankly, what he is asking for is beyond the scope of the bill.

The member mentioned that the municipalities know better the security threat that would involve their particular area. The head of CSIS commented that the only way to stop terrorism in Canada, which we have seen recently, was through the intelligence organizations of the federal government such as CSIS. These organizations have indicated that they need more money in order to be effective in this way.

Let us take a practical example. The minister finds out through CSIS that there is a threat to a bridge, to a tunnel or to some sort of international crossing. The member is suggesting that the minister would need to go on a consultation tour around that area and consult with probably five cities and five different councils which have different priorities, five to ten different school boards, at least one or two provinces and one or two states, and other levels of government that we have not even talked about here. We are talking about a terrorist threat to a bridge or a tunnel that could take up to one or two years of consultation. The member is suggesting that consultation should be required in cases involving the security and safety of Canadians crossing an international border.

I wonder how the member's constituents would feel about that many levels of bureaucracy and taking a year to solve a terrorist threat.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised and shocked by the parliamentary secretary's question because I accepted, in good faith, an amendment proposed by the government which would allow security provisions for the minister.

Government Orders

It is important to note that right now the government relies on the Windsor police force to show up at the Ambassador Bridge plaza as well as the tunnel plaza to do the work because there are no federal people to stop the security risks which are happening on a regular basis. The government also relies on municipal first responders to take care of any problems at the borders, such as a fire, a safety issue or other type of issue. No overall plan was proposed by the previous government and none has been proposed by the Conservative government. The government must rely on these people to protect the citizens there. My constituents trust the people in their communities who serve them on a regular basis and do so on good faith.

All we are asking for is some consultation. Fearmongering about this consultation is not proper. I am talking specifically about my area but security risks happen in other areas. There are only 24 regions to begin with and 22 of them already have various levels of government involvement in their operations. The ones that do not have government involvement will require some consultation. It can happen properly and efficiently. It has been a problem in the past but we can solve it now with this bill. The people in my community do trust that their city councillors, their school board trustees and other responders will at least have a voice at the table.

The bill calls for the minister to use his best discretion in a national security crisis situation. We would never hold that up. We understand there could be times when that could happen and we support that part of the bill, which is why we accepted the friendly amendment that was put forward for the minister to have some discretion. What we are looking for is a planning process that starts with the regular flow of trade and services that are not under a national security threat.

Officials for the Ambassador Bridge hire a municipal police contingent to oversee some of its security. They are already part of that security.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute to the commitment my colleague has to this issue. For the number of years that I have known him he has been a tireless champion of the free movement of goods and services across international borders for trade purposes with special attention to national security issues. No one has been more outspoken on this issue. It is fitting then that when someone with his background and expertise blows the whistle on legislation that may be faulty or have shortcomings we should take note.

We as Parliament should be seized of this issue. I am satisfied, given the arguments that I have heard, that this amendment is justified and that the bill should be sent back to committee for the specific purposes of reconsidering at least clauses 7 and 24 which deal specifically with the duty to consult.

No one denies that Bill C-3 was necessary to complete the work that began as Bill C-44 in the previous Parliament to finally put some regulatory regime to the development of new or the expansion and rehabilitation of existing bridges and tunnels which cross international borders. We welcome this. It is overdue.

However, in our haste we should not ignore the basic principle of natural justice, which is the duty to consult. More learned people than I have pointed out that consultation has legal meaning. It means

more than simply telling Canadians what we intend to do to them. It means inviting their views and accommodating some of those views when those views have merit.

We have all seen sham consultations where the touring task force blows into town, rents the local town hall and, with a very fancy power point presentation, announces what the government intends to do to people with their tax dollars. Objections are raised at all the microphones as to why this should be done differently and the bureaucrats pack up their books and their power point presentations and go off to the next town. At the end of the process we read in the newspapers that consultation took place in 33 Canadians communities and therefore they are ramming ahead with the legislation. That is not consultation.

My colleague for Skeena—Bulkley Valley just said, “Just ask first nations about the federal government”. I am not critical so much of the current federal government because it has not been in government long enough, but the past record of federal governments in this country in their dealings with first nations have made an appalling travesty of any semblance of true consultation.

My colleague from Windsor West was talking about consultation. He rose today on an issue of principle. He is not arguing about the merits of the bill so much as with the shortcoming in the bill that he cannot live with. I cannot live with it either based on his recommendation.

If the bill is all about the free movement of goods and services, expanding, accommodating and facilitating trade, it should have no barriers in the way of consultation. I cannot imagine the government allowing such an important issue to be tripped up by the denial of such a basic and fundamental right; the right to consult, the duty to consult and the duty to accommodate in the context of what one has heard.

I do not accept the fearmongering that we heard from the parliamentary secretary, that the duty to consult is so onerous, as contemplated by my colleague's amendment, that it would grind the process to a halt even in the event of national security. He said that in the event of a terrorist threat if the minister were duty bound to consult everybody and their grandmother, the terrorists would be running roughshod over us. That is nonsense.

There are other security measures in Canada where the ministers have broad sweeping powers to take what actions are necessary in the interest of national security. That kind of fearmongering trivializes an important debate and it does not do any of us a service to deviate from the issues of the day with that kind of thing.

● (1255)

I thought that the duty to consult all levels of government or interested parties was the norm in any situation like that. I was surprised by the parliamentary secretary's vehement reaction to that idea. Let us look at the language being proposed here. It would be helpful if we all started from the same base level of information in the debate.

Government Orders

What is being proposed is that, “before recommending that a regulation be made...the minister shall consult with the other levels of government that have jurisdiction over any place where an international bridge or tunnel is situated...”. That is not too onerous. That is just common sense. It continues with, “...and with any person who, in the opinion of a minister, has a direct interest in the matter...”.

What if private property is involved? What if a school or a school board needs to be consulted? With the tools and the bureaucracies at the minister's disposal, surely this level of consultation would not grind things to a halt.

We are not talking about the chamber of commerce. The minister used the example that, for heaven's sake, we will have to consult with everybody and their grandmother and that levels of government could mean chambers of commerce. Chambers of commerce are not governments. They are organizations that are part of civil society. The way this is phrased, “...if, in the opinion of the minister, that individual has a direct interest in the matter...”, the minister may decide that he does not have to consult with the chamber of commerce.

Let us be realistic and honest in our debate. What we are talking about, I think, is a basic fundamental principle and the amendment, to which I am trying to limit my remarks, addresses a concern that I certainly share.

When I was the aboriginal affairs critic for the NDP, I remember when we went through a contentious piece of legislation that would have affected the lives of aboriginal people, first nations. At that time, during our research and demanding that true consultation take place, I looked at some of the Supreme Court rulings that made reference to consultation. That was where I learned that the duty to consult meant far more than just engaging in a dialogue. The duty to consult includes some reasonable accommodation. If the other party makes a valid point and there is no compelling reason to ignore that point, then we are duty bound to accommodate that point if we want to claim there was consultation.

Consultation is often one of the stepping stones to infringing on a person's rights. There are times when it is justified to infringe on a person's rights, whether they are human rights, property rights, et cetera, but the courts have held that in such a situation there are two things that must take place in order to justify infringement of a person's rights, and the first aspect of that is the duty to consult in a thorough and comprehensive manner.

I enjoyed listening to the speech from my colleague from Windsor West because he kept bringing us back to the key salient point of what we are debating on two levels. First, he reminded us that we had an obligation to be thorough, complete and to make good laws. Each day in the House of Commons we begin the day with a prayer that reminds members of Parliament how duty bound we are to take every step possible to make good laws.

In the profound and well-defined conscience of my colleague from Windsor West, we would not be making good laws if we passed into law Bill C-3 without clarification on this duty to consult, without the natural justice associated with the obligation of the minister to consult.

He also reminded us of another worrisome trend. This is a theme, almost a motif that threaded its way throughout the entire Liberal regime of 13 years, that almost every piece of legislation that I have had to deal with since I have been a member of Parliament, most of them introduced by the Liberal government, expanded the discretionary powers of the minister and undermined the powers of Parliament to have the final say and, in this case, the powers of various levels of government.

My colleague from Windsor West has drawn our attention to this in the bill. Again, without this duty to consult being folded in and factored into the bill, the discretionary authority of the minister is enhanced once again, where ultimately it will be the minister who will decide what, when, where and how much to do with any new bridge or tunnel on an international crossing, and there are 24 such sites, or even the expansion, renovation or development of an existing crossing.

● (1305)

That should be worrisome. That is a trend that undermines the authority of Parliament. It gives too much power to the executive and not enough power where it should properly reside, which is with us the elected legislators and the legitimately elected representatives of other levels of government.

I am very surprised that the Bloc did not find fault with this. My colleagues from the Bloc Québécois are usually the first to remind us when a minister oversteps jurisdiction. I have heard a great deal of hue and cry from my colleagues from the Bloc when the federal government puts in place legislation that even hints at the fact it may be able to exercise control over another jurisdiction, in their case a provincial jurisdiction, without even the duty to consult. Surely that offends the sensibilities of my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois. It certainly offends mine.

There are bogus arguments abounding throughout this debate. I do not understand the resistance and reluctance on the part of opposition parties to insist that the bill be the best it can be. I found the official opposition members' arguments so vague and nebulous that they have almost no opinion. They do not have any opinion on Bill C-2, the most earth shattering and life changing piece of legislation in this Parliament surely. They have no opinion on that. They have no opinion on Bill C-3. They do not want to take part in pressing the Minister of the Environment to be a better minister of the environment. I do not know what they are doing to earn their keep lately, but they have an obligation to get involved in the debate as the official opposition. They seem to be willing to leave being the official opposition to the NDP. We do not mind assuming that role, but we would expect a little support from time to time on some of these pressing issues.

I will not dwell on that because I feel strongly about this issue. I have been invigorated and inspired by the speech given by my colleague from Windsor West and his dedication to the issue. He reminded us of the critical importance of international crossings. Until today I was not aware that there are 24 such crossing points.

Government Orders

The one we have heard most about is the Ambassador Bridge going from Windsor to Detroit. A lot of Canadians would probably be surprised to learn that the bridge is privately owned. Given that 40% of Canada's trade with the United States crosses at that very juncture, that the Province of Ontario would be the United States' fourth largest trading partner were it a nation, from a national security and public policy point of view or virtually any way we consider this, it is surprising that the bridge is a privately owned enterprise. We would think the jurisdiction and control and the expansion of it would be of such public importance that we would want it to be a public enterprise. It gets to be a matter of Canadian sovereignty, as my colleague pointed out.

We test the merits of an argument by challenging the argument. We can test the mettle of a piece of legislation by whether it can survive intelligent debate in the House of Commons. All I have heard so far is boosterism for a bill that has a serious, fundamental flaw and has had very little critical analysis. There has been lots of analysis of some of the merits of the bill, with which we do not disagree. There has been lots of analysis of the need for the bill, with which we do not disagree, but no one seems willing to get into an exchange with us, or with my colleague from Windsor West who moved the motions anyway, about the idea of consultation.

Where is the debate in this place? We would think there would be an appetite to have a real exchange on such a fundamental principle as the duty to consult. It is something upon which the Supreme Court has commented on many occasions. I feel duty bound to incorporate those principles into virtually all pieces of legislation that come through here.

• (1310)

There should be a screen through which all pieces of legislation should be viewed, to make sure they pass basic tests of ethics, of fairness, of accommodating basic principles that we as Canadians stipulate ourselves to. We want to be operating at the highest possible standards of ethical practices, of principles of fairness and equity with a duty to consult.

Let us think this through. Taxpayers' dollars can be used to change their atmosphere and environment without an opportunity to have meaningful input as to how that takes place. It is almost taxation without representation. Revolutions have been fought on basic issues like this. Canadians have a right to participate in the way that our tax dollars are being spent, up to and including a bridge being built in their backyard or expanding an existing bridge that is in their backyard.

It is one of those basic things that I would demand as a citizen, the right to full participation. Any government that did not want to listen to my views is not worthy of being my government. That is the way I would view it and I would certainly deal with that at the ballot box the next time around.

Bill C-3 is a component of Bill C-44 which, if we remember from the 38th Parliament, was an omnibus bill that died on the order paper. It was an ambitious omnibus bill that was set out to modernize the entire Canada transportation system really, with a Railway Safety Act and a new Via Rail Canada Act. What we are seeing with Bill C-3 is a hiving off of a section of a complex bill that died because of a lack of support from the rail line companies. It got complex.

The Conservatives opposed Bill C-44. All of these elements of Bill C-3 and others would be in effect today were it not for the Conservatives blocking the previous omnibus bill because they felt that Via Rail should be privatized and not accommodated with its own act. They opposed some of the changes in regard to monopolies and the selling off of rail lines and railcars, et cetera.

When we got Bill C-3 back, it was the most necessary, the most time sensitive component of a much larger and, I would argue, an equally necessary review of the entire Canada transportation strategy. That strategy, we should point out, is incomplete if we do not recognize the east-west dynamic as well as the north-south. I live in Winnipeg where the Red River corridor is a north-south corridor for trade, for the movement of goods and services that we value very much, but we should not value it at the expense of the necessary trade and transportation links, both east and west.

A country that is as geographically challenged as Canada must be seized of the issue of transportation. We would not have opened up the west without that commitment and without enabling the prairie farmers to move their grain with some accommodation by the federal government.

When we heard the member for Windsor West argue passionately for the details of how this affects his riding, I hope Canadians understood the motivation of my colleague. Some of the things he was explaining about the Ambassador Bridge cry out for involvement of other levels of government, of the level of government closest to the people affected.

We do not want to impose change from Ottawa. It fuels resentment of Ottawa when change comes from above without the participation of that local level of government. No one knows the facts on the ground better than the good people who are elected to represent people at the municipal and provincial levels in that area.

There are such complicating circumstances associated with the Ambassador Bridge, with 10,000 trucks per day lined up, idling, belching pollutants all over the school grounds, et cetera. How can we say that we would not consult with the local school board, or bypass that level of government, when some of the very air quality problems that are created by the inadequate Ambassador Bridge affect school children? How can we be so callous as to ignore those legitimately elected representatives?

• (1315)

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's wide ranging remarks on consultation. I would like to ask a couple of pointed questions.

He and his colleague are asserting in the motion that there needs to be a reference back to the standing committee to reconsider clauses 7 and 24. First of all, could the member tell the House what is the state of consultation requirements today with respect to anything that the bill addresses? If he does not actually know what the state of consultation is today, how can he assert that it is deficient?

The second question I put to the member concerns his definition of consultation, which is an interesting one. I have not seen it ever reflected in a judicial opinion. I have not seen it in conducting consultation in over 40 national consultation processes in the last decade before I entered elected office.

Government Orders

The member talks about consultation and almost implies that consultation means a seat at the table, and not only a seat at the table but the party being compelled to attend, or that there has to be a manifestation of the views of that party that is going to be consulted in the outcome.

Consultation has always meant consulting. It does not mean necessarily that the parties being consulted are going to get their way. It does not mean that they are going to have to see their views ultimately reflected in the outcome. From whence does he derive his definition of consultation?

He has asserted here twice now that the previous government undermined the powers of Parliament. He has asserted that we expanded the discretionary powers for ministers over 13 years. Asserting something does not make it so. Where is the evidence for either of those claims?

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, clearly the member for Ottawa South was listening to my remarks and I appreciate that.

I should begin by saying that no one is calling for the right to veto. We are calling for the duty of consultation. There is a separation.

I think he will find a good definition of consultation in Supreme Court rulings in *Delgamuukw*, *Sparrow*, and a number of other aboriginal issues, and I think Haida had the consummate definition of consultation as being accepted, as growing and evolving. Through jurisprudence we are finding a greater need to give better definition to the term "consultation". In successive Supreme Court rulings is how these things evolve and mature and so does our understanding of the term "consultation" mature. I doubt that our definition of consultation will ever grow to the point where there will be a right to veto included in the duty of consultation.

I hope that helps to clarify the matter for my colleague.

As far as the worrisome trend I find with expanding the discretionary powers of the minister at the expense of Parliament, expanding the arbitrary powers of the executive at the expense of the elected body, I do not think anyone can deny this is a worrisome trend that has been identified by academics for the last 20 years, but most profoundly in the last 10.

I put the challenge back to my colleague. Show me a piece of legislation that did not have some clause at least in its original draft that did not expand the power, the authority of the minister at the expense of the legislative arena. That was the pattern. Often we interrupted that. Often we were able to nip that in the bud, but previous Liberal governments came back and tried again and again with virtually every piece of legislation that I have been associated with in my nine years in the House of Commons.

• (1320)

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's comments on the amendment and the bill are very important. I think the whole issue of consultation merits some digging in of heels. It is a serious deficiency in the legislation. We have a piece of consultation, but we have not walked the full distance on this issue.

I think my colleague is right to talk about the sham consultation. It is something we have seen in the past when there was not a serious

intent to consult with people directly affected. It seems ironic to hear this talk from a government that talks about grassroots democracy so much. It talks about wanting to hear from Canadians about the issues of the day, about wanting the input of Canadians on the issues of the day, yet when it comes to actually setting up the mechanisms to do that in important areas such as international bridges, it is unwilling to entertain the actual amendments that would do this important work.

In my own constituency, although we do not have an international bridge, we are faced with a highway construction project, the gateway project to improve trade with the Far East, the Pacific Rim. We have heard about the supposed need to expand a major bridge across the Fraser River and the major Highway 1 that goes through my constituency.

We have seen a consultation process that people in my constituency have a terrible problem with. We have attended open houses that display the intent of the project. There are great, shiny, glorious posters and fancy pamphlets, but the actual meaningful consultation was almost non-existent. We have seen group consultations with special invited guests. How do we get on the list? Nobody seems to know.

There are serious deficiencies with that kind of consultation, so this issue is very important to people in Burnaby—Douglas even though Bill C-3 does not necessarily affect us directly. I would ask my colleague from Winnipeg if he could expand on that, especially when he says that often the excuse is made that consultation is just too onerous a process, that it will put off important decisions, and that it puts off important decisions around our trading arrangements. Why is it that trade always seems to trump the needs of our neighbourhoods and our citizens and ultimately sometimes even human rights in this country and around the world?

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague does point out a worrisome trend, which is that even grassroots parties, or parties that seem to feature themselves as grassroots parties to get elected, often seem willing to trample on that very concept of consulting with the grassroots at their first opportunity once they assume power.

It is only months into a new government and we are having this argument about whether the government should or should not consult with lesser governments before it imposes some kind of massive development in their backyards. I think that consultation would be in keeping with exactly the principles that the government espoused and under which it was elected.

I think it is one thing that we share, in fact, with the roots of that party. The NDP has always prided itself on being a grassroots organization too. I would like to believe that when we form the first NDP federal government we will be more true to our commitments to consult with the grassroots and to maintain that link with the grassroots. There is something about power.

Government Orders

This may be my last opportunity to speak in the House of Commons in this session of this Parliament and, in these final moments, I would acknowledge how civil this debate is today. Of all the people that I have heard on this issue, the former leader of the NDP, Ed Broadbent, at the end of the last Parliament, implored parliamentarians to try to elevate the standard of civil debate in the House of Commons. I think it is starting to take. I believe that we can win our arguments based on merit, not on who can shout the loudest. Most of us here today agree, I believe, that sometimes we are embarrassed with the antics.

Whether this argument comes down in our favour or not, I have had the opportunity to express my views without being heckled or ridiculed or catcalled. It is a refreshing change. I find it is so much comfortable. If a member's idea cannot survive free and open debate, then perhaps the idea did not have that much merit, but we should not try to win it on the basis of shouting down the other person. I think there is a lesson in that for all of us.

I want to close by saying that the amendment put forward by my colleague for Windsor West was put forward in the spirit of trying to make this the best bill it could possibly be. There is no mischief. There is no political motivation. I hope it is received in that same vein.

• (1325)

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House today to add a few comments on this important debate about an issue that has been championed so energetically, so well and so intelligently by the member for Windsor West. I know of the passion he has for this, his understanding of the issue and the commitment he has made, and I am impressed.

The first question that people watching this might be asking is this one: what is the big deal?

Why is it that we are driving this piece of work here this morning? This is a rather important bill before the House that is going to change the way we manage and govern some very important pieces of infrastructure involving our connectedness with our neighbours to the south. Why are we focused on this little piece at the end of the day, which in some people's minds may not make such a big difference? I have to say that in fact it does make a big difference and it really is important.

As we look at the way our economy is evolving today and the need for us to be connected in some very real and meaningful ways to the world, to the global economy, and most particularly to our neighbours to the south, we begin to understand how important the minutia, the details, are when we discuss and are involved in making plans about and determining the nature of our connectedness with the United States of America. Our bridges and tunnels are ways of getting back and forth across the border. They are really very important and are actually the key to any economic success we will have going forward.

This is actually a chance for us. I thank the government for bringing this bill forward. This needed to be done. We needed to look at the way we manage our bridges and tunnels. Until now, it has been complicated and a bit of a patchwork. Some tunnels and bridges are owned by the private sector. Some have commissions

that are locally based. Some are governed by the federal government. There is no real consistency and no real thought-out pattern involved in the way the bridges and tunnels have been managed.

They are too important for us not to be doing this. The bridges and tunnels are too important for us not to be asking the important questions that the member for Windsor West has been asking in committee and in the House since this bill was tabled a few months ago. He and his cohort, his partner from Windsor, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, have been unrelenting in their pursuit of this piece of important interaction for the federal government as it decides what these bridges and tunnels will look like, whether they will expand or not, whether they will be repaired or not, and how it will deal with and respond to some of the very real issues that come up time and time again in communities where bridges, tunnels and ferries exist.

These issues do come up. The level of traffic back and forth between Canada and the United States over the last 20 or so years has risen exponentially. It has caused some of the problems that we are experiencing today, which is actually why we in the House are debating this bill. We in the New Democratic Party caucus are insisting that when decisions are made going forward, flowing out of this bill concerning these important pieces of infrastructure, municipal and local governments be consulted, because everything that happens in relation to bridges has a serious impact on the communities.

To give an example of how important the issue of the border crossings is, in the last Parliament and again in this one, an all party caucus of Parliament was formed. Members of every party and every caucus in this place gather on a regular basis to talk about the issues, to consult with each other, to hear from each other, and to be helpful to each other in how we give advice not only to our government but to the American government on how we manage, take care of and run our bridges and tunnels, the means of getting back and forth between the two countries. We bring in guest speakers. In the last Parliament, we had Ambassador Cellucci come and talk to us about the issue of security at the bridges and the tunnels.

• (1330)

Security is a very important issue. Again, this is why it is important that the federal government take on this responsibility. It is also, I think, why it is very important that the government consult with the local communities. Where issues of security are concerned, there has to be cooperation among the federal, provincial and local authorities if we are going to be effective in dealing with challenges that might present themselves at those institutions.

It is actually rather telling that a large number of members of Parliament gathered here over a year ago to meet, to talk with and to hear from Ambassador Cellucci in terms of some of his perceptions and understandings, and to share with him what ours were and get a good dialogue going. Significant numbers of members of Parliament now have actually travelled to Washington to be in consultation with some of the officials in the United States, and again, to talk about the border, how we manage this border that is common both to us, and how we put in place facilities and structures that will be most convenient for everybody concerned.

Government Orders

Again, we have to start, I believe, and this is what the member for Windsor West is saying every time he gets up on his feet in this place to talk to us, challenge us, inform and enlighten us and educate us about this issue. He is saying that we cannot do this effectively, that we cannot hope to be successful in the initiatives we take on, the investments we make and the developments we work with, if we are not talking directly with local government, if we do not have some method or way of getting input and consulting with local government.

As the member said so eloquently this morning in his comments, it is at the local level that we know best. We are closest to the action at the local level. Local politicians live, eat and breathe these issues on a daily basis. They watch the trucks go over. They watch the long lineups. They see the impact it has on local neighbourhoods as those trucks go through and as they stop to get serviced or whatever. The local level needs to be consulted.

I just have to look at my own community of Sault Ste. Marie, where we have a very important bridge that connects Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario with Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. It has become, in many ways, a central piece in the further economic development of not only our city but our whole region. What happens to that bridge is critical. The expansion of that bridge, hopefully, the development of the infrastructure at both ends of the bridge where we deal with people coming and going, and the mall that needs to be put up so we can increase commerce with that piece of infrastructure, this is all critical. It is a really important part of the economic development planned strategy that we have going forward in Sault Ste. Marie.

We have begun to think about, work on and make significant investments as a local community in the possibility of a multi-modal transportation hub in Sault Ste. Marie. If members look at Sault Ste. Marie on the map they will see that it is dead centre in the middle of Canada. Not only that, if we expand the map further, it is dead centre in the middle of North America.

An hon. member: Come on.

Mr. Tony Martin: Yes, it is. The member for Winnipeg Centre probably thinks Winnipeg is, but I would argue with him that in fact if he looks at the map more carefully and takes the bigger view that is there, he will see that Sault Ste. Marie actually is at the centre of North America. It is a very important hub and we are trying to take advantage of that.

• (1335)

In the context of today's discussion on this government bill to have the federal government manage those pieces of infrastructure, it is absolutely essential that it be in conversation on a regular basis with the local authorities. It must be in regular conversation with those people who on a daily basis are putting together plans, developing thoughts and ideas, working with other levels of government such as the provincial government and other municipalities in order to take full advantage of the strategic location in Sault Ste. Marie.

We are at the hub of the Great Lakes. Sault Ste. Marie connects Lake Superior with Lake Huron with Lake Michigan, three of the biggest Great Lakes. The bridge is the one piece of infrastructure that

links them in a meaningful way and allows traffic to go back and forth between our two countries and those three Great Lakes.

The federal government is mistaken if it thinks for a second that it can unilaterally in all of its splendour and position of authority make decisions about that bridge without consulting the people of Sault Ste. Marie. The people of Sault Ste. Marie see themselves as an important part of this country and they send their member of Parliament here to speak on their behalf. If the government thinks it can go ahead and make decisions about that piece of infrastructure without consulting those folks, it is wrong.

I am hoping that with this debate today, with the back and forth and the very respectful nature of that discussion, the government might come to its senses. There is time. We still have a significant bit of time this afternoon before we get to question period. I am hoping the government will sit down with the member for Windsor West, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh and others from every party in the House who are involved in this really important discussion. I am hoping for a satisfactory agreement that we who speak on behalf of the people we represent at the local level will be engaged in a meaningful way in any decisions that are made.

When I was the member for Sault Ste. Marie in the provincial parliament I had the privilege to take part in organizing a trade delegation from our area to Ireland and Finland. We were selling the opportunity to come to Sault Ste. Marie, make investments, set up shop, bring what they do or the product they produce to our part of North America and from there to transport it easily across the border into the midwest United States of America where there is a market of millions and millions of people.

In discussions with those people they asked how they would get their goods or services from Sault Ste. Marie into that very lucrative and exciting market. I would mention almost immediately the bridge, knowing in the back of mind that the bridge needs work, particularly if we are going to take advantage of the potential that is there. If we are going to become a multimodal hub to attract investment from Europe into Canada, into our region of northern Ontario so that from there people can sell into the midwest United States, we need to focus, invest and work very hard to develop the potential for traffic to move more quickly across that bridge than it is moving now. The bridge needs to be expanded. It needs more resources in order to build up the facilities. It needs more personnel.

The government needs to be in consultation with the city of Sault Ste. Marie and its economic development arm and to be willing to partner. There is nothing we do in any community in Canada where economic development is concerned where partnership is not required. The community invests the money it gets from its own citizens. With that it tries to lever money from the provincial government. Then it goes to the federal government and says there is money in the pot from the municipal sector, from the provincial sector and the private sector has an interest because the private sector sees it as possibly enhancing its opportunities.

Routine Proceedings

● (1340)

Communities ask the federal government for some investment and in turn the federal government rightly asks what the project is. The project my community is focused on is that transportation hub and how we get our products into the market south of the border. My community is focused on the bridge.

I have written letters to the Minister of Transport both in the last Parliament and during this Parliament to share some of the wonderful opportunities that exist in Sault Ste. Marie. I have told the minister of some of the challenges we are facing if we want to make this happen. I have suggested that the government needs to be generous. It needs to be willing to come to the table and be a partner. It needs to see the potential.

In the context of this bill and the request that is being made by the member for Windsor West, there needs to be consultation. We want the federal government to be involved directly and intimately in running, managing and taking care of the bridge that connects Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario with Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.

We have a role to play. We have things to say. We have thoughts and ideas that are important and valuable. If the government works with us and the partners we have already brought to the table, we could make investments that would produce positive and exciting results. The government needs to contribute in a more generous way to the further economic development of our area.

A cookie cutter approach does not work. It does not work for any level of government to take something off the shelf and apply it to another circumstance. It does not always fit. Trying to fit a square peg into a round hole does not work. We have to be thoughtful, intelligent and understanding of the contributions people bring to the table and in this instance, the contribution that people from local jurisdictions brought to the table.

This debate is important and valuable. I asked what was the big deal; after a fairly lengthy committee process and time in the House, I wondered why the member for Windsor West was insisting that the amendment be made. I have said over the last 20 minutes that the amendment is needed because we have to understand the valuable contributions people at the local level make to further develop these pieces of infrastructure. This is not only about traffic or security measures. It is about the future of our communities. It is about the future of our regions. It is about the future of our country.

In the last hours before we break for the summer and we go back to work in our communities with our constituents, I would ask that the government in its wisdom see a way to adopt the amendment put forward by the member for Windsor West. In the spirit of good relations in the House this morning, I ask that the government sit down with him and find a way to honour the deep commitment and passion and sense of importance that he brings to this discussion and move this amendment forward so we can pass this bill today.

● (1345)

POINTS OF ORDER

PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION NO. 161

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Because of suggestions made during the debate on my private member's motion, Motion No. 161, I consulted the Ethics Commissioner to ascertain whether or not my private interests and the motion placed me in a potential conflict of interest.

The House should know that the response from the Ethics Commissioner indicates that there is no conflict, but because the motion is still before the House for further consideration, I believe it is important for the House to have a copy of the Ethics Commissioner's opinion. Because I am the only person who can make this public, I request unanimous consent to table the opinion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Does the House grant unanimous consent for the hon. member for Simcoe North to table the letter?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Hon. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions between all parties, and I think you will find there is unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding the Order made on Tuesday, April 25, 2006, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security be authorized to continue its deliberations relating to its review of the Anti-terrorism Act beyond June 23, 2006 and to present its final report no later than December 22, 2006.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES AND TUNNELS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-3, An Act respecting international bridges and tunnels and making a consequential amendment to another Act, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unlike my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie, I cannot claim that my riding of Victoria is the centre of North America, as the city sits right on the Pacific Ocean. However, I do appreciate the wisdom of the amendment to require that the federal government consult with local government. As Victoria is a port of entry for many ships, I have seen the increased requirements for security and the costs that those involve.

I am wondering if my colleague would explain to us how he sees the consultation will improve the situation that municipalities, local governments and cities are facing with respect to some of these issues.

Mr. Tony Martin: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a central consideration to this amendment.

In my community's instance, there is an authority that oversees our bridge. Some very active and effective organizations in the community are looking at the further development of our city and its economic future. If there were in place a regular opportunity to sit down and talk with the federal government, we could bring lots of things to the table that would lead to further developments and improvements for the bridge in our city.

If we are going to become a multimodal hub, if we are going to realize some of the potential given our geographic location at the centre of North America, then we need to be in consultation with the level of government that manages and controls the central piece of infrastructure, the bridge. We need to be talking to that level of government about the kinds of investments that need to be made not only in the bridge but in all of the infrastructure that leads up to and away from the bridge.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know how crucial this issue is to the member's community of Sault Ste. Marie.

I wonder if my colleague might comment on the fact that the bill right now includes consultation for operation of international bridges and tunnels, but it does not include consultation for the sale or resale, the construction or alterations to those important pieces of infrastructure. Those can have an important effect on the communities where these bridges and tunnels are located. They can have a really crucial effect on the development of those communities, on the livelihoods of the people who live there, on the quality of life for people who live near these important structures.

I wonder if he could comment on why he would think there would be any opposition to ensuring that consultation was in place when

Government Orders

sale or resale, construction or alteration was involved with our international bridges and tunnels.

• (1350)

Mr. Tony Martin: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question, particularly given that we have a mish-mash of ownership across the country right now and control of bridges of tunnels.

Bridges can be sold and bought in a way that does not take into account the impact that it will have on the local community and the local area, so those kinds of considerations are certainly crucial.

I am lucky in my own community. We have an authority. We have a publicly owned and managed facility. That authority does excellent work in maintaining and managing the bridge, but it needs the help of the federal government. It needs to be in consultation on a regular basis with the federal government in partnership with the community to see what else needs to be done and to talk about the future of the bridge.

We hope we will see that for all of our bridges as we go forward because they are such important pieces of infrastructure. Considering some of the issues and concerns we have today around terrorism, we hope that more and more of those bridges will be bought up, owned and controlled by the federal government.

We will have a vehicle out of the bill that is being passed here today to actually have the federal government, which then owns those facilities, to be in consultation regularly with the local community as we consider how we move forward, make further investments, and develop those important pieces of infrastructure.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie who has done terrific work with his community. It is important to acknowledge that the member has been very good about having an involvement, not only just in terms of people around him advising him with regard to this but also the municipality.

I would ask the member for Sault Ste. Marie if he believes the border authority commission, which he has in his community, has been of benefit to the community in many respects? In my area, where we do not have any border authority, there is basically no overall jurisdiction whatsoever to help coordinate the traffic. We have a worse situation.

Maybe the member could comment on the fact that there is an accountability process through his border authority, which I do not currently have in my region.

Mr. Tony Martin: Mr. Speaker, I think our authority is an example of how good relationships between levels of government and public ownership and public control of a bridge can reduce some of the difficulties and challenges where bridges are concerned.

We have an excellent authority. We have local membership on that authority and those members are appointed in consultation with our community and are in constant communication with the powers that be in Sault Ste. Marie, and I think that is very valuable.

Statements by Members

What we are asking for today by way of an amendment to the bill is that it be formalized, that there be regular consultation among the federal government, the local authority, and the local community around issues of impact as we expand these facilities, for example, in areas of the environment.

In our community, we have just cut a new roadway which is named after a previous member of Parliament for Sault Ste. Marie who passed away last summer, Carmen Provenzano. The community decided to name the roadway coming from the highway north and the highway east to the bridge, crossing the St. Mary's River and into Michigan, Carmen's Way. Some members who knew Carmen may be interested.

However, it speaks to the very positive and valuable contribution that publicly owned and controlled bridges with authorities, with a more formal opportunity to consult with the local community, can have on the development of those facilities.

• (1355)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's response. I would like to ask him about the issue of planning in the region with regard to safety and security.

I know that we are working toward having support in terms of training for first responders, especially if there is a crisis, whether it be hazardous materials or security issues. That is where we need to build stronger partnerships for safer and sounder communities. That is why we need to develop national strategies for that.

My local government as well as the provincial government, and I actually give credit to the federal government for providing me with a recent briefing on hazardous materials, which was very helpful, have been talking about those issues.

I would ask my colleague whether or not there should be more planning with regard to those measures to protect public safety?

Mr. Tony Martin: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, that would be crucial. As a matter of fact, in my community we have the authority that manages the bridge. We have our city council and our economic development corporation. We also have contribution from the provincial and federal governments to build the infrastructure that will be necessary if we are going to expand and take advantage of the opportunity that is there given our geographic location.

In building those roads and developing those transportation networks between the highways and the bridge, the local folks at city hall, in consultation with the engineers and the people who build those roads, consider all of those factors. They consider the safety factor and what might happen if a hazardous load comes over. They ensure that the roads are in such condition that we minimize the possibility of any kind of accident happening.

These roads, ultimately at some point, will have to go through neighbourhoods, as they do in Windsor. We have to consider the long lineups that may occur from time to time, the idling of those vehicles, and what impact the emissions will have on the immediate neighbourhood.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a motion coming with respect to the bill in the next

couple of minutes, but I do want to say how pleased I am that the bill has been introduced in Parliament. Indeed, it was one of the first bills introduced after the federal accountability act, which is very important to the government.

I commend the Minister of Transport for introducing Bill C-3. There are even similarities in this bill to a bill that was introduced in the last Parliament. One difference is that this bill will be passed. I am very pleased about that.

For the first time since Confederation this gives absolute authority to the federal government to act in a responsible manner that is consistent with environmental principles and consistent with the consultation process that must go on whenever decisions are made on our international borders. I am very pleased that we are moving forward on it.

Indeed, in the past, there has been a collection of various statutes and various ways that international crossings have been constructed. For instance, a number of them have been constructed under the Navigable Waters Protection Act. As important as that particular piece of legislation is, it is important that we have legislation like this which clearly sets out the federal authority with respect to bridges and tunnels.

It will be welcomed in my area of Niagara Falls. I do not know if anyone in this Chamber has more international crossings than I do in the riding of Niagara Falls. I do not know of anyone who has more than four. In any case, it is a great step forward. I am glad to be able to add those few comments to the mix.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

CANADA DAY

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this year on July 1 we celebrate Canada's 139th birthday. This is a perfect opportunity to express the pride we feel about living in a young, prosperous and diversified country which is often the object of envy around the world.

Canada Day is an opportunity to gather in our communities across this vast country and to proudly celebrate all that we have in common. It is an ideal occasion to celebrate our accomplishments at home and abroad. Looking ahead, we have every reason to view the future with confidence and enthusiasm.

We encourage all Canadians to participate in the various activities taking place in their communities, whether performances featuring local artists, street parties or parades. We should all take advantage of the opportunities to celebrate our great country with family, friends and neighbours.

I invite all Canadians to participate in the festivities of July 1. We have so much to celebrate.

*Statements by Members***LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this the last day of the session, I would like to share with Canadians the excellent work of the Liberal Party as official opposition.

The party exposed the lack of concern that the government has for Canadian students, especially those most in need.

The Liberals refused to allow the ACOA minister to force opposition MPs to register as lobbyists to do our job.

The Liberals presented an amendment in the finance committee to prevent the government from increasing the income taxes on the lowest income Canadians. The amendment was defeated by a combination of the government and the Bloc. On Canada Day take home pay will decrease from coast to coast to coast.

Liberals exposed the fact that the government, despite ambitious and far reaching language, has not allocated a single red cent to address the fiscal imbalance.

The Liberal Party showed the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia that their new national government holds the Atlantic accords in absolute contempt.

The Liberals vigorously defended Canadian farmers and supply management. While the Liberal Party fought for a robust sensitive products regime at the WTO, the Conservatives are backing away from supply management.

Liberals confirm that the fiscal framework of the previous government did in fact include a total of \$5 billion to address obligations arising from the Kelowna accord.

* * *

*[Translation]***NICOLE BEAUDOIN**

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on June 1, Nicole Beaudoin, President of the Quebec Business Women's Network and President and CEO of the Women Entrepreneurial Center of Québec received the title of Officer of the Order of Quebec.

A pioneer as a female executive in large corporations, a Fellow of the Ordre des comptables agréés du Québec, an experienced manager and a finance specialist, Ms. Beaudoin's expertise has been sought by many national and international organizations.

Her passion and perseverance have made her a leader in empowering women and helping them grow. She supports women in their quest for professional success by giving them all the means and guidance they need.

Since her youth, Ms. Beaudoin has been involved in a number of social and cultural associations in various capacities. Service, solidarity, integrity and respect are values that characterize her personal and professional life.

Congratulations to Nicole Beaudoin, resident emeritus of Laval.

*[English]***CHINESE CANADIANS**

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today in Parliament we will witness a historic occasion, when the Government of Canada makes a formal apology on behalf of all Canadians for the racist and discriminatory policies that caused suffering and hardship because of the Chinese Head Tax and Exclusion Act.

I am proud that our party, the NDP, has never wavered in its support and commitment for an apology, and a fair and just settlement for head tax payer survivors, widows and descendants. Former NDP MP Margaret Mitchell first brought this issue to Parliament in 1984. We thank her for her commitment.

We also pay tribute and respect to those in the Chinese Canadian community: the Chinese Canadian National Council; the B.C. Coalition; ACCESS; and individuals such as Sid Chow Tan, Victor Wong, Susan Eng, and Charlie Quan, a head tax payer in East Vancouver. They have shown the courage of their convictions.

Today we honour the memory of the Chinese workers who gave their lives for the building of Canada's national railway, and the survivors and families who know that justice must be done.

* * *

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today roughly 416 truckloads of garbage will rumble down the highway from Toronto, dripping leachate on their way to massive landfill in Michigan. Consider that.

We are living in a day and age where we can put satellites in orbit, operate on humans with lasers, and build computers that fly airplanes, but we still find it acceptable to bury garbage in the ground and leave that problem for another generation to figure out. We have thousands of ticking time bombs across the country.

There exists technology that can forever relegate landfills to history. Indeed, many European countries have been doing this for decades. It is simple. We take household garbage and gasify it at 8,000°C. We can create energy from waste and clean up the environment in the process. This is not incineration.

Landfilling is wrong-headed and destructive. Gasifying garbage is the way of the future. It is time governments at all levels realized this.

Statements by Members

•(1405)

[*Translation*]

THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the list goes on. In 2005, the Liberals provided \$480 million in immediate funding to the grains and oilseeds sector to help producers face the cash crisis. In contrast, producers have not received a penny from the Conservative government for spring seeding.

The Conservatives say they will honour the \$3.4 billion increase the Liberals promised for international aid and our promise to double the budget for official development assistance, which will exceed \$5 billion by 2010. Following a protracted struggle on behalf of residential school victims, the Conservatives are finally honouring the agreement signed by the Liberals.

The Sierra Club called the Liberals' last budget the greenest ever. Unfortunately, the Conservative budget cut 93% of the funding Liberals set aside for the environment, which is a major disaster for future generations.

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[*English*]

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Mr. Rod Bruinoog (Winnipeg South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in an effort to raise awareness about suicide, on March 14 five youths organized a relay and left Sydney, Nova Scotia on a trek across the country. This was the fourth annual aboriginal youth suicide prevention walk.

Yesterday they reached their destination at the parliament buildings in Victoria, B.C. Today I would like to recognize them and their remarkable commitment in raising awareness for this very tragic issue.

Too many families and way too many first nation communities continue to suffer from complex and severe problems. In a country like Canada we cannot allow this kind of tragedy to continue unabated. We must all take heed of the message that these youths are sending and do everything in our power to work together to address the difficult issue of suicide.

I send my deepest thanks to these five youths for their sincere and important efforts.

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[*Translation*]

NATIONAL REVENUE

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec made a decision in the Norbourg affair in order to help swindled investors. Ottawa is not following our lead in renouncing taxes not paid by Vincent Lacroix and redistributing the money to hundreds of small investors.

The Minister of National Revenue can say that she cannot comment on this matter for reasons of confidentiality under the Income Tax Act but what she is really doing is letting the dust settle

and hoping that the end of the session and the arrival of summer will calm investors.

In Chicoutimi—Le Fjord and Saguenay—Lac Saint-Jean some 370 investors lost almost \$6 million in the Norbourg affair.

The citizens in my area and the population of Quebec are asking the minister to hear their demands and to announce her government's decision before the end of this session.

* * *

GLENGARRY—PRESCOTT—RUSSELL

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House of two activities that will take place this summer in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Three times per week between July 6 and August 17, Francoscénie will present *L'écho d'un peuple*, a celebration of 400 years of French history in North America and Ontario, and a major production attracting tourists from all over Ontario, Quebec and further afield.

With over 300 actors, singers, dancers and jugglers, this show is a major event for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

[*English*]

The second event I would like to highlight is the Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville. With over 60 pipe bands, highland athletes and hundreds of traditional dancers, this event has something for everyone. Almost one million people have found themselves drawn to Maxville to witness an outstanding display of highland music, dance, sports, pageantries and tradition.

This summer Glengarry—Prescott—Russell is where it is at. Venez-nous visiter!

* * *

FEDERAL OPPOSITION PARTIES

Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is more proof that we have been an effective opposition. The Conservatives affirmed the Liberal commitment of \$41.2 billion over 10 years to strengthen Canada's public health care system.

The Public Health Agency of Canada, created by the Liberals in 2003, will be established through Bill C-5.

The Liberals had an agreement with the Farmer Rail Car Coalition with regard to the hopper car fleet. Under the Conservative government it got nothing.

We effectively exposed the environment's lack of leadership at the UN Conference of Parties to the Kyoto Accord. We revealed that the U.S. had ceased to fund the Asia-Pacific partnership, the Conservatives' alternative to Kyoto. One-third of its funding is now gone.

We successfully amended the throne speech which illustrates how we can work cooperatively to ensure that the policies and actions of the government better reflect Canadian values.

Statements by Members

The Liberals reached historic early learning and child care funding agreements with the provinces. The Conservatives terminated them.

* * *

• (1410)

SRI LANKA

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been monitoring events in Sri Lanka closely and is concerned with the recent escalation of violence in the country and its troubling impact on the peace process. It is important that the Government of Sri Lanka now shows leadership and fosters a climate of trust where the peace process can move forward.

We are concerned that paramilitary groups are being used to disturb the peace process and call upon both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to ensure that these paramilitary groups are dismantled and that they both return to peace talks as quickly as possible. We commend Norway for its efforts.

Canada commits unwaveringly to help advance the peace process.

* * *

BRETON HOUSE

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Breton House in Sault Ste. Marie as it celebrates its 20th anniversary in bringing addiction recovery services to women and their loved ones.

Addiction services for women were hard to find back when Breton House opened its doors. A small group of women in recovery saw the need for a home where women could get help to recover from chemical dependency and support for their spiritual, physical, emotional and intellectual growth.

Its residential and community programs help women in recovery deal with their fear over losing jobs, partners, children, their health and even their lives. Women in recovery learn respect for themselves and can discover hope once again.

I salute the work done by the 10 women on staff and the board of directors at Breton House. They transform lives and make our community a better place to live.

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party promised to be an effective and responsible opposition and the promise has been kept.

We demanded that the government provide direct relief to Canadian students unable to pay to continue their education.

We proved that the government's transit plan would cost \$2,000 per tonne of CO₂ reductions while the Liberal EnerGuide program, an excellent program, would cost only \$200 per tonne.

The Liberals worked tirelessly to find a durable and fair resolution to the longstanding softwood lumber dispute with the United States. What did the Conservatives do? They produced a sellout framework deal that capitulates to the powerful U.S. lumber lobby and seems to be unravelling without provincial or industry support.

We also announced the launch of a free trade negotiation with South Korea.

Finally, and my favourite, we helped the confused Conservative government to understand that changing a tax rate from 15% to 15.5% is an increase, not a decrease.

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[*Translation*]

ST. JEAN BAPTISTE DAY

Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, June 24 is St. Jean Baptiste Day, a day to celebrate the cultural pride and rich heritage of francophones in every region of Canada. Colourful parades and lively celebrations will be held throughout the country in recognition of French Canadian culture.

St. Jean Baptiste festivities combine ancient rites performed during the summer solstice—a time of light and hope—and the traditional celebration of this day to honour the patron saint of French Canadians.

Let this serve as an opportunity to get to know our neighbours better and to learn more about our country. Together, we can express how proud we are to belong to such a dynamic, diverse society, which has become the envy of the rest of the world.

Francophones and francophiles, please join the celebration and learn more about the culture of French-speaking Canadians and their contribution to Canadian society.

* * *

• (1415)

QUEBEC NATIONAL HOLIDAY

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely delighted to rise to deliver a message to all Quebecers on this day, our Fête nationale du Québec.

This weekend, throughout Quebec, men, women and children will get together to celebrate Quebec's national holiday. There will be bonfires everywhere and we will celebrate our pride in being a nation with such an extraordinary destiny.

These festivities and celebrations will also serve as an expression of the creativity, diversity and potential we have so often manifested. The Fête nationale du Québec is an opportunity to get together and have some fun, but above all, to dream of Quebec as we would like to see it.

The Bloc Québécois would like to wish all Quebecers a memorable fête nationale that is sovereignly in line with our aspirations.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to highlight the work that the official opposition has done on the environment, protection of aboriginal communities and protection of Canadian art and culture.

Oral Questions

With respect to immigration, it is important to remember that it was our government that welcomed nearly 3 million new arrivals between 1993 and 2005, citizens who are a definite asset to the country.

I would like to say a word about one of those new arrivals, Mrs. Maoua Diomande, who was forced to seek refuge in a church sanctuary in June 2005. A happy end to her story was announced yesterday, and Maoua received her freedom.

I applaud and thank the entire community of Ottawa—Vanier, and particularly Sandy Hill, for their unfailing support of Maoua. Lastly and belatedly, on behalf of my colleagues, I would like to say to Maoua: welcome to Canada.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been almost two months now since the Prime Minister declared “peace in our time” on the softwood lumber dispute. As a result of the Prime Minister’s negotiating strategy of any deal at any cost, the U.S. administration is now telling the U.S. lumber lobby that the agreement will force the Canadian forest industry to abandon the practices that the Americans do not like.

Does the Prime Minister now realize that his declaration of victory was in fact an unconditional surrender? Will he tell the House today that he will refuse to accept any agreement that threatens Canada’s sovereign control over our own natural resources?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the softwood lumber discussions continue with a view of finalizing the legal text in the very near future. We are confident that legal text will do exactly what the framework agreement does, and that is protect Canadian forestry practices and provide stable access to the American market, something the previous government was unable to do for the last five years.

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House, the trade minister, with his usual chutzpah, told the House that the talks were proceeding well and that the provinces were supportive. The Americans key demand on market-based timber pricing is a complete anathema to the largest timber producing province in our country, the province from which the trade minister comes. It is difficult to see how the talks could be going much worse.

Back in January, when the Minister of International Trade solemnly pledged to the people of British Columbia that he would become the Prime Minister’s “worst nightmare”, is this what both of them were thinking about?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has it wrong once again. The province of British Columbia is moving toward some market-based pricing for its timber, precisely one of the things we are ensuring that the final agreement protects.

It is not surprising that we would have this kind of thing coming from the Leader of the Opposition. What have we seen for the past four months? We have seen an opposition that does not have a clue on what it stands for on all the major issues. Those members are for mandatory minimum penalties for gun crimes, then they vote against it. They are for a softwood agreement, one weaker than we got, then they oppose one when we get it. They are for defence procurement, then they are against it. They do not know what their stand is on the accountability act. That is why Canadians changed the government.

• (1420)

[Translation]

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing is clear, we do not declare victory prematurely. It seems that the Prime Minister counted his chickens before they hatched. That is not what we do on this side of the House. While the Prime Minister is trying to save his sinking softwood lumber agreement, the industry needs help now.

If the Prime Minister is so sure of an agreement, why does he not immediately offer loan guarantees to the industry sectors that are suffering the most? That is what a Liberal government would do. His Minister of International Trade knows that better than anyone in this House.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are proud of this agreement that will be finalized shortly. Again, it would be interesting to have a vote on this agreement in the House of Commons because, just like on accountability, criminality and all the major issues in this country, the Liberal Party does not have a position.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Trade is hiding between a rock and a hard place. First, he did not want the Standing Committee on International Trade to consider the softwood lumber framework agreement. Perhaps he is ashamed of what he negotiated. Now he is opposing the implementation of a loan guarantee program to help the victims of his capitulation.

Since he took part in announcing the implementation of a loan guarantee program just over six months ago, why does he not restore this Liberal program until we can get a real agreement?

[English]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I speak with knowledge. I know what the party opposite was able to do on softwood lumber. I am very proud of the agreement—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I am sure the Minister of International Trade appreciates all the help with his answer, but we have to be able to hear the answer. The Minister of International Trade has the floor.

Oral Questions

Hon. David Emerson: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the agreement that this government has been able to reach on softwood lumber. I am very proud of the work that the Prime Minister has done to enable us to achieve that agreement, which is going to be good for the softwood lumber industry in our country for years to come.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister would know a little about the Liberal Party because he ran twice as a Liberal.

[*Translation*]

The softwood lumber workers in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, northern Ontario and British Columbia have had it with the Conservatives' hypocrisy.

When will the government offer loan guarantees to prevent more job losses?

The program is ready, the Minister of International Trade announced it himself. When he became a Conservative, did he lose his heart?

[*English*]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not lose my heart, but I certainly gained some tremendous leadership from the Prime Minister.

The softwood lumber agreement is going to get done. It is far better than any alternative. It is far better than litigation. It is far better than any loan guarantee program such as the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

* * *

• (1425)

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the eve of Quebec's fête nationale, the cabinet will not be meeting in Ottawa, but in Quebec City, Quebecers' national capital. With that decision, the Prime Minister seems to recognize the importance of Quebecers' national holiday. If Quebecers have a national holiday, it is certainly because they form a nation and see themselves as a nation.

Are we to understand that the Prime Minister is taking the trouble to travel with his cabinet for our national holiday because he recognizes that Quebecers form a nation in their own right?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cabinet is proud to be meeting in Quebec City, the historic capital. In my opinion, Quebec has been part of Canada since the beginning and will be part of Canada in the future. The leader of the Bloc is asking this question to avoid the real question. Will his ally, Mr. Boisclair, hold a referendum on Quebec's future?

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am certain that he will hold one. We will face each other in that referendum.

An hon. member: And win it too.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: That said, I am well aware that Quebec is part of Canada at present, although I hope it will become a country one day. Acadia is part of Canada, yet the Acadians are recognized as a nation. The first nations are part of Canada, yet the federal government recognizes that they are nations.

Even though Quebec is part of Canada, nothing prevents the Prime Minister from recognizing that Quebecers form a nation, just as Acadians and aboriginal peoples do.

Quebeckers form a nation. Could he say that?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have said many times that Canada is a strong, united, independent, free country that includes a confident, united, autonomous, proud Quebec. I say it again.

The Bloc Québécois leader might want to hold a referendum to create a new country, but Jean Charest does not want another referendum, Mario Dumont does not want another referendum and the people of Quebec do not want another referendum.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister might try to convince Quebecers that he respects the Quebec nation by showing up at the Fête nationale in Quebec City tomorrow.

If he truly does respect the Quebec nation, how can the Prime Minister justify ignoring the unanimous vote in the Quebec National Assembly urging him to respect the Kyoto protocol, an agreement Quebec strongly supports?

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about something the member did yesterday in the environment committee. If the Bloc wants to go to an election and cause an election on the environment, I say bring it on. Our record in four months is miles better than the 13 year Liberal record and the non-record of the Bloc. It will never be in power. It will never be able to represent the interests of Quebecers. It will never be able to what is right for Quebecers on the environment.

Already in four months, the government has passed pollution laws to ensure that we address health issues like blindness, asthma and cancer. Those things are important to Canadians and to Quebecers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Prime Minister and his government seem more inclined to meet the demands of the oil companies—who do not want anything to do with the Kyoto protocol—than those of Quebecers.

How can he and his government explain to Quebecers that they are rejecting the Kyoto protocol when over three-quarters of Quebecers consider it one of their top priorities?

It would be hard to be more disconnected than that. This government is very disconnected from Quebecers.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the member is disconnected from his headset. If he had listened to the things that have been going on in the House for the last four months, he would know that the government has never rejected Kyoto. The Conservatives have never pulled out of Kyoto. We are working within the Kyoto protocol.

We are putting a reasonable, achievable, affordable domestic plan in place that will ensure that the mess the Liberals made out of Kyoto over the last 13 years will be addressed. We will make a success of our made in Canada plan.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians approach the next smog season and as this session comes to a close, Canadians are asking themselves how bad it is going to be. How many Canadians, for how many days, are going to be locked inside because of bad air outside? How many seniors and children and people with health problems are going to end up in the emergency wards because of smog?

Despite assurances to the contrary, the government has given us no smog reduction plan, no clean air plan, no green investment plan, no green jobs plan.

How many more months is it going to take before we have a plan from the Prime Minister and the government and when are we going to get a competent minister to implement it?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the hon. member has taken the entire spring to talk about Kyoto. If Kyoto were fully implemented by all the countries of the world tomorrow, it would do absolutely nothing to control smog, which is one of the reasons the government and the environment minister have been working hard to develop a plan to deal with just that.

The Minister of the Environment, who is a young, dynamic, energetic woman, will be here pushing forward environmental issues long after the career of the member for Toronto—Danforth is over.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the air may be bad out there, but the Prime Minister should not hold his breath on that prediction.

If the government or, for that matter, the part time official opposition over there have no plan to deal with climate change, we have a plan. We have tabled a five part plan that will clean up our environment and exceed the Kyoto targets.

I invite the Prime Minister, by the way, to give us his scientific briefing notes on climate change versus smog because his science is all washed up.

Will the Prime Minister take some of our good ideas?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in terms of my prediction, I notice the Liberal Party once again could not make up its mind whether it was for that prediction or not.

The NDP has long supported measures to move forward on these fronts. We are pleased, after all these years, that this month it has tabled some ideas, and we will be carefully considering those ideas.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of the five upcoming purchase projects for the military, the Minister of National Defence has a potential or perceived conflict of interest in three of them. Of the \$15 billion in purchases proposed, \$8 billion will be directly tainted by the minister's lobbying past.

I have one question for the minister. Will the minister recuse himself or will the minister resign?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, although the government is still in the process of finalizing its procurement plans, let me be absolutely clear.

This government, in our campaign, laid out that we would correct 13 years of Liberal neglect, that we would move forward with major military purchases, including new supply ships, new trucks, new helicopters, and strategic and tactical airlift.

I can tell the House that I do not care whether that party opposite does not support our military. This party does, and we will have a strong military for a strong country.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is not about the military. This is about the minister, who refuses to answer the questions about his lobbying past.

The fact is, I know that in the military generals do not have to answer questions. In this House, they have to answer to the Canadian people. Will the minister recuse himself or will he resign?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the opposition for all that clapping.

As usual, the member opposite is chasing a mirage. Why those members are chasing a mirage is that they are against the accountability act, which is going to bring in new rules to control lobbying and funding. The prime example of lobbying is that the previous prime minister used a whole room of lobbyists to select his cabinet. His cabinet was selected by lobbyists. We are going to prevent that kind of thing in the future.

• (1435)

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are not impressed.

Oral Questions

The Minister of National Defence has misled the House by declaring that no decision had been made with regard to purchasing military equipment, particularly the much talked-about C-17s, the new Conservative toy that will cost Canadian taxpayers \$4 billion rather than leasing them for \$42 million. Even General Hillier agrees with that. Now we have learned that next week they will go on a \$15 billion spending spree as well as announcing its new toy, the Boeing C-17.

Why are they being so secretive and hasty in this matter. What are they hiding when the Minister of Industry secretly goes to Washington on his knees—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Industry.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform my colleague from the opposition that any decision by the government regarding the purchase of military equipment will be made according to a clear, transparent and fair process. It will be in the best interests of the military, Canadians and the aeronautical industry because there will be economic benefits for Canada.

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a transparent process does not include secret meetings, negotiations and politicking when there has been a procurement policy in place for 30 years. If we wish to show respect for Canadians, we must follow the process.

The current minister is a lobbyist and general. Of his \$15 billion purchases, \$8 billion worth are being bought from former clients.

Will he recuse himself or has the Prime Minister set aside some money for legal challenges that will cost an arm and a leg?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this new government does not need any lessons on managing public moneys, accountability, political practices or procurement of military equipment. In this new government, we stand firm for the military and for Canadians. We are proud of what we are doing for Canada. That is why we were elected.

* * *

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Finance said this about securities, “—the issue is not whether this falls under provincial jurisdiction. The important thing is the best interest of Canadians, who must be protected in our securities markets”.

How can the Prime Minister allow his Finance Minister to ignore the provisions in Canada's Constitution so he can do what he wants and centralize the securities sector in Toronto?

[English]

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would say that the hon. member has her facts wrong on this issue. No such thing is happening.

The member will know that discussions are taking place on these and related issues over the summer. I know that her province will be active in these discussions. I believe that the resolution will be very acceptable to the province of Quebec.

[Translation]

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, unless the Prime Minister wants to start a round of constitutional negotiations, will he remind his Minister of Finance that it is not up to him to decide whether or not the government will respect the Constitution as regards the securities sector? In other words, will he bring his minister back into line immediately?

[English]

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the provinces have made some progress on this issue already in harmonizing securities regulation. The fact remains that in the view of our government it would be to the benefit of all of Canada were there to be a single securities regulator.

As I have said, these discussions are taking place. I think the member should realize that this will only come about as a result of discussions and some meeting of the minds. I am hoping that everyone will attend in good faith and realize that what is best for the country will be best for every citizen in the country.

* * *

[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the plan for the Massif de Petite-Rivière-Saint-François is essential to the development of Charlevoix, since it would create 600 permanent jobs. Of the \$230 million to be invested, Quebec has already offered \$30 million. It seems that the federal government has refused to make a similar offer over five years.

The Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec was elected by promising nothing less than a Marshall plan to correct the regional economy.

How can he stand here today, in the context of the fiscal imbalance, and declare that Quebec has resources that he himself does not have? This means that, when it comes to investing in the Massif de la Petite-Rivière-Saint-François, the federal government was merely paying lip service.

● (1440)

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not every day that a promoter chooses to invest so much money in a project such as the Massif. In this House, government members have tremendous respect for promoters who wish to contribute to economic development.

This is why we reviewed this file three times, in order to make the best possible offer to the promoter, Daniel Gauthier, to help him go ahead with this project.

We did the best we possibly could within the budget constraints of Infrastructure Canada and within Economic Development Canada regulations.

*Oral Questions***OLDER WORKERS**

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government prefers war over compassion. The federal government is preparing to invest close to \$15 billion to procure all kinds of military equipment: aircraft, vehicles and ships.

How can it be so easy for the federal government to find \$15 billion to buy war materiel, but not \$100 million to help older workers and their families?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased to answer the hon. member's question. The answer is simple. For 13 years, the Canadian Forces were neglected. The 13 years of the former Liberal government left the Canadian Forces in need of military equipment. And we will address that need.

In our platform during the last election campaign, we talked about military procurement. We are only keeping the promise we made to Canadians and Quebecers.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were surprised to learn that the Prime Minister could only count to five. It appears that he cannot get past the number four. The Prime Minister is so eager to go to the barbecue circuit that his fifth priority of health care has fallen off the menu.

Do the Conservatives have a plan to reduce wait times? No. Do they have a plan to implement catastrophic drug coverage? No.

Do we have a minister who has been embroiled in one conflict after another? Yes. Do we have a minister who has violated Treasury Board rules? Yes.

Will the Prime Minister take his hamburger flipper and flip this minister out?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member has a dramatic past, but in terms of the facts of this case, the facts are quite different from what she suggests.

In fact, in this country since this government was elected, there has been a province, the province of Quebec, that has moved forward with a wait times guarantee. We are in discussions with other provinces. There are numerous projects that have reduced wait times in this country.

Has this government followed through with additional moneys for wait times? Yes. Has this government followed through with a focus on health care that matters to Canadians? Yes.

When the Liberals were in government—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Brampton—Springdale.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Again, Mr. Speaker, empty rhetoric with no substance, because the fact is that the Conservatives have no plan on health care.

The Liberal government invested \$42 billion to reduce wait times and to improve health care services. The Liberal government defended the Canada Health Act. We defended public health care in this country. The Conservative government has failed to deliver on the health care agenda.

Will the Prime Minister admit that his minister's conflict has resulted in no action, no plan and no leadership on the health care file?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. We have made progress on the health care file. We are listening to the people of Canada on what they think is important in health care. They want a wait time guarantee. They want to make sure that when they need a procedure done, it is done in their community or there is a recourse for them that they can actually find.

We are actually focused on what Canadians care about. Can the same be said about when those members were in power? No.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on top of other conflicts and a contract scandal, we now learn that the health minister received more than \$70,000 from pharmaceutical and drugstore chains in his failed Conservative leadership bid, including more than \$11,000 from one company alone. In the 2004 and 2006 elections, big pharma gave big again.

I would not think it possible, but this minister for Shoppers Drug Mart has more conflicts than the Minister of National Defence. When will the Prime Minister take these conflicts seriously, remove this minister and take the health department out of the back pocket of big pharma?

• (1445)

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. President of the Treasury Board has risen to answer and has been recognized by the Chair for that purpose.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, yesterday was a landmark day for accountability. Yesterday the House of Commons passed the federal accountability act, which would ban corporate donations, ban union contributions and lower to just \$1,000 a single campaign limit, not just for campaigns at election time, but also for leadership campaigns.

For the Liberal member to stand in his place and lecture this party on financing of leadership campaigns is absolutely disgraceful. He should tell his colleagues in the Senate to pass the federal accountability act now and bring real accountability to both houses of Parliament.

Oral Questions

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a sad day for accountability when those members refuse to answer questions and time and time again practise nothing but hypocrisy. What does it take? How many conflicts and violations do there have to be before the Prime Minister actually demonstrates some accountability, not just rhetoric?

We have an unelected friend of the Prime Minister appointed to cabinet, a military lobbyist as a defence minister, two ministers who refuse to file conflict of interest reports, and now a minister of Shoppers Drug Mart who is responsible for health. This is not accountability. This is hypocrisy.

What is next? Is the member for Calgary West now going to become our new Ethics Commissioner?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member opposite that the Minister of National Defence has more experience and more integrity to deal with issues affecting our armed forces than any minister in the last 50 years.

As for that member of the Liberal Party standing in his place and trying to give lessons on ethics to this party, while we were trying to bring in the federal accountability act frontbench members of the Liberal Party were shaking down young school children, shaking down young children for their milk money to give to their political campaigns. The member opposite should apologize and then resign.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. We will now have a little quieter question with the hon. member for Calgary Northeast.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for years now, parents, grandparents, police and other organizations have sought tougher laws to curb the abusive activities of predators, pedophiles and pornographers.

For years these same criminals have escaped justice because of our low age of sexual consent. As a result, our families have suffered imaginable pain as their children were exploited, and authorities were often powerless to do anything about it.

Can the justice minister tell us what the government is doing to protect our children from these predators?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has stated its commitment to protect vulnerable youth from sexual predators by raising the age of consent for sexual activity from 14 to 16 years old and renaming it the “age of protection”.

I am pleased to announce today that I tabled a bill to protect our children from adult sexual predators. This change to the age of protection is part of the government's commitment to protect our children from sexual exploitation. This is a common sense measure that deserves the support of all members of this House.

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages is vital to the survival of thousands of communities across Canada.

Several organizations, including the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, are very concerned about the fact that the government has not yet named a new Commissioner of Official Languages.

This government is dragging its feet. We need someone who can carry on Ms. Adam's good work.

Can the Prime Minister guarantee that he will nominate a highly qualified interim commissioner immediately, or is this not a priority for this Conservative government?

• (1450)

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government recognizes the importance of the Commissioner of Official Languages' role, and the process is underway to find a replacement.

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[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, given the environment minister's inability to answer any questions on climate change, perhaps we will have a bit more luck with the Minister of Health.

The failing grade the Sierra Club gave the government on climate change, and reports from the Canadian Public Health Association reaffirming the illnesses and health failures for people as a result of climate change, the government has posed a significant threat to Canadians' health and safety now and in the future. Rising temperatures will result in increased sickness and fatalities due to heat stroke, dehydration and various other illnesses—

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member of a couple of things.

First, I am working very closely with the Minister of the Environment on some issues that are of great importance to Canadians, whether it is reducing toxins in our environment or protecting the quality of the water that we drink by establishing drinking water guidelines. We are also tackling air pollution which, as we know, is not only an environmental issue, it is a health issue for the air that we breathe.

I have every confidence in the Minister of the Environment. I used to be a minister of the environment and I have seen a lot of federal ministers of the environment, but this Minister of the Environment will protect our country and our environment.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the House adjourns today and miraculously the government is ready next week to make five announcements about \$15 billion in defence procurements, all of which we have asked about in this House for the last two months and for which the government has had no answers.

Is this not convenient timing and all their repeated denials just a smokescreen to hide the fact that the Minister of Defence is deeply conflicted.

This is the chamber of ultimate accountability and Canadian democracy. Why will the Minister of Defence not answer one question in this House?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, there is a great case of envy over here. The Liberals had 13 years to straighten out the armed forces and instead they hollowed it out. They only had three major projects in 13 years.

We have only been in office four months and we will move on the military and give the military what it needs.

This is just sheer envy.

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CHALLENGER JET USE

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last fall, while in opposition, the Prime Minister's parliamentary secretary criticized going from Ottawa to Edmonton "aboard a luxury jet that costs \$11,000 an hour to operate, rather than share a commercial flight with ordinary taxpayers".

While ordinary Canadians are barely coping with high gasoline prices, the Prime Minister and his privileged backbenchers did not share such mundane concerns when they went to Edmonton.

Will the Prime Minister cut a \$50,000 cheque to taxpayers and pay back the money wasted on this luxurious boys night out?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will know that the Prime Minister does not travel by commercial aircraft for security reasons. It is also well known that I was travelling out west for the World Urban Forum in any case, but we saved the taxpayers money by taking four members of Parliament who otherwise would have been flying by commercial aircraft.

* * *

•(1455)

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was a pretty feeble answer.

Little creates more angst among Canadians than government actions that put their pensions at risk. Yesterday the finance minister gave two non-answers on this subject.

If the minister is serious about topping up the Canada pension plan with unplanned surpluses to pay for premium reductions while

also preserving the soundness of the system, could he tell us how much it would cost to produce a minimal 0.1% premium reduction?

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish that the member would actually stick to the facts. The fact is that the 2006 budget indicated that the government was open to considering allocating unplanned surpluses to the CPP and the QPP. Obviously this will require some discussion with the provinces which are also part of this program.

Nothing has happened yet. Discussions will be ongoing. The hon. member knows full well that with nothing happening he should not be asking hypothetical questions about a very important program for Canadians.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, someone has to do the work of the finance minister.

Yesterday I called the Office of the Chief Actuary and was told that what was needed was a one time injection of \$15 billion to get a minuscule 0.1% premium reduction.

Since the government says that there is no way it will have that kind of money, will the minister acknowledge that there is absolutely no chance of lower premiums for Canadians, or does the government plan to cut premiums irresponsibly and put the pension system at risk? Those are the only two choices.

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows very well that if unplanned surpluses were being directed into the CPP and the QPP the contribution rates in the future could be lowered. However, there are no plans, as the hon. member knows, to reduce CPP premiums in the short term.

He also knows that there will be a joint federal-provincial conference of finance ministers happening later this month and this will be the first opportunity to even discuss the issue. I ask the hon. member to be patient and wait for some actual facts before he shows the kind of outrage that the Liberals are so famous for.

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[Translation]

PAY EQUITY

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women tabled five reports in this House, including the one on pay equity, a report that was tabled last year under the previous government.

Beyond the excuses that interdepartmental committees never come up with anything concrete, will the government finally promise to do justice to women by introducing pay equity legislation, like Quebec did a number of years ago?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will say again to the hon. member that the interdepartmental committee looking at this issue is composed of representatives from the Department of Justice, Status of Women, Finance and the Treasury Board Secretariat.

We are reviewing various proposals, including the one in the Bilson report, what is currently being done in Quebec and Ontario. In the fall we hope to be able to make proposals in this House.

* * *

BLACK COMMUNITY

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in May, the Black Coalition of Quebec sent a letter to the Prime Minister asking him to designate August 23 as International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.

The purpose of this request is to ensure that we never forget these human dramas that marked the lives of millions of people around the world. The Black Coalition of Quebec is still waiting for an answer from the Prime Minister. Can he promise to designate International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition, as the Quebec national assembly did unanimously, so that on August 23 we can commemorate this episode in the history of humanity?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada always shares in international days of recognition. It is not exactly clear from the member's question what it is she is seeking from the Government of Canada.

We clearly participate in international forums. We participate in recognition of days of mourning and recognition of tragedies that have taken place on the international scene.

If the member would like to bring this matter forward, either through the House in a formal mechanism in the fall or to speak with me personally about the matter, I would be more than happy to receive the information.

* * *

• (1500)

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know the government is doing all it can to undermine farmers' rights through the Canadian Wheat Board.

Therefore, while the official opposition is awaiting a response from the Minister of Agriculture to a formal access to information request, could the minister inform the House whether he, by order in council or in any written form, electronic or otherwise, issued any directive, order, instruction, request or advice to the board, its directors, officers or management, and what was the legal authority for that attempted intervention?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure exactly what he has in mind. It is interesting how the hon. member from Prince Edward Island would like to direct the activities of western Canadian farmers. However, this government is not interested in throwing farmers in jail just for selling their own grain, which is something the Liberals did.

Government Orders

When we are looking for answers to help the agriculture sector, we do not have to wait long. Under the Liberals over there, they had to wait until Easter.

* * *

FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after 13 years of Liberal waste, mismanagement and corruption, Canadians are looking for government to do things differently.

The Conservative Party campaigned on a promise to restore accountability and transparency to government. Canadians voted for change and the government introduced the federal accountability act.

Could the President of the Treasury Board confirm that the promise has been kept and update us on the status of the federal accountability act?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister made a solemn commitment to introduce the federal accountability act as the very first piece of legislation into the House, a promise that he delivered on.

Yesterday the House of Commons voted to ban corporate donations to political parties, voted to oppose a five year ban on ministers becoming lobbyists when they leave office and voted to beef up the powers of the Auditor General to allow her to follow the money.

Accountability is also about standing up and making a stand. I know where the NDP stands on accountability. I know where the Bloc Québécois stands on accountability. I know where this team and the Conservative Party stands on accountability. The only group not to make up its mind is the opposition Liberal Party.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES AND TUNNELS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-3, An Act respecting international bridges and tunnels and making a consequential amendment to another Act, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, regarding Bill C-3, the international bridges and tunnels act, in the spirit of cooperation, discussions have taken place among the parties and you will find if you ask that there is unanimous consent for the following:

1. That the amendment from the member for Windsor West be withdrawn.
2. That Bill C-3, Clause 7, be amended by adding after line 5 on page 3 the following:

The Minister may, if in the opinion of the Minister it is necessary having regard to all the circumstances, consult with the other levels of government that have authority in the place where the international bridge or tunnel is, or is to be, situated and with any person who, in the opinion of the Minister, has a direct interest in the matter.

And

Business of the House

3. That, Bill C-3, Clause 24 be amended by adding after line 31 on page 10 the following:

The Minister may, if in the opinion of the Minister it is necessary having regard to all the circumstances, consult with the other levels of government that have authority in the place where the international bridge or tunnel that is the subject of the application is situated and with any person who, in the opinion of the Minister, has a direct interest in the matter.

And then that the bill, as further amended, be deemed to have been read a third time and passed.

I would suggest that this speaks volumes about the Prime Minister, the minister and this government in cooperating to get the job done for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Does the parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion adopted and bill, as amended, read the third time and passed)

● (1505)

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Speaker, I rise on another point of order.

We often hear from the government that one region cannot be responsible for another. My colleague from Malpeque, who is the agriculture and agri-food critic asked an important question of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. In his reply the latter gave the impression that because my colleague is from Prince Edward Island he is unable to look into the affairs of the west.

I would like a clarification and an apology on behalf of all Canadians. He is a full Canadian.

The Speaker: I understand the misgivings of the hon. member from Bourassa, but in my opinion, this is a topic for debate and not a question of privilege or a point of order.

[*English*]

We have a request from the hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale.

* * *

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA OF TIBET

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the various parties and I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, whereas Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet, has been recognized with the Nobel Peace Prize as one of the world's leading champions of peace and non-violence; and

Whereas His Holiness the Dalai Lama will visit Canada from September 9th to the 11th of this year; and

Whereas this House has previously acknowledged historic visits to Canada by other leading champions of human dignity, such as Raoul Wallenberg and Nelson Mandela, by adopting motions granting them "honorary Canadian citizenship";

Therefore, this House resolves to bestow the title "honorary Canadian citizen" on His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

HOUSE OF COMMONS

The Speaker: At this time I would like, on behalf of all hon. members, to bid farewell to the pages of the House of Commons for 2005-06.

The summer recess is upon us and we may not have another chance to thank you properly. Because of the last federal election, you did not serve in the House as long as some of your predecessors did, but I think you would all agree that being part of both the 38th Parliament and the 39th Parliament was an exciting experience for all of us.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: On behalf of all my colleagues here in the House, I wish to thank and congratulate you for the work you did for us over the past year.

Your job has not always been an easy one, but you have all conducted yourselves professionally and we appreciate it.

[*English*]

Today I would ask you to receive our collective thanks and our best wishes for your future endeavours. Perhaps some day soon we will have the pleasure of seeing you sitting at these desks and think that perhaps it was your experience with us that gave you the desire to serve as a member of Parliament.

[*Translation*]

On behalf of all my colleagues, I thank you for your excellent work and wish you good luck in your future endeavours.

Some hon. members: Bravo!

* * *

● (1510)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is indeed a Thursday and time for the usual Thursday question. Before I ask that question, may I say on behalf of all of the members of the opposition that we heartily endorse your words about the pages who have served this House so well. We certainly want to join with you in thanking all of them for their hard work.

I wonder if the government House leader has any indication at this point what his leading item of business might be when the House resumes on September 18.

I wonder if he can also tell us if he has any specific plans for any summertime royal assents to any of the bills that have already been disposed of by this House.

Also, I wonder if he would take the opportunity during the long hot summer to encourage his caucus to join with him in seeing the Al Gore film called *An Inconvenient Truth* on the realities of global warming.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his kind and generous words.

I can indicate to the House that I share his comments with respect to the pages. On this side of the House, I am sure I speak for everyone in extending a few words of thanks and good wishes to everyone who works on a daily basis to assist the House of Commons and its members in the conduct of our work on behalf of Canadians. Parliament Hill is a unique workplace and the requirements of this place make extra demands on our personnel from time to time.

[Translation]

The spring legislative agenda was quite heavy.

[English]

Members know and the public should know that we take great pride in the precincts of Parliament. I think everyone was delighted to see the Library of Parliament open once again for all Canadians to enjoy.

I hope the pieces of legislation that have been passed by this Parliament, most recently the international bridges and tunnels act which was passed a few minutes ago, all receive royal assent as quickly as possible as they move through the other place.

We have had a wonderful legislative agenda up to this point and it will be even better in the fall for all Canadians.

The Speaker: It being 3:15 p.m., pursuant to order made on Wednesday, June 21, 2006, the House will now proceed to Statements by Ministers.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CHINESE CANADIANS

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to formally turn the page on an unfortunate period in Canada's past, a period during which a group of people, people who only sought to build a better life, were repeatedly and deliberately singled out for unjust treatment. I speak of course of the head tax that was imposed on Chinese immigrants to this country, as well as the other restrictive measures that followed.

[Translation]

The Canada we know today would not exist were it not for the efforts of the Chinese labourers who began to arrive in the mid-19th century.

[English]

Almost exclusively young men, these Chinese immigrants made the difficult decision to leave their families behind in order to pursue

opportunities in a country halfway around the world they called Gold Mountain. Beginning in 1881, over 15,000 of these Chinese pioneers became involved in the most important nation building enterprise in Canadian history, the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

From the shores of the St. Lawrence across the seemingly endless expanses of shield and prairie, climbing the majestic Rockies and cutting through the rugged terrain of British Columbia, this transcontinental link was the ribbon of steel that bound our fledgling country together. It was an engineering feat that was instrumental to the settlement of the west and the subsequent development of the Canadian economy, and one for which the back-breaking toil of Chinese labourers was largely responsible.

The conditions under which these men worked were, at best, harsh and at times impossible. Tragically, some 1,000 Chinese labourers died during the building of the CPR, but in spite of it all, these Chinese immigrants persevered, and in doing so, helped to ensure the future of this country. But from the moment the railway was completed, Canada turned its back on these men.

Beginning with the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885, a head tax of \$50 was imposed on Chinese newcomers in an attempt to deter immigration. Not content with the tax's effect, the government subsequently raised the amount to \$100 in 1900 and then to \$500 in 1903, the equivalent of two years' wages. This tax remained in place until 1923 when the government amended the Chinese Immigration Act and effectively banned most Chinese immigrants until 1947.

Similar legislation existed in the dominion of Newfoundland, which also imposed a head tax between 1906 and 1949, when Newfoundland joined Confederation.

The Government of Canada recognizes the stigma and exclusion experienced by the Chinese as a result. We acknowledge the high cost of the head tax meant that many family members were left behind in China, never to be reunited, or that families lived apart and in some cases in extreme poverty for years. We also recognize that our failure to truly acknowledge these historical injustices has prevented many in the community from seeing themselves as fully Canadian.

• (1515)

[Translation]

Therefore, on behalf of all Canadians and the Government of Canada, we offer a full apology to Chinese Canadians for the head tax and express our deepest sorrow for the subsequent exclusion of Chinese immigrants.

[Member spoke in Chinese]

[English]

This apology is not about liability today. It is about reconciliation with those who endured such hardship and the broader Chinese Canadian community, one that continues to make such an invaluable contribution to this great country.

Routine Proceedings

While Canadian courts have ruled that the head tax and immigration prohibition were legally authorized at the time, we fully accept the moral responsibility to acknowledge these shameful policies of our past. For over six decades, these race based financial measures aimed solely at the Chinese were implemented with deliberation by the Canadian state. This was a grave injustice and one we are morally obligated to acknowledge.

To give substantive meaning to today's apology, the Government of Canada will offer symbolic payments to living head tax payers and living spouses of deceased payers. In addition, we will establish funds to help finance community projects aimed at acknowledging the impact of past wartime measures and immigration restrictions on the Chinese Canadian community and other ethnocultural communities.

No country is perfect. Like all countries, Canada has made mistakes in its past, and we realize that. Canadians, however, are a good and just people, acting when we have committed wrong.

[*English*]

Even though the head tax, a product of a profoundly different time lies far in our past, we feel compelled to right this historic wrong for the simple reason that it is the decent thing to do, a characteristic to be found at the core of the Canadian soul.

In closing, let me assure the House that the government will continually strive to ensure that similar unjust practices are never allowed to happen again. We have the collective responsibility to build a country based firmly on the notion of equality of opportunity, regardless of one's race or ethnic origin.

Our deep sorrow over the racist actions of our past will nurture an unwavering commitment to build a better life for all Canadians.

● (1520)

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to join all members in recognizing the presence in the galleries of our fellow Chinese-Canadians who have come here to join us today on this solemn occasion. We welcome them.

Last fall the member for LaSalle—Émard, as the prime minister of our country at that time, apologized to the Chinese community for the head tax and the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was repealed late, but repealed nonetheless, by the then Liberal government of Prime Minister Mackenzie King in 1947.

[*Translation*]

That apology expressed, on behalf of Canadians, our regret for the hardship and difficulties inflicted on those victims and their families directly affected by the Chinese Head Tax and the Chinese Exclusion Act. Liberals want to ensure that there is an appropriate plan to educate Canadians on this chapter of our history, so we can learn from our past.

We understand that apologizing is just part of the healing process for communities that have been the victims of measures taken in the past and which today we can recognize as injustices.

Liberals want to ensure that there is an appropriate plan to educate Canadians on this chapter of our history, so we can learn from our past and ensure that similar injustices are not repeated.

That is why we signed an agreement in principle with several communities to provide funding for education and commemoration initiatives. We hope that the government will honour these agreements, and deliver in full the funds that were committed and permit those communities to tell their stories in a way that will shed a new perspective on their past while educating all Canadians so that we may be better citizens and work to ensure that similar injustices are not committed in future times, as the Prime Minister said.

[*English*]

Our Chinese community has already achieved that in its literature and in such moving and modern expressions as the opera *Iron Road*, which some may have seen here in Ottawa, allowing us all to share the anguish and pain, the courage and determination that was shown when building the railway that was so essential to establish our country and to which the Prime Minister has paid tribute in his remarks.

It is critical, when we address historical injustices, that we ensure we are equal in our treatment of all communities that faced immigration restrictions or wartime measures. While in government, we initiated an ambitious program to commemorate those historical inequities. The Liberal Party is committed to supporting the Charter of Rights and promoting equality for all Canadians. We believe that only through promoting healthy multiculturalism and education programs can Canadians ensure the mistakes of our past are never repeated.

Today we rejoice with other Canadians in the extraordinary success that Canadians of Chinese origin have achieved. We recognize their talents and energy have contributed to our success as a country, whether in business, the professions, the arts or, indeed, in politics, as is represented by several members of the House on both sides of the aisle of this democratic institution which we share so proudly.

We share thus with our Chinese colleagues and citizens their pride in their individual and community successes, none better perhaps than that incarnated in our former Governor General who is a woman and an immigrant of Chinese origin who came to represent our Canadian face, both to ourselves and to the world.

[*Member spoke in Chinese as follows:*]

Wah Yan Bu Hui Choi Bai Ke Si

● (1525)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I must first point out that nothing would have been possible without the hard work done by the people who for many years doggedly pleaded this cause on behalf of the victims.

Many of those people are with us today, and I salute them.

I would also like to applaud the tireless efforts of our immigration and citizenship critic, the member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges, who is also of Chinese origin, and our candidate in the most recent election in LaSalle—Émard, May Chiu, who was actively involved in this struggle.

Congratulations and thank you to everyone for their dedication.

Routine Proceedings

As you are no doubt aware, the Bloc Québécois has long criticized the Government of Canada's refusal to acknowledge the past injustices to the Chinese-Canadian community. The head tax and the discriminatory immigration policy that followed were heinous acts.

It is not too strong to speak of racism, as the Prime Minister did.

This discrimination was institutionalized in Canada.

I commend the Prime Minister's decision to apologize officially on behalf of the Government of Canada and the people of Canada.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois and the people of Quebec, I join him and apologize sincerely to all the Quebecers of Chinese origin for past errors.

The Prime Minister says that the purpose of his statement is to turn the page on an unfortunate period in Canada's past.

And to give greater weight to the government's apology, he announced that he will offer symbolic payments to head tax payers and the spouses of deceased head tax payers. I hope with all my heart that he will extend this compensation to the direct descendants of the victims of this policy.

It was high time the government acted. Once again, I congratulate the Prime Minister for keeping his word, and I ask him to act accordingly and think about the direct descendants of these victims.

[*English*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker,

[*Member spoke in Chinese*]

[*English*]

On this historic day, the New Democratic Party and its caucus join with all members of the House in expressing Canada's apology to all of those who were forced to pay the Chinese head tax and to all of those families who suffered under the Chinese Exclusion Act. This is a momentous first step toward achieving full justice, reconciliation and closure to right the historic wrong of the head tax that has been a stain on our national conscience for a century.

We have waited many years for this day, but not as long as the few remaining head tax payers who honour the House with their presence here today, not as long as those who died waiting in vain for justice to be done, not as long as the many families that were ripped apart and kept apart, not as long as those who were forced to stay behind in China, not as long as the wives who died waiting to be reunited with their husbands, and not as long as the children who never knew their fathers and their grandfathers.

[*Translation*]

In his apology, the Prime Minister spoke of the injustice that was done to Chinese immigrants.

He spoke well of the contribution of Chinese Canadians to building our railway and, in fact, building our country.

He used the words exclusion and suffering.

● (1530)

[*English*]

We agree with these words. They needed to be said and now they have been said on the record in the House for future generations to see and to better understand this stain on our past. We agree with these words. The apology is an all important first step.

The next step should be the action that would give full meaning to these words: full justice, full reconciliation, and full closure to all of those who suffered from this racist and unjust policy. That step would entail redress that is more than symbolic, redress to the descendants of the head tax payers who died waiting for this day.

In calling for full redress, I remind everyone present that the quest for justice began in the House of Commons 20 years ago, after having been brought forward by members of the community, some of whom are also with us today.

In 1984, a New Democratic member of Parliament, Margaret Mitchell of Vancouver stood in this very place and spoke of the hurtful legacy of racial discrimination that divides Canada. On that day over 20 years ago she asked the government to issue an apology and to offer redress to those who suffered. She told the stories of loneliness, heartbreak and isolation faced by so many Chinese immigrants.

She spoke of one constituent, one of the thousands of young Chinese men who Canada encouraged to come to Canada to help us build our country. He came at the age of 15 and was forced to pay the \$500 head tax. He did so to try to help his family to survive back in China. However, as with so many families torn apart by those policies, his wife was later refused entry to Canada because of the Chinese Head Tax and Exclusion Act.

Margaret Mitchell dared to ask that the Prime Minister, on behalf of Canada, formally acknowledge these injustices to Canadians of Chinese origin. She did so in her own words, and I quote:

In order to make amends for this shameful period in our history, and to recognize our new Charter of Rights which should prevent such future discrimination against ethnic minorities—

Margaret Mitchell was the first to bring this need for an apology and redress to the House. She was joined by Dan Heap, an NDP member of Parliament for Trinity—Spadina at the time, and together they led the NDP effort in this regard. I am so pleased that all parties have come together.

Both at the time worked with the leaders of the very large Chinese Canadian populations, particularly in Vancouver's Chinatown and Toronto's Chinatown. Dan Heap at the time was assisted by a young Chinese woman immigrant who now sits with pride with us as the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina. She helped collect the head tax certificates from the family members and listened to their sad stories.

Margaret Mitchell's seat is now held by the hon. member for Vancouver East, who has been resolute in pursuit of justice on behalf of her constituents.

Routine Proceedings

It is those constituents who we must honour today, the few living but the very many that are dead. We must also consider this as an apology to the many thousands who never made it to Canada, who died before the Chinese Head Tax and Exclusion Act was lifted or who were unable to raise the exorbitant amount of funds required. Families were ripped apart and kept apart for decades. Some wives left in China were in despair and committed suicide. A generation of children never knew their fathers or grandfathers.

This apology must be for them as well. I hope that it allows all Canadians to reflect on the suffering, the injustice, and the absolute importance of this apology. I thank the Prime Minister most profoundly for having risen in the House and made the apology on behalf of all Canadians.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

Today I commend this Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage for finally taking the first step to right this historic wrong—but we also ask for full justice—the next step.

The next step—to finally achieve reconciliation and closure—is surely to recognize those thousands of head tax payers who died waiting for this day and to provide redress to their descendants.

[*English*]

Now is the time to heal the wounds of exclusion and discrimination. Canadians have at long last heard the overdue

apology. In dealing with the failures of the past, we can now move forward.

It is a great day for Canada. We join in the apology and we applaud the first step. This redress is not about liability; it is about justice. Let us show the world that Canada is indeed a fair, generous and just nation.

[*Member spoke in Chinese as follows:*]

Kan nah dah gong doh jeh doh jeh

[*English*]

The Speaker: Order, please. I believe that concludes the business of the House for today.

I would like to pass on to all hon. members my very best wishes for a relaxing summer break. There is of course the usual refreshment offer in Room 216 for those who wish to drop by to wish others the same.

[*Translation*]

It being 3:37 p.m., pursuant to order made Wednesday, June 21, 2006, the House stands adjourned until 11 a.m., September 18, 2006, pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 3:37 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, June 22, 2006

Privilege		(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	2819
Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development		Employment Insurance Act	
Mr. Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	2815	Mr. Blais	2819
Mr. Nicholson	2816	Bill C-344. Introduction and first reading	2819
Mr. Bigras	2816	(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	2819
Mr. Godfrey	2817		
The Speaker	2817	Immigration and Refugee Protection Act	
		Mr. Bains	2819
ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Bill C-345. Introduction and first reading	2819
Privacy Act		(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	2820
The Speaker	2817	State Immunity Act	
Investigative Hearings and Recognizances		Mrs. Grewal	2820
Mr. Toews	2818	Bill C-346. Introduction and first reading	2820
Aboriginal Affairs		(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	2820
Mr. Bruinoooge	2818	Criminal Code	
Recognizance with condition		Mrs. Grewal	2820
Mr. MacKenzie	2818	Bill C-347. Introduction and first reading	2820
Canadian Security Intelligence Service		(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	2820
Mr. MacKenzie	2818	Conscientious Objection Act	
Criminal Code		Mr. Siksay	2820
Mr. Toews	2818	Bill C-348. Introduction and first reading	2820
Bill C-22. Introduction and first reading	2818	(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	2820
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	2818	Patent Act	
Criminal Code		Mr. Masse	2820
Mr. Toews	2818	Bill C-349. Introduction and first reading	2820
Bill C-23. Introduction and first reading	2818	(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	2821
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	2818	Committees of the House	
Interparliamentary Delegations		Canadian Heritage	
Mr. Bezan	2818	Mr. Schellenberger	2821
Mr. Merrifield	2818	Motion for concurrence	2821
Mr. Bélanger	2818	(Motion agreed to)	2821
Committees of the House		Finance	
Procedure and House Affairs		Mr. Lukiwski	2821
Mr. Goodyear	2818	Motion	2821
Justice and Human Rights		(Motion agreed to)	2821
Mr. Hanger	2819	Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities	
Canadian Heritage		Mr. Lukiwski	2821
Mr. Schellenberger	2819	Motion	2821
Citizenship and Immigration		(Motion agreed to)	2821
Mr. Doyle	2819	Public Accounts	
Agriculture and Agri-Food		Mr. Lukiwski	2821
Mr. Ritz	2819	Motion	2821
International Trade		(Motion agreed to)	2821
Mr. Paquette	2819	Criminal Code	
Criminal Code		Mr. Scheer	2819
Mr. Scheer	2819	Bill C-343. Introduction and first reading	2819
Bill C-343. Introduction and first reading	2819		

Sri Lanka	
Mr. Obhrai	2853
Breton House	
Mr. Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	2853
Liberal Party of Canada	
Mr. Szabo	2853
St. Jean Baptiste Day	
Mr. Harvey	2853
Quebec National Holiday	
Ms. Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	2853
Immigration	
Mr. Bélanger	2853

ORAL QUESTIONS

Softwood Lumber	
Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre)	2854
Mr. Harper	2854
Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre)	2854
Mr. Harper	2854
Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre)	2854
Mr. Harper	2854
Mr. LeBlanc	2854
Mr. Emerson	2854
Mr. LeBlanc	2855
Mr. Emerson	2855
Quebec	
Mr. Duceppe	2855
Mr. Harper	2855
Mr. Duceppe	2855
Mr. Harper	2855
The Environment	
Mr. Bigras	2855
Ms. Ambrose	2855
Mr. Bigras	2855
Ms. Ambrose	2856
Mr. Layton	2856
Mr. Harper	2856
Mr. Layton	2856
Mr. Harper	2856
National Defence	
Mr. Dosanjh	2856
Mr. Harper	2856
Mr. Dosanjh	2856
Mr. O'Connor	2856
Mr. Coderre	2856
Mr. Bernier	2857
Mr. Coderre	2857
Mr. Bernier	2857
Securities Industry	
Ms. Brunelle	2857
Ms. Ablonczy	2857
Ms. Brunelle	2857
Ms. Ablonczy	2857

Regional Economic Development	
Mr. Guimond	2857
Mr. Blackburn	2857
Older Workers	
Mr. Lessard	2858
Mr. Bernier	2858
Health	
Ms. Dhalla	2858
Mr. Clement	2858
Ms. Dhalla	2858
Mr. Clement	2858
Mr. Holland	2858
Mr. Baird	2858
Mr. Holland	2859
Mr. Baird	2859
Justice	
Mr. Hanger	2859
Mr. Toews	2859
Official Languages	
Mr. Godin	2859
Ms. Verner	2859
The Environment	
Ms. Priddy	2859
Mr. Clement	2859
National Defence	
Mr. Goodale	2860
Mr. O'Connor	2860
Challenger Jet use	
Mrs. Jennings	2860
Mr. Harper	2860
Canada Pension Plan	
Mr. McCallum (Markham—Unionville)	2860
Ms. Ablonczy	2860
Mr. McCallum (Markham—Unionville)	2860
Ms. Ablonczy	2860
Pay Equity	
Mrs. Lavallée	2860
Mr. Blackburn	2860
Black community	
Ms. St-Hilaire	2861
Mr. MacKay	2861
Agriculture	
Mr. Easter	2861
Mr. Strahl	2861
Federal Accountability Act	
Mr. Lauzon	2861
Mr. Baird	2861

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

International Bridges and Tunnels Act	
Bill C-3. Third reading	2861
Mr. Jean	2861
Motion	2861

(Motion adopted and bill, as amended, read the third time and passed).....	2862
His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet	
Mr. Sweet.....	2862
Motion.....	2862
(Motion agreed to).....	2862
House of Commons	
The Speaker.....	2862
The Speaker.....	2862

Business of the House	
Mr. Goodale.....	2862
Mr. Nicholson.....	2863

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Chinese Canadians	
Mr. Harper.....	2863
Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre).....	2864
Mr. Duceppe.....	2864
Mr. Layton.....	2865

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