



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, May 2, 2007**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

## **CONTENTS**

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

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1405)

[English]

**The Speaker:** It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

*[Members sang the national anthem]*

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### PATRICK MACDONALD

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Patrick MacDonald, a defensive lineman and long snapper for the University of Alberta Golden Bears football team.

After coming off an impressive season with the Golden Bears, Patrick has been offered a three year deal with the New Orleans Saints of the National Football League, making him only the second Golden Bear in its history to sign with an NFL franchise.

Patrick's accomplishment does not only exemplify the hard work and dedication he brings to the football field, but also the outstanding football program the University of Alberta has to offer.

Once again, I would like to congratulate Patrick MacDonald for this outstanding achievement and wish him all the best as he prepares to attend rookie camp in the coming weeks.

I am confident that the talented rush end will crack the Saints' roster for the upcoming season, and will show the entire league what the University of Alberta and the city of champions are made of.

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### JESS LAROCHELLE

**Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Private Jess Larochelle, a Canadian Forces soldier from my riding who will be decorated with the Star of Military Valour for distinguished and valiant service in

the presence of the enemy for his actions during an intense firefight in the Panjwai district of Afghanistan last October.

Private Larochelle was manning an observation post while serving with Charles Company of the First Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment, when more than 20 insurgents launched a surprise attack.

His observation post was hit by a rocket propelled grenade and Private Larochelle, who was under substantial enemy fire and in an exposed position, aggressively returned fire, providing cover for his company's flank, which otherwise would have been unprotected. Private Larochelle's courageous actions helped save the lives of many members of his company.

On behalf of all hon. members, I would like to thank Private Jess Larochelle for his heroism and courage, and salute him on being decorated with the Star of Military Valour, Canada's highest military honour next to the Victoria Cross. We are proud of Jess.

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[Translation]

### QUEBEC MANUFACTURING SECTOR

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since 2003, more than 100,000 jobs have been lost in the Quebec manufacturing sector, including 35,000 in 2006 alone with the arrival of this new government. The year 2007 is proving to be even worse, since in the first two months, Quebec has already lost 28,000 manufacturing jobs.

What more does this government need to be convinced that its economic laissez-faire approach is not the solution to the many challenges facing our manufacturing companies, including those in the Quebec furniture industry? What is it waiting for? Is it waiting for our manufacturing companies to become just the museums of a bygone industrial age?

Instead of watching these jobs being lost one after another without doing a thing, the government should be proactive by investing, for example, in research and development to promote modernization and innovation.

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[English]

### PAY EQUITY

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the Pay Equity Network that is here in Ottawa today.

*Statements by Members*

It has been three years since the release of the pay equity task force report and still no action from the government or the previous government. The NDP has been fighting for proactive pay equity legislation for more than 20 years.

[*Translation*]

Equal pay for equal work is a fundamental right. Although pay equity is protected in Canada under the Canadian Human Rights Act, it is not a reality for Canadians. In fact, today, women earn only 72¢ for every dollar earned by their male colleagues.

[*English*]

Yet, the government thinks that the status quo is adequate. It is not.

Pay inequity has wide ranging social consequences for all women and their families. It makes women and children more vulnerable to poverty, especially for households headed by women.

It is time that the government acted on the recommendations of the pay equity task force to ensure basic equality and human rights.

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**ZIMBABWE**

**Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in April, as the chair of the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption, I attended the Global Forum V anti-corruption conference in Johannesburg and spoke out in support of the parliamentarians and others who have been beaten, imprisoned and intimidated by the government of Zimbabwe.

It is time that each and every one of us who believe in good governance and the rule of law stood up in support of the people of Zimbabwe who are now in considerable danger because they are exercising their democratic right to speak out against their government. For some, free speech can come at a great price.

I called on the African countries to lead an international effort to plan now for the rebuilding of the institutions of Parliament, the judiciary and the government in Zimbabwe to ensure that the current tyranny by Mr. Mugabe does not continue, or continue with his successor.

Strong leaders who are not constrained by strong institutions are dictators. We have seen it in Zimbabwe and we have seen it elsewhere. We have seen enough to know that lack of accountable governance destroys lives, destroys prosperity and destroys nations.

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• (1410)

[*Translation*]

**YOUNG PEOPLE FROM MADAWASKA—RESTIGOUCHE**

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, over the past few weeks, I have had the opportunity to meet with a number of student groups from my riding who actively participate in community life.

I met with two student groups that participated in the Forum for Young Canadians: two classes studying political, economic and legal

institutions and a group of students who participated in the Adventure in Citizenship program.

I always enjoy these meetings because they allow me to talk about subjects that matter to these young people and to share with them my experience as a parliamentarian. I was pleased to see how interested the students were in the machinery of government and in national politics. These are young people who actively participate in community life and who have a particular interest in the socio-economic, cultural and political challenges that shape their surroundings.

Let these young people be an inspiration to other young people to make a significant contribution as members of the community and as citizens. These programs help foster the integration of young people, improve their quality of life and contribute to the development of their full potential. I want to commend the young people in my riding.

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[*English*]

**VOLUNTEERISM**

**Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw the attention of the House to two of my constituents who have recently been recognized for their outstanding community service.

Tom Meier was recently named citizen of the year by the Maple Ridge Community Foundation. Tom's long history of volunteer contributions include past service as vice president of the Ridge Meadows Hospice Society, president of the Pitt Meadows Airport Society, and president of the Chamber of Commerce, to name just a few.

In Mission, Abe Neufeld received the district's highest honour when he was named a Freeman of the District of Mission. Abe has served the community in a number of volunteer and elected positions including regional district area director and Mission councillor. In 2001, he was elected as Mission's mayor where he served until he retired in 2005.

I know that all members will join with me in congratulating Abe and Tom for their tireless efforts on behalf of the people of my riding. We thank them for making our community and country a better place.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**SCIENCE CENTRE**

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the opening, on Monday last, of the project office for a science and technology exploration centre is great news for the Quebec City and the Chaudières-Appalaches area. In spite of the promise made by Conservative candidates in the Quebec City area, I had to call on the federal government on many occasions to get it to finally deliver on its commitment and provide financial support for the project office, an essential step in establishing the science centre.

*Statements by Members*

The federal government's involvement must not stop there, however. It will be expected to help pay for the science centre, with costs estimated at more than \$30 million. The Bloc Québécois will make it an important issue.

We espouse the regional consensus and mobilization in support of the establishment of such an infrastructure in our region. This is why I will keep on asking that the government financially support the execution of the project.

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[English]

**AFGHANISTAN**

**Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am dismayed by the accusations and innuendoes of the opposition parties about our mission in Afghanistan. It is time for them to stop using this mission for their own political purposes.

The situation in Afghanistan is far more complex than is generally understood. The government is taking a realistic, multidimensional approach.

We are supporting Canada's effort to save lives through de-mining operations, to improve quality of life through development, to bring hope through microcredit programs, to bring freedom through education, and to stabilize the country that has known only turmoil for so long.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our troops and to our development teams. They are carrying out this mission with honour, dedication and professionalism. They are enhancing Canada's reputation as a country that values freedom, democracy and human rights.

Under the Liberals the funding for this mission was set to decline annually until 2009. We must give credit to the Prime Minister for increasing the aid dollars, evidenced by an additional \$200 million announced recently.

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**COAST GUARD**

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for the Coast Guard has attacked MPs like myself for speaking out against the redeployment of the icebreakers from Dartmouth to his riding.

This move, preceded by no discussion with union workers or regional management, will have a devastating impact on loyal Coast Guard workers. The local community is rising up against this cynical, political move.

We see countless current and former officials publicly questioning this decision: a captain of one of the vessels, Coast Guard alumni, and other officials and workers. In fact, it seems that everybody beyond the muzzle of the government not only opposes the move but questions who in the Conservative government is standing up for Nova Scotia. The move was not mentioned in the new Coast Guard business plan dated April 1 of this year.

If the minister is so assured that his decision is above board, show us the evidence. Show us the file. Show us the business case.

Until then, I and others will continue to defend the Coast Guard workers against what appears to be a politically driven decision. The Coast Guard employees who have worked so hard defending our coastline deserve better, and they deserve it now.

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●(1415)

**LIBERAL PARTY CANDIDATE**

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has been two weeks now since Farhan Mujahid Chak's notorious views have come to light and the Liberal leader still refuses to send him packing.

Among other things, Mr. Chak diminishes the Israeli state by accusing it of murder and rape. He believes and sympathizes with suicide bombers. He suggests the terrorist attacks in France were actually the work of the French government. Oh yes, and he failed to disclose that he was charged in a nightclub shooting. And he is still considered the best Liberal candidate for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont.

Yesterday, the B'nai Brith condemned Mr. Chak's views and called upon the Liberal leader to do the right thing and remove Mr. Chak as a Liberal candidate. The Liberal leader's response was silence. Canadians deserve a lot better than that. Fresh from the spectacle of the Liberal leader's best friend, Elizabeth May, diminishing the Holocaust for cheap political points, he should show a little courage and kick them both out of the Liberal Party.

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**CHILD CARE**

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I recently visited a wonderful parents and tots program in my Halifax riding. The Lions Club, supported by the United Way and municipal government, has created a space in the Spryfield Recreation Centre where preschoolers can play together in a safe, spacious setting while moms and dads can share parenting tips and support one another. That is the good news.

The bad news is that the majority of these families have been desperately seeking accessible, affordable, quality early learning and child care opportunities and such spaces are virtually non-existent in their community. Why? Because of broken promises, first by the Liberals and now by the Conservatives.

That is why it is vitally important to enact Bill C-303, the New Democrat early learning and child care act. Every child deserves that chance. Every family deserves that choice, whether home based or community based.

As with every vital social program, from medicare to employment insurance to public pensions, federal legislation is needed, resources are required and standards must be set that will allow each province and territory to apply those standards and allocate those resources for the benefit of children and families needing child care.

*Statements by Members***FISHERIES**

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have all seen the television images in the past few weeks showing ice conditions off Labrador and northern Newfoundland. These are the worst spring ice conditions in decades. Not only has the ice damaged or destroyed fishing vessels with many sealers left with no income, it has delayed the opening of several important fisheries.

This delay means an even longer gap than usual between the expiry of seasonal EI benefits and the resumption of employment income for fishers and plant workers in coastal communities. While income is no longer coming in, the bills have not stopped.

Bearing in mind the extraordinary conditions experienced this spring, I call upon the government to take immediate steps to extend emergency EI benefits, or take other similar measures to assist the many affected families in their time of need.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**JEAN-MARIE COSSETTE**

**Mr. Raymond Gravel (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec is in mourning, along with Montreal's Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste, sovereignists everywhere in Quebec, and the people in the riding of Repentigny. Jean-Marie Cossette has passed away.

An ardent supporter of Quebec sovereignty and the French language, and a long-time nationalist activist, Mr. Cossette served four terms as president of Montreal's Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste and was awarded numerous prizes. He was such an expert on the subject of Quebec and so knowledgeable that he could hold his own with any expert on the subject. As the founder of Fondation nos Racines, he helped new immigrants integrate into French-speaking society.

Proud of his nationalistic dreams, he became a member of the Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale. In October 1970, Jean-Marie Cossette became a victim of Trudeau's repression and was imprisoned along with 500 other patriots. He was released 21 days later. No charges were ever brought against him.

On behalf of the entire sovereignist family, I would like to offer my condolences to Louise Grimard, his family and the people—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Mount Royal.

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[English]

**WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY**

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, May 3 is World Press Freedom Day, reminding governments and the public of the profound importance of freedom of expression, the lifeblood of a democracy, and consecrated as a core freedom in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and international human rights law.

Regrettably, this right and the safety of those who espouse it is increasingly at risk in many parts of the globe where journalists are assaulted, kidnapped and even murdered with impunity. Indeed, as we meet, Bangladeshi journalist Shoaib Choudhury faces trumped up criminal charges carrying a death penalty for exercising this fundamental freedom.

I am sure that my colleagues and Canadians generally will join us in marking World Press Freedom Day, with the hope that freedom of expression will be a protected freedom and those who assault it will be held duly accountable.

\* \* \*

● (1420)

**GREEN PARTY LEADER**

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Green Party leader still does not get it. Elizabeth May will not offer a clear apology for her irresponsible comparison of Canadian public policy to Chamberlain's appeasement.

Ed Morgan, President of the Canadian Jewish Congress, said, "Elizabeth May shows insensitivity to context and history", but no apology by May.

Frank Diamant of B'nai Brith Canada said, "The evoking of the Nazi era by the Green Party leader in order to score political points is insensitive to those who lived through this dark time", and still no apology by May.

The Liberal member for London North Centre called her comments "beyond the pale", and still no apology by May.

Liberal Senator Tommy Banks said, "Ms. May's comments were a bit over the top, if not a lot over the top", and still no apology by May.

Since the Green Party leader will not apologize or withdraw her comments, will the Liberal leader withdraw his endorsement of her candidacy in Central Nova?

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY**

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, in 1993, the United Nations General Assembly decided that May 3rd would be World Press Freedom Day and would mark the day when the Windhoek Declaration in Namibia was adopted.

That declaration provides that the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation.

Each year, UNESCO coordinates activities marking this declaration, to emphasize the commitments made by nations.

Freedom of the press is considered to be a human rights foundation and is a springboard between comprehension and knowledge. It is critical to the sharing of ideas between nations and cultures, and that sharing is also a prerequisite to lasting comprehension and cooperation.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### AFGHANISTAN

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in a desperate attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable and plug the holes in his ministers' conflicting stories, the Prime Minister again misled this House.

He claimed that the Minister of Public Safety had informed this House on April 26 that Correctional Service Canada had received allegations of torture. He never did that. The Prime Minister misled this House. Why?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I read the quote from April 26. The Minister of Public Safety can talk about that.

[English]

There have been a lot of accusations of contradictions. I just have to go back to the contradiction I pointed out yesterday. Since the Leader of the Opposition now acknowledges that Elizabeth May's comments are completely inappropriate, and since she will not retract those comments, why does he believe it is still appropriate that she would be his candidate in Central Nova?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is the Prime Minister will not be able to provide the quote. He pretends. He misled the House in pretending that the minister never said that Correctional Service Canada received allegations of torture, but we know that these allegations exist. We know that it would not be acceptable regarding the Geneva convention to send detainees to the Afghan authorities. We know that we need a proper process with NATO.

Will the Prime Minister himself commit to not send detainees to the Afghan authorities as long as this proper process involving NATO does not exist?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as far back as February I published a news release talking about our corrections officers going to Afghanistan. The Liberals did not care. They did not ask a question about that. I later talked to the media when I was in Afghanistan about what they were doing. The Liberals did not raise a question. They did not care.

Last week, quite correctly as the Prime Minister pointed out, I mentioned the issue of corrections officers talking to two individuals who had talked to them about their treatment there and also addressing another matter. The Liberals just did not care.

The only allegations and misleading going on are the Liberals trying to suggest that our brave troops are doing something outside of the Geneva convention, and that is not true.

• (1425)

[Translation]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely untrue. The minister never told this House on April 26 that he had received allegations of torture. Rather, he claimed that the allegations made by the opposition were false. He was unable to tell us why they were false. He had no way of knowing whether or not they were false. Yet he continues to accuse

### Oral Questions

the opposition of not supporting our troops. I say that when an incompetent minister is kept on, that shows a lack of support for our troops. I say that when senior officials contradict each other in the media so much that this government is in chaos, that shows a lack of support for our troops.

[English]

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, before I was addressing the issue of the good work that our corrections officers were doing, the Liberals were saying that nothing was happening over there, Afghan people were not being trained, nothing was happening in the prisons. Then when I tell them that things are happening, and when we do report stuff, they still go crazy. We still do not have an answer.

We have talked about supporting our troops. Why does that member not support all of the people that Elizabeth May slandered in a horrific fashion? Why does he not support Canadians in that aspect by telling her that she cannot run—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is a government in chaos. No less than three ministers, a secretary of state and the Prime Minister himself have jumped into the confusion, each making up their own stories to hide their incompetence.

The person ultimately responsible for this mess is the Prime Minister. It is his job to ensure that our military has the civilian leadership that it needs.

Why will the Prime Minister not bring some order to this chaos, take the first critical step and fire his incompetent Minister of National Defence?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the very simple answer is that the Minister of National Defence is undertaking a very important action on behalf of the Canadian military in rebuilding our Canadian military after years of neglect and denigration by the party opposite.

The Minister of National Defence and all ministers of this government are strong defenders of the Canadian military, unlike the party opposite, and we are proud of it.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is not leadership. Rather than seeing the Prime Minister's leadership, we are witness to open battles between departments in the media. The ministers contradict one another on a daily basis.

When will the Prime Minister take charge and bring some order to this chaos that runs the risk of engulfing his own government?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member speaks of the departments' contradictory statements in the media today. He is contradicting the facts of 2005, when the Liberals were in power.

*Oral Questions*

[English]

The allegation in the papers today, as I understand it, is that General Hillier signed an agreement without any political approval. It is my clear understanding that any such agreement would have required the approval of the Liberal cabinet ministers of the day.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this morning we learned that General Rick Hillier acted on his own when he reached an agreement on the transfer of detainees to Afghan authorities. Without consulting the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hillier entered into an agreement that does not involve NATO and that does not respect the Geneva convention.

How can the Prime Minister maintain an agreement on an issue as serious as the transfer of detainees, when the Minister of Foreign Affairs was not even consulted?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I just said in English, I think that such an agreement should have been discussed and approved by the Liberal cabinet ministers of the day. That said, this government brought changes to the agreement last year, and it will continue to make changes, depending on how that agreement is working.

• (1430)

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on November 15, 2005, when he was in the opposition, the Minister of National Defence said, about the mission in Afghanistan:

—if we capture prisoners in the new venture we are going into, we will be passing them on to NATO forces, as long as we have a guarantee that the Geneva convention is followed.

However, these prisoners are being transferred to Afghan authorities. We have no guarantee that the Geneva convention is being followed. Can the Prime Minister explain why he and his Minister of National Defence changed their minds once they came to office?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the decision to, instead, transfer Taliban prisoners to the Americans and the Afghans was made at the end of the previous government's mandate. We have now made arrangements with the Afghan government and with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. We are constantly cooperating with our counterparts in Afghanistan, and these arrangements are working as they should.

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has not been consulted about the arrangement negotiated with the Afghan authorities concerning the fate of prisoners. The Prime Minister continues nonetheless to defend such an arrangement, in spite of the known risk of torture faced by prisoners. He is thus accepting that Canada violate the Geneva convention.

How can the Prime Minister approve such an arrangement, which does not provide a right to have full access to detainees, unless he agrees with general Hillier and with going over the head of his own Minister of National Defence?

[English]

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are respecting their obligations under international law. As has been pointed out, we do have an arrangement with the government of Afghanistan and the human rights commission. There is an investigation going on and we will assist in that investigation.

[Translation]

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I take exception to the answer we have just been given. It is the responsibility of the nations transferring prisoners to take every precaution to ensure that the conventions are respected.

In trying to understand Canada's position, we have the beginning of an explanation when listening to the kind of language used by General Hillier, who talks about the Taliban as scum bags, and hearing the Prime Minister answer back that they are just Taliban.

Does that not show how little regard this government has for Canada's obligations under the Geneva convention?

[English]

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us be clear here. The NATO commander has confirmed and has said that he sees no evidence to back up any allegations that are being made by the Taliban alleged terrorist detainees.

The hon. member continues to take the word of the Taliban detainees over our brave Canadian men and women and that is truly unfortunate.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in light of these allegations, the ministers of this government should start working for Canadians and for our troops. They need to show us that they are up to the job and we are not seeing that right now.

We know one thing. An agreement was signed, under the Liberal government, without a clause guaranteeing access to detainees, an essential clause under the Geneva convention. General Hillier signed that document.

When did the Prime Minister know about this agreement? Does General Hillier still have carte blanche for signing such agreements?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I just said, my understanding is that the Liberal government of the day approved this agreement. In the meantime, we have the cooperation of the Afghan authorities on ensuring access to the prisons and seeing that these arrangements work.

• (1435)

[English]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is going to have to do better than that, because the general says, and told Parliament, that he signed these agreements with the full knowledge of the two ministries involved at the time when the Liberals were in power. Now we have reports in the *Globe and Mail* suggesting that he did it on his own.

*Oral Questions*

The Prime Minister is going to have to confirm that the general signed them on his own or did not, so that we can understand what kind of chain of command we have in this country.

It is important for the Prime Minister to get to the bottom of it. Does the general have carte blanche under his government to sign agreements that could possibly violate conventions, yes or no?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Once again, Mr. Speaker, the leader of the New Democratic Party is asking me about events that occurred under the previous government.

At the same time, let me be very clear. I think I have been already, but let me be very clear that the information I have would indicate that General Hillier is correct and the *Globe and Mail* is wrong.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we all know that the success of our mission in Afghanistan relies first and foremost on openness and transparency. However, again yesterday, the Conservative government refused to answer simple and direct questions on the matter of the detainees. Let us try again today.

How many detainees have been transferred? Where are they? Have they been interrogated? By whom? In the presence of whom? Have they been asked directly whether they were tortured?

[*English*]

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member said, let us do it again. This is an operational matter. We do not discuss the details of detainees.

However, during the Liberal regime there were detainees, and if the Liberals want to reveal that information, they can.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence has a new excuse every day for not answering questions.

Can the minister tell us how general information on detainees would endanger the lives of our troops? Is this not further evidence that the government is trying to hide information? Why not tell Canadians the truth?

[*English*]

Why is the Prime Minister not able to manage this crisis?

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have military operations going on in Afghanistan. We do not advertise everything we do and every one of our actions in public because there are lives at stake in Afghanistan. That is why we keep operational information quiet.

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Geneva convention is clear on the prisoner transfers. It states:

—the following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever...Violence to life and person...murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture...

In the Arar case, Justice O'Connor recommended also that:

“Canadian officials should not wait for ‘verification’ or unequivocal evidence of torture...before arriving at a conclusion of a likelihood of torture.”

Why is the government putting Canadians at risk of breaching the Geneva convention?

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have with me a quote dated April 10, 2006, by the member for Vancouver South, who said he had read the agreement and reviewed it:

I agree that it is an important agreement and it is one that is quite good in many respects. The involvement of the International Red Cross or the Red Crescent as an independent third party is very important because it can then follow the prisoners and ensure they are treated well and appropriately in accordance with the Geneva conventions. The agreement makes reference to the Geneva conventions and that is important for us to recognize.

That was said by the MP for Vancouver South.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the only difference is that at least our member knew what the Red Cross did. The minister does not know how the Red Cross worked. It is quite pathetic.

This government is unable to provide the slightest bit of information, such as the number of detainees who have been transferred, their current status or whether there have been any disappearances. This government is showing that it has no interest in its responsibilities under the Geneva convention. It is in complete denial.

How will we win the respect of the Afghans if Canadians cannot get assurances that this Conservative government will respect international law?

[*English*]

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is pathetic is the fact that it took the Liberals four years to put a policy in place, and it was only done a month before Canadians fired them. We have quotes and evidence that they support the agreement they put in place, and now they have decided it is not good enough.

It is this Conservative government that is going to enhance this policy.

\* \* \*

● (1440)

[*Translation*]

**GASOLINE PRICES**

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the skyrocketing price of gasoline cannot be attributed to international factors alone. It also has to do with the voluntary closure of some refineries. A reasonable refining margin seems to be between 5¢ and 7¢, depending on the type of gas. We recently learned that this margin has reached 27¢. This translates into a 20¢ jump in profit. As we all know, the price at the pump is within provincial jurisdiction.

Can the federal government not verify the rate of profit on the refining margin, since this falls within its jurisdiction?

*Oral Questions*

[English]

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we all know that the price of gasoline is driven by market conditions, and what we do know, in fact, is that we have uncovered a conspiracy to increase gas prices. The sinister group behind this plot is none other than the Liberal Party of Canada. In fact, this is supported by economists such as Don Drummond and Mark Jaccard, who have confirmed that under the Liberal plan the price of gasoline would rise by more than 60% of today's prices.

When we look at the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition, who says that "high gas prices are actually good for Canada", it is no wonder the Liberals are sitting on that side of the House.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we certainly do not mean to suggest any collusion, but here are the facts. In Halifax, for instance, Esso does the refining for everyone. In New Brunswick, Irving does it. In Quebec City, the same idea, it is Ultramar. In Montreal, guess what? Petro-Canada and Shell do the work for everyone, even for the competition.

Should we not start asking ourselves some questions, when the refining profit margin is 20¢ too high? Does this not warrant a serious investigation and an agency to monitor the whole thing?

[English]

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have been six federal studies of gas prices and each and every time the Competition Bureau has found that there has been no price fixing. If the member has information and would like another investigation, he is welcome to bring that forward.

However, our government is taking action. We have brought in \$2 billion in our biofuel strategy. We are providing incentives for Canadians to purchase fuel efficient vehicles. We have lowered the GST. Our government is doing something about it.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has told us eight times now that excessive use of tax havens, such as Barbados, by wealthy taxpayers is a threat to Canada's tax base.

How can the minister simply stand by knowing that his government is losing billions of dollars in tax revenues every year, billions of dollars that middle class taxpayers have to compensate for, to fund the federal government's spending?

[English]

**Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government is very concerned about tax loopholes and tax havens. That is why we are eliminating an important tax loophole allowing multinational corporations to deduct interest incurred in foreign jurisdictions without paying taxes.

I point to the fact that the official opposition does not seem to agree with this, but the *Toronto Star* says that it makes no sense to

allow companies to claim breaks against income on which they pay no tax. The Liberal leader is turning his back on sound policy.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, if this government is serious about its intentions, the recent budgetary measures will not put an end to this situation.

Do the Minister of Finance and the government understand that they do not even have to change the legislation? The easiest way to deal with the Barbados issue is to amend section 5907 of the Income Tax Act regulations.

[English]

**Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, closing tax loopholes makes lower taxes for all Canadians. That is our goal. We want to make Canada even more competitive for all business. We are having discussions on a manner of issues and areas where we can move forward with this agenda. This goal is possible, and I welcome the Bloc's support in moving forward on this.

\* \* \*

● (1445)

**AFGHANISTAN**

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, chaos, confusion and cover up and now access to information documents show that the government tried to suppress a photograph of Afghan detainees a year ago.

In May 2006 a photojournalist took pictures of 10 suspected insurgents captured by the Canadian military. Canadian military lawyers told him that the photos could not be published because they would violate the Geneva convention.

Why is the government's respect for human rights and the Geneva convention so selective?

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, I can confirm for the member that Canadians are respecting their obligations under international law. Canadian brave men and women are doing an excellent job in Afghanistan. We have relationships with the Government of Afghanistan and the human rights commission to ensure there is an investigation. We will work closely with them.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, make no mistake that on this side of the House we support our Canadian brave men and women, but we must tell the truth. Access to information documents show that even a National Defence spokesman has questioned why the photo was suppressed. He has said, "The military should not play cat and mouse on this one because success lies in openness".

Could anyone on the frontbench tell the—

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Secretary of State.

*Oral Questions***GASOLINE PRICES**

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have been many allegations. I remind the hon. member that there were five reports on Afghanistan, four of them were delivered to the previous Liberal government, with which it did absolutely nothing. There were general allegations within all of those reports. There are no specific details or specific evidence to support any of the allegations made by Taliban alleged terrorist detainees.

Why do the hon. member and the opposition parties continue to take the word of the Taliban detainees over our Canadian brave men and women?

**Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this detainee debacle continues every day with a different story from the elevator scrums of Conservative ministers.

First, it was the Red Cross. Then it was Correctional Service Canada. Then the allegations were false. Then there were no allegations. And yesterday, the Prime Minister again got involved in this disinformation campaign.

When will the Prime Minister cut loose the symbol of this scandal and fire his incompetent Minister of National Defence?

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, obviously the member did not hear me when I quoted the Liberal member for Vancouver South as to what he had to say about the agreement that the Liberal Party put in place a month before it was fired. He said:

I agree that it is an important agreement and it is one that is quite good in many respects.

The involvement of the International Red Cross or the Red Crescent as an independent third party is very important because it can then follow the prisoners and ensure they are treated well and appropriately in accordance with the Geneva conventions. The agreement makes reference to the Geneva conventions and that is important for us to recognize.

Again, that was the Liberal member for Vancouver South.

**Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are no versions of the truth. The Prime Minister is at the centre of all these contradictions. For two weeks the government has had changing stories on very straightforward questions.

Six different cabinet ministers have given confused explanations on what happens to detainees once they leave the control of Canadian soldiers. They are either providing disinformation or they just do not know. Neither is acceptable.

Our military deserves better and Canadians expect more. When will the Prime Minister take control of this crisis?

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our military on the ground in Afghanistan, our brave men and women, take their job and their role very seriously. They are working very hard and they are conforming with international law.

What is so hard for the hon. member and the opposition to understand? Why is it so difficult for them to trust our Canadian brave men and women?

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned about the recent spike in gasoline prices across the country. In my home province of British Columbia, gas prices reached \$1.28 per litre yesterday.

Our government has introduced programs to help Canadians save on gasoline such as the ecotransport strategy, the eco-auto program and support for public transit. However, there are some in the House who have advocated higher gasoline taxes for Canadians.

Could the Minister of the Environment enlighten the House on whether higher gas taxes are good for Canadians?

• (1450)

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, quoted earlier, and I saw the Leader of the Opposition shaking his head.

In the *Calgary Herald*, on August 24, 2005, the leader of the Liberal Party said that high gas prices were actually good for Canada.

It is time for the Liberal Party to expose its secret plan to bring in a massive new tax, called a carbon tax, be honest with Canadians and let them be the judge.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, let us get down to the facts about gas prices. Yesterday, Imperial Oil reported a 31% increase in quarterly profits on the very same day that gas prices went through the roof. In Vancouver it is \$1.30. In Winnipeg it topped out at \$1.10. We have big oil companies making big profits and consumers still paying big prices. It does not add up.

Why does the government not take on these big gas makers? Why does it not listen to consumers who want a public inquiry into this?

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said for the members across the way, and I will say it for the NDP members, if they would like an investigation, they are welcome to bring one forward to the Competition Bureau. There is a process to check into that. In fact, that has been done six times, and we all know the result.

Our party is delivering action on this file. As has been mentioned, we are bringing in initiatives for public transit. We are bringing in incentives to buy fuel efficient vehicles. We are bringing in our ecotransport program.

We are taking action and we are delivering results, something the old Liberal government could never get—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, why does the minister and his government not try doing something for a change? Why do they just keep sitting on their rear ends when gas prices keep going up and consumers are getting dinged right, left and centre.

The government has the power to start an inquiry into rising gas prices, so all we are asking is why does it not at least conduct a public inquiry? What is it trying to hide?

### Oral Questions

When will the Conservatives start facing the facts? Canadians are getting sick and tired of their inaction. Will they do something for a change?

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure why, but every time we turn around, the NDP seems to want a public inquiry.

We all know there are a number of factors on the world scale that affect the price of gasoline. It is market driven. We have seen price controls by socialist governments in the past and they simply do not work.

The best thing we can do is create certainty in the industry and certainty for the markets to ensure that stability. We are taking action. We are delivering. We are getting the job done.

\* \* \*

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are more bad reviews for the environment minister's latest green scam.

Richard Peltier, co-author of a recent UN climate change report, says that under the latest Conservative plan greenhouse gas emissions will climb "like a rocket".

Gordon McBean of the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences says that the plan will rob Canada of its leadership role on the world stage.

Will the minister stop destroying Canada's credibility and bring Bill C-30 back so the country can have a real plan to meet the challenge of climate change?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it must be awfully nice for a former Liberal cabinet minister to think about what the world might have been if the Liberals had actually done something for Canada.

He can give quotes. I can give quotes, too. Let us look at what one individual said:

—my initial reaction is that this is a strong step in the right direction. The federal government seems to finally have its priorities straight on climate change...

Who said that? It was the leader of the Liberal Party of Alberta.

• (1455)

**Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister's latest plan scheme scam is intensity based. In the previous 13 years, Canada's energy intensity improved by 43%. We have to do more. That is why we are asking the minister to bring Bill C-30 back so we can have real reductions and absolute targets and get the job done.

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** There is a member, Mr. Speaker, who is a charter member of the "we didn't get it done club". There is a member who himself has spoken out in favour of intensity based targets in the past.

We have a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, absolutely. These harmful emissions have been left unchecked in the country for far too long. The government will not study, debate and host more international conferences. We are actually going to act to reduce

greenhouse gas emissions, to fight climate change and to get the job done.

[Translation]

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the list of experts who have no faith in the Conservative climate change plan grows longer by the day: it includes David Suzuki, Al Gore, and many more. The plan is a trick and a fraud and it is misleading Canadians. Bill C-30 is a real plan for fighting climate change, and we can pass it today.

When will the government bring back Bill C-30?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Al Gore, the man who invented the Internet, is also the vice president of the "we didn't get it done club", and he gets together with the leader of the Liberal Party.

I could also quote people, people who are working to build the economy of Canada. Let us look at a prominent supporter of the Liberal Party who said, "I think the Minister of the Environment is right on the money". Who said that? It was Buzz Hargrove.

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that hot air balloon has no credibility whatsoever on climate change. He has a bogus plan that will lead to increased emissions. Not one climate change expert has endorsed the plan and the list of those denouncing it is growing.

If the minister had the courage of his convictions, he would bring back Bill C-30. When will we get a real environment minister instead of that Chicken Little?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know what the Liberal Party wants. It wants more debate, more discussions, more Chardonnay and canapés at fancy international conferences.

What the government wants to do is actually and absolutely reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We are going to require industry, in a mandatory set of regulations, to actually reduce the amount of carbon it produces and sends into the atmosphere.

We will no longer sit back and watch these harmful emissions and allow climate change to go unchecked without Canada doing its part in the world.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Paul Gérin-Lajoie's manifesto denounces increased military spending at a time when people are still threatened by famine, disease and extreme poverty. Between 2006 and 2009, the Liberals and Conservatives will have increased the defence budget by \$6.1 billion. The budget for official development assistance, on the other hand, will go up by only \$1 billion during that period.

In light of this imbalance, are we to understand that the government has decided to solve the world's problems with weapons rather than development assistance?

*Oral Questions***AGRICULTURE**

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my friend that the rate of international aid reached its lowest point under the Liberal government: 0.22% in 2001. Our government has announced more money for Canadian aid. In addition, out of respect for Canadian taxpayers, we are going to make sure that aid is efficient.

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is constantly boasting about her international aid budget. But everyone agrees that even if it doubles current funding, Canada will fall short of the average for OECD countries.

I therefore ask the minister, if she and her government are so serious and really want to meet the millennium targets, what is she waiting for to come up with a credible plan to meet the target of 0.7% of GDP by 2015?

• (1500)

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member again that we increased international aid by \$900 million in our most recent budget. That said, as an accountable government, we must also report to Canadian taxpayers, who have a great deal of compassion for the people who need our assistance, something the Bloc Québécois will never be able to promise, because the Bloc Québécois will never form the government. The Bloc Québécois will never be accountable to Canadians.

\* \* \*

[English]

**INCOME TRUSTS**

**Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last Thursday evening, people packed a community hall in my riding, people who lost a huge amount of money in retirement savings. They asked me to ask the Prime Minister a question: Does he not regret having fooled people by telling them he would never tax their income trusts and will he now ask the Minister of Finance to revisit this disaster the way he is scrambling to save his failed policy on investment interest?

My constituents deserve an answer, not another cheap political attack, Peter.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what the member should worry about is the double standard, not just the question of the double standard that he is worried about, but the double standard that he speaks about.

He said in 2006, "I think anybody who crosses the floor should go back to the people for ratification". He has not yet, but then again that is the same member who said at the government operations committee last month, "no one cares what I campaigned on".

We care. There are some byelections coming up. I think we can fit him in.

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government came into power 16 months ago. From the very first day it has been committed to improving the vital agricultural sector of this country which was ignored for so long by the previous Liberal regime.

The Minister of Agriculture has been quick and decisive to introduce a new funding framework to replace the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program.

Could he please tell the House what this government is doing to help farmers deal with the rising costs of production?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in reference to the CAIS program, that program was from the dark, sad, depressing era of farm policy brought in by the Liberal government.

We promised to replace the CAIS program and we are doing that with a disaster relief framework, increased and better production insurance, and a savings plan for farmers. More important, a couple of months ago the Prime Minister was on the Prairies and he announced another \$400 million to address the costs of production. That is another \$600 million for farmers, another \$2 billion for the biofuels program; 4.5 billion new dollars for farmers. The dark, sad era is over. The good times are rolling.

\* \* \*

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is true that the Conservatives have been in power for 16 months. In June 2005, the now Prime Minister wrote a letter to a widow of a veteran and said that a Conservative government would immediately extend the veterans independence program for all widows of all veterans.

This year alone we will lose about 35,000 to 40,000 of our brave World War II and Korean veterans. Many of them will leave widows behind. These widows are asking for the VIP so that they can stay in their homes longer.

The Prime Minister made a promise and we expect him to keep it. When will the Prime Minister stand up and honour his promise?

**Hon. Greg Thompson (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member will acknowledge that we did more in our first 13 months than the Liberals did in 13 years: five OSI clinics, front line workers for veterans, an ombudsman for veterans, a bill of rights and we implemented the new charter.

*Points of Order*

We are committed to enhancing the VIP. I want to let the member know that this year alone we brought 12,000 new entries into that program. That is not a bad record.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what absolute nonsense. I asked the Prime Minister to keep his promise, not to have his underlings answer this question.

I have a question on another point for veterans. Many thousands of veterans are suffering from asbestos from the ships used during the war. Many of these veterans are applying for DVA benefits but they are being denied because of their asbestos problems.

My question is for the Prime Minister or the Minister of Veterans Affairs. When will the benefit of the doubt, which is in the new veterans charter, be honoured so we can help these veterans who served us so gallantly in World War II and in Korea?

• (1505)

**Hon. Greg Thompson (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member has to be intellectually honest in his remarks but he is not being intellectually honest because he must acknowledge the 12,000 we brought in this year alone.

In terms of the veterans who are applying for disability pensions, he is referring to an issue that we worked on with our counterparts. We have the best pension entry plan in the world and the best arbitration in the world in terms of appeals. We are getting the job done for veterans.

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**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, OPP commissioner Julian Fantino has had enough of the government's failures in Caledonia. The Ontario Provincial Police are under pressure because it is holding back both sides in the dispute. However, the Minister of Indian Affairs is nowhere on this file.

Residents of Caledonia are wondering why the government is missing in action. The only thing the minister has done is to appoint a Conservative retread with no land claim experience and no mandate to negotiate.

Why will the minister not lift a finger and actually solve the dispute?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should get his facts straight. First, this is the first government in Canadian history to recognize the Haudenosaunee Council and to actually be at the table with the Six Nations. Our negotiators are there and they are able people who are doing an exceptional job.

The OPP will continue to be responsible for policing in Ontario. We will continue to work at the table with the first nations in a respectful way toward a resolution.

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**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Senate backed off on its delay tactics and finally allowed the bill fixing dates for elections to become law.

However, the Liberal dominated Senate is still stalling on the bill to limit senators' terms to eight years.

Today we learned that the Liberal senators are looking for a new obstruction tactic and are actually considering sending the bill to court to keep themselves from ever passing the bill.

The Liberal leader said months ago that he would get his senators to pass this bill. What happened?

Would the Minister for Democratic Reform comment on the Liberal senators' defiance of their leader and on the future of this bill?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as Liberal senator David Smith has often told me, "the devil finds work for idle hands to do". Well, it seems there are idle hands in the Liberal Senate and they are creatively finding new ways to avoid doing their jobs.

Top constitutional scholars testified that the term limit in the bill is constitutional. Even a Liberal Senate committee found that it was constitutional. Apparently, they do not even believe themselves.

Why will the Liberal senators not listen to their own leader and go ahead and pass term limits? Maybe it is because they do not like this Faustian pact with the unrepentant Green Party leader.

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**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During the course of question period, there were discussions from time to time about the cost of gasoline and a comment was made by a member of the government alleging that the Leader of the Opposition had said that high gasoline prices were good. I believe it was the environment minister who said that. If he were to check the quotation, I believe he would find that the comment in question can be attributed to a newspaper but not to the Leader of the Opposition.

• (1510)

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is very clear in the *Calgary Herald* of August 24 where it states:

[The Leader of the Opposition] said high gas prices are actually good for Canada....

I can also tell the House that in the Liberal leadership debate on June 10, 2006, the deputy leader of the Liberal Party said, "We've also got to have popular, practical, believable policies that may involve some form of a carbon tax...".

The Liberals' record is very clear on this issue.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to confirm what the Minister of the Environment has, in effect, now admitted. He has admitted that the language he referred to in question period was in fact in the *Calgary Herald*, not in quotation marks and, therefore, not attributable to the Leader of the Opposition.

**The Speaker:** I am sure that all hon. members appreciate the clarification that we now have in respect of statements made during question period.

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### PRIVILEGE

#### PARLIAMENTARY PRECINCT—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington on March 29, concerning the issue of confidential files in the possession of the Liberal Party of Canada. The hon. member commented further on the matter on April 17 and April 27. In reviewing this important question, the Chair also considered carefully the documentation forwarded by the hon. member on May 1.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the hon. member for having raised this matter, as well as the hon. member for Ajax-Pickering for his comments.

[*English*]

In his remarks, the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington referred to statements made to the media by the hon. member for Ajax—Pickering and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, in which they indicated that they had in their possession several boxes of documents which they claimed to have found in drawers and filing cabinets in the offices customarily occupied by the staff of the leader of the opposition.

The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington confirmed that the documents in question were the property of the Conservative Party of Canada, that they were confidential in nature and that they included the personnel files of approximately 30 past and present employees of the party, himself among them. He stated that the hon. members for Ajax—Pickering and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine had admitted inspecting the documents in question and that the hon. member for Ajax—Pickering had made specific reference to “five years worth of performance appraisals of Conservative staffers” before going on to allege “gross ineptitude” on the part of the Conservative Party.

[*Translation*]

In response to the claim that the documents had been found in drawers and filing cabinets, the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington disputed this assertion. He noted the presence, on the boxes containing them, of address labels that he said had been placed there by Conservative staff, clearly indicating the intended destination.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington also reported that while the majority of the documents had been returned to the Conservative Party, the hon. member for Ajax—Pickering had told the press that, and here he said he was quoting the hon. member for Ajax—Pickering, “the Liberal caucus is retaining possession of some of the documents to determine whether or not they contain other issues that are in the public interest”.

### *Speaker's Ruling*

The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington expressed concerns that documents of the Conservative caucus were still in the possession of the Liberal caucus and were being retained with a view to making them public at such time as this might be politically damaging to the government.

In reply, on April 17, 2007, the hon. member for Ajax—Pickering stated that all of the remaining documents had been returned to the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms on April 10, 2007. He declared that the documents had not been copied or mishandled and that only one Liberal staff member had been involved in their examination. He denied that all the documents had been boxed and the boxes labelled, stating that “the only labelled box contained videotapes of the 2004 Conservative election ads and all other materials were found in desk drawers and cabinets”.

The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington then made a further submission on his point of order, commenting on the manner in which confidential documents had been displayed at a news conference on March 26, 2007 and on the detailed description offered to the media by the hon. member for Ajax—Pickering of their contents. He identified discrepancies among a number of statements to the media by the member for Ajax—Pickering and others in his caucus, and he emphasized the diligence with which Conservative staff ordinarily manage the relocation of confidential documents.

The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington charged that the Leader of the Opposition was “guilty of facilitating actions that are an ongoing contempt of Parliament” if some of the documents had not been returned. He demanded that the identities of those involved in inspecting them be disclosed, that he be told whether any of the documents had been scanned or otherwise reproduced, and that the Leader of the Opposition explain why some of them had been displayed on his website.

In seeking recognition from the Chair that a prima facie breach of privilege had occurred, the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington maintained that his ability to discharge his duties as a member of Parliament had been impeded. He cited Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, page 229, to the effect that interference with the functioning of a member of Parliament “may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence”, and he adduced a precedent from 1996 in which an inappropriate press release by a member of Parliament had been deemed to constitute a prima facie case of privilege.

● (1515)

[*Translation*]

I have looked into this question with care, as I indicated was my intention when the issue was brought before the House. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states at p. 50:

“Parliamentary privilege” refers ... to the rights and immunities that are deemed necessary for the House of Commons, as an institution, and its Members, as representatives of the electorate, to fulfill their functions. It also refers to the powers possessed by the House to protect itself, its Members, and its procedures from undue interference, so that it can effectively carry out its principal functions which are to inquire, to debate, and to legislate.

*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

Members are aware that parliamentary privilege is strictly limited in its application. With respect to individual members, privilege provides them with a guarantee of freedom of speech, freedom from arrest in civil actions, exemption from jury duty and from appearing as a witness, and freedom from obstruction, interference, intimidation and molestation.

As I indicated in my remarks on April 17, 2007, the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington may have a grievance. However, as Speaker, I am limited to a determination of whether or not the treatment of the documents in question has interfered with the member's ability to carry out his responsibilities as a member of Parliament. It does not seem to me that this is the case.

All members, I am sure, appreciate the seriousness of this incident. Issues of personal privacy are of importance not only to those of us in this place but to all Canadians. At the same time, I can see no grounds at present to justify a finding that the use made of the documents in question constitutes a breach of the privileges of this House or of the individual member in this case, the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington continues to participate in debate fully and freely, and to attend to his other responsibilities as a member. While he may have concerns about what has occurred with respect to these documents, the Chair cannot see, on a prima facie basis, that the member's privileges have been violated.

Perhaps the hon. member should bring his concerns on this matter to the attention of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in respect of the proper handling of found documents pertaining to matters of parliamentary business and belonging to another member or to the caucus of another recognized party.

In respect of his concern regarding the privacy rights of individual members or employees of members and caucus staff, perhaps the hon. member might ask the Board of Internal Economy to review the matter of how found documents are to be handled, as an administrative matter, where the documents relate to individuals in their personal or private capacity. However, I do not think this is a case requiring the intervention of the Chair, since it fails to meet the standard required of a question of privilege.

Once again, I thank the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington for having brought this matter to the attention of the Chair.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1520)

[English]

**INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS**

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the Table the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation to the Hellenic Republic,

the United Kingdom, and the Kingdom of Norway, from March 8 to 18, 2007.

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**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 11 petitions.

\* \* \*

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## STATUS OF WOMEN

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Status of Women entitled "The Impacts of Funding and Program Changes at Status of Women Canada".

## ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development entitled "The Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999—Five-Year Review: Closing the Gaps".

In accordance with its order of reference under Standing Order 108(2) and section 343 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, the committee has considered and held hearings on the subject matter of the statutory review of the act, and agreed to it on Tuesday, April 24, 2007.

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

**Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics in relation to the statutory review of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act.

In the interest of transparency something has been brought to my attention in the last hour or so. There are a couple of dissenting opinions, and the last sentence of one of the dissenting opinions reads "Minister Day's letter is attached as an annex to this dissenting opinion".

Unfortunately, when the dissenting opinion was provided to the clerk, the letter was not attached and therefore it does not form part of this report. We will try to deal with that when we publish the report that is going to be disseminated to the public. I want to make sure that is on the record.

\* \* \*

**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-438, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (consent).

*Routine Proceedings*

He said: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my seconder, the member for Parkdale—High Park, for her support.

This bill is brought forward to deal with the problem we have within our legislation; specifically, section 159 of the Criminal Code. This section of the Criminal Code has been struck down by a number of courts, including two courts of appeal, as being against the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It, unfortunately, continues to sit on our books. Both the previous government and the current government, even though they have had opportunities, have not brought forward amendments to the Criminal Code taking that out completely.

The purpose of this bill is to do just that. It is a bit lengthy in the sense that it is deleting one specific paragraph, paragraph 159, but it also has a number of consequential paragraphs that need to be amended. That is the reason for the length of the bill.

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

\* \* \*

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the interest of moving this along, I will make my best effort to move this motion and seek the assistance of the opposition House leader in ensuring that I have it right. I move:

Whereas Huseyin Celil is a Canadian citizen who was travelling in Uzbekistan on a Canadian passport, and was extradited to China;

Whereas the Chinese government has refused to recognize Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship;

Whereas the Chinese government has refused to grant Canadian officials consular access to Mr. Celil, as per the 1999 Canada China consular agreement; and

Whereas there are serious allegations that Mr. Celil was mistreated and possibly subjected to torture while in Chinese custody, which would constitute a serious breach of the UN Convention against Torture, to which both Canada and China are parties;

This House calls upon the Government of China to grant consular access to Mr. Celil and investigate the claims of mistreatment and torture both promptly and impartially, and to ensure that Mr. Celil's rights are fully protected; to review the allegations against Mr. Celil with a view to returning him to Canada; and this House calls upon the government of Uzbekistan to explain why Mr. Celil was extradited to China instead of Canada, since he was travelling with a Canadian passport.

I would seek the support of the House for the motion.

• (1525)

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. the government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think that consent is indeed forthcoming. However, might I suggest that we just take a moment to make sure we are absolutely agreed upon the language and make sure there is no mistake. It is only a matter of moments.

**The Speaker:** Perhaps we can complete routine proceedings and then we will put the question on the motion after routine proceedings, if that is agreeable. By then I will have a copy that I could read to the House.

[*Translation*]

**PETITIONS**

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by over 900 people from a number of regions of Canada. This petition follows up on the final report of the national round tables on corporate social responsibility of Canada's extractive industries in developing countries.

The final report was prepared by an advisory group made up of members of civil society and of the industry. The document includes a series of recommendations based on the consensus reached by stakeholders regarding the development of good overseas practices for Canadian mining, oil and gas companies operating in developing countries. The multi-party round table process and the ensuing final report are a world first.

The petitioners are pleased with this report and are asking the government to demand that Canadian businesses conduct their operations abroad in compliance with clearly defined corporate responsibility standards, to establish effective monitoring processes, and to pass appropriate legislation.

[*English*]

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has been long established that 50 weeks of maternity benefits under the Employment Insurance Act are beneficial to the well-being of mother and child for at home parental bonding, but it ignores the reality of some like Roxie Malone-Richards and her beautiful new daughter, Jessie, in my riding of Edmonton East, who are deprived of the right to have this full experience due to complications with premature birth.

Roxie Malone-Richards and over 1,000 petitioners are calling for consideration to be given to amend the Employment Insurance Act and allow additional maternity benefits to start when the child leaves the hospital to go home.

## CANADA POST

**Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the following petition from my constituents of Bramalea—Gore—Malton. The petitioners call upon the minister responsible for Canada Post to review Canada Post's decision to locate community mailboxes along formerly designated rural routes and restore home mail delivery for my constituents of the Castlemore area.

The residents of the neighbourhood of Castlemore must either cross or stand alongside these roads to collect their mail and there is a clear danger to personal safety, particularly for the elderly and children.

## AGE OF CONSENT

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to bring forward today.

*Routine Proceedings*

The first one is from the very wise citizens of the city of Timmins and the communities of Englehart and Earleton in northern Ontario and it is on raising the age of consent. The petitioners are bringing forward to the House the following: that the protection of children from sexual predators must be a top priority of the federal government; that the Canadian Police Association, a number of provincial governments and a parliamentary committee report all recommend raising the age of consent; and that studies show that 14 year olds and 15 year olds are vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Whereas it is the duty of Parliament to enforce the Criminal Code to protect the most vulnerable members of our society from harm, the petitioners are asking the government to take the necessary steps to raise the age of consent from 14 to 16.

• (1530)

## PASSPORTS

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will continue the second petition, signed mostly by the good citizens of the city of Timmins, about the need for passport services in northeastern Ontario. The petitioners point out to Parliament that: passport delays have become increasingly long; it is difficult for people from the northeast to access passport services; there is no fully operational passport facility and no expedited services available for the citizens of northeastern Ontario; and this lack of service is hampering numerous economic opportunities for the region because our region is dependent on mining exploration and a lot of our citizens travel.

The citizens of Timmins—James Bay are asking the government to approve the granting of a fully operational passport office in the city of Timmins to serve the people of northeastern Ontario. It would also be able to serve the citizens of northwestern Quebec and would alleviate the current workload and delays.

[Translation]

## CANADA SUMMER JOBS

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am tabling two petitions today.

The first one deals with the Canada summer jobs program. The petitioners are asking the government to not only maintain the program, but to improve it. They are opposed to the cuts announced for next year, and they are also opposed to those that have already been made.

They also point out that this program is very useful to students looking for a first job, and they hope that the government will maintain it in its original form, and improve it.

## KYOTO PROTOCOL

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my second petition is from a group of seniors in the riding of Ahuntsic, who are asking that the Kyoto protocol be respected, as it was originally signed.

[English]

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I continue to get petitions on this important issue from across Canada.

There are several hundred here today. The petitioners are requesting that the government continue its work to combat the trafficking of persons. This is a very important issue and I am grateful for the opportunity to present it.

[Translation]

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour of presenting a petition signed by nearly 2,000 Canadians from across the country. These petitioners call on the Parliament of Canada to require Canadian businesses operating abroad to respect the environment and human rights before they can receive any financial assistance from the Canadian government.

[English]

## SENIORS

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by numerous Canadians regarding the issue of newcomer seniors. The petitioners point out that many of our seniors who have come recently to Canada are struggling to make ends meet and yet their presence here in Canada is much needed in terms of family reunification and support for our multicultural society. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to amend the Old Age Security Act and to look at the requirements for OAS and GIS to eliminate the 10 year residency requirement.

The petitioners also look for action from provincial governments on sponsorship obligations and changes to public transit, and they would like government funding for more ethno-specific affordable housing for seniors.

[Translation]

## SUMMER CAREER PLACEMENT PROGRAM

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition signed by nearly 300 people from the riding of Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, mainly people from the Île d'Orléans and upper north shore areas, who denounce the cuts made to the summer career placement program.

This is a program that is very important to young people. It often helps them land their first job. It also helps them financially by enabling them to work through the summer and earn money. Let us not forget that, when a young person gets a summer job, this provides relief to his or her parents at the same time. So, we are asking that the government restore, maintain and even enhance the summer career placement program.

*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

## FISHERIES ACT

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I stand to present a petition today signed by well over 200 constituents from Glace Bay, Catalone, Main-à-Dieu and Louisbourg, who have voiced concerns about the forthcoming legislation, the changes in the Fisheries Act, Bill C-45. There is a great deal of concern about provisions in the owner-operator regulations and transfer of licence.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to not go forward with debate and call upon the government to go forward with honest and open dialogue with fishing communities and fishers, so that any change in legislation will have the best impacts on those affected.

• (1535)

**The Speaker:** The Chair has now received the motion from the hon. government House leader .

\* \* \*

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC)** , seconded by the hon. member for Wascana, moved:

Whereas Huseyin Celil is a Canadian citizen who was travelling in Uzbekistan on a Canadian passport, and was extradited to China;

Whereas the Chinese government has refused to recognize Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship;

Whereas the Chinese government has refused to grant Canadian officials consular access to Mr. Celil, as per the 1999 Canada China Consular agreement; and

Whereas there are serious allegations that Mr. Celil was mistreated and possibly subjected to torture while in Chinese custody, which would constitute a serious breach of the UN Convention Against Torture, to which both Canada and China are parties;

This House calls upon the Government of China to grant consular access to Mr. Celil and investigate the claims of mistreatment and torture both promptly and impartially, and to ensure that Mr. Celil's rights are fully protected; and to review the allegations against Mr. Celil with a view to returning him to Canada; and this House calls upon the Government of Uzbekistan to explain why Mr. Celil was extradited to China instead of Canada since he was traveling with a Canadian passport.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like assurances that the request for the government of China to allow access and the following parts are not related to the government of China, but that the consulars who are so granted access would be allowed to investigate. Is that the case? Maybe the mover could explain. It is not the that government of China is to investigate or to determine any of these matters in regard to the access and the authority to take necessary action.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, I have given my copy of the motion to the Speaker. However, this is a motion that I think is agreed upon by all the parties in the House of Commons. It expresses clearly our concern and seeks to have the Chinese government provide consular access for Canadian consular officials to see him as a Canadian citizen. I think that is the clear intention. We also would like to see him returned to Canada and I think that is part of the intent of that motion. I think all parties are in agreement with it.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed with this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

## 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, Question No. 186 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 186—**Mr. Bill Siksay:**

What projects, grants, contributions and any other funding support has Human Resources and Social Development Canada funded for the riding of Burnaby—Douglas since February 7, 2006?

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, government information on funds, grants, loans and loan guarantees issued by departments and agencies is based on parliamentary authorities for departmental or agency programs and activities. This information is listed by department and government organization in the public accounts and disclosed on the websites of government organizations. However, government organizations do not compile or analyze expenditure information by electoral district. Consequently, at present, it would not be possible to provide the information in the form requested.

Over the course of the 39th Parliament, a number of government organizations have undertaken efforts to identify federal expenditures by postal codes which could then be summarized by electoral districts using a tool developed by Statistics Canada. While there is some promise in this approach, there remains a significant potential for error since over 5,000 postal codes straddle two or more electoral districts. Moreover, the government would have significant concerns about the quality of the financial data derived by this approach because there is no way to track the geographic area in which federal funding is actually spent. For example, federal funding could be provided to the head office of a firm situated in one electoral district, while the funding was actually spent by a subsidiary located in another electoral district. This may also be the case for payments to individuals, organizations or foundations. For these reasons, and the fact that fewer than half of government organizations have acquired the Statistics Canada tool, it is not possible to produce an accurate and comprehensive answer to this question at the present time.

### *Government Orders*

That said, Statistics Canada has initiated a process to enhance the accuracy of the tool that provides the link between postal codes and electoral districts. The process will allow departments to better approximate by electoral district data gathered on a postal code basis. The improved tool should be available in the fall of 2007. In the interim, the Privy Council Office will also launch an interdepartmental process to determine whether this tool can be extended to all government organizations as well as the means to ensure that it is used in a consistent manner across the whole of government.

[English]

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

### MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

**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 ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1540)

[English]

### CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from April 30 consideration of Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (minimum penalties for offences involving firearms) and to make a consequential amendment to another Act, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today in this place to express my support for Bill C-10, and my desire and hope that all members will see fit to support this bill as well.

Bill C-10 is one of a suite of government initiatives that we have introduced in this House in an attempt to get tough on crime. We have seen several other initiatives pass before this House in debate, but unfortunately, I must say at the outset my concern is that members of the opposition, particularly the official opposition, seem to have tried, almost on a continuous basis, to obstruct debate on these bills.

I speak of Bill C-10 now because we have seen many times before when debate has been engaged that members of the official opposition have moved concurrence motions to interrupt that debate.

Again I must say that despite the fact that we have given our best efforts to try to introduce legislation that not only would get tough on crime, but in doing so would protect Canadian citizens and Canadian communities, we have seen a concerted effort by members of the opposition to water down bills in committee. When that has not worked, they have tried to obstruct introduction and debate of these bills in this place.

I can only say that I find that to be unconscionable, quite frankly, because I think that these bills, even though there may be genuine differences of opinion by members of the opposition, at least deserve the opportunity to be debated fully in this place. Any attempts that we have seen by members of the opposition to interrupt such debate is, as I mentioned before, unconscionable. I am very pleased today to see that at least this day we have an opportunity to continue debate on this very important bill.

It is important that members of this House and other Canadians who may be watching this debate understand fully the implications behind Bill C-10 and its intent. Quite frankly, Bill C-10 is an attempt to increase and impose mandatory minimum sentences on those individuals convicted of crimes, either gang related or firearm related crimes.

Mandatory minimum sentences are initiatives to which all opposition parties in the last federal election committed in their own campaign platforms. We had been very clear in our commitment that if elected, we would introduce legislation that would deal with mandatory minimum sentences for a number of offences, use and non-use offences that have dealt with firearms.

If I recall, the Liberal Party during the last election campaign also supported those initiatives. In fact the Liberals said that if they were elected, they would ask that mandatory minimum sentences be doubled if they formed government. In fact just the opposite was true. When Bill C-10 was introduced at committee, we saw a combined opposition, primarily led by the Liberal Party of Canada, that seemed to gut Bill C-10.

I found it to be somewhat hypocritical that on one hand, during the campaign when Canadian voters were examining which political party they wished to vote for, on the issues of law and order and crime in general, the Liberals said at that time that should they be elected to government, they would be introducing legislation that would double the mandatory minimums for gun related and gang related offences. Yet what happened in reality away from the spotlight of an election campaign, in committee we saw that the Liberals wanted to gut the bill and in fact remove all but two of the clauses of that bill.

On one hand, the Liberals spoke to the Canadian electorate about one thing, but the reality is that when they got behind the closed doors of the committee chambers, they did quite another. I find that to be quite reprehensible.

I believe that Canadians deserve to be treated with respect, and we saw anything but that with respect to the Liberals with Bill C-10.

*Government Orders*

Luckily, however, we have seen that the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, the hon. member representing the NDP, has found it in his heart and in his party's heart to restore some of the initiatives contained in Bill C-10 and support us in getting this bill passed through this place and to eventually make it into law. I applaud the member for Windsor—Tecumseh for his initiative and support in this matter.

• (1545)

What the bill states, quite frankly, quite clearly and quite simply, is that if someone is convicted of a first offence, gang, gun or firearm related, there would be a five year minimum sentence imposed by the judiciary. For any second or subsequent offence, it would be a seven year minimum sentence.

This is a reasonable approach. In fact, when the original Bill C-10 was introduced, we wanted even tougher legislation. We wanted five years for the first offence or conviction, seven years for the second, and then 10 years for the third and subsequent offences. However, again the opposition decided to gut that provision and without the support of the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, we would see Bill C-10 in a state nowhere near the original bill that it was intended to be.

However, I think we have struck a reasonable compromise with the support of our colleagues from the NDP in restoring at least some of the provisions of the original Bill C-10, so that now we see that we will be getting support to impose five year minimum sentences on the first offence and seven years for second and subsequent offences.

Not only do I think that is reasonable, but it reflects the will of the majority of the Canadian public. For too long Canadians have seen a justice system, and some would call it a revolving justice system, where individuals convicted of serious gun related crimes would far too often be back out on the street before the end of their sentences. In fact, time and time again people in my riding have said to me, "Why do you not do something, if you are finally elected and become the government of this land, about protecting Canadian citizens?"

I am a big believer in deterrents. I believe that if individuals who are considering the commission of a crime knew that if caught, sentenced and convicted, the sentence at the end of the day would be severe enough, that would act as an effective deterrent to the commission of that crime. In all cases, certainly not; in some cases, yes, I believe it would happen.

My point is that if we can do anything that would prevent or reduce the level of incidence of serious crimes, that is an initiative in which we as parliamentarians should be engaging. We should support those initiatives.

I have heard time and time again from members of the opposition that statistics tell a different story, that statistics say that deterrents such as mandatory minimums do not work. With all due respect, I disagree vehemently with the approach taken by the Liberals. I believe that deterrents do work and we should do everything in our power to set a course of action in our justice system in Canada to ensure that serious offences are dealt with severely.

I agree with members of the opposition when they say that greater effort should be put into trying to find ways to prevent crime from occurring originally. I agree with that. The Conservative Party of Canada agrees with that. The only difference I see between our party and opposition members is that when all exhaustive efforts to prevent crime from occurring fail and serious offences occur, the perpetrators should actually be punished and punished severely.

This is the essence behind Bill C-10, to impose mandatory minimums on individuals who commit gang related or firearm related offences. It will act as a deterrent. It is a bill that I ask all members of this place to support.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to Bill C-10 today. Essentially, the purpose of this bill is to significantly increase minimum sentences for firearms related offences.

In his speech, my colleague who spoke just now accused the opposition of being small-minded and hypocritical, among other things, about Bill C-10 in the parliamentary committee and in the House of Commons. I feel I must explain that the Bloc has disagreed throughout the Bill C-10 process not because of surface issues but because of substantive issues. The approach the government is seeking to initiate with this bill is damaging and dangerous, and we do not think it will bring about concrete results.

The Conservative government's approach, as expressed in Bill C-10, is contrary to the approach Quebecers have always wanted, an approach that often produces real results. We have always focused on prevention and rehabilitation. I remember the debates on young offenders here in the House of Commons, debates that were led by the then member for Berthier—Montcalm, who was our party's justice critic.

We proved that Quebec's approach to the issue produced results and that the prevention and rehabilitation approach justified supporting a point of view that, while diametrically opposed to the one proposed by the federal government, nevertheless maintained the social equilibrium we needed. Members of the Bloc Québécois are against this bill because it is damaging and ineffective and will not make our citizens safer.

We are among those in this House who believe that to reduce violence in our society, we must work on prevention. We believe that we must implement measures such as gun control. We believe that we must, for example, reduce the amount of violence on television. This is the purpose of my bill to amend the Canadian Broadcasting Act. We believe that we must take preventive measures to reduce violence on television, which is the complete opposite of the government's approach in Bill C-10.

*Government Orders*

Also, we believe that minimum sentences unnecessarily tie the hands of judges, who remain in the best position to determine what sentence is the most appropriate in light of all the facts of the case. The Robert Latimer case, where a man who wanted to end the suffering of his 12-year-old daughter, took her life out of compassion, shows that although this man was sentenced to 25 years in prison, the judges' assessment was quite different. The problem with these minimum sentences is that some sentences are not really commensurate with the person's actions. The sentence should be personalized, instead of having a mandatory minimum penalty that often does not fit the crime committed.

Third, experts indicate that the use of minimum sentences does not lower crime rates or recidivism rates. I would remind the House about a study conducted in 1997 for the Department of Justice Canada by University of Ottawa criminologist Julian Roberts. Mr. Roberts concluded that: "mandatory sentences of imprisonment have been introduced in a number of western nations. ... The studies that have examined the impact of these laws reported variable effects on prison populations, and no discernible effect on crime rates."

● (1550)

Clearly, the impact of minimum sentences has not been conclusive. When we look at the statistics, even though the government tries to ignore them and says that the opposition is manipulating the figures, the fact remains that homicide rates—including first and second degree murder, and manslaughter—have dropped by 36% in recent years.

During that time, crime rates did not increase. The homicide rate did not increase. On the contrary, it fell. In 1975, there were three victims for every 100,000 inhabitants. In 2004, by contrast, there were only 1.95 for every 100,000 inhabitants. Thus, in recent years, we have not seen an increase in the homicide rate. On the contrary, it went down.

The problem with the approach the government would like to take is that it tries to copy an American model, a model initiated south of the border. But our statistics are different from those of the United States.

In the United States, in 2003, there were five victims for every 100,000 inhabitants. In Canada, we had 1.73 victims for every 100,000 inhabitants and in Quebec there were 1.34 for every 100,000 inhabitants. They would like the public to believe that the homicide rate has increased; but that is completely false as it has decreased by 36%. The government wants policies from south of the border to be adopted here in Canada. That is completely wrong. Better results will not be achieved by handing down longer or more prison terms. On the contrary. If you believe in prevention and rehabilitation and look at Quebec's example, you will realize that the results are a good deal better than those south of the Canadian border. That is why we are opposed to Bill C-10.

In the two minutes I have left, I will say that rather than increasing minimum sentences, the government should be reviewing the parole process. My colleague from Ahuntsic probably gave the best example in question period yesterday when she asked the Minister of Public Safety the following question:

—a halfway house in my riding, located very close to an elementary school, houses Clermont Bégin, a sexual predator whom the National Parole Board still considers very dangerous. My constituents are worried.

Setting aside the fine work being done by the staff at this halfway house, does the Minister of Public Safety think it is right that a facility like this, located fewer than 300 metres from an elementary school, is housing sexual predators?

Consequently, rather than looking at increasing minimum sentences, the government should carry out a review of the parole board process.

In closing, I will say that we are opposed to this bill. Our reasons for opposing it are not superficial. There are fundamental issues and cosmetic amendments will not satisfy the approach proposed by the Bloc Québécois. We believe in prevention and in rehabilitation. For these reasons we are opposed to Bill C-10.

● (1555)

[*English*]

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech and I am troubled by some of his remarks. Obviously the government believes in prevention and rehabilitation. Obviously rehabilitation is a tremendous outcome following detention in a federal facility for a serious crime. However, it does not deliver justice in any regard.

For the victims who fall prey to violent gun crimes, acts involving guns, does the member not feel the government has an obligation to ensure that justice is served and that there is a penalty that serves as a deterrent so people who would threaten others with guns no longer do that?

I agree that prevention and rehabilitation are very good things to work toward, but there must be justice in the justice system. It is time to re-balance it. I would love to hear what the hon. member has to say.

● (1600)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Speaker, of course, justice must be served in cases such as the ones that my colleague talks about. Justice must be served, but it must be personalized, and penalties must fit the crime. In this regard, we must trust judges.

It is certainly not by providing for minimal penalties, with very specific numbers of years, that we will correct the situation. To ensure that situations such as those do not occur again, a more stringent firearm control system must be established. This will prevent such situations from happening again. Indeed, justice must be served, and that is why we have a justice system in Canada.

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of my colleague who followed this debate. During the debate, he certainly heard the Conservative government provide examples of unacceptable sentences.

Did he hear the government mention an unacceptable sentence that has been maintained by an appeal court in the country?

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Speaker, to say the least, this is a question for a criminal lawyer that an economist can hardly answer. However, I can say that this bill does not respond to the wishes of Quebec's society.

I remind the House that we have had debates in this Parliament on the Young Offenders Act. Essentially, we believe that prevention and rehabilitation must be the thrust of this bill. Unfortunately, the government would not listen.

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I was listening to my dear colleague express some of the reserves he has with regard to Bill C-10. I would like to hear what he has to say on one particular point.

As other members of this House, I saw that member introduce last week a bill aimed at reducing violence in television broadcasts. Many members on the government side are claiming that they want to fight crime, to better protect our fellow citizens and to enact bills providing for increased penalties as a form of repression.

However, they voted against that bill to reduce violence in television broadcasts. As you know, certain studies show that television violence can lead to other forms of violence.

I would like the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie to comment on this.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie has 30 seconds left.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the type of approach that we favour. Studies have shown very clearly, including the one published by none other than the communication department of Virginia Tech University, that a youth who sees images of violence will try to duplicate them. That means that if we focus on prevention with regard to violence, I am deeply convinced that we will be able to fight—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Resuming debate. The hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

[*English*]

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood would like to take my spot. Can we switch?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Newton—North Delta. As you know a member of Parliament's life is somewhat frantic at times and this is one of those days. I want to thank him for his generosity and I appreciate the opportunity to speak in this debate.

It is a bit of a bizarre bill. It is quite obvious this is the government's attempt to switch from a pretty bad week it had. Conservatives want to get back to their so-called law and order agenda, which is little more than a cheap ploy to take people's attention away from their hapless handling of Afghanistan, the environment, income trusts, interest deductibility and a whole variety of other economic issues.

It is beyond me why the government considers increasing minimum mandatory penalties to be a matter of such urgent national

importance that it has marginalized far more other important issues such as income trusts, interest deductibility and fighting climate change and making excuses and firing incompetent ministers of defence and for that matter, for finance. The emphasis on this matter is even more perplexing when it is taken into account that, contrary to myth propagated by the government, crime rates have in fact generally been declining since the early nineties. Of course facts never get in the way of legislation for the government.

A number of reasonable suggestions were made by Liberal members at the committee with respect to trying to put the bill into some sort of a reasonable context, but they were rejected and the government quite clearly indicated that it was not interested. Conservatives were rather soft on the causes of crime. There is absolutely no interest in dealing with those root causes.

In fact, the government's lax attitude toward gun control makes it easier to obtain guns. It has been starving the gun registry and now there are more guns on the streets of Toronto and other cities. To no great surprise, there is more violence and there is more violence that is associated with guns. So much for a law and order party. The Conservatives want everyone else obey the laws, but when it suits them, they do not want to obey the gun control laws and they want to ensure they fade into oblivion.

It is more than just a little perverse to contribute to the guns on the street and then come along and save the problem it just created. More guns are on the street in part because of that party. More guns and more violence means more criminality. More criminality means more court time and more taxpayer money, more prisoners and a backlogged justice system, all because of the government's fear of alienating the very powerful gun lobby.

Once again we see a vicious cycle caused by misplaced priorities and identification of the problem of a party that is soft on the causes of crime. The Conservatives would rather throw money at the problem after they created it in the first place because of this self-perpetuating counter-productive process.

I suggest that the cynical government's true intent in Bill C-10 is to create the illusion that it is taking effective measures with respect to making Canadian communities safer. In fact, this piecemeal, incoherent, punishment based obsession to crime is all about optics and nothing but optics.

Simply put, the approach of Conservatives to crime is more concerned with appearance rather than substance, which would explain why they ignore the best advice of experts in the area who have long argued for a balanced and comprehensive approach to crime, which consists in equal parts of prevention, deterrence and rehabilitation.

The government is not fond of listening to anyone. In fact, it does not even listen to its bureaucrats. There was an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* entitled "Tories warned early automatic prison terms won't work". At various points in the article, it says:

—within days of taking office, was warned by senior federal bureaucrats a central election pledge to impose new automatic prison terms won't deter crime nor protect the public.

*Government Orders*

•(1605)

The Conservatives, apparently, ignored the advice from the justice department lawyers. Their briefing book said that minimum mandatory sentences had no discernible benefits and that they prompt more people to plea bargain their way out of jail.

It is not just their own lawyers the Conservatives ignore. They also ignore criminologists, the people who make their living in this field, who have actually studied the phenomenon and who give advice that is universally consistent. Many criminologists are actually very dismissive of minimum mandatory sentences because all they do is clog prisons and there is scant evidence they in fact deter crime.

Having ignored their experts and their own department, the Conservatives also chose to ignore international experience where many jurisdictions are backing away from minimum mandatory sentences because they do not work. A number of U.S. states have abandoned this particular approach. The department is ignored, the committee is ignored, the experts are ignored, international experience is ignored and, of course, the community is ignored.

The other reason we oppose Bill C-10 is because of its serious unintended consequence. When discretion is taken away from judges, it impedes their efforts to tailor sentencing in accordance with the particular circumstances of each offender and each offence. Each offence is unique and it is very difficult to achieve a cookie cutter approach to justice. I do not believe the government is actually interested in justice. It is interested in the conviction process. As long as there are convictions, it is fine, and justice is kind of an incidental byproduct.

The fact remains that there is anything but a widespread consensus that mandatory minimum penalties have much value as deterrents to crime, which helps explain why many other jurisdictions and stakeholder groups remain doubtful of their effectiveness.

However, the evidence puts a lie to such a distorted image of the crime situation in this country because crime has actually been going down over the past 15 years, in some categories of crime quite dramatically and in the category of violent crime not as dramatically.

This past weekend I attended a few events in my riding and met with about 100 people over the course of the weekend. I can honestly say that not one person mentioned Bill C-10 to me and not one person wanted to talk to me about minimum mandatory sentences. In fact, I do not even recollect any conversation about criminal issues whatsoever. However, among people's chief concerns were the environment and Afghanistan and one or two talked about income trusts.

Last year the United Way identified a number of postal codes in the GTA which are particularly impoverished areas. One of those postal codes is in my riding. The United Way, the TD Bank and other interested community leaders got together and asked the community what they could do. The community and community leaders worked together. In a short period of time an alliance was formed among the community leadership and they addressed the real causes of crime.

I can say that in the two years that the United Way has been working in that postal code, real crime in real terms has actually been

reduced. The police love this initiative, the community is thrilled and the leadership is quietly quite satisfied. Some people are moving back to the area after having put their houses up for sale.

Accompanying this initiative is a commitment on the part of the government to spend something in the order of about \$250 million. I put a challenge out to the minister. If he could pro-rate that among 308 ridings, I would appreciate my riding receiving its share and forgetting about this bill. I can tell him and the House that if that pro-rated share came to my riding, it would do more to reduce the causes of crime than all of these minimum mandatory so-called justice and tough on crime bills put together.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak and thank my colleague from Newton—North Delta for sharing his time.

•(1610)

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's interest in the crime and justice issues but some of his information was so factually incorrect that I thought I might stand for a moment to offer some comments on that.

He just made reference to the \$250 million and how he would like that spread around. I wonder what he would like to do with the \$2 billion spent on the gun registry boondoggle. How many MRIs, et cetera, could that buy across this country. To use such a fallacious argument, as he has just done, is a waste of time.

However, on some of the information that he has presented, he is right in the fact that the rate of crime in this country has gone down, but the rate of violent crime in this country has gone up.

•(1615)

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** No it hasn't.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** It has and the statistics prove it. I ask the hon. member to check the testimony given at the justice committee when Bill C-215 was presented. The verification of those facts came forward from the justice committee as well as all the independent expert witnesses.

The reason I am a little more familiar with Bill C-215 is from having presented the bill which I authored. However, at that particular point it should be noted that the bill passed second reading with the support of a member of the Liberal Party as well. Quite obviously, regretfully, Parliament was dissolved and the bill did not go on.

The member mentioned that everyone was backing away from this. I can assure him that is not the case. A number of people are backing away from minimum mandatory sentences but they are not for violent crime. They are for small summary conviction offences. I totally agree that we should not have minimum mandatory penalties. However, for certain serious violent crimes, where people are threatened with a gun, I ask the hon. member if he has ever looked down the barrel of a gun or talked to the families of the victims that have been devastated by these potentially deadly weapons.

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Speaker, I regret to say that I actually have looked down the barrel of a gun because someone did pull a gun on me. It was not my favourite day, shall we say.

*Government Orders*

The hon. member seems to have adopted the Prime Minister's somewhat selective memory on issues with respect to crime. Overall crime is down to something in the order of 25% since 1991 and violent crime has actually decreased 7.6% over the same period of time. So again he is wrong.

What the hon. member does not seem to understand is that when the Conservatives basically destroyed the gun registry by de-funding it and by doing pretty well everything possible to destroy the gun registry, they made guns more available. When guns are made more available, it follows that more criminality will occur, more people will be in the justice system, more people will be in prisons and therefore those prisons will need more funds.

What the Minister of Public Safety is doing is funding more prisons. Why does he not deal with something real simple like getting those guns off the street?

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned several things and, quite frankly, I think his facts are just wrong. He quotes crime statistics but we all know crime statistics only record reported crime. If one cannot get police officers to respond because they are stretched to the limits of trying to operate within their communities without the resources, people stop reporting it. The problem is that people do not feel safe.

The member knows very well that a number of the individuals who committed gun crimes in the city of Toronto were either ordered not to possess guns, were on parole or were awaiting trial. These people should not have been on the streets. Bills like C-10 would prevent them from reoffending and threatening others with guns. He should support it.

**Hon. John McKay:** I do not know whether this is parliamentary language, Mr. Speaker, but Bill C-10 will do diddly-squat for getting guns off the street or for reducing criminality. It will do absolutely nothing.

If the hon. member cannot read statistics, then I am sure there are people like Professor Doob at the University of Toronto who will help him out with the statistics. He appeared before the committee and he is a noted expert and a noted criminologist who has said that violent crime is down.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we need to recognize from the outset that all of us here want the same thing. We want less crime and especially less violent crime. We are looking for the best solution, and we do not agree on what the best solution is.

I would first like to talk about my own experience. I began practising criminal law in 1966 by chance. I was one of the first four young lawyers to leave university and join the crown prosecutors' office in Montreal. I then joined the federal crown prosecutors' office. A large firm recruited me, and I eventually opened my own office before entering politics. I served first as public safety minister—the position I held the longest within the Government of Quebec—then as justice minister and finally as transport minister for a short time. My experience has therefore always been in criminal law.

From the start, I asked myself why people committed crimes and what we could do to reduce crime. The answer does not lie just in the

practice of law. I quickly realized that criminology might hold the answer, so I joined the Société de criminologie, where I learned things that ran contrary to what I would naturally have thought. For example, fear of punishment has little effect on crime. Fear of being caught is more likely to have an impact. The severity of the punishment has little effect.

Why am I against minimum sentences despite all my experience? Because minimum sentences are meaningless. First of all, criminals do not know what the minimum sentences are. Not only do they not know them, but I am certain that not one member of this House could pass a test on the number and length of minimum sentences in Canada. Just ask any of the members who will be speaking on this bill what the difference is between the minimum sentences for first-degree and second-degree murder. If we do not know them, imagine the criminals.

Furthermore, criminals are not thinking about minimum sentences while they are committing offences. If they think they are going to be caught, they do not go ahead with it. They are not thinking about their sentencing. We must also consider the state one must be in while committing a crime. It is difficult for us to imagine, because we are honest people and we probably all also practice intellectual honesty. Crime, however, is usually committed with extreme impulsiveness. Indeed, engaging in criminal behaviour is not a rational process.

Experience also shows that minimum sentences do not work. The best example of this comes from within our borders. Among the minimum sentences proposed to us here is a seven year minimum sentence. Seven years. That reminds me of a well-known minimum sentence. That was the minimum sentence for importing marijuana. Marijuana began entering Canada in the late 1960s. People began using it and it became quite popular. The marijuana grown in Canada had no hallucinogenic effect. Thus, all the marijuana consumed in Canada during the 1970s and even the 1980s came from outside Canada. The minimum sentence for importing marijuana was seven years of imprisonment. This did nothing to deter people from importing it, any way they could. Most of the time, those who were caught did not know they risked facing a minimum of seven years in prison. I saw this myself in my practice. When that minimum sentence was declared unconstitutional, there was no increase in that particular crime.

We saw the same thing with the death penalty. It seems to me that the death penalty should have had the most deterrent effect on those who commit crimes. Yet, since the death penalty was abolished in Canada, the homicide rate has gone down.

On the other hand, we managed to lower crime in an area where minimum sentences did not apply. Some minimum sentences are small and were around then. We upheld them. I am talking about impaired driving, drinking and driving. There are far fewer impaired driving offences today. We did not achieve these results by increasing sentences; this was achieved through a wide range of public awareness and education campaigns.

*Government Orders*

●(1620)

South of the border, we see the U.S. experience. The Americans incarcerate six times as many people as we do and, yet, the homicide rate in the U.S. is three times ours. Is this really an example we want to follow? I often see that the Conservatives are truly geared toward the U.S. model, when they are looking for models to support the legislation they want to introduce.

Let us look at a number of countries. The U.S. incarceration rate is six times greater than Canada's and their homicide rate is three times greater than ours. Their incarceration rate is five times greater than England's and their homicide rate is five times greater than England's. Their incarceration rate is four times greater than Australia's and their homicide rate is six times greater than Australia's. Their incarceration rate is six times greater than Germany's and their homicide rate is seven times greater than Germany's. Their incarceration rate is three and a half times greater than France's and their homicide rate is eight times greater than France's. As far as Finland, Switzerland and Denmark are concerned, the U.S. incarceration rate is 10 to 11 times greater than in those countries and the U.S. homicide rate is three times greater than Finland's, six times greater than Switzerland's and five times greater than Denmark's.

Experience everywhere shows that incarceration does not influence homicide rates.

What is funny is that every time I talk to educated Americans and mention the differences in homicide rates, they all tell me that the main reason the homicide rate is higher in the United States is because people are free to obtain guns and because of the number of guns in the country.

The Conservatives, who—as I have noticed—often follow the example of American Republicans, are perpetuating this same contradiction: wanting to imprison more people, but leaving more guns in circulation. They should take the time to look at the American statistics. It is as if they do not want to. If they looked at them, they would see that their solution is not a good one.

I have also noticed something else: when we set minimum penalties, we always look at the worst cases. What is unfortunate is that these minimum penalties must also be applied in less serious cases. I am thinking specifically about cases of being an accessory, where a wife does not like that her husband has a gun, or does not like something, but allows the gun to be kept in their house and even goes as far as hiding it in a certain place. It does not make sense to punish the wife the same way as her husband, who uses guns to commit crimes. But, with the minimum penalties the Conservatives are creating, they would have the same sentence.

The real way to reduce crime is through the important role that judges play by individualizing sentences.

I have also noticed that when the Conservatives give examples of too much leniency in the courts, they give extreme examples. I have never heard them cite an appeal court case. It should be understood that, in this country, probably tens of thousands of sentences are handed down every day by hundreds, if not thousands, of judges. It is public knowledge that the media do not report the less interesting

cases; the media report extraordinary cases, and so those are the only ones we hear about.

When a sentence is unwarranted, changing the law is not the solution; an appeal must be filed first. In my opinion, if we examine the decisions of the court of appeal, we see that they are perfectly adequate. I heard a Conservative speaker talking about revolving doors and the fact that people see that sentences are not stiff. An analysis of the statistics shows us that our rate of incarceration is comparable to that of most western countries except for one. There is one country that is quite different from all other western countries.

●(1625)

There is one, I am not quite sure—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Order, please. We will proceed to questions and comments. The hon. member for Mississauga South.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member raised some very important and interesting facts about comparative crime rates.

One of the bits of research that I was able to look at basically indicated that the fastest growing industry in the United States today is the privatization and building of jails. It has become an enormous industry in the United States. Arguably, in most jurisdictions the penalty regime in the United States is more severe than it is in Canada, and yet the crime rate on a comparative basis is three times higher.

This is a serious situation to consider in terms of getting it right. Maybe the issue is not so much a theme of getting tough on crime as it is on getting stronger on crime prevention, crime reduction. Canadians want to see a balanced approach and appropriate sentencing as well as appropriate prevention measures and rehabilitation.

●(1630)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin has the floor. Before he stands up, I want to apologize for interrupting him, but I gave him a signal to indicate when he had only two minutes, and then one minute left for his speech.

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

In United States, things are terrible. They put six times more people in prison than we do. Their murder rate is three times higher than ours. It is also revealing to know that their robbery and armed robbery rates are 60% higher than ours. I hope that we will not follow the American model. I sincerely believe that we cannot afford to put that many people in prison.

*Government Orders*

Why are there private prisons in United States? It is because most inmates should not be in prison. They represent no danger to society and no supervision problem. In United States, the most serious cases are not in private prisons. The kind of criminals we have in Canadian prisons are not handed over to private companies. What these companies get are the offenders who only need watching. In fact, as soon as they show any sign of becoming dangerous, they are sent to regular prisons.

What an incredible waste of energy, all the more so because prison is still considered to be the school for crime. Prison sentences must be used sparingly as most civilized countries have realized. There is only one civilized country that thinks differently and it is the United States. Earlier, you heard what I said about Germany, the Scandinavian countries, France and Australia. I hope that the present government will not take us on the same path as the Americans.

[*English*]

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is said by many democrats south of the border that the republican's would sooner deal with social issues in the electric chair rather than in the high chair.

Does my colleague believe there is a fear that we are drifting more toward that American republican model in taking these measures? Should money be spent more on housing development and affordable housing rather than housing prisoners? I would like the member to comment on the relationship between investment and social programs, and what is being presented here today as legislation.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin should know that he has 25 seconds left to answer.

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** Mr. Speaker, of course, I agree with the member. However, I would say that what distinguishes us, as he has noted, are facts, statistics.

Everyone can look at the statistics on the Internet. We keep a record of crimes in Canada and it is on Juristat. It can be accessed through Google by typing Juristat, and it is now free of charge.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, Aerospace Industry; the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Afghanistan; the hon. member for Don Valley East, The Budget.

• (1635)

[*English*]

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, crime prevention and personal safety hit at the very core of daily life for citizens across this country.

When I sit down with concerned citizens from my own riding of Newton—North Delta in their living rooms, in the coffee shops, or

when I visit our high schools, I hear the same concerns I have as a father and as a local businessman.

This has never been a partisan debate. One can try to make it one, as this government has tried time and time again.

It claims that being tough on crime is some Conservative policy. Unfortunately, as with so much of this government's record, this is more fiction than fact. It is fiction to claim that the Conservatives will put 2,500 more police officers in our cities. We know this is a promise that is all talk, no action.

Where are those new officers? Not one in my riding. Not one in any riding across this country. We can look in the budget for new funding to provide for RCMP officers, but we will not find it. Again, it is more fiction than fact.

We can talk to the mayor of Vancouver who has put more officers on his streets than this government has put across our country. He cannot depend on this government to do more than talk about crime. No mayor can and no citizen can.

Talk is cheap. But just talking about crime is not enough for my constituents. It never was and it never will be. If people are in a community like mine and they care about crime, what do they do?

The city of Surrey RCMP and the Delta police have moved forward with the community on their own crime prevention strategy. This was officially launched in Surrey on February 26, an event which I had the honour of addressing. We have worked together, with no help from this Conservative government, and the results speak for themselves. Auto theft in Surrey is down 22% and business break-and-enters in the Whalley area of Surrey are down by an impressive 45%.

This kind of approach has my full support as the elected member of Parliament for the people of Newton—North Delta. This kind of approach has the full support of my leader for Canadians. In fact, it is with examples like my community in mind that the Liberal Party has put forward its own comprehensive crime prevention plan.

The most effective way to protect our homes and our rights is to catch and convict more criminals. It is the government's duty to ensure that criminals know they will be caught and convicted. I believe there is no question that sentences are an important part of the solution. Serious crimes should carry serious penalties.

I can say that when I speak to my constituents, when I speak to my family, and when I speak to other members of Parliament, there is no question that all Canadians are looking for these tougher measures to help stop crime before it happens.

However, we now that fighting crime with longer sentences alone is not the only solution. Canada has to make sure that we have a balance between effective sentencing and strong social strategies.

Surrey and Delta know this. I wonder why this government does not. Action on the municipal level means that we must be just as ready to invest at the federal level.

*Government Orders*

The Liberal Party has committed to providing funds to hire more police officers. In our platform, we have committed an extra \$200 million for more RCMP officers as part of a new rapid response team. We will provide immediate help to local police departments to combat guns and gang activity, as well as organized crime and drug trafficking.

• (1640)

Canadians are tired of waiting for action. They want us to act now. Canadians realize that the Conservative government is not willing to take concrete action toward providing effective policing in our communities.

Over the past years, the Liberal Party has offered to help pass six major pieces of criminal justice legislation. We have offered to help the Conservatives pass legislation that raises the age of consent, improves the DNA data bank and modernizes the criminal justice procedures.

The Conservatives have thus far refused these offers of support and actively worked to delay passing their own legislation.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** I've got a question for you Sukh.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** The hon. member can ask the question when I am given the opportunity to answer him.

This is one question I want to ask the Prime Minister on behalf of my constituents. When will he stop the empty electioneering and get serious about moving forward on protecting our children, our seniors and our communities?

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** You're blocking us in committee. When are you going to get serious about it?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** The Liberals are very serious about dealing with the situation. That is why I am standing in the House today, and it is my time.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, you will acknowledge that it is my time to address the House. When the time comes to ask questions, I will be glad to have hon. members ask me questions and I will answer them.

Victims of crime do not care about politics or headlines that the members on the other side raise. They just want to know that criminals will be stopped, caught and punished. It is time for this government to follow the city of Surrey's lead and take the necessary steps to get the job done. We need action now, not just talk.

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from British Columbia on the other side of the House for made some interesting comments in terms of the coming of the Liberals' view of how they were going to be pro-security for Canadians. Based on what they have done recently, it is hard to believe that they are on this.

We are debating Bill C-10 today. It has a five year mandatory minimum penalty for a first conviction using a firearm, seven years for a second conviction and ten years for a third and subsequent convictions. Under the present system, it is currently four years, regardless of previous convictions.

Does my colleague from British Columbia support getting tough on criminals who use guns? For mandatory minimum penalties, what does he not like about having people serve time for serious crimes?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Burlington is a good friend of mine. In fact, I am sure the hon. member listened to my speech when I said that a serious crime should carry serious penalties. I do not disagree with that. On the other hand, I would like the hon. member for Burlington to help me to talk about those vulnerable people in our society who need help the most. We have to act on preventing crime. It can only be prevented if we have strong social programs in place.

The biggest piece of the pie that is missing is stronger social programs. We had child care agreements with the provinces. That was a landmark achievement, which the previous Liberal government made with the provinces to educate children, so children would receive the care they needed and would not commit crimes.

First and foremost, we have to ensure that criminals do not reach the stage where they are criminals.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague whether, during the debate, the Conservatives gave him an example of people who had committed serious crimes and who had not been severely punished by judges.

[*English*]

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke in the House before me. Again, when it comes to the Conservatives, all they want to do is electioneer with taxpayer dollars and they are not serious enough to deal with the situation at a deep level.

I go to the people of Newton—North Delta and my constituents come to me. In fact, I have not received a single letter on the bill. Most of the letters I receive are on child care, the Kelowna agreement, the income trust, all the betrayals that the Conservative government has made to make things worse in Canada for Canadian people.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I draw to the attention of the hon. member the fact that well in excess of 90% of the major violent crimes are committed with firearms, which are already prohibited. They are illegal. Every one of these offences committed with a firearm is not just a simple offence, but a potentially deadly offence.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I reiterate that serious crime should carry serious penalties. On the other hand, when it comes to the gun registry, if we go to any police officer across the country, every one of them is for the gun registry. That is a step toward—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Châteauguay—Saint-Constant.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in today's debate on the government's motion concerning Bill C-10, an act to amend the Criminal Code (offences involving firearms).

*Government Orders*

This is not the first time I have commented on this bill. Initially, Bill C-10 sought to amend the Criminal Code to increase minimum prison sentences to five, seven or 10 years, depending on whether the crime was a repeat offence, for eight serious offences involving the use of a firearm.

The bill set out prison terms according to several factors, including whether the firearm in question was a restricted weapon or a prohibited weapon, or if the offence was committed in connection with a criminal organization.

The bill also set out minimum prison sentences from one to five years according to the number, if any, of previous convictions for other firearm-related offences. It also created two new offences: breaking and entering to steal a firearm, and robbery to steal a firearm.

My colleagues and I have read and analyzed every detail of this bill very carefully. The Bloc Québécois has always been a staunch supporter of fighting crime via rehabilitation. We believe that the best way to eliminate the scourge of violence is to deal with the causes of violence. The Bloc supports a justice model based on a personalized process that recognizes that each case is unique. Long-term solutions to deterring crime are based on rehabilitation. We also think that judges are in the best position to determine the most appropriate sentence in light of the facts presented to them.

That is why, in the Standing Committee on Justice, we brought this concept of justice to the forefront along with our concerns about the government's vision of law and order. The validity of this approach was corroborated by most of the witnesses who appeared before the committee. Bill C-10 is damaging and ineffective because there is no convincing evidence that it will make citizens safer.

The experts who testified before the committee said that minimum sentences did not reduce the crime rate or the recidivism rate. In addition, the clerk of the Standing Committee on Justice provided us with some 30 American and Canadian studies showing that there is no correlation between mandatory minimum sentences, deterrence and the crime rate.

After it was studied in committee, Bill C-10 was gutted, an indication that the government's desire for tougher legislation is at odds with the other parties' vision. Only clause 9 survived, concerning theft of a firearm.

The majority spoke. But now, the government is back with new motions designed to restore the old version of Bill C-10.

Aside from a dozen clauses that were in the original bill, the government's motions essentially restore the clauses in the original bill, including those pertaining to sentences for crimes committed with a firearm.

Motion 10, for example, concerns an individual who discharges a firearm at a person with intent to wound, maim or disfigure, to endanger the life of or to prevent the arrest or detention of any person—whether or not that person is the one at whom the firearm is discharged. This motion reintroduces heavier minimum sentences: five years for a first offence, seven years for a second and 10 for each subsequent offence.

This government is persisting and still does not understand. There is no evidence that heavier minimum sentences for offences involving weapons or other serious offences will deter criminals. I firmly believe that the Criminal Code, as it now stands, has proven effective in imposing minimum sentences and protecting public safety.

The code already contains mandatory minimum sentences. The judge can use his or her discretion to impose a sentence that is heavier than the minimum. In other words, the government needs to understand that the minimum sentence is a starting point, not a cap.

Might I remind the government that these offences already fall in various categories, such as use of a firearm in an indictable offence, use of a firearm in ten listed violent offences, and possession, trafficking et cetera of various prohibited firearms.

The ten listed offences include mandatory minimums if a firearm is used in connection with the offences of criminal negligence causing death, manslaughter, attempted murder, causing bodily harm with intent to harm, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault, kidnapping, robbery, extortion and hostage taking

• (1650)

I should add that mandatory minimum sentences are also provided in the Criminal Code for use of a firearm to commit or with the intention to commit an indictable offence, and for possession of firearm knowing it is unauthorized.

Mandatory minimum sentences are also found in the Criminal Code for possession of restricted or prohibited firearms with ammunition, possession of a weapon obtained by crime, weapons trafficking or possession for the purpose of trafficking, making an automatic firearm, and importing or exporting of a firearm knowing that it is unauthorized.

Still, as I said a moment ago, mandatory minimum sentences affect the sitting judge's discretion in cases tried before the courts. There is no exception, no escape clause, no discretion. Without mandatory minimums or with the lower mandatory minimums as they exist today in our Criminal Code, the courts do have the discretion to fashion a sentence more proportionate to the gravity of the offence and the conduct of the offender, and to consider both aggravating and mitigating circumstances in each case. In my opinion and that of my colleagues, it is essential that the latitude of the judiciary be preserved. The Bloc Québécois did support the idea of mandatory minimum sentences once, but that was for one specific type of offence, namely child pornography.

*Government Orders*

I cannot conclude without saying that these motions hide an unwanted reality that would affect our citizens' quality of life. When we combine all the plans that the government has regarding this issue, we see a significant increase in the cost of the prison system, and some of that cost will certainly be downloaded to the provinces.

I want to stress the fact that this shift to incarceration will move funds from enforcement and prevention programs. Also, with more people in jail, the issue of crime will not be solved: it will merely be moved into another area.

In a way, incarceration does offer some level of protection to society, but the rehabilitation side, the rebuilding of social relationships is also more difficult when incarceration is used, not to mention the fact that prisons have often been called schools for crime and a great networking opportunity for criminals.

I think that all these concerns raise questions about the emphasis put by the government on increasing incarceration rates in Canada. I wonder if the government has taken into consideration the fact that these motions would have a disproportionate impact on some communities, including aboriginal people.

For all these reasons, I have no choice but to oppose these motions, which resuscitate the original Bill C-10. Let us be clear: my party wants a safer society for everyone. However, better protection for citizens is primarily accomplished by attacking the root of the problem, by targeting the causes of crime and violence. Poverty, inequality and feeling excluded will always be the breeding grounds of crime.

That is why the real solutions to crime prevention are further sharing of wealth, working on better social integration and relying on rehabilitation. Unfortunately, the motions ignore these avenues, and the government thinks that it will improve safety by building more jails and filling them up. This is a sad move on the part of a government that wants people to think it is taking action, even though it is essentially creating a false sense of security.

•(1655)

[English]

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not disagree with my Bloc colleague's presentation on the bill before us, Bill C-10.

The previous speaker talked about causes. I am actually a board member of an organization called Transitions for Youth which helps young people, who are in trouble or who are about to get in trouble, to find a better way than the criminal courts or other areas. We have worked very hard at promoting what it does in the community. It does great work there and I am proud to be associated with that group.

I do agree that kind of work needs to be done but we also know that once one commits a crime, particularly with a gun, which is what the bill deals with, we need to have the framework to ensure they are penalized for what they do. We do need to make communities safer and I believe mandatory minimum penalties will do that.

Based on the Bloc member's position on the bill before us, am I to understand that the current four year minimum, regardless of the

number of previous convictions, is good enough for her communities?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I absolutely agree with him that one of the best ways to help people prevent crime is to be more vigilant, to develop means for rehabilitation and, as he is doing in his own community, to help young people reintegrate. This is an approach that the Bloc Québécois supports.

Obviously the Bloc Québécois is not very supportive of minimum penalties, with the exception of penalties for pedophilia, which we accepted. The Bloc does not think that the 30 studies submitted to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights conclusively show that the penalties are useful in preventing crime or helping. They did not show that mandatory minimum penalties led to peace and justice and were deterrents to crime.

I believe that the Bloc's views on this are absolutely right.

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, having spent the past 25 years working for the defence in criminal law, I have a specific question for my colleague. I would also like to congratulate her on her speech, which was perfect.

That is exactly it. We cannot control crime with minimum prison sentences. I hope that the members opposite will come to understand that. When I say "the members opposite" I mean not only the government members, but also those of the NDP, whose position I do not understand.

That said, my question is specific: does the member not think that by imposing minimum prison sentences we will increase the length of trials? Because lawyers will be inclined to argue cases to the fullest, so that they take more time.

•(1700)

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

I agree with the member. Trying to impose minimum sentences in this manner will do nothing to facilitate things or relieve congestion in the legal system. On the contrary, this will definitely mean more congestion and more confusion. Once these minimum sentences are imposed, this will only paralyze another system even further, that is, the prison system.

I therefore see no advantage or benefit to this stubborn desire on the part of the Conservative government and the NDP, which is supporting it, to impose mandatory minimum sentences.

[English]

**Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (minimum penalties for offences involving firearms) and to make a consequential amendment to another Act.

*Government Orders*

Regrettably, my riding of Etobicoke North has experienced much gun crime related to gangs and drugs. Certain pockets within Etobicoke North have had particularly bad experiences. We have been compared in Toronto to an area in Scarborough called Malvern as two of the highest gun crime centres in Canada. It is not a very proud statistic to claim.

Fortunately, in the last year or so the violent crime rate in my riding has diminished somewhat as a result of a number of factors. One factor was the very large swoop in Rexdale in May 2006 with 106 gang members being arrested and charged. They were generally involved in drugs and gangs. It was the anti-gang legislation that our government introduced many years ago that helped the police conduct that raid.

We have also seen a lot of changes in the way the police operate in the riding, more visible policing, and a lot of work has been done in the area of community building crime prevention programs. I will give a couple of examples. We have a program in my riding called breaking the cycle, which is funded by the human resources development department. It helps young people exit gangs and get back into normal family life, find jobs or go back to school. The program is working.

In Etobicoke North, we have taken advantage of much of the program funding that is available through the national crime prevention program, another federal program administered by Public Safety Canada.

Another program is Hoops Unlimited, a basketball program that provides young people with an alternative after school, instead of going to malls and getting involved with gangs and drugs.

The North Albion Collegiate Institute had a program where students were involved in a theatre production. We have had many such programs, which are all helping to keep young people engaged in a constructive way rather than a destructive way.

It was part of our government's response to gun crime in the last couple of years of its mandate that we saw it as needing a holistic response. We needed tougher sanctions, good gun controls and more community programming, and that was how our government approached it. In fact, it was our government that tabled tougher sanctions for gun crimes because the evidence was somewhat clear that while mandatory minimum sentences were not very effective, they could be effective in targeted ways for gun related crimes.

That is why our government proposed changes to the mandatory minimums for certain gun related crimes and why our party has tabled certain amendments to increase mandatory minimums for certain gun related crimes from one to two years and for other gun related crimes from four to five years, which are measured responses.

We need to understand that when young people go to jail, they are exposed to hardened criminals. They will get out at some point and we need to think about how we will rehabilitate them and turn them into productive members of society.

The evidence would suggest that in the U.S. many states are moving away from mandatory minimums for a wide variety of

crimes because their jails are filling up but the crime rates are not diminishing and, in fact, they could be increasing.

• (1705)

We need a very holistic response. We can do better with our witness protection programs. While clearly right now there is an issue with the RCMP in one of the witness protection programs, the police in the city where I come from tell me that it is necessary to have the kinds of programs whereby people's identities are changed and they are sent off to live in another location.

However, we can bring witnesses forward in a much more constructive way through changes in the judicial process. That is why the Standing Committee Public Safety and National Security will be inviting various stakeholders, including the city of Toronto Police Service, to testify about what we need to do with our witness protection program.

In Etobicoke North and indeed across Canada, what the police are finding is that for violent gun crimes and drug related crimes people are not coming forward. That is hampering the investigations and the conviction of some of these criminals.

I believe also in the reverse onus provisions for bail. Too often we have people, not only young people but mostly young people, certainly in my area, who have been charged with gun crimes but are released on bail and reoffend. Therefore, our caucus is supporting measures that will bring in the reverse onus. In other words, a person who has been convicted would have to show a judge that he or she should be released on bail rather than the other way around. I think that is a good step.

In 2006 during the election campaign, the then prime minister, the member for LaSalle—Émard, came to my riding of Etobicoke North and announced the ban on handguns. It was criticized at the time, with people saying that it would not do anything. Of course on its own it would not have, but it was part of a whole set of solutions or prescriptions.

Certainly in my riding of Etobicoke North a ban on handguns went down very favourably. It did not go down so well in other parts of Canada, I would have to admit, but we need to have gun control measures. We need to have the kind of gun control and gun registry that is prevalent in Canada.

If we look south of the border, we can see that it is so easy to get a handgun, and we can see what happens as a result. Incidents of handgun crimes in the United States are in much higher numbers than they are in Canada. In fact, if we look at homicides generally, in the year 2000 there were 542 homicides resulting in a national rate of 1.8 homicides per 100,000 population in Canada, whereas in the United States the rate was three times higher at 5.5. We know that relates also to gun crimes. Guns per capita in Canada: .25. In the United States: .82 At rates per 100,000, firearms deaths in 1998 in Canada were at 4.3 and in the United States at 11.4.

*Government Orders*

We need good gun control. Certainly we know there is a black market in handguns, so that if someone is shot with a handgun in Etobicoke North, there is probably a 50% chance that the handgun came from the United States or a good chance that it was obtained on the black market. That does not mean we should not control handguns. That is a fallacious argument.

As for the licensing, I know the government is still committed to licensing and I say alleluia for that. However, we still need to control and register long guns because the reality is that long guns are responsible for as many gun related crimes as handguns.

We know, as I have said, that in the United States the mandatory minimums, the three strikes and they're out concept in California, is not proving to be effective. I will support measures that increase the sanctions against gun related crime in Canada and will have an impact in Canada. That is why I like our party's proposals. I will certainly be supporting them.

● (1710)

We know, as I said earlier, that to deal with this problem we have to deal with it in a very holistic way. I have argued, for example, that we should look at having an integrated border enforcement team in the city of Toronto.

Our government brought in integrated border enforcement teams, with I think 13 or 14 teams across Canada. They tend to be located in the major crossings like Detroit-Windsor and the Peace Bridge, but we do know that a lot of guns are coming into Toronto via these border locations. Integrated border enforcement allows law enforcement agencies to work together to solve and prevent these crimes.

Let us get tough on crime, but let us do it in a way that has results.

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's intervention. I will be very quick so others may ask questions.

The hon. member is from Etobicoke North. My in-laws live at Royal York and Eglinton, so he may be their member of Parliament for now.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Are they moving?

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** They should.

At any rate, based on the conversation the hon. member had with us here in the House, I am not clear about the Liberal position.

In Bill C-10 we are increasing the mandatory minimum penalties for use of a firearm in the commission of a crime. That graduates upward. The hon. member was quoting U.S. statistics and so on and saying that mandatory minimums do not work or that the U.S. is moving away from that.

Is it the Liberal position that you would like the Government of Canada to move away from and get rid of mandatory minimum sentences?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I will remind the hon. member to ask questions through the Chair, not directly.

**Hon. Roy Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, let me say for the member for Burlington that some people will do anything to get their in-laws to move from Etobicoke North to Burlington. I did not know members opposite were so desperate for votes over there, but perhaps they are.

I think mandatory minimums are appropriate in certain targeted areas. That is why I support our party's proposals to increase mandatory minimums in a measured way for gun related crimes.

I think my colleague from the Bloc put it very well. The problem is that we often read in the newspapers about the exceptional cases where a trial judge may have ruled in a certain way. I think it is useful to follow it on through to the appeals and not get flared up by information in the newspapers. It is all very emotional. When we know someone, a friend, a relative or someone in our constituency, who has been shot or who may have been killed, it is not very pleasant.

I believe in mandatory minimums in targeted areas. One of those targeted areas that I support is gun related crimes. That has been a problem in my riding.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciated listening to my colleague from Etobicoke North. I appreciated hearing his comments on the issue of mandatory minimums and on the importance of the fact that in all studies virtually all experts are in agreement that mandatory minimum sentencing can be effective on a first conviction, because that then lays the groundwork if there are subsequent offences for the judge to take it into consideration and tailor a harsher sentence, a sentence that is tailored to the accused, to the circumstances of the crime, to the victim and to the impact on the community.

However, studies have shown consistently that if one also creates mandatory minimums on a second and subsequent conviction it in fact is counterproductive. I believe my colleague mentioned something about 25 states that had mandatory minimums and escalator penalties, which is what the Conservatives have attempted to do with Bill C-10, and those states in fact have now moved away from the escalator minimums. Perhaps the hon. member would like to give us a few gems from his thoughts on that.

● (1715)

**Hon. Roy Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know about the gems, but I want to thank my colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and also congratulate her as our justice critic for working very hard on this file and for listening to people like me who are experiencing a lot of gun related crime in their ridings.

She makes a very good point. If we look at the incarceration rates in the United States, where incarceration is at a much higher level than it is in a country such as Canada, we would think that would have an impact on violent crimes, for example. Exactly the reverse is true. The United States has the highest incidence of violent and gun-related crimes and the highest levels of incarceration rates.

*Government Orders*

Someone might argue that of course if there is more crime there is going to be more incarceration, but some experts have actually done some analysis. They have concluded, by looking at the data and trying to pull out various variables that are controlled, that in fact crime rates alone do not account for incarceration rates in the United States.

In other words, there are more people in the United States and there is a higher crime rate in the United States, but these levels do not explain the incarceration rates. If we control for crime categories that are defined, the U.S. still locks up more people than any other nation per incidence, the exception being robbery in Russia, so we need to understand that putting people—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Resuming debate. The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I feel it is very important to rise today to speak to Bill C-10, which I have had the opportunity to study. Indeed, for some time, I was a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. When this bill arrived before us, we had the opportunity to carefully examine it and to see what the government had in mind.

I would first like to invite all hon. members of this House to watch a criminal lawyer at work for a day in a court house. For those who are unfamiliar, I would like to explain how it works.

Unless they are very well-known, people who practice criminal law, generally speaking, do not have only one client. We usually have several. We do not represent only people involved in organized crime, the mafia or other criminal groups. Quite often, we represent people who are appearing before a court for the first time and who, in a moment of weakness—and God knows, we have all had them—decided to rob a convenient store in order to make ends meet. This is a classic example.

Under this bill, if individuals already have a similar offence on their record, or other offences in reference to this bill, they would receive a seven year sentence. This is what will happen. The individual will go to court. He will ask to be tried by a jury with a preliminary hearing, all in an attempt to drag out the process as long as possible. Since there are hundreds of thousands of cases in Canada every year, there will be a considerable backlog in the court houses. Since the administration of justice comes under provincial jurisdiction, the federal government will have to give provinces considerable amounts money to appoint new judges, new crown prosecutors, hire new police officers and, especially, to build new prisons.

In the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights we obtained some figures. It seems that between \$20 million and \$22 million in additional funds will be needed annually to implement Bill C-10.

I want to appeal to my colleagues opposite and explain to them that they are going down the wrong path by thinking that implementing automatic processes in sentencing will reduce crime. That is not so. This premise is wrong and sends the wrong message directly to the public. Crime rates in the U.S. were not lowered by imposing minimum sentences. In fact, the crime rate went up.

I can understand the position of the Conservative Party, but I do not understand the NDP's position. I do not understand the New Democrats, unless they have a strictly political agenda, but I dare not say. I think they are going down the wrong path by supporting such a bill.

When the time comes to sentence an individual, one of the primary criteria, the essential criterion that the Supreme Court determined in a number of cases—that I will not name here—is that the sentence has to be individualized. I will explain what that means for my colleagues opposite. We have to sentence the individual before us based on the crime he committed and his chance for rehabilitation, in order to send a clear message that this type of crime should not be committed.

● (1720)

Rehabilitation starts when an individual accepts his sentence. When I was a criminal lawyer, before sitting in this House, I had the obligation to explain to my client that the court would impose a sentence of three to five years. We can prepare our client to accept this kind of sentence for very serious crimes. As soon as the individual accepts this sentence, the rehabilitation process can start.

Because of what the NDP is preparing to do, along with the Conservative Party, individuals will dig in their heels. I promise you that court backlogs will increase considerably. We are aiming at the wrong target.

Judges receive direction and information. Unfortunately, contrary to my colleagues opposite, whether from the Conservative Party or the NDP, supreme court judges, appeal court judges, superior court judges and Quebec court judges—in the case of Quebec—read court decisions. They are able to understand that their sentence was not severe enough and that the appeal court has overturned it. I do not need to give examples. As I have several times been in appeal court, I know that the learned judges were asking us whether we did not think that our client should have received a sentence that was more severe, given the seriousness of the crime. We knew right away that they would overturn the sentence that had been handed down in the court of first instance.

I have said it before and I will say it again, and I hope that some of the members opposite will understand this time. The problem is not with sentencing, but with carrying out the sentence, with when they get out. Perhaps we should take a closer look at parole. Perhaps convicts get out too quickly. Perhaps, but that is not what I am talking about.

Individualized sentencing is essential if we want our legal system to work. It is the foundation of our legal system. Individuals appearing before a judge need to know that the judge will be talking specifically to them and sentencing them, and that they will be the ones serving the time. If we bring in automatic sentencing, people will play that game and commit armed robberies with knives instead of guns. The Conservative and NDP position in terms of Bill C-10 will not solve anything.

About 30 studies were submitted to the committee. I can assure you that I read them all, and I tried to prove that my colleagues opposite were right, but none of those studies indicated that minimum prison sentences lowered the crime rate. Not one of them.

*Private Members' Business*

The homicide rate in the United States is three times higher than in Canada and four times higher than in Quebec. Will minimum prison sentences expedite cases? Absolutely not. They will be dragged out, they will take a long time, and nothing will be resolved. Bill C-10 will not help the Conservatives and the NDP achieve their goal. Down the road, they will come back here and say that maybe they made a mistake. By then, the Supreme Court will probably have decided that the sentences are too harsh and that we MPs will have to rethink this.

In closing, I would like to suggest that every member spend a day with a criminal lawyer at a court in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver. If they do, they will realize that the Bill C-10 solution proposed by the Conservatives and the NDP is not a good one.

• (1725)

[English]

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the experience the hon. member from the Bloc has brought to the floor today and I recognize his passion. I would like him to recognize that I and many other members also share a passion; it is obviously different, but it is an honest principled belief, with all respect, that the Bloc position is wrong. Our approach on crime is a much more principled approach. It is a difference of opinion, but I recognize it is an honest difference. I hope the hon. member would also recognize that gesture comes from this side as well.

I will mention a couple of points. We are not talking about misdemeanours here. We are talking about serious criminal indictable offences: rape, robbery, murder, manslaughter, extortion, kidnapping. These are not just over the counter offences. These are serious threats to life and limb.

If the member had a son, daughter, mother, or wife who was a victim, would he think \$22 million was too much to pay for—

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but there is only one minute left before the ringing of the bell.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue has the floor.

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, I will use that minute to try to enlighten my colleague.

First of all, I will tell him that we see things from a fundamentally different angle. Had his government showed us studies confirming its position, I can assure the House that we would have agreed with that position. But there are none. Right now, nothing shows that minimum jail sentences help reduce crime rate. There are no studies proving that.

The member can come with me whenever he wants for a tour of the court houses. We will do criminal law for a full day and he will understand that it is extremely important to personalize sentences.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

• (1750)

[Translation]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## VETERANS AFFAIRS

The House resumed from April 25 consideration of the motion.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

[English]

**Hon. Jay Hill (Secretary of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to grant the time extension for the bill.

**The Speaker:** Is it agreed that the motion will carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[English]

**CRIMINAL CODE**

The House resumed from April 26 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at report stage of Bill C-299 under private members' business.

• (1800)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 169)

**YEAS**

## Members

Abbott  
Albrecht  
Allen  
Ambrose  
Anderson  
Angus  
Asselin  
Bachand  
Bains  
Barbot  
Beaumier  
Bell (Vancouver Island North)  
Bellavance  
Benoit  
Bevilacqua  
Bezan  
Black  
Blaikie  
Blaney

Ablonczy  
Alghabra  
Allison  
Anders  
André  
Arthur  
Atamanenko  
Bagnell  
Baird  
Batters  
Bélangier  
Bell (North Vancouver)  
Bennett  
Bernier  
Bevington  
Bigras  
Blackburn  
Blais  
Bouchard

Boucher  
 Breitreuz  
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
 Bruinooge  
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
 Cardin  
 Carrier  
 Chamberlain  
 Charlton  
 Chow  
 Clement  
 Comartin  
 Cotler  
 Crowder  
 Cullen (Etobicoke North)  
 Cuzner  
 Davidson  
 Day  
 Del Mastro  
 Deschamps  
 Dewar  
 Dosanjh  
 Dryden  
 Dykstra  
 Epp  
 Fast  
 Fitzpatrick  
 Folco  
 Fry  
 Galipeau  
 Gaudet  
 Godfrey  
 Goldring  
 Gourde  
 Grewal  
 Guergis  
 Hanger  
 Harvey  
 Hearn  
 Hill  
 Holland  
 Ignatieff  
 Jean  
 Julian  
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
 Komarnicki  
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
 Laframboise  
 Lalonde  
 Lavallée  
 LeBlanc  
 Lemay  
 Lessard  
 Lukiwski  
 Lunney  
 MacAulay  
 Malhi  
 Maloney  
 Marleau  
 Martin (LaSalle—Émard)  
 Masse  
 Mayes  
 McDonough  
 McGuire  
 Ménard (Hochelaga)  
 Merasty  
 Miller  
 Minna  
 Moore (Fundy Royal)  
 Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)  
 Nadeau  
 Neville  
 Norlock  
 Oda  
 Owen  
 Pallister  
 Paradis  
 Pearson  
 Peterson  
 Picard  
 Poilievre  
 Preston

Bourgeois  
 Brown (Oakville)  
 Brown (Barrie)  
 Byrne  
 Cannon (Pontiac)  
 Carrie  
 Casey  
 Chan  
 Chong  
 Christopherson  
 Coderre  
 Comuzzi  
 Crête  
 Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)  
 Cummins  
 D'Amours  
 Davies  
 DeBellefeuille  
 Demers  
 Devolin  
 Dhaliwal  
 Doyle  
 Duceppe  
 Easter  
 Eyking  
 Finley  
 Fletcher  
 Freeman  
 Gagnon  
 Gallant  
 Gauthier  
 Godin  
 Goodyear  
 Gravel  
 Guarnieri  
 Guimond  
 Harris  
 Hawn  
 Hiebert  
 Hinton  
 Hubbard  
 Jaffier  
 Jennings  
 Kadis  
 Karygiannis  
 Keeper  
 Khan  
 Kotto  
 Laforest  
 Lake  
 Lauzon  
 Layton  
 Lee  
 Lemieux  
 Lévesque  
 Lunn  
 Lussier  
 MacKenzie  
 Malo  
 Manning  
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)  
 Mathysen  
 McCallum  
 McGuinty  
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
 Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)  
 Merrifield  
 Mills  
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
 Mourani  
 Murphy (Charlottetown)  
 Nash  
 Nicholson  
 O'Connor  
 Ouellet  
 Pacetti  
 Paquette  
 Patry  
 Perron  
 Petit  
 Plamondon  
 Prentice  
 Rajotte

Ratansi  
 Regan  
 Richardson  
 Robillard  
 Rota  
 Russell  
 Savoie  
 Scheer  
 Scott  
 Shipley  
 Simard  
 Skelton  
 Solberg  
 St-Hilaire  
 St. Denis  
 Steckle  
 Storseth  
 Szabo  
 Temelkovski  
 Basques)  
 Thibault (West Nova)  
 Tilson  
 Tonks  
 Turner  
 Van Kesteren  
 Vellacott  
 Vincent  
 Warawa  
 Wasylycia-Leis  
 Wilfert  
 Wilson  
 Yelich

Nil

Nil

Redman  
 Reid  
 Ritz  
 Rodriguez  
 Roy  
 Savage  
 Scarpaleggia  
 Schellenberger  
 Sgro  
 Siksay  
 Simms  
 Smith  
 Sorenson  
 St. Amand  
 Stanton  
 Stoffer  
 Sweet  
 Telegdi  
 Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les  
 Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)  
 Toews  
 Trost  
 Tweed  
 Van Loan  
 Verner  
 Wallace  
 Warkentin  
 Watson  
 Williams  
 Wrzesniewskyj  
 Zed— 268

NAYS

PAIRED

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

**CRIMINAL CODE**

The House resumed from April 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-343, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (motor vehicle theft) be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred division at second reading of Bill C-343, under private members' business.

● (1810)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 170)

YEAS

Members

Abbott  
 Albrecht  
 Allison  
 Anders  
 Angus  
 Atamanenko  
 Batters  
 Benoit  
 Bezan  
 Blackburn  
 Blaney  
 Breitreuz  
 Brown (Barrie)  
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
 Carrie  
 Chan  
 Chong

Abлонczy  
 Allen  
 Ambrose  
 Anderson  
 Arthur  
 Baird  
 Bell (North Vancouver)  
 Bernier  
 Black  
 Blaikie  
 Boucher  
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
 Bruinooge  
 Cannan (Pontiac)  
 Casey  
 Charlton  
 Chow

*Private Members' Business*

Christopherson  
Comartin  
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)  
Cuzner  
Davidson  
Del Mastro  
Dhaliwal  
Dykstra  
Epp  
Fast  
Fitzpatrick  
Galipeau  
Godin  
Goodyear  
Grewal  
Guergis  
Harris  
Hawn  
Hiebert  
Hinton  
Jean  
Kadis  
Karygiannis  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Komarnicki  
Lake  
Layton  
Lemieux  
Lunn  
MacAulay  
Maloney  
Marleau  
Masse  
Mayes  
McGuire  
Merrifield  
Mills  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Murphy (Charlottetown)  
Nicholson  
O'Connor  
Pallister  
Petit  
Prentice  
Rajotte  
Reid  
Ritz  
Schellenberger  
Shiple  
Skelton  
Solberg  
Stanton  
Stoffer  
Sweet  
Telegdi  
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)  
Toews  
Trost  
Tweed  
Van Loan  
Verner  
Warawa  
Wasylcia-Leis  
Wilfert  
Yelich

Clement  
Comuzzi  
Cummins  
D'Amours  
Day  
Devolin  
Doyle  
Easter  
Eyking  
Finley  
Fletcher  
Gallant  
Goldring  
Gourde  
Guarnieri  
Hanger  
Harvey  
Hearn  
Hill  
Jaffer  
Julian  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Khan  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lauzon  
Lee  
Lukiwski  
Lunney  
MacKenzie  
Manning  
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
Mathysen  
McDonough  
Merasty  
Miller  
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)  
Neville  
Norlock  
Oda  
Paradis  
Poilievre  
Preston  
Redman  
Richardson  
Scheer  
Sgro  
Simard  
Smith  
Sorenson  
Steckle  
Storseth  
Szabo  
Thibault (West Nova)  
Tilson  
Tonks  
Turner  
Van Kesteren  
Vellacott  
Wallace  
Warkentin  
Watson  
Williams  
Zed— 164

Davies  
Demers  
Dewar  
Dryden  
Folco  
Fry  
Gaudet  
Godfrey  
Gravel  
Holland  
Jennings  
Kotto  
Laframboise  
Lavallée  
Lemay  
Lévesque  
Malo  
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)  
McGuinty  
Ménard (Hochelega)  
Minna  
Nadeau  
Ouellet  
Pacetti  
Patry  
Perron  
Picard  
Ratansi  
Rodriguez  
Roy  
Savoie  
Scott  
Simms  
St. Amand  
Temelkovski  
Basques)  
Vincent

DeBellefeuille  
Deschamps  
Dosanjh  
Duceppe  
Freeman  
Gagnon  
Gauthier  
Graham  
Guimond  
Ignatieff  
Keeper  
Laforest  
Lalonde  
LeBlanc  
Lessard  
Lussier  
Martin (LaSalle—Énard)  
McCallum  
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)  
Mourani  
Nash  
Owen  
Paquette  
Pearson  
Persson  
Plamondon  
Robillard  
Rota  
Russell  
Scarpaleggia  
Siksay  
St-Hilaire  
St. Denis  
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les  
Wilson— 100

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Consequently, the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. (Bill read the second time and referred to a committee.)

\* \* \*

[English]

## ELECTORAL REFORM

The House resumed from April 30 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. M-262 under private members' business in the name of the member for Vancouver Island North.

● (1825)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 171)

## NAYS

Members

Alghabra  
Asselin  
Bagnell  
Barbot  
Bélangier  
Bellavance  
Bevilacqua  
Bigras  
Bouchard  
Brown (Oakville)  
Cardin  
Chamberlain  
Cotler  
Crowder

André  
Bachand  
Bains  
Beaumier  
Bell (Vancouver Island North)  
Bennett  
Bevington  
Blais  
Bourgeois  
Byrne  
Carrier  
Coderre  
Crête  
Cullen (Etobicoke North)

## YEAS

Members

Alghabra  
Atamanenko  
Bains  
Bélangier  
Bell (North Vancouver)  
Bevilacqua  
Blackie  
Byrne  
Chan  
Chow

Angus  
Bagnell  
Beaumier  
Bell (Vancouver Island North)  
Bennett  
Bevington  
Blackie  
Chamberlain  
Charlton  
Christopherson

*Private Members' Business*

Comartin  
 Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)  
 D'Amours  
 Dewar  
 Dosanjh  
 Eyking  
 Godin  
 Guarnieri  
 Ignatieff  
 Kadis  
 Layton  
 Maloney  
 Martin (LaSalle—Émard)  
 Masse  
 McCallum  
 McGuinty  
 Merasty  
 Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)  
 Nash  
 Owen  
 Pearson  
 Ratansi  
 Regan  
 Rodriguez  
 Russell  
 Savoie  
 Scott  
 Siksay  
 Simms  
 St. Denis  
 Stoffer  
 Telegdi  
 Thibault (West Nova)  
 Turner  
 Wilfert  
 Wrzesnewskyj — 91

Crowder  
 Cuzner  
 Davies  
 Dhaliwal  
 Dryden  
 Fry  
 Graham  
 Holland  
 Julian  
 Keeper  
 Malhi  
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)  
 Mathysen  
 McDonough  
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
 Minna  
 Murphy (Charlottetown)  
 Neville  
 Pacetti  
 Peterson  
 Redman  
 Robillard  
 Rota  
 Savage  
 Scarpaleggia  
 Sgro  
 Simard  
 St. Amand  
 Steckle  
 Szabo  
 Temelkovski  
 Tonks  
 Wasylcia-Leis  
 Wilson

Karygiannis  
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
 Komarnicki  
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
 Laframboise  
 Lalonde  
 Lavallée  
 Lee  
 Lemieux  
 Lévesque  
 Lunn  
 Lussier  
 MacKenzie  
 Manning  
 Mayes  
 Ménard (Hochelaga)  
 Merrifield  
 Mills  
 Moore (Fundy Royal)  
 Nadeau  
 Norlock  
 Oda  
 Pallister  
 Paradis  
 Perron  
 Picard  
 Poilievre  
 Preston  
 Reid  
 Ritz  
 Scheer  
 Shipley  
 Smith  
 Sorenson  
 Stanton  
 Sweet  
 Basques)  
 Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)  
 Toews  
 Tweed  
 Van Loan  
 Verner  
 Wallace  
 Warkentin  
 Williams  
 Zed — 175

Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
 Khan  
 Kotto  
 Laforest  
 Lake  
 Lauzon  
 LeBlanc  
 Lemay  
 Lessard  
 Lukiwski  
 Lunney  
 MacAulay  
 Malo  
 Marleau  
 McGuire  
 Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)  
 Miller  
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
 Mourani  
 Nicholson  
 O'Connor  
 Ouellet  
 Paquette  
 Patry  
 Petit  
 Plamondon  
 Prentice  
 Rajotte  
 Richardson  
 Roy  
 Schellenberger  
 Skelton  
 Solberg  
 St-Hilaire  
 Storseth  
 Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les

**NAYS**

Members

Abbott  
 Albrecht  
 Allison  
 Anders  
 André  
 Asselin  
 Baird  
 Batters  
 Benoit  
 Bezan  
 Blackburn  
 Blaney  
 Boucher  
 Breitzkreuz  
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
 Bruinooge  
 Cannon (Pontiac)  
 Carrie  
 Casey  
 Clement  
 Crête  
 Cummins  
 Day  
 Del Mastro  
 Deschamps  
 Doyle  
 Dykstra  
 Epp  
 Finley  
 Fletcher  
 Freeman  
 Galipeau  
 Gaudet  
 Goldring  
 Gourde  
 Grewal  
 Guimond  
 Harris  
 Hawn  
 Hiebert  
 Hinton  
 Jaffer  
 Jennings

Ablonczy  
 Allen  
 Ambrose  
 Anderson  
 Arthur  
 Bachand  
 Barbot  
 Bellavance  
 Bernier  
 Bigras  
 Blais  
 Bouchard  
 Bourgeois  
 Brown (Oakville)  
 Brown (Barrie)  
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
 Cardin  
 Carrier  
 Chong  
 Comuzzi  
 Cullen (Etobicoke North)  
 Davidson  
 DeBellefeuille  
 Demers  
 Devolin  
 Duceppe  
 Easter  
 Fast  
 Fitzpatrick  
 Folco  
 Gagnon  
 Gallant  
 Gauthier  
 Goodyear  
 Gravel  
 Guergis  
 Hanger  
 Harvey  
 Hearn  
 Hill  
 Hubbard  
 Jean  
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)

**PAIRED**

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

It being 6:25, the House will now proceed to private members' business.

\* \* \*

[English]

**INCOME TAX ACT**

The House resumed from January 31 consideration of the motion that Bill C-207, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (tax credit for new graduates working in designated regions), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to debate Bill C-207, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (tax credit for new graduates working in designated regions).

Let me begin by saying that I believe hot spots in our economy, mostly in urban centres, tend to draw young Canadians away from the less populated regions when they begin to look for work after college or university.

*Private Members' Business*

That is why I commend my colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord for recognizing the need to ensure that our regions have the workers they need in order for their economies to thrive. His private member's bill certainly has this principle at its heart.

The bill proposes to provide a non-refundable tax credit to recent graduates who take their degrees into one of the regions identified as a designated region by the Development Incentives Act and find work related to their degree. Young Canadians who meet the qualifying employment criteria are able to claim a non-refundable tax credit of 40% of their salary up to a maximum of \$8,000 for the first 52 weeks of employment.

The principle of the bill is a good one. It encourages young Canadians to settle in these designated regions after graduation. During that time, they will hopefully create ties to the local community, develop friendships and perhaps family and then choose to remain there when the 52 weeks qualifying period has ended.

While I have no doubt that the bill would offer some amount of success in achieving this, it does, however, miss the larger picture. The fact is if we want young people to settle in these regions, we need to ensure there are well-paying jobs for them there.

If we were to ask ourselves what is more likely to attract young workers to the regions, a one year tax incentive that will put \$2,000 into their pockets if they find employment there, or the creation of real well-paying jobs that will provide for that young person year after year, most people would accept the latter.

What about the people who live in these regions and are struggling to find meaningful employment? In short, what we really need are the kinds of comprehensive regional development strategies that the party of the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord is quite simply against.

We need something just like the previous Liberal government's regional development plan. The 2005 budget included \$800 million to provide over five years for the creation of new initiatives through Canada's regional development agencies, ACOA, FedNor, WD and Canada Economic Development for Quebec, which received roughly \$300 million of that investment.

This showed real investment and real commitment from the Liberal Party, a commitment that the current Conservative government seems to lack.

I will not get into all the details about the views of the Conservatives on regional development as most of us know them well. I could tell the House for hours about how the government, time and time again, fails British Columbians.

I am sure that most of us can recall any number of quotes from the Prime Minister that illustrate his disdain for Canadian regional economic development. We can recall speeches, for example, where the Prime Minister has accused Atlantic Canadians of relying on a "culture of defeatism", or the Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity) calling for the elimination of western economic diversification.

● (1830)

Today, we can still see the disregard of the Conservatives for the regions, and all these good things they have done for Canadians, including my constituents in Newton—North Delta. For instance, look at their decision to eliminate the summer career placement program, a program that was designed to find college and university students summer employment, which, for the most part, was in the very regions we are discussing today.

Thankfully, after much pressure, the government relented and reinstated the program by changing its name to the summer jobs program. The Conservatives, however, only gave the revamped program half of the resources of the previous Liberal program. This will no doubt result in many fewer students finding summer jobs in the regions.

Returning more directly to Bill C-207, I believe the bill represents one potential tool that will help to ensure young people settle into regions, but it is just one small tool when what we need in Canada is a box full of tools.

I also have some concerns regarding some technical aspects of the bill. I believe some of the wording needs to be tightened up. For instance, the bill does not clearly define what "employment related to their degree" actually entails. Without clarification the measure might possibly become prone to abuse.

Second, I wonder if the 52 weeks that the bill allows for is a long enough time period to create a real incentive for young Canadians to decide they want to work in one of Canada's designated regions.

All in all, however, the bill does have some merit and I will be pleased to lend my support to it at second reading. I hope, as it moves through committee stage, the members there will give the bill serious consideration and return it to the House with these questions addressed.

Once again, I would like to congratulate the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord for his work.

● (1835)

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-207, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (tax credit for new graduates working in designated regions). The designated regions are those regions that have traditionally high levels of youth out-migration.

I am interested in the bill because it closely mirrors work that we have been doing in my office for my region of northern Ontario because it has suffered from massive levels of youth out-migration. It is not just affecting our economic potential but it is seriously affecting the future of our region.

A number of players in the Timmins region have been trying to bring issues to bear on this, such as the Far Northeast Training Board, Northern College and Collège Boréal. Mike Kentish, who has been involved in adult literacy, learning and training, has also come forward with a number of ideas similar to those in the bill.

*Private Members' Business*

I find that the bill does have some vague areas which we could actually tighten up in terms of defining what regions would merit this and whether or not a year is enough. I do not know if that is worthwhile. I think young people who commit to returning to a region after a certain period of time would merit the tax credit. However, it is important because some of our northern communities are seeing 20% of their young people leaving and when they leave they do not go back. There are a number of reasons that is happening.

Our regions include the northern mining belt. The gold region extends from Val-d'Or over to Sudbury and Timmins. In the early days the mines were founded by immigrant miners because in those days the mining companies did not want Canadians working in the mines. They hired young men from Yugoslavia, Croatia and Bulgaria on short term work contracts because the work was hard.

My family were immigrant miners who came to Canada to do this work. The miners did not want their children to work in the mines. The old Croatian miners used to tell their kids that they would break their legs if they went underground. That may not actually be what they said but they did want their young people to get an education because they valued it. Those men worked hard and died young so their children could get an education. However, when they got their education they left. Year after year they left and new workers arrived.

However, the economy changed and by the 1970s and 1980s we were not seeing the same level of immigration in the north. Young people were still being encouraged to get an education and leave but now there is a serious problem. However, we do have economic potential in a region where there are opportunities for work but our young people are still leaving.

What do we need to do? We need to start focusing on the trades and training to ensure that our young people have the opportunity to work. In northern Ontario, the young people who want an education go to Guelph, to Ottawa or to Toronto where they spend four years in school. What happens when they finish? They end up with \$40,000 worth of debt. While they are there, what else happens? They fall in love and now have \$60,000 or \$80,000 worth of debt.

We can rest assured that these young people are not going back to northern Ontario because starting over in northern Ontario becomes too difficult financially. As a result, we are losing our best young people who are our greatest resource. They are a much greater resource than gold, diamonds, the white pine, nickel or copper. Our young people are our resources and we need to find a way to encourage them to go back to their regions.

The story in northern Ontario is similar right across Canada.

[*Translation*]

I would like to talk about the young Franco-Ontarians who must leave northern Ontario to get a post-secondary education or to get a job in Alberta or in southern Ontario.

When young Franco-Ontarians leave a community such as Smooth Rock Falls, Kapuskasing or Timmins, they leave behind their Franco-Ontarian community and culture. When we lose our young people, we lose our future.

It is critical that the provincial and federal governments provide sufficient resources for the construction of a new Collège Boréal campus in Timmins. It is equally critical that we give our young people the opportunity to learn a trade in their own language.

• (1840)

In the region of Timmins, a new Collège Boréal campus is essential for the development of the Franco-Ontarian community. It is essential for the development of a new economy in the north.

[*English*]

We need to work on education. We need to ensure that our young people have the opportunities to get trained in the trades and trained in university in their own regions and in their language so they can stay in our region so that when the opportunities do arise we will have given our young people the chance to stay and to have a new future.

The bill does speak to some of the areas of how we can start to encourage young people to come back. As I said, some more work needs to be done on the bill to fine-tune it to focus on kinds of incentives and where. Right now I think the area is somewhat vague. I do not think all regions of this country need it. We are looking at how to tweak certain areas that are suffering from extreme high levels of youth out-migration. Other areas are much more stable.

However, as federal members we need to recognize that rural Canada plays an important role and that the communities of rural Canada need to be maintained and the vitality of these communities can only be maintained if we have young people who are still living there.

What does happen when our young couples are down in Guelph, Ottawa, the University of Calgary or wherever with their \$50,000, \$60,000 or \$70,000 worth of debt? As we said, they fall in love and stay wherever they are. What happens then is that they have a family and then the grandparents start to go south to visit them. Sooner or later, after the young people leave, the parents leave to be with their grandchildren because it is too hard to be so far away.

The youth out-migration is the first step to the loss of the population of our region and then it is followed by the older generation. Once we lose enough of a critical mass we lose the vitality that holds our northern communities together.

I am very interested in this bill. As a New Democrat, I would be more than willing to work on how we can tweak it to improve it, but it is taking us in a direction that will help us in the north build and maintain the communities that we are so proud of.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased and proud to speak to the bill introduced by the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord. First, I would like to congratulate him.

The bill tabled amends the Income Tax Act to give new graduates working in designated regions a tax credit. This is a concrete example of social and economic measures that Quebec has taken over the years. We have developed all kinds of original social initiatives, such as child care centres.

*Private Members' Business*

What about land occupancy? To ensure that our population will continue to have the requisite resources in our villages and municipalities, the Government of Quebec has developed a practice that it has already implemented. It gives a tax credit to a young person who settles in a region, in order to counter the exodus of youth and avoid the shortage of skilled labour.

This measure is available in my region and has had a positive impact. For example, population movement had been declining for a number of years. Now it seems that this measure has tempered matters in this regard. Additional efforts are required to achieve an even better result, to add a sort of catalyst that will result in further progress.

Bill C-207 is a step in that direction because it simply suggests extending this measure to all of Canada by defining the regions where these credits can be claimed. Consequently, in the end, this will provide an incentive for youth to settle in the regions. This is not charity. It is important for all of our land to be used and developed and for benefits to be found in every location. It is to the advantage of the major centres for the regions to be strong. This bill will help make this happen.

The original project was tested in Quebec. It allowed a new graduate to get an income tax credit equal to 40% of earned salary, up to a maximum of \$8,000. That measure was implemented in 2003. That same year, 2,500 people applied for the credit. In 2004, it was claimed by 9,700 people from different regions, including 1,200 from Abitibi-Témiscamingue, 1,600 from the Lower St. Lawrence, 800 from the Gaspé and Magdalen Islands, 1,000 from the North Shore and 4,000 from Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean. We can easily understand why the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord is so interested in the measure. His region did benefit from the initiative put in place by the government of Quebec. Now, we want to broaden the measure.

The experience Quebec has had with it must be taken into account. In fact, the original measure has been amended. The changes made could be included in the bill when it is studied in committee.

I listened to the speech made by my colleague from the NDP and I agree with him. I recognized an interesting principle, a positive way of doing things. For Quebec, the system is already in place and there is no need to reinvent the wheel. We only need to apply the federal tax credit in the same regions where the Quebec credit applies. As for the other provinces, we need to identify the right regions where the tax credit should be offered.

I invite hon. members to consider the results this type of measure can achieve. Young people are moving to the regions and sometimes they stay for a number of years. We would be prepared to consider an amendment, among other things, to spread out the tax credit over three years, like it was done in Quebec. This encourages applying for the credit just once. When someone moves to a region, they often get the urge to invest the rest of their life there and to contribute to the development of that region. The result is quite interesting.

Indeed, an amendment could be adopted in committee to make the tax credit more flexible and make it apply over a number of years. The incentive would have a more lasting effect.

As I was explaining, another amendment could be made with regard to eligible regions to ensure that this will truly be a positive incentive. Furthermore we have to avoid future disputes as much as possible, since there are always borderline areas in these cases. Nonetheless, as far as I am concerned, this issue should not prevent us from implementing a tax credit where it would be appropriate to do so.

• (1845)

Let us take for example the regions I mentioned. My colleague from Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, our party's regional development critic, is certainly aware of this reality.

We have seen the figures for his region in the Gaspé peninsula and for the Lower St. Lawrence. We are well aware that in terms of regional development, we now have to deal with the natural market forces inherent to globalization, which is causing our regions to lose their populations. One might say that that is how the market operates and we have to let the market dictate how this works, but this has a significant impact on support for municipal structures and support for our regions.

When the population of a town diminishes, it does not take long before it can no longer offer services. This disorganization, this de-institutionalization is very negative for our society. In my opinion, it is up to the government to go ahead with measures like this. They do not cost very much and they provide a return. For example, in the medium term, the bill will ensure that schools in villages stay open because young people will settle there, couples will form and children will be born. In that sense, we are keeping the wheels turning and making sure that life can go on in the communities.

It is important to move ahead with the bill so that it can be referred to a committee that will study it, hear witnesses and obtain the necessary expertise. The basic principle is that population movements are not solely a matter of economic markets. It is a question of regional development.

In the past, there were all sorts of initiatives like this that attracted people to regions throughout Quebec and across Canada. We need more such initiatives, because if we do not act, the consequences will ultimately be negative.

Look at what is happening in major cities in countries in the south. Artificial towns are being created around the cities, where people from rural areas are settling. This is happening in China, and it is creating serious problems.

I hope that we will have the support of the majority of members of this House so that the bill will get through the report stage, come back to this House with any amendments we have suggested and have an impact so that this measure will be implemented in the short term or at least in the next budget. Then, the efforts of the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord will have paid off.

In the next budget, there will be such a measure, and it will improve the situation in our regions and their ability to attract young people. I believe we will all benefit from such measures.

My time is almost up, so I will just remind this House that we are elected in ridings and that when a member like my friend from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord has the interests of his own riding and all rural regions at heart, he deserves to be heard by this House. I hope that hon. members will support the bill so that it can move on to the committee stage.

• (1850)

[English]

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today we are continuing the debate on Bill C-207, a bill proposing a tax credit for new graduates working in certain designated regions.

While one can recognize the aim of such a measure and the desire to foster economic development in forming that measure, the proposal in Bill C-207 is saddled with a number of fundamental flaws.

The chief flaw of Bill C-207 is that while it encourages recent graduates to remain or relocate in designated regions, it does nothing to generate new employment in those regions. As a result, it could be argued that the proposed credit would primarily benefit individuals working in such regions regardless of the presence or absence of the tax credit. In that light, such a measure would clearly not be an effective avenue for this purpose.

This also speaks to a larger problem with Bill C-207. The bill proposes to address the issue of economic development in essentially a temporary or fragmented manner. Properly fostering economic development involves a multi-faceted approach responsive to local needs and creating strategic partnerships between businesses and public institutions, the community and other stakeholders.

Canada's national economy is highly diversified across different economic regions with varied needs in terms of workers' skills. The skill sets needed to work in the offshore oil industry in Newfoundland differ significantly from those needed to work in the high tech sector in Waterloo. As well, at any point in time each of these sectors will experience business cycles and economic adjustment.

Economic adjustment is constantly taking place and is a sign of a healthy and flexible economy. Most economically successful adjustments happen naturally and without intervention from government.

Governments, domestic and international, have been moving away from subsidies. Instead they have been focusing support toward fostering high valued added economic activity through education, innovation and infrastructure.

Canada's new government promotes innovation, research and development and post-secondary education through a variety of programs that benefit directly and indirectly students pursuing post-secondary education. For instance, as confirmed in budget 2007, federal investment in granting councils and the Canada Foundation for Innovation, among others, will total \$1.4 billion this year.

We also support an assortment of economic development programs totalling \$1.2 billion through the regional development

### *Private Members' Business*

agencies, like the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec.

The regional development agencies work in partnership with stakeholders to tailor their specific programs to meet the economic development needs of their local communities. These programs include support for small to medium size enterprises which can benefit recent graduates.

The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, ACOA, has a program that provides an excellent illustration of this approach. The export internship for trade graduates initiative provides training and employment opportunities to international trade specialists graduating from colleges and universities in Atlantic Canada.

Small and medium size enterprises receive help to acquire the expertise they need to successfully develop and implement an international marketing plan. Eligible companies work with ACOA and post-secondary institutions to select qualified graduates with training in international business. Together the employer and the intern develop and implement a strategic export plan for that company. At the conclusion of the internship, the employer can apply through ACOA for assistance to retain the graduate's services for up to three additional years.

The Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec offers other examples of how Canada's new government supports similar programs that involve a multi-faceted approach to regional development. The innovation, development, entrepreneurship and access program for small to medium enterprises is a financial assistance program that fosters the growth of small and medium size enterprises in Quebec, helping these businesses become more competitive in the world markets in activities ranging from product development to marketing plans.

• (1855)

Also, the community economic diversification initiative - vitality, CEDI-vitality, is an initiative designed to support communities in seven regions and 21 Quebec regional county municipalities with slower economic growth. The initiative helps foster economic development by supporting the diversification of the economic base of these communities to create sustainable long term jobs, jobs that will stem, or even prevent, the exodus of youth from these regions.

Small and medium size enterprises, business groups and industry associations can all apply under vitality for assistance in the development of strategies and action plans, capital projects for enterprise startup and business expansion, and marketing of new products and services. The program also assists with the establishment of entrepreneurship support organizations, projects aimed at enhancing cooperation between knowledge institutions, such as universities and colleges, and the business community.

In 2006-07 total government support of these programs will total over \$380 million.

*Private Members' Business*

These are the types of regional development measures that define a multi-faceted approach. They are forward looking in promoting export markets in an increasingly globalized economy. They involve key stakeholders, employers and post-secondary institutions to help create new opportunities for new graduates, and they work.

Bill C-207 proposes a tax credit nowhere near as well targeted. It proposes a tax credit that would do nothing to foster economic development conducive to job growth. It would do nothing to create the opportunities vital for the retention of those new graduates. Yet the proposed credit would cost up to \$600 million annually. I submit that this would be an inefficient use of public funds.

Canada's new government takes seriously the challenge of ensuring Canada is equipped for an increasingly competitive global market. We are all working for all regions of Canada. All young people need to be given the opportunity to acquire the skills and training so that Canada can have a knowledge advantage with the best educated, most skilled and most flexible workforce in the world.

Canadian businesses need to operate in an environment that encourages investment and innovation. When Canada succeeds, we all succeed.

Bill C-207 proposes to use a tax credit to encourage young people to stay in a particular region. Yet it does not help create the type of employment opportunities that would provide an incentive for a young person to stay there. It ignores the varied nature of Canada's economy and that economic adjustment is an ongoing reality of a healthy, dynamic, diversified economy.

The Government of Canada supports regional economic development and devotes significant resources to programs that are responsive to local needs, employ strategic partnerships with other stakeholders and are multi-faceted in their approach.

This Conservative government is working to improve the standard of living and quality of life for all Canadians. This government is working to make Canada a world leader for today and for future generations.

Bill C-207 does nothing like that. Instead, it proposes to spend up to \$600 million on a tax credit that would not help create a single additional job.

For these reasons, I am unable to support this legislation. I hope that my colleagues, after taking full account of the larger picture, will decline to support this bill.

•(1900)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** I would like to thank the hon. member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia for having occupied the chair for a few moments.

[*English*]

Resuming debate.

I just want to give fair warning that I am about to recognize the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord for the right of reply.

[*Translation*]

When the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord has finished his speech, that will be the end of the debate and the motion will be put.

The hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all the members who spoke in this debate today, as well as the members who spoke in the first debate. Bill C-207 is designed to fight two problems that affect the regions: the exodus of young people and the shortage of skilled labour in the regions.

In the next few minutes, I would like to respond to certain concerns my colleagues have about Bill C-207. According to Mr. Clément Desbiens, an economist with Emploi-Québec, all employment sectors in the regions will be more affected in the coming years. A document entitled *Perspectives professionnelles 2005-2009* states that the demand for workers in fields related to retirement will increase. However, according to the study, workers in the regions are likely to leave for urban centres where there are more jobs in sectors such as retail sales, services, administration and finance.

According to Emploi-Québec's estimates, 250,000 jobs will be created during that period. Emploi-Québec anticipates that, for the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region alone, 18,000 new jobs will have to be filled. According to the economist, the aging of the population will be felt across the country, but its impact will be even more disastrous in the regions. The country's population growth tells the tale. Between 1996 and 2006, that is over a period of 10 years, Canada's population increased by 9.4%, while the population decreased by 8.5% in Newfoundland and Labrador, by 2.2% in Saskatchewan, and by 1.1% in New Brunswick. During that same period, the population increased by 20.9% in Alberta, by 12.7% in Ontario, and by 10.2% in British Columbia.

I would also like to provide other statistics affecting my region. Over a period of 10 years, from 1991 to 2001, the population of the Lower St. Lawrence region decreased by 2.9%. During that same period, the population of the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region decreased by 2.9%, and I could provide more examples. I now come to the most affected region, that of Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands, where the population decreased by 7.7% over the same period.

This is why we support this bill which addresses all the problems. It is a tool that our regions and regional businesses can use to have access to skilled labour.

The bill provides for a tax credit not exceeding \$8,000 over a 52 week period. Some have suggested that it would be better if the maximum of \$8,000 could be used over three years instead of one. This is, of course, something we could discuss at committee, and we are open to such a suggestion. I therefore ask all the members of this House to act on behalf of our regions and our young people.

The Conservative members opposite who spoke in the first debate, and in this one, said that the total cost would be \$600 million a year. I say that they are trying to scare the public and the members of this House. For Quebec, it would come up to \$30 million. So, we are talking about approximately \$150 million. I will close by encouraging all members to support this bill, to really help our young people and those regions with a declining population.

• (1905)

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** All those in favour of the motion, will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Pursuant to Standing Order 93 the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 9, 2007, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[Translation]

### AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to this important issue of the lack of federal government support for Quebec's aerospace industry.

I would remind the House that during question period on March 1, 2007, the Bloc Québécois returned to the charge. For months, the Bloc had been calling on the federal government to respect the existing distribution of Canada's aerospace industry. A total of 55% to 60% of Canada's aerospace industry is in Quebec. In a contract awarded to a private company like Boeing, we would have liked to see the federal government require the company to distribute its investments in a way that reflects the current situation in Canada. The government, however, made no effort to do so. The company itself was the one to suggest a rate of 30%. Thirty per cent is clearly insufficient. This launched an immense offensive from within the

### Adjournment Proceedings

entire Quebec aerospace industry—from large and small companies alike—to tell the federal government that Quebec must receive its fair share.

They also appealed directly to the company. The company showed some sensitivity to the issue, but the federal government showed absolutely none. When the project was announced, the two ministers present, who both happen to be from Quebec, were unable to say how the spinoffs of the project would be divided. They called all of Canada the region. This showed complete disregard for the fact that Quebec has developed an expertise and has 55% to 60% of the aerospace industry within its borders. We are talking about thousands of jobs.

The commitment of 30% means that Quebec will lose 18,500 jobs per year, because the federal government did not want to impose a standard that simply corresponded to the current distribution. In the past, we have seen the government make significant investments in the automotive sector, for instance, and the Province of Ontario came out ahead, because that region was identified as where most of the industry is located.

The Conservative government now refuses to make such commitments in the aerospace sector. Consequently, Boeing, which subcontracts its distribution and production chain, will favour these subcontractors, which is quite normal. However, this chain of subcontractors may not necessarily include Quebec sub-contractors. Bombardier is one of Boeing's competitors. Do we believe that Boeing will subcontract to its Quebec competitor? I think that is absolutely ridiculous.

On an opposition day, we tabled a motion, supported by the Liberal Party, to the effect that the existing distribution in Canada had to be respected in order for each region—Quebec and the other provinces—to receive the share of spinoffs from this contract corresponding to the actual impact. Otherwise, the rules of the game are changed and a private company is given the responsibility for drastically altering the distribution.

Given the overall situation, and after the intervention of the Leader of the Bloc Québécois and myself on March 1, and in view of several measures that we took on opposition day, can the government guarantee that Quebec will receive 60% of the spinoffs, which it deserves, in order to respect the current distribution for each region in Canada? Will the government take positive action and promise to guarantee the 60% share?

• (1910)

[English]

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and answer the question about the Quebec aerospace industry, and the distribution of industrial benefits.

The Government of Canada's approach to industrial benefits recognizes the strengths and capabilities of Canada's aerospace and defence industry from coast to coast. It is fair, it is open, and it is designed to ensure that prime contractors can build long-lasting, sustainable business relationships with Canada's aerospace and defence sector.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Industry Canada has been dealing with the industrial and regional benefits policy for over 20 years now. The department has always allowed companies to make investments in Canada based on best business practices and what makes the most sense to them. The government will continue with that policy to ensure that it is fair across the entire country.

This is an exceptionally good time for Canada's aerospace industry. Canadian aerospace companies have helped to develop one of the world's strongest aerospace industries, an industry that employs about 75,000 highly skilled workers and that adds to the knowledge economy in every region of Canada.

Canada's new government has done a great deal to secure new opportunities for Canada's aerospace and defence industry both inside and outside Quebec. We are securing significant industrial benefits from the "Canada First" defence procurements and we have signed on to the next phase of the joint strike fighter program, again securing billions of dollars of opportunities for our world class companies.

For all procurements, Industry Canada officials work closely with the regional development agencies: the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Western Economic Diversification, and the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec. Together they identify Canadian companies that might be interested in the opportunities available.

They also work directly with Canadian companies from coast to coast to highlight the opportunities that are available, work with the companies that are bidding on contracts to emphasize the importance of cross-country involvement, and highlight the abilities of Canadian companies.

Our position on defence procurement is clear. All regions of Canada will be able to benefit. Canadian aerospace and defence firms have the competence, the expertise and the ability.

For aerospace related projects, we insist that industrial benefits be of high value and high technology. We are asking that at least 30% of the spinoff projects be targeted to nine key technologies that have been identified in collaboration with the industry.

For the C-17 Globemaster procurement, Boeing must provide 100% industrial and regional benefits as measured in Canadian content value. This applies to the purchase of the aircraft and for the portions of the in-service support that Boeing is responsible for. Fifty per cent of benefits must go to the aerospace and defence sector.

There are other requirements, such as 15% participation by small and medium sized businesses, allowing smaller players in the industry to get the best possible benefit now and well into the future from these procurements. We encourage prime contractors to undertake partnerships that make real business sense.

Quebec aerospace companies have the competence, the expertise, and the ability needed to be involved over the life of the contract. We are confident that they will position themselves well within the context of our military procurements.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Speaker, it is discouraging to hear my colleague say things like that. We get the impression that we will

never be able to help them make progress. Nevertheless, we managed to do so with the Technology Partnerships Canada program. The Conservatives spent month after month, year after year criticizing the program. It was not until after the last election that our arguments eventually convinced them to bring the program back. Now \$900 million will go to the aerospace sector, and that is good. That sector needs the money badly if it is to compete with other countries around the world.

In that same spirit of optimism, I would invite my colleague to take another look at the reality of the situation and make sure that, in the end, the federal government gives Quebec contracts that will maintain the existing distribution. In this case, contrary to what happens with private companies, this is a company that received a contract without going through a tendering process. The federal government will have to deliver the goods for Quebec's 60% share of the aerospace industry.

[*English*]

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Mr. Speaker, what is frustrating is listening to the Bloc because it just does not listen. After 1993 Lucien Bouchard vowed his party would be around for just one Parliament, that win or lose an independence referendum, there would be no role for the Bloc afterward.

The member's question was asked and answered in the House, asked and answered in the national defence committee, asked and answered and voted down on an opposition day, and today he heard the same answer. Canada's new government is working hard to ensure our aerospace and defence industry is strong.

In the January 17, 2007 edition of the *National Post*, Laura Guzzo pointed out, "The [Montreal] aerospace industry is having a good year. In fact, it might be even better than last year. And that is no small feat.

We insist that every dollar that companies receive from our defence procurements is matched by a dollar of economic activity in this country. Canada's aerospace and defence companies will benefit from our "Canada First" procurements.

Mr. Bouchard was right. There is no role for the Bloc in Ottawa. I hope this is the last time this member and this party waste valuable time in the House with this question.

● (1915)

AFGHANISTAN

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on March 23 during question period I asked several questions of the Minister of National Defence. I pointed out that he had already misled the House and had to apologize and that it appeared he had done so again, and I called for his resignation.

How just a little bit of time causes things to evolve. Since then, it is not just the defence minister who is now missing in action who has misled the House, we have had changing stories, shifting sands from the Conservative government on the issue of the Afghan detainees since that time. Virtually every day the Conservatives have changed their story.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The Conservatives, for instance, were warned of possible human rights abuses in Afghan prisons as early as last year, and the number of disturbing reports grows with every passing day, but the government continues to deny the existence of a problem. To make matters worse, as I just mentioned, the Minister of National Defence has been missing in action in this House. Every single question that has been directed to the Minister of National Defence has been answered by another member of the Conservative cabinet.

If the Prime Minister does not have enough confidence in his own defence minister to allow him to answer questions in the House, how can he possibly allow that defence minister to remain the leader of our armed forces? The Prime Minister must fire the national defence minister and appoint a new one who hopefully will get to the bottom of this issue.

Let me give a few salient points. Every single one of the national defence minister's assertions regarding the Afghan detainees and the assertions of the Conservative government itself has been contradicted at every turn by top military officials, international organizations and the media.

We learned they denied the existence of a report on the state of Afghan prisons authored by Canadian diplomats. Then lo and behold, the report was found. They denied the presence of torture and human rights abuses in Afghan jails. Then media reports proved that there were numerous accounts of instances of torture and abuse. The diplomats' report contained blacked out sections. Then it was revealed that the blacked out sections contained information confirming widespread abuse and torture. Now the Information Commissioner is investigating why such critical sections of that report were censored when they present no threat to national security.

The Conservative government and the Minister of National Defence claimed there was no evidence that Afghan authorities were blocking access to prisons, but days earlier the head of the human rights commission in Kandahar said that while legally his commission had permission to visit prisoners, the Afghan authorities in those prisons do not permit it.

The defence minister suddenly announced a new detainee monitoring agreement had been reached, but it was to the surprise of the foreign affairs minister and Canada's chief of defence staff. The next day the Prime Minister said that no such deal had been concluded.

They then changed tactics and claimed that Correctional Service of Canada officials had been monitoring detainees all along. Then officials in Canada and Afghanistan contradicted these claims, clarifying that the two Correctional Service of Canada officials were there to conduct training and improve prison conditions, not to monitor detainees.

I ask simply—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in responding to the hon. member's question, it would be useful to begin by recalling the purpose of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan. We are there

contributing to a UN-sanctioned, NATO-led mission to help Afghanistan rebuild its society, institutions and economy.

Sixty countries in the international community helped developed a plan for Afghanistan. Called the Afghanistan Compact, it belongs to the government of Afghanistan. There are 37 countries on the ground that are implementing the plan at the request of the Afghanistan government.

Canada is there to help provide a secure environment in which development and democracy can flourish and to help restore hope to the Afghan people.

As Canadian Forces help provide security, inevitably they will detain individuals suspected of engaging in insurgent, criminal or terrorist activities. These individuals are transferred to Afghan authorities under the December 2005 arrangement negotiated by the previous Liberal government. This includes a commitment to treat detainees humanely.

Despite being in Afghanistan since 2002, and despite having received four out of five Afghanistan reports, the previous Liberal government did absolutely nothing to develop a policy for detainees until one month before they were fired by Canadians.

It will be our government that will improve this arrangement. In February, Canada strengthened its partnership with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, a body designated under the Afghan constitution to monitor human rights in Afghanistan.

This enhancement, which the Liberals did not do, came through an exchange of letters. These letters allow Canada to notify the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission of transfers, and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission to inform Canada if it learns of detainee mistreatment by Canada, and also the Afghan authorities.

The choice of the human rights commission is consistent with Canada's efforts to reinforce Afghanistan's sovereignty, strengthen governance and improve the rule of law. Moreover, this arrangement helps support indigenous institution building, something that Canada strongly supports.

Canadian representatives have worked with Afghan authorities to ensure that the human rights commission obtains access to facilities where detainees transferred by Canadian Forces are held. In addition, Canada is exploring ways of providing further support to the human rights commission, including capacity building and logistical and technical assistance where appropriate, to help the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission fulfill its important role.

For example, Canada has been deeply engaged in assisting the democratically elected government of Afghanistan to build its own justice, policing and correctional systems since 2002. Let us remember that this is a country that has had 30 years of tyranny.

Currently this includes mentoring, training and capacity building for the Afghan national police and the Afghan prison system. Officials in our Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, as well as the RCMP and Correctional Service Canada, are also stationed in Kandahar to help provide such support.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The allegations that have been made about the treatment of detainees in Afghanistan are taken very seriously by the Government of Canada. Let us remember that these are allegations that are made by Taliban alleged terrorist detainees.

• (1920)

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Mr. Speaker, this is typical of the Conservative government. The Conservatives knew about the alleged atrocities and they hid it.

Now it has come to light that there are serious allegations about possible torture and atrocities being committed by Afghan authorities, to whom our Canadian military has turned over suspected terrorists, yes, but also other people, and there is the presumption of innocence, which the Conservative government appears to have forgotten about.

The Conservatives literally obfuscated the truth. They change their story every single day.

Here this junior minister sits as the mouthpiece for that Conservative government and that Prime Minister and does not address the issue. The issue is a Minister of National Defence who misled the House repeatedly—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

**Hon. Helena Guergis:** Mr. Speaker, it really is unfortunate that far too often the members of the Liberal Party have to resort to personal attacks when they find they are losing arguments.

The simple fact of the matter is that the Government of Canada has an arrangement with the government of Afghanistan and with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. There is an investigation going on with regard to these allegations, but they are general allegations that have been received, I remind the hon. member, since 2002, and four out of five reports in which allegations were received were under the Liberal Party. The Liberals did absolutely nothing with these allegations.

What we see from the members of the Liberal Party is that they continue to take the side of the Taliban detainees, to take their word of allegations of being mistreated as the gospel truth, and they choose to ignore what our brave Canadian men and women are saying. It is unfortunate.

• (1925)

THE BUDGET

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of my constituents of Don Valley East and debate budget 2007, the second budget introduced by the Conservatives since assuming office in 2006.

Budget 2007 will go down as the most visionless and mean-spirited budget in Canadian history. In fact, with \$12.5 billion in new spending, the finance minister has distinguished himself as the biggest-spending minister in Canadian history. This is quite a feat.

When the Progressive Conservatives were finally defeated in 1993, they left the Liberal government with a \$42 billion deficit and a declaration from the *Wall Street Journal* that Canada was on the road to becoming a financial basket case. While the Conservatives

love to repeat the empty rhetoric that the Liberals did nothing for 13 years, the fact remains that it was the Liberal government that turned around the desperate financial crisis, eliminated the deficit and began paying off Canada's national debt as early as 1998.

Let us fast forward to 2006, when the Conservatives inherited a \$17 billion surplus and the lowest unemployment rate since 1970, and what do we see? The largest spending spree in Canada. But what did they spend it on? They spent it on gimmicks, pure gimmicks. So much for the Prime Minister and his Conservative talk about responsible government. Never before has so little been achieved with so much.

What are some of the gimmicks?

I asked the Minister of Finance a simple question. How has his budget helped real people with real problems? As for Marie who earns \$40,000 and Judy who earns \$22,000, how do they benefit from the working income tax benefit or from the child tax credit? They are either too poor or too rich. At \$40,000, for pension splitting, how do they benefit?

When Canadians filed their income taxes, they also discovered another gimmick. The Conservatives claimed that they made a tax cut. Instead, those earning \$36,000 a year or less actually experienced a tax increase from 15% to 15.5%. Does that sound like fairness?

Why is it that the neo-conservative budget is at the expense of the very vulnerable in society? This put 20,000 Canadians, most of them seniors, back onto the tax rolls. As an example, a person earning \$15,000 actually experienced a tax increase of \$149.

The Conservatives have squandered an opportunity. What did budget 2007 say about affordable housing? It said nothing, zip, zero.

How about day care spaces? Sadly, there was not one single space. In budget 2006, the Conservatives' hare-brained scheme to give tax breaks to the private sector crashed and burned when CEOs across the country universally rejected the plan.

How about the bombshell the finance minister dropped on October 31 when he wiped out over \$20 billion in retirement savings with the decision to cut income trusts?

I would like to ask the minister or his representative how the government intends to assist Canadian investors, many of them seniors, who lost as much as 50% of their retirement income when the Conservatives broke their election promises.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Don Valley East. At least she has a lot of respect for the House and does not engage in personal attacks, like the previous speaker, the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. I find it disgusting, and I thank the member for Don Valley East for her decorum.

However, I do find it odd that she would criticize our budget of 2007 for not assisting low income Canadians, specifically low income single moms, when in reality, the budget of 2006 did just that.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

For instance, let us take the example of one of a member's constituents, a hypothetical single working mother of two earning \$30,000 a year in Thorncliffe.

Under the former Liberal government, of which the member was a part, that single mom would have paid over \$400 in taxes. However, because of the Conservative government's first two budgets, which the member voted against, that single mother's tax bill is zero. That \$400 in tax relief may not seem much to a Liberal, but to that single mom in Thorncliffe Park, it will make a big difference in her life. In fact, in our first two budgets, we removed 885,000 Canadians off the tax rolls altogether.

Our budgets have also brought in numerous measures benefiting those with incomes too low to pay personal income tax, like the one point GST cut and the \$1,200 universal child care benefit for families with children under six. These new initiatives are in addition to already existing support for low income families provided through the GST credit, the Canada child tax benefit and the national child benefit supplement.

A major positive development for low income Canadians in budget 2007 was the working income tax benefit, a new initiative assisting Canadians into a more prosperous life for themselves and their families.

I want to quote a few of the organizations and the individuals who found our budget very worthy. The Canadian Labour Congress called the benefit an initiative "worthy of support". The Canadian Association for Community Living said it would "assist people with disabilities over the welfare wall". The Retail Council of Canada said it "should help to reduce the disincentives for some individuals to leave welfare with paid work".

I find it odd that the member for Don Valley East would vote against a budget that restored the fiscal balance, bringing federal support for Ontario to \$12.8 billion. Maybe she should have consulted with some of her provincial colleagues before she voted against the budget.

Maybe she should have consulted with Premier Dalton McGuinty, who said that budget 2007 "represents real progress for Ontarians". Perhaps she should have talked to the finance minister, Greg Sorbara, who said there are "real positives for Ontario" in budget 2007. Maybe she should have spoken to the energy minister, Dwight Duncan, who said budget 2007 was "a good step forward and the kind of thing we wanted to see".

I want to ask the member for Don Valley East this. Was Dalton McGuinty wrong? Was Greg Sorbara wrong? Was Dwight Duncan

wrong? Was Bob Delaney wrong. I would like to know what the member for Don Valley East thinks of that.

• (1930)

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to first correct the member. Thorncliffe is not in my riding. However, 15% versus 15.5% increase is an increase, and another \$350. I do not think the member knows math.

A person earning \$22,000 a year cannot benefit out of the working income tax benefit. They are too rich for that and too poor for the child tax credit. These are gimmicks.

I can assure the member that voters in my riding of Don Valley East do not forget it. They want child care spaces. They have not forgot the income trust fiasco.

When will the government own up to the fact that this is a visionless budget, a gimmicky budget, which has created no spaces and has not helped any person who is vulnerable. Instead, it has put 200,000 seniors back on to the tax rolls.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know where that member lives because I just listed all the Ontario ministers and the premier, who agreed with the budget, which means they are speaking for their constituents. They are Ontarians, so I am not sure where the member lives.

We are taking steps to help all Canadians, including hard-working single moms. I have already outlined numerous initiatives in budget 2007 that will benefit low income workers, including the low income single parents.

Other initiatives include new spending measures such as an investment of \$250 million to provinces and territories for the creation of new child care spaces.

The hon. member's constituents particularly benefit from the support in budget 2007, which she voted against: \$963 million to fund the GTA transit projects, which she voted against; \$586 million from the Canada ecotrust, which she voted against; \$574 million for the Canada-Ontario agreement, which she voted against; \$205.4 million for patient wait times, which she voted against; \$117.2 million—

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:35 p.m.)



## CONTENTS

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

<b>Patrick MacDonald</b>			Mr. Harper .....	8959
	Mr. Jaffer .....	8955	Mr. Ignatieff .....	8959
<b>Jess Larochelle</b>			Mr. Harper .....	8959
	Mr. Rota .....	8955	Mr. Duceppe .....	8960
<b>Quebec Manufacturing Sector</b>			Mr. Harper .....	8960
	Mr. André .....	8955	Mr. Duceppe .....	8960
<b>Pay Equity</b>			Mr. Harper .....	8960
	Ms. Nash .....	8955	Ms. Lalonde .....	8960
<b>Zimbabwe</b>			Ms. Guergis .....	8960
	Mr. Williams .....	8956	Ms. Lalonde .....	8960
<b>Young People from Madawaska—Restigouche</b>			Ms. Guergis .....	8960
	Mr. D'Amours .....	8956	Mr. Layton .....	8960
<b>Volunteering</b>			Mr. Harper .....	8961
	Mr. Kamp .....	8956	Mr. Layton .....	8960
<b>Science Centre</b>			Mr. Harper .....	8961
	Ms. Gagnon .....	8956	Ms. Robillard .....	8961
<b>Afghanistan</b>			Mr. O'Connor .....	8961
	Mr. Khan .....	8957	Ms. Robillard .....	8961
<b>Coast Guard</b>			Mr. O'Connor .....	8961
	Mr. Savage .....	8957	Mr. Coderre .....	8961
<b>Liberal Party Candidate</b>			Ms. Guergis .....	8961
	Mr. Goodyear .....	8957	Mr. Coderre .....	8961
<b>Child Care</b>			Ms. Guergis .....	8961
	Ms. McDonough .....	8957	Mr. Coderre .....	8961
<b>Fisheries</b>			Ms. Guergis .....	8961
	Mr. Russell .....	8958	<b>Gasoline Prices</b>	
<b>Jean-Marie Cossette</b>			Mr. Vincent .....	8961
	Mr. Gravel .....	8958	Mr. Lunn .....	8962
<b>World Press Freedom Day</b>			Mr. Vincent .....	8962
	Mr. Cotler .....	8958	Mr. Lunn .....	8962
<b>Green Party Leader</b>			<b>Taxation</b>	
	Mr. Keddy .....	8958	Mr. Crête .....	8962
<b>World Press Freedom Day</b>			Ms. Ablonczy .....	8962
	Ms. Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques) .....	8958	Mr. Crête .....	8962
			Ms. Ablonczy .....	8962

### ORAL QUESTIONS

<b>Afghanistan</b>			<b>Afghanistan</b>	
	Mr. Dion .....	8959	Ms. Dhalla .....	8962
	Mr. Harper .....	8959	Ms. Guergis .....	8962
	Mr. Dion .....	8959	Ms. Dhalla .....	8962
	Mr. Day .....	8959	Ms. Guergis .....	8963
	Mr. Dion .....	8959	Mrs. Redman .....	8963
	Mr. Day .....	8959	Ms. Guergis .....	8963
	Mr. Ignatieff .....	8959	Mrs. Redman .....	8963
			Ms. Guergis .....	8963
			<b>Gasoline Prices</b>	
			Mr. Lunney .....	8963
			Mr. Baird .....	8963
			Ms. Wasylycia-Leis .....	8963
			Mr. Lunn .....	8963
			Ms. Wasylycia-Leis .....	8963
			Mr. Lunn .....	8964
			<b>The Environment</b>	
			Mr. Godfrey .....	8964

Mr. Baird .....	8964	(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) .....	8969
Mr. Godfrey .....	8964		
Mr. Baird .....	8964	<b>Foreign Affairs</b>	
Mr. Regan .....	8964	Mr. Van Loan .....	8969
Mr. Baird .....	8964		
Mr. Regan .....	8964	<b>Petitions</b>	
Mr. Baird .....	8964	<b>Corporate Social Responsibility</b>	
		Ms. Lalonde .....	8969
<b>Development Assistance</b>		<b>Employment Insurance Act</b>	
Ms. St-Hilaire .....	8964	Mr. Goldring .....	8969
Ms. Verner .....	8965	<b>Canada Post</b>	
Ms. St-Hilaire .....	8965	Mr. Malhi .....	8969
Ms. Verner .....	8965	<b>Age of Consent</b>	
		Mr. Angus .....	8969
<b>Income Trusts</b>		<b>Passports</b>	
Mr. Turner .....	8965	Mr. Angus .....	8970
Mr. Van Loan .....	8965	<b>Canada Summer Jobs</b>	
		Mrs. Mourani .....	8970
<b>Agriculture</b>		<b>Kyoto Protocol</b>	
Mr. Schellenberger .....	8965	Mrs. Mourani .....	8970
Mr. Strahl .....	8965	<b>Human Trafficking</b>	
		Mrs. Smith .....	8970
<b>Veterans Affairs</b>		<b>Corporate Social Responsibility</b>	
Mr. Stoffer .....	8965	Mr. Patry .....	8970
Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest) .....	8965	<b>Seniors</b>	
Mr. Stoffer .....	8966	Ms. Wasylcyia-Leis .....	8970
Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest) .....	8966	<b>Summer Career Placement Program</b>	
		Mr. Guimond .....	8970
<b>Aboriginal Affairs</b>		<b>Fisheries Act</b>	
Mr. St. Amand .....	8966	Mr. Cuzner .....	8971
Mr. Prentice .....	8966		
		<b>Foreign Affairs</b>	
<b>Democratic Reform</b>		Mr. Van Loan .....	8971
Mr. Albrecht .....	8966	Motion .....	8971
Mr. Van Loan .....	8966	Mr. Szabo .....	8971
		(Motion agreed to) .....	8971
<b>Points of Order</b>		<b>Questions on the Order Paper</b>	
<b>Oral Questions</b>		Mr. Lukiwski .....	8971
Mr. Goodale .....	8966		
Mr. Baird .....	8966	<b>Motions for Papers</b>	
		Mr. Lukiwski .....	8972

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

<b>Interparliamentary Delegations</b>	
The Speaker .....	8968
<b>Government Response to Petitions</b>	
Mr. Lukiwski .....	8968
<b>Committees of the House</b>	
<b>Status of Women</b>	
Ms. Ratansi .....	8968
<b>Environment and Sustainable Development</b>	
Mr. Mills .....	8968
<b>Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics</b>	
Mr. Wappel .....	8968
<b>Criminal Code</b>	
Mr. Comartin .....	8968
Bill C-438. Introduction and first reading .....	8968

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

<b>Criminal Code</b>	
Bill C-10. Report Stage .....	8972
Mr. Lukiwski .....	8972
Mr. Bigras .....	8973
Mr. Del Mastro .....	8974
Mr. Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin) .....	8974
Mr. André .....	8975
Mr. McKay .....	8975
Mr. Kramp .....	8976
Mr. Del Mastro .....	8977
Mr. Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin) .....	8977
Mr. Szabo .....	8978
Mr. Cuzner .....	8979
Mr. Dhaliwal .....	8979
Mr. Wallace .....	8980

Mr. Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin) .....	8980
Mr. Kramp .....	8980
Mr. Dhaliwal .....	8980
Mrs. Freeman .....	8980
Mr. Wallace .....	8982
Mr. Lemay .....	8982
Mr. Cullen (Etobicoke North) .....	8982
Mr. Wallace .....	8984
Mrs. Jennings .....	8984
Mr. Lemay .....	8985
Mr. Kramp .....	8986

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**Committees of the House**

**Veterans Affairs**

Motion for concurrence .....	8986
Mr. Hill .....	8986
(Motion agreed to) .....	8986

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Criminal Code**

Motion for concurrence .....	8986
Motion agreed to .....	8987

**Criminal Code**

Bill C-343. Second reading .....	8987
----------------------------------	------

Motion agreed to .....	8988
(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee.) .....	8988

**Electoral Reform**

Motion .....	8988
Motion negatived .....	8989

**Income Tax Act**

Bill C-207. Second reading .....	8989
Mr. Dhaliwal .....	8989
Mr. Angus .....	8990
Mr. Crête .....	8991
Mr. Wallace .....	8993
Mr. Bouchard .....	8994
Division on motion deferred .....	8995

**ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

**Aerospace Industry**

Mr. Crête .....	8995
Mr. Carrie .....	8995

**Afghanistan**

Mrs. Jennings .....	8996
Ms. Guergis .....	8997

**The Budget**

Ms. Ratansi .....	8998
Mrs. Yelich .....	8998

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