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Tuesday, May 6, 2008

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 6, 2008

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I move that the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, presented on Thursday, March 13, 2008, be concurred in.

It is my honour to ask the House to support the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. A motion was presented on Thursday, March 13, that the report be concurred in. I will read the motion that is in front of the House right now. It states:

The Committee recommends that the government allow any applicant (unless they have serious criminality) who has filed their first in-Canada spousal or common law sponsorship application to be entitled to a temporary work permit and an automatic stay of removal until a decision is rendered on their application.

Members can imagine that when people get married, they would want their wives or their husbands to stay in Canada and be able to live together, to start a family, and to be able to enjoy their time together. The immediate time right after the marriage is the time when people are on their honeymoon and they really want to spend time together.

There is an immigration policy that very few Canadians actually know about. Probably very few members of Parliament know about it as well. It says that if one meets someone here in Canada and that person happens not to be a Canadian, the person might have been visiting in Canada or maybe a student, and one gets married to that person, under the present rules right now some of these spouses would be deported from Canada. Of course, one wants these people to stay in Canada. Then the sponsorship application must begin all over again overseas. In the meantime, these couples are separated for over a year.

I will give an example. On Valentine's Day of this year I highlighted the case in my riding of Mr. and Mrs. Chen. Mr. Chen has been in Canada for many years. He has a very successful

business worth about \$13 million and it is his family's sole source of financial support. A few years ago he was working with one of his co-worker's and fell in love. This young lady is a Canadian, they are both in their thirties, and a perfectly matched couple. She decided to sponsor Mr. Chen in Canada.

After waiting for six or seven months, the application to sponsor him and allow him to stay in Canada is still proceeding. In the meantime, Mr. Chen has been asked to be deported. This is very strange. Through his lawyer, he said that his wife was dependant on him financially and emotionally, and would be greatly harmed by his removal. Mrs. Chen had an 11 year old stepson and the stepson has adopted this wonderful father. They are very close. They have been living together for two or three years. Yet, this man faces deportation. A few days before Valentine's Day the police came to his house and he was about to be arrested and deported.

There was another situation of Brigitta Sallay. She had been in Canada for seven years. She married Arpad Vadasz or they lived in common law. They have an eight month old child. In April of this year, while her husband was sponsoring her application to stay in Canada, she was deported. She was arrested on April 9 and then a few days later on April 12 she was deported along with her eight month old child to Hungary.

• (1010)

That is completely bizarre because the mom of this baby has a common law husband who lives in Canada and the removal officer forgot to tell their 10-year-old daughter who is also in Canada. The 10-year-old daughter was in school at the time her mom was deported and did not even know about it, so the father ended up having to pick her up from school. As a result, they are now waiting for the mom to come back to Canada.

We can see that married couples are being cruelly separated due to a heartless immigration policy. I hear many heartbreaking stories of couples living in Canada who are about to be separated even while their spousal sponsorship applications are in progress. I asked the immigration committee to pass this very important motion because immigrants deserve fairness. By enacting very small changes, we can make a big impact on many families. The system does not have to be this complicated.

For over a decade, minister after minister talked about supporting families and yet they failed to support loving couples. It is absurd and cruel to separate families, and cause untold emotional and financial hardship just because of a failure of a political will or because Parliament has not been paying attention.

Routine Proceedings

I say that it is time for fairness for immigrant families. It is time to stop the deportation of spouses who have an outstanding application for sponsorship by their Canadian partners.

One of the objectives of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act is “to see that families are reunited in Canada”, but we are failing far too many families who are separated while living together here in Canada.

Some members may remember that in the House of Commons in 2005 there was a controversy involving the former minister of immigration. She was accused of giving a ministerial permit to allow a woman to stay in Canada while her partner was sponsoring her. This woman happened to be a former stripper and that became a big controversy. It became known as “strippergate”, or something of that nature, and her husband was sponsoring her at that time. Had the policy been changed, she probably would not have had to go to a minister or a member of Parliament. Her husband would have been able to sponsor her within Canada without any trouble.

So, in 2005, a new Liberal minister of immigration at that time made a policy change and said that most Canadians could in fact sponsor their husband or wife in Canada and they would not face deportation.

The policy at that time was clear. It said that we should allow Canadians who wanted to sponsor a spouse in Canada to apply in Canada whether or not their spouse was in status. One would think that was simple. That is what the policy said. There was no objection at that time. There was no uproar. People in the communities thought it made sense to allow these couples to stay together in Canada while their sponsorship applications were processed.

But what happened? What happened was that the department, and allow me to read this:

In 2005, a new public policy (the “spousal policy”) was adopted under the humanitarian and compassionate grounds provision in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) to extend the benefit of the SCPC class to spouses and common-law partners who are in Canada without status, subject to some exceptions discussed below.

So, the intention was to allow all inland applicants to apply in Canada for their spouses. Instead of doing it in a very clean, straightforward way, the former Liberal government did not really pay enough attention to it. It changed the policy a bit, but it really did not complete its job. It did not finish the job. It did not get the job done.

●(1015)

According to the Library of Parliament, there are people, loving couples, that are now affected by this. It is not a small number. Since I have been talking about this issue, I have received many examples of people being deported. They are not fraudulent applications remember and we are not talking about people who want to cheat the system. We are talking about allowing them to stay in Canada.

The absurd situation is that when Canada deports people back to their country of origin, we spend a lot of money arresting the people. We then have to ensure they depart and may even provide their means of travel, which again is a lot of money. Then the applications that have been processed within Canada and that may have been

worked on a lot for over eight months, these applications within Canada have to be scrapped.

If a person is deported to let us say China, the Canadian spouse would have to start a new application all over again to bring that person back into this country. Think of the cost, the duplication, and the administrative nightmare. The application forms have to be re-submitted, this time in Canada and overseas. None of the old applications would be in order. There would have to be a second medical exam and a security clearance.

We have heard from the minister recently that the backlog in overseas offices is at 925,000 and yet in Canada we are adding to that backlog in a completely needless way. We do not need to do it that way and yet we deport people even though they will eventually come back to Canada.

It is almost as if the right hand, which is the Canada immigration centre, is not paying attention to what the left hand, which is the Canada Border Services Agency, CBSA, is doing. As a result, the Canadian immigration system is processing an application and in the meantime the person is being deported. Then the application stops and it has to start all over again. It is absurd. It is a complete waste of taxpayers' money doing it that way. Not only does it waste taxpayers' money, it takes a huge emotional toll on couples.

Let me describe a few more examples. In Thunder Bay, there is a couple by the name of Marcel and Cindy Stubbe. Cindy, who is 44 years old, is terminally ill with lung cancer, which has spread to her brain, while her 42-year-old husband lives with her and is facing the constant threat of deportation to his native home, Holland. While his wife is a Canadian citizen, Marcel's status is that of a visitor, meaning that he faces deportation.

He thought originally that the government would show some compassion because of his wife's condition. Remember she has lung cancer, which is a terminal illness. The couple lives in a trailer park on a very strict budget and because Marcel is not allowed to work, he and his wife subsist on her \$1,061 from the Ontario disability support program. After paying all the bills, they have about \$100 left to buy a month's worth of groceries and pet food for their cats. Because of Marcel's visitor status, he and his wife did not qualify as a family of two, which would have meant a larger payment from ODSP.

Marcel and his wife have a very positive outlook on life. They said that some days are good and some days are bad. The Thunder Bay community is showing heart. It is very kind and generous. A group of strangers, neighbours of theirs, came together and raised over \$800 so Marcel could pay the fees required to apply for his immigration status. The fees were \$550 and the couple was able to use the rest for food.

●(1020)

The good Samaritans included the Victorian Order of Nurses, social workers and local volunteers. The couple said that they believed in miracles, but would it not be wonderful if he did not have to face deportation and that he could live in Canada with his fairly sick wife.

Routine Proceedings

There is another case from Toronto. The couple had two kids together in Canada. One is two years old and the other one is six months old and is still breast-feeding. One child was born in Ontario in 2005 and the other in 2007. The wife is facing deportation right now even though the husband is sponsoring her. The wife has to quit her ultrasound technician job and leave her properties behind. They have to reapply overseas and wait for another year or so. The two kids will either live with the father in Canada or with the mother back home in China.

It is just unbelievable. Why would we ask a family to make the decision of whether the children will stay with the father or the mother? They are not criminals.

We have 22,000 people in the backlog waiting to be deported and some are couples. They have Canadians who are sponsoring them and yet we deport them. We spend \$23 million a year deporting people out of Canada and yet yesterday the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development said that Canada needed families, children and workers. He said that because of our declining population and declining birthrate we are in serious need of more workers and young people and yet we are spending all that money to deport people. Half of them have businesses and the other half have very good jobs in Canada. They have kids born in Canada and yet we deport them. It does not make any sense.

We have another situation of a wife and husband who have been married since April 2004 and CBSA is trying to deport the husband. He has no criminal record. He works, pays his taxes and is a good husband and father. The couple bought a house in October 2007 and yet this poor man is being deported while the wife is trying to sponsor him.

These people are writing to the House of Commons through their member of Parliament asking that we please change the rules.

There is another person whose fiancée is in Italy while she lives here. She is a Canadian. They have been together for seven years. The whole situation is quite absurd. Not only is it costly but it increases our backlog and causes untold hardship on families.

I am asking that the House, hopefully unanimously or a good majority, supports the motion so that the matter will not come back here a year from now. I hope the minister will do the right thing and change the rule so that in a few months time or maybe by next Valentines Day we will not see couples being cruelly separated for no reason except some bureaucratic misunderstanding.

● (1025)

I hope all members of Parliament will support this concurrence motion and the immigration committee and allow these couples to stay together in Canada.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the New Democratic Party has outlined the dilemma that many MPs face with respect to the compassionate and humanitarian approach to many of these cases.

I am not sure the amendments to the Immigration Act would deal with the issue that is raised continuously, which is that factored into this humanitarian and compassionate criteria is the retort that we cannot encourage people to jump the queue. There are those who

make their applications from abroad and go through the process. Invariably, that is the position that the departments have taken in the past.

I wonder if the member could respond to that. Speaking on behalf of my own riding of York South—Weston, it is tremendously frustrating. I can see both sides of that issue, but would the member perhaps have a workable resolution that would deal with that issue and allow, on compassionate and humanitarian grounds, those kinds of cases that she cited to be resolved in the Canadian character?

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, in this case the motion does not say that anyone should jump the queue. The motion reads:

That the Committee recommend that the government allow any applicant (unless they have serious criminality) who has filed their first in-Canada spousal or common law sponsorship application to be entitled to a temporary work permit and an automatic stay of removal until a decision is rendered on their application....

We are not saying that we should push these spousal applications ahead of the queue. We are saying that if it takes six months, nine months or a year, it is okay. We can let them wait. However, in the meantime, we should allow them to work because some of them have a work permit or a visa and are working anyway. The key is that while their application is going forward we should not deport them. That is all I am saying. If we deport them, they must start all over again, which will definitely increase the backlog.

No one is jumping any queue. The couple is already in Canada and many couples are working, paying taxes, raising a family and own a house in Canada. Why are we deporting them and separating them? Why would we want to stop collecting their taxes? It does not make sense. There should be no queue jumping. It is okay to have them wait but we should not make it so absurd that they must reapply all over again and CBSA incurring the expense of deporting them from Canada.

The Auditor General will be coming out with a report later today about CBSA. We do not yet know the content. Will it be that CBSA does not give value for money? In these cases, Canadian taxpayers are not getting value for their money because we deport people, we process them and then they come back in after a year or two years, which is a complete waste of taxpayer money and the applicant's money. In the meantime, we are not collecting the taxes from those who had been working. It is absurd.

A very small change can have a dramatic impact for a lot of couples.

● (1030)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the motion, what does the member consider to be serious criminality? How would she classify that and at what point would that stage be reached? Also, until an approval in principle is given with respect to an issue, does she see any difficulty with granting an open work permit before that decision is made? Might there be abuses of the system if one simply applied and had an open work permit before an approval in principle was made? Does the hon. member see any difficulties with that?

Routine Proceedings

I appreciate that there are certain compelling and compassionate reasons why she might consider that but, at the same time, might there be situations that she can see that would be a matter of concern if the approval in principle had not yet been completed? If the due process has not gone forward, nor has an investigation been made as to whether or not the relationship is bona fide and actually exists as it ought to, does she see any difficulties in that area?

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, I raised that question in the committee. I want to quote Ms. Susan Kramer, one of the directors of CBSA, who said that last year CBSA deported 12,637 people. She went on to say:

The total backlog is 22,000, and of those, 6% are what we call high-priority cases. Those are the ones who pose a risk to national security, those involved in organized crime or crimes against humanity, and of course, criminals.

My definition of criminals is that they have a criminal record, which is pretty serious. She said that out of the backlog of 20,000, it would be under 2,000 people. About 6% of these people would have criminal records.

We need to speed up the deportation of these criminals. If the CBSA can spend more time and money tracking these people down and getting rid of them, fine. I think everybody here in the House of Commons would support that. However, we are not talking about criminals. We are talking about loving spouses.

As to the member's second question on whether there would be people who would abuse the system, there are always one or two bad apples, maybe 1 out of 1,000. Some people will abuse the system but it is such a small number.

Marriage is a big occasion. It is a life occasion. I cannot see many Canadians getting married because they want their spouse to abuse the Canadian system and get a work permit, for heaven's sake. If we were to go outside Parliament Hill and ask people if they would marry someone in Canada who does not have status so the person could work here, I think most people would say absolutely not.

• (1035)

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I was listening to my colleague, I could not help but think of an incident I had during the time of the last election of a young, recently married woman who was expecting a child. The marriage was delayed because of a problem with the husband's divorce. The authorities insisted on deporting her to a country where the health system was quite questionable in terms of its capacity to provide her with proper health coverage during the course of the pregnancy.

During the course of that election, I tried to get special permission from the minister to allow her to stay. What I said repeatedly at that time was that this was crazy because the woman would be allowed back into this country once her application was processed. I said that it was because of the delay over the divorce that it had not gone as far as it should have by now but that she would be allowed to come back.

A year later, after she had the baby by herself in another country, she is back living with her husband in a solid marriage. We put her through all that trauma.

Does either Immigration Canada or the Border Services Agency keep statistics on how many people in a spousal relation situation

come back to Canada after being deported, which wastes all that time, effort and money for nothing?

The Deputy Speaker: That may indeed be a very good question but, unfortunately, we have run out of time.

We are resuming debate now. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the motion does not talk about approval of the application in principle. It simply says that by filing the application, there would be an automatic stay in deportation and a temporary work permit would be issued. It seems to me that if we took this to its logical conclusion, it would certainly allow for potential abuse. I am not talking about legitimate cases and those that are approved in principle because that already happens. This is taking it to an illogical conclusion.

I would like to take this opportunity to speak to the motion proposed by the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina. We oppose the motion.

The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration voted on the motion that would entitle any applicant to an automatic stay of removal and a work permit until a decision was rendered on his or her in Canada spousal or common law sponsorship application. Allowing automatic stays of removal together with automatic access to work permits could seriously undermine the integrity of Canada's immigration program.

We have established a fair and adequate process in this country which ensures people are protected, but it also allows them to go through various processes that can take years before a decision is rendered. One could take advantage of that in a situation like this. It would almost certainly lead to an increase in applications in the spouse or common law partner in Canada class from individuals whose relationships might not be legitimate and who were seeking to enter Canada by any means. We are not talking about the obvious ones. Applications based on compassionate reasons should go forward, as should those approved in principle. We are talking about the potential misuse that might exist for others.

As members of the House are aware, all immigration applications are carefully examined to ensure that they are bona fide. For spouse or common law applications in Canada, steps are taken to ensure that the relationship which forms the basis of the application is bona fide in order to protect the integrity of the immigration program.

The Government of Canada is responsible for meeting this country's economic needs while fostering family reunification and offering protection to refugees. Those are the three pillars of our Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

Family reunification is a key element of the act. Keeping families together helps people integrate into Canadian society and contributes to their success. We believe our current policies reflect this goal.

Under the provisions of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, measures are in place which allow individuals already living in Canada to apply for permanent residence from within Canada. There are two types of cases involved: those who are in status and those who are out of status.

Routine Proceedings

Spouses and common law partners already in Canada and who are in status may apply for permanent residence in the spouse or common law partner in Canada class. In order to be eligible under this class, applicants must have a bona fide relationship, live with their sponsoring spouse or common law partner in Canada, and have legal temporary status in Canada. That is the way our system ought to work. It ought to have a balance in the process. While their applications are being processed, spouses and common law partners can apply to maintain their temporary resident status.

In addition, once applicants are confirmed as having met the eligibility requirements as spouses or common law partners in the in Canada class, they can remain in Canada and apply for open work permits while the necessary security and medical background checks are done to obtain final approval.

We have a system in place that is working. We have a system in place that allows for open work permits to happen, but there are also security issues that need to be taken into account.

This initial eligibility assessment, also known as the approval in principle, plays an important role in preserving the integrity of Canada's immigration program. It ensures that CIC has determined that an applicant's relationship is genuine before he or she is eligible to apply for a work permit. It only makes sense. It would not make sense to simply file an application just because one says he or she is a spouse. It makes it open to abuse.

● (1040)

I would like to stress that while the majority of spousal applicants are bona fide and are in bona fide relationships, some do abuse our programs. That is why we must take that reality into consideration.

To help prevent this abuse, citizenship and immigration officers check an applicant's background. They perform personal interviews and examine evidence to ensure that the relationship is genuine. Our current policy of restricting access to open work permits until after approval in principle is obtained prevents applicants from using the spouse or common law partner in Canada class as an avenue to circumvent legitimate immigration processes.

These are measures already in place for people who are in status to stay in Canada while their application is in process. However, Canada's immigration system is even more generous than that. We have measures in place for family members who are out of status to stay here permanently as well. For spouses and common law partners who are in Canada without legal immigration status, a public policy was introduced in 2005 to also allow these individuals, including failed refugee claimants, to apply and be processed in the in Canada class.

This public policy was implemented to facilitate family reunification in cases where spouses and common law partners were already living together in Canada, but who may have certain inadmissibilities resulting in a lack of status. This certainly has gone a long way to addressing many of the concerns that have been raised. It is not an opportunity or an availability to address every concern, because in that event, the illegitimate ones, or those that would use the system improperly, would be allowed as well.

The inadmissibilities I refer to include, for example, having overstayed one's temporary status, working or studying without

being authorized to do so, or entering Canada without a valid passport, the required visa or other documentation, and would apply to failed refugee claimants.

The ability to submit an application in these cases, and these cases are exempt, allows individuals to remain in Canada for a limited period of time, 60 days, should removal action be initiated. This period facilitates the processing of their application to the approval in principle stage. As with those who are already in status, these applicants will be allowed to apply for a work permit once they have obtained approval in principle.

In addition to this initial 60 day deferral of removal, once an applicant has obtained approval in principle, a stay of removal is granted until a final decision is made on the application. The system has built into it a policy that is equitable, compassionate and takes into consideration many of the issues that have been raised as problematic.

For individual cases where determination of eligibility is complex and may take longer than 60 days, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency consult with one another and reach a decision on how to proceed. This is yet another step in the process.

The current policy is considerably generous and flexible in facilitating family reunification applications and processing from within Canada. In most cases it allows people to stay while their application is in process. Once the bona fides of their application have been established, they are allowed to apply for an open work permit.

The government is diligent in ensuring that these applications are processed in a timely fashion, without undermining Canada's commitment to family reunification. That principle remains intact. That principle continues to be an abiding one that is taken into consideration along with the others that form part of the act.

Moreover, the existing measures minimize the potential for abuse. They strike the appropriate balance between our family reunification goals and the need to maintain the integrity of the immigration program.

Based on the reasons I have outlined, I would encourage my colleagues in the House to vote against the motion before them. It is very easy to bring a motion that would be all encompassing, all inclusive and to say it does apply to some existing extenuating circumstances. What the motion fails to consider is what might happen if an automatic stay and an open work permit were given every time an application was filed without any analysis of the claim or without any analysis of the bona fides of the relationship and without looking at any material. That would be inappropriate. It would not be the type of due diligence Canadians would expect from their government.

Routine Proceedings

●(1045)

They would at least want to ensure a certain threshold was met before any of those actions were taken. As I stated in my speech, when we look at all of the provisions that are already in place, we would have to come to the conclusion that equity, fairness and compassion are parts of the system which not only allow out of status people to remain here, not only provide for a time period to go through the processes to get to the approval in principle, but also allow for discussion to take place between two departments that are involved in the process to ensure that in those cases that require some compassion and equity, discretion will be exercised appropriately.

When we compare what is in place to what some of the needs are, a fair balance has been struck between what is necessary to meet the need and what is necessary to protect the integrity of the system. Canadians would expect that much. A balance is not always easy to draw, but we know that it needs to be a balance. To simply say we can file documents and expect consequences to happen without regard to what is in the documents would not be appropriate. It would not be exercising one's due diligence and would be abdicating in an area where Canadians would expect us to take some measure of work and take some measure of due diligence to ensure that the basic threshold is met.

For that reason, we oppose the motion as stated.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while I was researching this issue, about nine months ago I asked the minister and CBSA how many Canadian-born children are deported each year. They do not keep statistics apparently, so we do not know. We deport Canadian-born kids with their moms or dads, so that they can come back in later.

This whole notion of the Canada Immigration Centre working with CBSA is actually not quite correct. I have seen cases in which the right hand has no idea what the left hand is doing. In the meantime the parliamentary secretary said that we should see whether we can get the approval in principle done first and then make a decision. That would be fine if it could be done within six months. On average it is supposed to take six months. Even if there is a stay of deportation for six months to allow the Canada Immigration Centre to process the determination, some cases take more than six months. It could be seven months or eight months and sometimes two years, but after the six months has passed, guess what happens. CBSA swoops in and the person is gone. That person could be two days or two weeks away from getting an approval in principle, yet just as the person is about to get the approval in principle, the person is deported.

How is this system fair? How is it equitable? How is it flexible? It does not meet those criteria. It is not fair. It is not equitable. It is a waste of money.

●(1050)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, I take issue with that. I would disagree with the hon. member. Certainly, that is not the case. I know when a child is involved, the best interests of the child are always paramount and are taken into consideration.

We have a humanitarian and compassionate grounds process that is probably second to none in the world, where applications are taken into consideration and those factors are in place. In fact, in Canada we have a system that is unique in many ways. We have not only a hearing, but there is application for leave to the Federal Court, and appeal to the Federal Court of Appeal in some cases. We have humanitarian and compassionate grounds applications. Many times they can be made more than once and can extend for years. We have a pre-removal risk assessment. We have taken into account all of these processes.

There may need to be some inequities looked at. There may need to be some policy shifts, but certainly simply saying because there may need to be some of those, to go the full way and say every time an application is filed automatically there is a stay of proceeding and an automatic open work permit is not being fair, just or appropriate, given all the circumstances. It is simply not the way it is meant to work. At some point we have to draw line and say that people have to establish some basic facts before they are entitled to these things. That threshold is simply to establish a bona fide application, to say one's application has some legitimacy and some basis to it. When that happens, that is sufficient, but someone has to take the time to ensure that that happens.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was with great interest that I listened to the parliamentary secretary speak about uniting families, the integrity of the system and compassion.

I want to put to him a specific question regarding a constituent of mine, Mr. Masood Firoozian. He came to Canada, married his wife and applied. This was in 2006. The file was sent to the Vegreville case processing centre, which referred this file to Etobicoke. That was in March 2006.

In August of 2007, Etobicoke answered me and said:

This spousal application was referred to Etobicoke CIC from CPC Vegreville in March.07. It will be 12 to 14 months before this file will be assigned to an officer...

Fourteen months have gone by. He went back to them. On 16/04 a letter was received that said the spousal application was referred to Etobicoke, not in March 2007, as they said, but in January 2008. It was a total misrepresentation. It further stated:

It will be at least 12 months before this application will be assigned to an officer for review.

The fellow came to Canada and married his wife and he is still in status. Now his wife has to undergo a serious operation that will have her laid up for six months.

My question is very simple. He applied for an open work permit in order to be able to look after and provide for his family. His wife is going in for an operation and he wants to get a work permit, yet under the Conservative government we are not allowed to move to get him an open work permit so he can work.

Routine Proceedings

I have a question for the parliamentary secretary. I have already sent a letter to the minister on this. Will he intervene on Mr. Masood Firoozian's behalf in order to make sure he gets an open work permit so that when his wife is in hospital for the next six months he is able to look after his family? If the parliamentary secretary wants to put his money where his mouth is, he will stand up and say that he will intervene.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, as much as this member may want me to speak on an individual's specific case, it is obviously something that I would not do, nor would anybody responsibly do it. That case will have to stand on its own merits. He will get a response in due course.

What we are talking about here is not a specific case but a policy that applies to all applicants across the country. We have—

An hon. member: You're talking about people. You forgot to mention them.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: I think the responsible thing to do is to look at what are the underpinnings and principles involved in the policy. A motion to simply say that because people file some piece of paper they automatically get this and that is not responsible. That member is not responsible nor is any member who feels that would be an objective way to go.

There must be an objective basis. There have to be certain parameters and guidelines and they must be followed. Are there cases outside that have some issues that need to be looked at? There are. Those issues will be looked at in due course and I trust the appropriate rules and processes will be applied to those cases.

However, as a principle, it is important that we look at the program's integrity in a holistic way and ensure that there are certain underpinnings that must be met. When they are met, the due course will follow. I think what we have here is an appropriate balance and I certainly believe it should be maintained.

•(1055)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has indicated that this is all about balance. It is no surprise to us that he and his colleagues on the Conservative side are opposing this concurrence motion, as they opposed the report itself at committee, which gave rise to this debate on the concurrence motion.

I have to say I think it noteworthy that the Liberals have seen fit to play their role as official opposition in this case and actually stand behind the work that is done in the minority government situation at committee and now in Parliament. We would like to see more of that.

I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary a question. In opposing the motion and the report, he says that existing measures strike an appropriate balance between family reunification and the need to maintain the integrity of the immigration program. I am wondering if the parliamentary secretary would address the question of these horrendous backlogs that continue, and what that says about the government's notion of balance in what is clearly case after case after case where humanitarian and compassionate consideration should be brought to bear.

Where is the balance between continuing with serious shortages of staff trained and qualified to carry out these kinds of processes and making a decision to virtually gut the treasury by giving away very large sums of money to those who least need tax giveaways in our society today, those being big oil, big banks and big polluters? Where is the balance between that and those who are facing desperate family crises in many cases as a result of the policy that the parliamentary secretary and his government insist on standing behind, which is—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The parliamentary secretary has to have some time to reply.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that there needs to be an appropriate balance struck, and I am suggesting that this indeed is the case. Striking a balance would mean that we have to weigh the issues and then decide having regard to all of those issues. Simply filing an application expecting a result to happen, whether it is bona fide or not, is not weighing the balance. I think the member ought to know that.

With respect to the other issues she raised, I wonder why her particular party would choose to vote against \$1.3 billion being set aside for settlement and integration to make the system work better and to have those who do come in succeed. Why would those members vote against that or against a foreign credential referrals office that would help those who need credentialing to take place? Why would they have voted against cutting a \$975 immigration tax, as was opposed by the previous Liberal government—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but the time has expired. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kitchener—Waterloo.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to engage in this debate.

I want to say to the parliamentary secretary it is really unfortunate that he had his speaking notes prepared for him for the chamber and that he did not speak with the same rationality he did in the committee, because the policy we are looking at does not make any sense.

Cutting this down to the bare bones, what we have is that somebody applies for inland spousal landing. It is legal. There is absolutely nothing untoward about it. That is how the system was set up to work. However, the processing starts on that application and since it does not get done in time, it is passed on to removal, for no reason other than the fact that the application is not processed. Where does that make any kind of sense?

Somebody takes the right step and makes an inland spousal application to be able to stay here, which is quite proper, but because the bureaucracy does not deal with the issue fast enough, we are going to remove that individual. Where does that make any sense at all? That is what this comes down to.

I am shocked, and I am sure all the opposition parties are shocked, because for years we listened to that party stand in this House and defend family values. How much more of a family value can we have than not splitting husband from wife, father from children, sons and daughters, or mothers from their children? That is what this whole issue comes down to.

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If the case were that somebody was found to have a relationship that was not bona fide and it was a marriage of convenience, nobody is arguing that this person be allowed to stay here. What we are talking about is that when somebody makes an application to keep their family together in Canada the case must be processed before one of the spouses is removed.

Mr. Speaker, you must be wondering about it as well because I am sure you heard the same speeches on family values coming from the Conservative Party. This reminds me of the kind of family values where Mexico refuses to recognize religious marriages as far as derivative citizenship is concerned.

However, I mentioned that it really is too bad that the parliamentary secretary gets up in this House and reads notes prepared for him by the department, because when we had committee hearings on this issue, there was a sign in his questioning that he actually understood the issue and knew that this issue was not right.

I am going to refer to the meeting where this issue was discussed in committee and the parliamentary secretary asked the official:

I know there's a concern about multiple applications, but from what I'm hearing, if one application isn't determined in 60 days, you make it a point between the two departments to expedite it. If you removed the idea of multiple applications and just dealt with the particular case, is there any reason why, as a matter of policy, the removal couldn't be withheld until the expedited process on that particular application is completed?

This is what we all agree on. I think all of us in the committee agreed on it.

• (1100)

I have had a number of cases, like most members of Parliament have had, in dealing with this. There are two cases in particular to which I will refer. One involved a young couple who were married last summer. The husband was born in Canada. His father had emigrated from Guyana. The husband attended the University of Waterloo, where he met his future wife, who came from Guyana to go to Wilfrid Laurier University. They met and kept in contact.

While the young woman had status initially in Canada, she went back to Guyana. The relationship continued, she came up for a visit and the young couple decided to get married. They filed for inland application, which happened during the summer. While this was granted, the young woman could not get a temporary work permit to engage in her occupation. She happens to be a financial professional.

I come from the riding of Kitchener—Waterloo. We have a lot of insurance companies in the riding. It is the home of Sun Life, Manulife and a number of others. Her skills were in demand, but she could not get a work permit until she had approval in principle, which did not make any sense. When a young couple gets married, we want the couple to start off their life with both of them being able to work. We know the financial strains that can happen in marriages, especially with young people who are paying off students loans or whatever.

The work permit was not allowed until the approval in principle came through, which does not make any sense. We are a country that brings in well over 100,000 temporary foreign workers to work in Canada, yet for people who want to be future citizens and build a

family in Canada, we deny them the right to work while the bureaucracy goes through the file.

Another situation I had was in Chilliwack. The son of a friend of mine, who is a teacher, was involved with a veterinarian who happened to be from Holland. When the couple decided to get married, and her status would expire, she specifically went out of the country to make application because that way she could continue to work.

We have two very similar cases being treated totally differently by our officials in the handling of immigration matters for spouses.

I am sure most members of the House, who were here at the time, will recall a former minister who was in trouble around the whole issue of giving ministerial permits to people who wanted to get married and maintain their partners in Canada so they would not be split up.

The problem was, instead of having it down as a matter of routine by the bureaucracy, which is the way it used to be done, the rules were changed to require a minister's permit. This was totally wrong, and the minister was in trouble for showing compassion. The case she happened to deal with spun out of control. It was referred to as “strippergate”, as members will recall.

The basic foundation of it was that a Canadian male married that woman and therefore she was allowed to stay because she got the permit. Given the problems associated with that, we changed the rules back to the way they were. The rules are, if people marry, they can apply to have them stay inland while the case is being processed. There is nothing difficult about this.

• (1105)

I heard questions in the chamber about the queue and about how the time spent in lineups to get into Canada might be harmful.

I would like the House to consider this situation. CBSA expends resources to get people out of the country. Because their application has not been processed, it will have to start to process the application out of the country once again, which will take a lot of time and will back up the queue. Instead of doing that, why do we not dedicate the resources that CBSA spends to go after people who have made legitimate applications to land in Canada to keep their family together, pass it to processing and ensure it gets done. This is not rocket science.

The way the rule stands is just not defensible. It does not make any sense. It is the height of ridicule of a bureaucracy to split up families. We know problems are created when a family is split up for a period of time. They suffer emotionally, financially and psychologically.

Too often our officials separate families for absolutely no good reason. They claim that children are not deported if they are born in Canada. However, the reality is when parents are moved out of the country, the children will be split from them. In the case of undocumented workers, the children follow their parents even though they were born in our country.

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I do not understand the change in the approach of the parliamentary secretary. Why does he not go back to the common sense approach that he expressed in committee?

The Conservative government claims it is the pillar of family values, yet it is quite willing to split up families for no good reason. Why? The bureaucracy does not proceed fast enough. Why not? Money has been wasted on border services to round up people, which they never should round up, to send them out of the country. This ends up creating more work in getting people back into the country, and families are being split apart.

I call upon the parliamentary secretary to go back to the common sense approach he had in committee. I call upon him to persuade the minister and his colleagues in the Conservative caucus that keeping families together is a good thing. Splitting them apart unnecessarily is a bad thing. That should not be too difficult. I really am shocked that the Conservatives have not seen that point before, particularly the parliamentary secretary who understands the issues.

The money we spend to remove people from Canada, and I am not sure if it is 10% or 11% of the cases related to this, seems to be a real waste of resources. The government claims that we have to bring in more and more temporary foreign workers because of unfilled positions. To not issue a work permit to a spouse, while a case is being processed, also does not make any sense.

People who make refugee claims are allowed to have a work permit because we want to ensure they have a chance to support themselves. We also want to ensure that when people come to Canada, the first thing we do not say to them is that they have to rely on assistance from someone else, but rather they should come into the country and work. This is a good thing. I am surprised, from that perspective, why this does not make any sense to the Conservatives.

• (1110)

On one hand, the government is defending this policy. Essentially, the Conservatives are parroting the nonsensical evidence we heard from the officials at the citizenship and immigration committee. On the other hand, under the guise of Bill C-50, they really do not want to open up the debate to the extent it should be. Instead, they are saying that the whole system is wrong.

I ask the parliamentary secretary and the government to use a little common sense. Look at the policy, use some innate common sense and fix it. This is not rocket science. Somebody makes a legal application and then, because the bureaucracy does not process it in time, we remove that individual.

When I asked the officials in front of the committee if they could tell us what the percentage of approval of these cases was, they said it was 90%. Then I asked the officials if they could tell us how many people they got rid of because the department was unable to process the case in time and how many of those people came back in because their relationship was legitimate. The officials told me that they did not know and that they did not keep statistics on that, which surprised me.

Why not? Why would the department not keep statistics on something that simple? Then perhaps it could judge the quality of its decision making at the front end, instead of making these ridiculous decisions, removing individuals and making them go through the

whole process of applying from outside, and splitting up families. How does this make sense? It does not. The only people it seems to make sense to are those in the Conservative Party, who are supposed to be the paragon of virtue by trying to defend family values. They quite lackadaisically will have families torn apart.

I do not think there is a whole lot more to say about this, except to ask the parliamentary secretary to do a better job to persuade his colleagues and the minister in caucus that it is worth keeping families together and standing up for family values.

• (1115)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the hon. member, which would indicate that our party stands up for families. Indeed, we do stand up for family values. In fact, our party ensures that every child under six years of age receives \$100 per month.

I am disappointed that the member is not supporting this motion, ensuring it went forward. I know the member has worked hard to get to where he is. Will he support his leader when he supports Bill C-50? The bill would have some additional moneys that would go to reinforcing the system.

I ask the member to look at his rhetoric in terms of what he has said he wants and what the motion actually requests. They are two very different things. The member waxes eloquently, but when we look at the motion, it asks the government to allow any applicant, on filing an application to automatically be entitled to a temporary work permit and a stay of removal.

I think Canadians have an issue with this automatic business, where if applicants file, there are some automatic rights that follow; this particularly when they know applicants now who are in status after approval in principle do have a stay. Those who are out of status, and we are talking about those who have overstayed their temporary status, or working or studying without being authorized to do so, or entering Canada without a valid passport, visa or other documentation, and even to failed refugee claimants, could apply and, after approval in principle, have a stay that would take place in respect of the removal until the approval is done and any work permit issued.

I ask the hon. member to have a look at not what he says he wants, but at what the motion asks the government to do, and that is by filing a document, it automatically entitles a series of events to happen without regard to whether that is a bona fide application or without regard to the fact of whether the very principles or basic elements are established to the satisfaction of someone.

Why would the member not look at the motion and not what he proposes he would like to see it say? What is he asking? Does he seriously believe that simply filing an application, entitles an applicant to have things to happen without regard to any of the circumstances?

• (1120)

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, I do find the comment passing strange. I will read the motion to the member so he can clearly understand it. I am surprised that he does not. The motion states:

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The Committee recommends that the government allow any applicant (unless they have serious criminality) who has filed their first in-Canada spousal or common law sponsorship application to be entitled to a temporary work permit and an automatic stay of removal until a decision is rendered on their application.

An application is made. If the government says this application is bogus and makes a decision, the person is removed. There is no issue with that. Nobody is arguing that we will support a non-bona fide application. We believe in protecting the integrity of the system. We are saying that while we are in the process of dealing with the application, we do not separate families.

The member thanks me for saying that the Conservatives stand for family values. What I said was that they say they stand for family values, but they say one thing and they do something else. They are splitting families and they have no problem doing that, just like they have absolutely no problem in saying no to religious marriages in other countries and calling their children illegitimate. That is the Conservative Party's record.

I am amazed that some of my colleagues on the other side who happen to be Mennonites do not stand up and defend Mennonite marriages, and say that when we have a church wedding, we should not be discriminated against.

In terms of Bill C-50, I am afraid this is one member who will not support it. Bill C-50 very seriously undermines the objectivity of an immigration system that is being copied by all the countries they point to, such as Australia, New Zealand, Europe and England. The Americans are looking at it. Their senate is studying it because they want to have an objective system. The Conservatives would destroy ours so they could carry out their neo-conservative agenda.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the top news today is that the government's top economic problem is how to staff all the nation's companies. Apparently, finding more workers to avoid what Conservatives are saying is an economic time bomb is a very high priority. The Minister of Human Resources said our demographics are working against us in a speech yesterday to the Canadian Legislative Conference of the Canadian Building Trades.

Yes, we need workers. Apparently, in the next 12 years B.C. will be short 350,000 workers; Alberta, 100,000 workers in 10 years; Ontario 560,000 workers in 2030; Quebec, 13 million by 2016. We have a shortfall. Why would the Parliament of Canada not allow open work permits to be issued, so that these folks who are in Canada already can work because we need more workers, according to the human resources minister. He said that yesterday and we are out there looking for more workers.

Why are we then deporting these people who can work here, and not allowing them to work while they are applying to have their wives or spouses sponsor them in Canada? To the hon. member: It does not make sense, does it?

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that Canada is facing a demographic crisis and to think that the government would discourage young families, break up young families, makes no sense. Further, the incredible reliance that the government puts on temporary foreign workers, instead of landed immigrants who will come here and build a country, also makes no sense. We need to start thinking more logically and not through the bureaucratise of the department, which I dare say could certainly use

some modernization. It is very hard to try to explain the inconsistencies of the Conservative government.

• (1125)

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose the same question to my hon. colleague that I posed to the parliamentary secretary and I heard absolutely nothing from the parliamentary secretary as far as family values are concerned.

We have known that there are families who have been broken apart. I have in my riding a family where the husband met the wife. She was a refugee claimant. They got married and had two Canadian children. CBSA knocked at their door and said, "We're sorry. You have to go". When the mother left, she took her two Canadian children with her because obviously the father could not look after them. Someone had to go to work.

I am wondering if my colleague would share his views on this matter. Does he think this is appropriate? Does he think that the Conservative Party is going too far? Are we using the CBSA to divide families? Is this a humane aspect and is this a way to keep families together?

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, I say to my colleague that it was one of the reasons we put the motion at committee. It was to try to make sense and try to be logical about a situation that in policy makes no sense. What really strikes me and I find incomprehensible is that the governing Conservative Party cannot see the stupidity of the present process. It is just illogical. Why split families up? Every one of us, as members of Parliament, have had situations—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry but time has expired. On debate, the hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration because our immigration system is out of control and is facing serious difficulties. For the past few months, it has been my great pleasure to participate in this committee, in which I take great interest.

The purpose of the motion we are debating today, which was passed in committee, is to rectify this situation somewhat. This is a tiny contribution, a very small step forward. In my opinion, much more must be done because there are many other problems in the system, which probably needs to be redesigned.

With regard specifically to the issue before us, as the parliamentary secretary suggested, I would like to reread the recommendation before discussing the issue in detail. Here is what the report says:

That the Committee recommend that the government allow any applicant (unless they have serious criminality) who has filed their first in-Canada spousal or common law sponsorship application to be entitled to a temporary work permit and an automatic stay of removal until a decision is rendered on their application.

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Basically, this refers to a person who is applying to sponsor a spouse. In Canada, an individual can sponsor only one person in his or her lifetime. Now, Parliament has to decide whether it is a good idea to remove a person who has made an application before a decision has been rendered on the application. In the meantime, that person would be able to obtain a work permit to earn a living, like most of us.

We must therefore study two aspects of this issue. The first is removal. I asked Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Canada Border Services Agency officials a number of questions, and I was told that in practice—although numbers were unavailable—officials almost systematically do not remove people in this situation and that the Canada Border Services Agency does not typically remove people awaiting a decision on a sponsorship application. Nobody was able to give me any numbers, but with few exceptions, people awaiting a decision are not removed from Canada.

The parliamentary secretary mentioned this earlier today, saying that we already had a balanced approach and that measures to avoid unnecessary deportations were already in place. Since this is what is currently done in almost all cases, I do not understand why the Conservative members would have a problem supporting this motion.

Another thing that seemed to bother the parliamentary secretary even more is the issue of granting a work permit to these people. I find that rather strange, since these people have the right to reside in Canada. They are here waiting for a response from Citizenship and Immigration Canada—a response that could take a long time, as the government itself admits. They are being told that they will have to wait, but in the meantime, they cannot work. They have to stay home twiddling their thumbs and doing who knows what. These people cannot help make Canada more prosperous, cannot pay taxes, cannot contribute to the economy or help their families survive.

This causes people to suffer unnecessarily, especially since, as the government often reminds us, Canada is facing a labour shortage. We are told that there are not enough workers to do the work, and we are not just talking about skilled workers. In fact, Canada is facing a labour shortage even for unskilled jobs. That is what the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration heard about temporary foreign workers when we recently travelled across Canada.

I think that this government, which opened the floodgates on temporary foreign workers by increasing the number of these workers admitted to the country and by stating that it intends to increase their numbers, is talking out of both sides of its mouth.

• (1130)

On the one hand, foreigners want to come and work temporarily in Canada, and we want the number of those people to increase so that we can meet our labour force needs. On the other hand, there are people who are already here in Canada whose spouse already has permanent residence status or Canadian citizenship. These applications will most likely be accepted, given the relatively high success rate of sponsorship. They have every opportunity to make a life in Canada. However, we do not allow them to work while they are waiting for the government's response. Yet, we are willing to bring in temporary foreign workers. That seems to me to be completely inconsistent.

The parliamentary secretary tried to justify his government's opposition to this motion. I have the feeling that it is just that: they wanted to justify their opposition and vote against the motion simply to vote against it. Personally, I do not see what is compromising for the government. They could have very well voted for this motion.

Some people believe that this method will lead to large-scale abuse. The procedure we are talking about is very particular: it is the sponsorship procedure. It would not apply to every applicant, whether they are applying for refugee status or something else. This is a question of people who already have a spouse in Canada who has legal status and can, once in their lifetime, sponsor someone. There is no reason to think that this technique will be widely used to gain undue privileges, especially since the privileges would only apply when the application is being reviewed.

Thus, someone who uses this ploy—a sham marriage—would be allowed to work legally in Canada for only a few months, that is, for the time it takes to process the application. I would also like to remind the House that, in Canada, a person can only get married once, or at least a divorce must be obtained before the person can remarry. One cannot get married over and over again. The parliamentary secretary already knows this. It seems to me that anyone who wants to break the law and cheat our system could do so in a much more straightforward manner by simply working illegally. Furthermore, during our tour, we found out that it is still easy to work illegally in Canada. So why would anyone bother going through such a bogus procedure, when one can simply break the law?

In short, I think the abuse argument falls short. As I said earlier, this sponsorship procedure has a rather low rejection rate. Anyone who applies and goes through this procedure has a good chance of being approved. He or she would not be granted any undue privilege. Basically, if that were to happen, that is, if an individual's application was rejected because it was unsuitable, false or misleading, after he or she had already been working here for a few months, the consequences for Canada would be rather minor. Indeed, if someone works for a few months, helps boost the economy, pays taxes and earns money for his or her family, I think this is inconsequential compared to the potential benefits of allowing that person to work while awaiting the government's response.

Obviously, the crux of the problem lies in the wait times. If the wait times were very short, we could reasonably assume that the motion would never have been introduced before this Parliament. But this problem exists because the wait times are much too long, as the government itself has admitted.

I find it rather interesting and ironic that the parliamentary secretary is talking about balance and integrity in the immigration system. Let us be serious. Any number of examples demonstrate that the immigration system is not working, and this proposal will certainly not create an additional weakness in the system. Quite the opposite, it aims to bring better balance and greater integrity to the immigration system.

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• (1135)

Since the parliamentary secretary brought it up, let us talk about balance and integrity in the immigration system.

First, let us talk about the wait times. The government has introduced a bill in which it claims to want to reduce wait times. Anyone who knows anything about how a lineup works knows that allowing people to jump to the head of the line does not make the lineup any shorter. The length of the lineup stays the same, but some people do not have to wait as long. Those who are at the end of the lineup have to wait longer, which makes the average wait time the same for everyone. It is not rocket science. The only way to make the lineup shorter is to process more cases or limit the number of cases in the first place.

The best way to handle this would be to process more cases. To do so, there need to be more commissioners of oaths. The system is currently short about 50 commissioners. When this government came into power, there were roughly five commissioners short of the 150 provided for in the act. Today, the number varies. I have seen a few orders in council recently, but, basically, some 50 positions need to be filled. This is a big part of the wait time problem. If the right number of commissioners under the legislation were in place to process immigration cases, we would get results more quickly.

This would be more efficient for Canada. Our immigration system would be more attractive to people who can make a contribution to Canada.

We would also have a system with better security. Some immigration and refugee status applications are rejected for reasons of national security or serious criminality. That means the longer we take to process such cases, the longer a refugee, for example, stays in Canada. We cannot promote law and order and also allow people who may be a danger to Canada and whose files have not been processed to wait in line simply because we refuse to appoint commissioners and fill the necessary positions.

There is another fairly absurd situation where we can definitely say that the immigration system is not balanced and its integrity is questionable. I am referring to the assessment of applications for permanent residence on humanitarian grounds which, in many cases—I pointed this out to the House last week—are carried out by the same person who does the pre-removal risk assessment. I find that rather odd. I asked the minister this question in the House last week. Officials had pointed out some cases to my riding office and so I asked the minister to confirm whether it was true. She answered that the immigration system in Canada was good and that the Conservatives were great people, even though this was not what I was after.

My office, and surely many other offices in Canada, was informed of several cases of individuals who had applied for pre-removal risk assessment. This is what happens in such cases. The officer who assesses the file of an individual gives a negative response indicating that they are not at risk if they return to their country and then they are asked to go back there. The individual tries another procedure, an application for permanent residence on humanitarian grounds. The same officer who told them they were not at risk will examine the new application. He will do so under another section of the act;

however, the fact remains that the same person is conducting the assessment.

That seems to be government procedure and it does not bother anyone. When I asked the minister the question, it did not seem to bother her. However, this seems to be unfair. In speaking of law and justice, there is also the concept that justice must be seen to be done. How can an individual, who resorts to one procedure and is rejected, believe that he is treated fairly when the person examining his file is the same person who rejected his application at a previous stage?

• (1140)

This makes no sense. If the government wanted to have a balanced system that operated with integrity, it would not tolerate this sort of practice. What is more, in her reply last Friday, the minister pointed out that there were more than 4,000 officers in Canada who were all highly competent. To my way of thinking, if there are 4,000 officers, it should not be too difficult to find a different officer to examine an application being made on humanitarian grounds, because there are another 3,999 officers. It should not be too hard to find someone else.

I would like to point out that no member of this House would ever tolerate such a policy if it were applied to a Canadian citizen. None of us here would ever agree to take part in an appeal or a subsequent proceeding and be judged by the same judge who had already convicted us previously. Everyone would say that it was not a true appeal and that our chances were virtually nil, because the same person was evaluating our case. If the minister were serious, she would correct this situation.

The other situation that clearly shows the lack integrity of our system concerns the refugee appeal division. When the law was amended to reduce the number of board members who heard refugee claims from two to one—it used to be that two people heard each claim, but now a claim is heard by only one person—parliamentarians created the refugee appeal division, which is part of the law now, so that even though only one person would render a decision, claimants would have an appeal mechanism to ensure there were no errors or abuses, no major problems, no people who would be sent back to their countries to be tortured or killed.

The government has never instituted this refugee appeal division. Even though the law provides for it, the government is still refusing to put it in place. That is why the Bloc Québécois introduced a bill to force the government to give these people a right to appeal, as the law provides. It is ironic that the Bloc Québécois should have to introduce bills to enforce the laws of Parliament. I am surprised at this, because I thought it was the government's job to enforce the law, and I am especially surprised since this government claims to be the law and order government.

As it stands, this bill has been passed by the House of Commons and is being held up in the Senate. I hope that the Liberals and the Conservatives will hurry up and move this bill through quickly.

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I have a good example from my riding of the problems caused by the fact that the system is not balanced and has lost its integrity because there is no refugee appeal division. This case involves Abdelkader Belaoui, who has sought sanctuary in a church in Pointe-Saint-Charles since 2006. He was in that sanctuary when I was campaigning during the last election. This man is blind and experienced terrible things in his home country. Now, the Canadian government is threatening to deport him if he leaves his sanctuary. When Abdelkader Belaoui applied for refugee status, his case was assessed by commissioner Laurier Thibault, who, at the time, was rejecting 98% of the applications he evaluated.

Mr. Speaker, if you were called before a court one day, and the judge was known to convict in 98% of cases, you might feel that you had no chance of winning. You would not believe that justice had been served. That is the case with Abdelkader Belaoui. He has never been able to appeal the decision because the refugee appeal division is still not in place. Canada should be ashamed.

I will end there so that I can answer some questions and perhaps give the parliamentary secretary a chance to take a call on his cell phone, to which he seems to be paying particularly close attention.

• (1145)

[*English*]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is indicating that there should be a balance in the process. That is precisely what we are saying.

The previous speaker from Kitchener—Waterloo said of course we expect that they would be bona fide applications. That is exactly the point. He makes my point, which is that we need to establish that the application has some bona fides. In order to do that, one has to look at it and approve it in principle.

The motion does not have this. It simply says “any” application filed would automatically require certain events to take place. It is true there are many people here without proper documentation, but having said that, I ask the member if he would not agree with me that there are many processes in place that have made improvements for those who do want to come in through a legitimate process.

There is the provincial nominee program, whereby provinces can nominate people who come in, particularly in the category they desire, even if they are temporary workers. There is the in Canada experience class and the foreign credentials referral office that helps them along. Foreign students can work in Canada and apply for permanent resident status. Would he agree with me that those are good elements in the evolution of immigration which provide a legitimate means and a legitimate process to get in?

Would he support Bill C-50, which actually would allow additional people to come in? In particular, family members can be reunited more quickly—more, quicker and better—and those who want to apply for permanent resident status will be able to come in on a much faster basis. Would he agree with me that this is the type of thing that should happen? This is a means to legitimately come to this country and to be able to work, reunite with family and ensure this country is built, but to do it in a fashion that is a legitimate process.

Finally, would he not agree that this balance would require at least a certain underpinning or threshold to be met before one could be entitled to the various aspects that this particular motion is calling for?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Mr. Speaker, I will answer the question. For starters, I would like to point out that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration said a little while ago that we should stick to what the motion actually says. Now he starts telling me about provincial nominee programs. The Bloc Québécois is in favour of the Canada-Quebec agreement. We think that everything that can be handled by Quebec should be.

Our immigration policy in Quebec is different from the policy in the rest of Canada. Our approach to integrating immigrants is different. The agreements we now have are steps in the right direction, but we still do not have complete control over immigration policy. It is not perfectly suited, therefore, to Quebec realities. It can only be perfectly suited when Quebec becomes a sovereign country. In the meantime, we have to work on various proposals under the current system.

If I stick to what the motion actually says, we are not talking about the nominee program under the terms of the agreements with the provinces. What we are talking about are sponsorship applications within Canada.

I want to remind the House that a sponsorship application can only be made once in a lifetime. We would not be running any great risk if we allowed someone who is living here and has a family here to work, earn a living, help cover his family’s needs and pay taxes so long as his application is being processed. I should point out as well that these applications have very high success rates.

The worst that can happen is that, after a few months, the application is rejected and the person has to leave Canada. At least he will have worked during these few months and contributed to the economy at a time when the government itself says we have a labour shortage. I fail to see what the problem is.

The parliamentary secretary’s question actually rather confirms what I said in the beginning. There are not really any reasons to be against this motion. He is so afraid it could be taken as some kind of criticism that all he wants to say is look how great and clever the Conservative government is and what fine things it does for us. We should rise about this partisan approach and show a bit more humanity and compassion. The people who go through our immigration system, like Mr. Kader Belaoui whom I mentioned earlier, are not just numbers or statistics but real human beings. When a person is in the process of getting permanent resident status and is sponsored by a husband or wife, it is only showing a little humanity to allow that person to work while waiting for the government’s answer.

Routine Proceedings

• (1150)

[English]

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a study states that by 2016 Quebec will need 13 million workers, so obviously we want more families to come to Quebec. We want more families that have started out in Quebec to be able to stay there and not be deported. We certainly want families to be able to work if they are in Quebec or to study when being sponsored by a spouse.

During discussion at the committee, we noted that stopping deportation for 60 days seems pretty arbitrary. Does 60 days make sense? A lot of applications take longer than 60 days and those people get deported. Does it make sense?

My last question is about cases considered under humanitarian and compassionate grounds. CIC, the Canada Immigration Centre, said that the average time for processing humanitarian and compassionate applications is 25 to 30 months. During that time, the CBSA, the removal agency, comes in and removes people while they are being considered within Canada. Does it make sense at all that we are processing these cases on humanitarian grounds and yet on the other hand the people are getting deported? Is it logical at all?

• (1155)

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Mr. Speaker, my colleague asked three questions. If I may, I am going to answer them in reverse order, hoping that I do not forget them.

On the third question, dealing with the humanitarian aspect, it is quite obvious that these processing times are far too long. In immigration cases, in my opinion, we should set standards and objectives to be achieved. We should be able to say that answers have to be given within a specified time. We are working with human beings. We cannot leave them for months, or even years, waiting for a decision and then tell them, after all that, that they have not been accepted. That is not humane, we have to give them an answer, yes or no, but quickly.

The second question dealt with the 60-day stay automatically granted and subsequent deportation orders. I recall that in committee we had trouble getting an answer to that question: if the answer has not come in 60 days, what do you do? We were told that in most cases they still waited for the answer and an agreement was made. So I asked whether there were cases where that was not done, whether they had figures, examples, numbers. No one could give me an answer. On that point, I think this motion is worthwhile: these cases will not happen, we will wait for the answer before deporting people.

On the first question, dealing with Quebec and its labour needs, yes, obviously, Quebec, like all the provinces, needs workers. That is specifically why there is oversight of its nominee program, or immigrant selection, by Quebec. I would like to point out to my colleague that for Quebec, immigration is about more than just filling labour market needs, as it may be in the rest of Canada.

The situation for francophones in North America is extremely fragile, and clearly immigration can play an extremely important role in building a unique francophone society in North America. That is why we have long been doing battle in Quebec to repatriate more of our powers, including powers relating to immigration, so that we can

built a model that is uniquely our own. For example, Canadian multiculturalism is unanimously rejected in Quebec, but we have to live with it because it is the framework that federalism imposes on us, until Quebeckers agree that the only path is to become a sovereign country.

[English]

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on this motion.

In particular, I would like to examine the report as well as the dissenting report. The particular report by the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration states:

In accordance with its mandate pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), your Committee has considered the questions of spousal sponsorships and removals.

The Committee recommends that the government allow any applicant (unless they have serious criminality) who has filed their first in-Canada spousal or common law sponsorship application to be entitled to a temporary work permit and an automatic stay of removal until a decision is rendered on their application.

I also want to put on the record and speak to the House about the dissenting opinion, which was placed by the parliamentary secretary on behalf of the Conservative Party. It states:

Dissenting Opinion of the Conservative Party of Canada

Existing measures strike appropriate balance between family reunification and the need to maintain the integrity of the immigration program. Current provisions to allow applicants, including those without status, in the Spousal or Common-law in-Canada class to stay and apply for work permits once they have received approval in principle.

Those are very important words, “approval in principle”, and I will come back to them in a few moments.

I want to examine how inland spousal sponsorship works. This is a process that is done from inside Canada. I want to explain how it works and what we are talking about. People listening to this debate might scratch their heads about spousal inland and spousal outland. It is very important for us to look at this very carefully.

Inland spousal involves a couple, common law or who live together for a year or a couple of months and then get married, be it same sex marriage or heterosexual marriage. Then they decide that because of extenuating circumstances the spouse who is not a Canadian, but is in Canada on a visitor visa or is in Canada on status, wants to get sponsored by his or her spouse. Sometimes there are people in this country who have come here and claimed refugee status and who have found a partner and married.

Therefore, what is the process? Once a couple decides they are going to have an inland spousal application, they download the forms from the immigration website and fill them out. They have to provide all kinds of information. Then they send these forms to the case processing centre in Vegreville.

Routine Proceedings

While this process is taking place, the sponsoree, the person who is being sponsored by his or her spouse, cannot leave Canada. They have to stay within Canada. Lo and behold, let us say that the person being sponsored is a female, a wife. If she were to get pregnant, that individual can have the child in Canada but unfortunately her spouse is going to be responsible for the delivery. These are very important things.

There are a few examples that one needs to see and examine to understand. The paperwork goes to Vegreville for processing. Vegreville looks at the forms. If it believes the individual, after it is finished the form is sent to the local immigration centre. The local immigration centre then either calls the individual in to get landed or calls them in to convene an interview so they will find the bona fides of the spousal application, of the marriage.

It is very disturbing that the Conservative government has gone so far as to destroy people's lives. I want to give a few examples. In my riding, I had a young lady who came from China and claimed refugee status. That refugee status failed. She got married to a Canadian citizen. They have two Canadian children. That young lady was deported to China on March 31 of this year.

There were two Canadian kids, the husband is a Canadian, the husband is working and the husband can afford the sponsorship, and yet CBSA moved in and removed this lady. There are two young children, aged two and one. Of course those children cannot stay with their father in Canada. They had to accompany their mother back to China. The sponsorship now will take place outside Canada, which can take anywhere from one to three years. It depends where it is.

• (1200)

We have destroyed the family inside. We have destroyed the family unit, the family sincerity and the family well-being. We have removed the wife and the children followed. The children will be in China and the husband stays back in Canada. I am not sure if his mind will be all there. I am not sure he will be able to concentrate at work while his wife and two kids are half a world away. Of course, wanting to see his family he will make several trips to China at an additional cost.

Here we have the Conservatives, instead of supporting and standing up for young families, they are separating a husband and wife and, in the process, separating children from their father, which will probably destroy him completely because he will not be able to concentrate at work. If he does not concentrate at work, he might also lose his house.

I want to bring to the House a particular example of how the system has failed yet another Canadian family. I raised this example with the minister when she came to committee last year. It was in the newspaper. It is the example of Mr. Masood Firoozian. He came to Canada and, after a few months, he met his wife. She sponsored him and they submitted the sponsorship application to Vegreville. This is an inland spousal application. The two individuals felt they wanted to start a family. They did not want to separate so the sponsorship was submitted inland.

The lady had two children from a previous marriage. Vegreville received the application on July 13, 2006. My office was advised

that they had received the application and in July they were processing applications received in 2006.

I will read the fax that I received from Vegreville dated January 8, 2007. It states, "application received 13th of July, 2006. Our office is currently processing applications of this nature, received March 27, 2006".

Under the Liberals, when spousal applications were sent to Vegreville there was a five month processing timeline. The application was received in July 2006 while they were processing applications received in March 2006.

After that, I did another follow up. In that follow-up I was advised that the application was referred to Etobicoke in March 2007. That is exactly one year to the date from the time that he submitted it.

Fax after fax were sent to Etobicoke in order to find out what the processing time was. On August 13, 2007, we received the following answer. It said that the spousal application was referred to Etobicoke CIC from Vegreville in March 2007. It said that it would be 12 to 14 months before this file would be assigned to an officer for review.

The fax that we received back was dated August 13, 2007 and it said that the application was referred to Etobicoke in March 2007, which was roughly well over a year. Under the previous Liberal regime, it used to take anywhere between 8 and 12 months before the application was dealt with from start to finish. We have roughly about a 50% delay.

The couple then approached me in April of this year. We are almost 25 months in the process. An inquiry was sent to Etobicoke and it replied that the spousal application was referred to Etobicoke CIC in January 2008. I am looking at the previous answer I received from Etobicoke and it said that the application had been referred to them in March 2007. I sat wondering if we were missing a year or we were in the same year. It went on to state that it would be at least 12 months before the application would be assigned to an officer for review.

• (1205)

Right now we are almost at 24 months from the time the application was submitted and it has not yet been looked at. The individual is still in status and has extended his visitor visa application. He has applied numerous times for work but gets refused every time.

If we want to examine it, it would be like driving a car and all of a sudden hitting a wall. I think this family has hit a wall. The wife is sick and needs to have an immediate operation. She will be laid up in hospital and at home recuperating for six months.

On April 16 we were told that it would take an additional 12 months. From the time the application was submitted to the time it is finished, it will be close to 36 months. I wonder what I will be told next year when I go back and ask what is happening. I will probably be told that it was submitted in 2009, of course forgetting the previous years, and that it will take an additional 12 months.

Routine Proceedings

If I were to believe the latest fax I received on April 16, this application should be finished in three years time. Without question, that is an increase of anywhere from 300% to 500% from the previous regime. The minister was confronted in committee about that and I am still waiting for an answer.

Why are we at this stage and what is the problem? The problem is that when the Conservative government came in, it wanted to fulfill its Reform agenda, to fulfill and play to the Reform Conservative base for the votes. It started removing people in massive numbers. It moved individuals from Canadian immigration to CBSA, the Canada Border Services Agency. CBSA has more officials removing individuals from Canada than working to keep people here.

Yes, there are provisions that if people are to be removed they do get another kick at the can, which is called the PRA, pre-removal risk assessment. However, I have yet to see a pre-removal risk assessment go favourably.

I was speaking about the woman from China who has two children and is about to be removed from Canada. A pre-removal risk assessment was done. If anybody were to go positive on a pre-removal risk assessment, nothing could be more compassionate than the case of this mother and her two Canadian children. When they were born, the father had to pay for the deliveries which cost anywhere between \$10,000 to \$15,000 per delivery. The husband was out about \$25,000 to \$30,000. The only sin the man committed was to get married to a woman and have children in Canada. The man wanted to populate Canada. A Canadian citizen wanted to have a family.

Did the Conservative Party move quickly to find an answer to that family's dilemma? No. Its only answer was to send the woman off to China.

Approval in principle is the key that I mentioned before. Approval in principle is when an application is submitted to Vegreville and it feels that everything is okay so it approves somebody in principle. From what we have witnessed, that climbed anywhere between five to six months under the Liberals, to twelve months under the Conservatives.

I know the parliamentary secretary will jump up and down and say that is not the case, but I would refer to last year when the minister came before the committee. She was confronted with that question and she still has not provided me with an answer.

From five to six months, bumper to bumper in Vegreville and another two months under the Liberals, now we a total of six to eight months and even a year before an individual is processed, landed and given his or her paperwork. All of a sudden we have the case of Mr. Masood Firoozian that is going on three years.

• (1210)

Mr. Firoozian's wife will be going into the hospital and he must wait an additional 300% to 500% longer before being given approval in principle, before being able to apply for a work permit and before being able to say that he is a landed immigrant and would like to have OHIP and medical coverage. Should this individual get into an accident or get sick tomorrow he will have no medical coverage. The reason for that is that we have taken officials from immigration and moved them to removals. Instead of having officials trying to keep

families together, officials are removing them. Our dilemma is: Do we work to keep families together? Do we work to help immigrants who are in Canada and would like to support their families?

I have five daughters. What would happen if one of my daughters were to meet a young man in Canada and decide to get married and have a family. According to the Conservatives, a party that is going back to its Reform roots, should my daughter sponsor this young man he might have to wait up to three years and counting before he could apply for work. What do I tell my daughters? Do I tell them not to have children because they will not be able to stay at home and look after the children if their husband cannot go to work and provide for the family?

Where is the compassion and decency? Are we working to keep families together? Are we working to provide for the families? Are we working as a nation to support families? Do we not want to stand shoulder to shoulder with them as they begin the first steps of getting married, having children and working to provide for them and be with them? Unfortunately, though, that compassion, that interest and that love for the family has left this building. It went out when the Conservative government came to power and decided to move resources from immigration to removals.

We need immediate action. I am glad members of the Conservative Party are in the House because, hopefully, this will go back to the minister and she will listen, instead of taking the "my way or the highway" attitude.

The minister says that Bill C-50 will have no amendments. When the Conservative members of the committee said that we would have a dissenting report, I wonder if they talked to their constituents. I wonder if any of them did any constituency work and saw the problems or whether my constituency is the only one with these problems. I wonder whether these problems are only in the constituencies represented by Liberal members of Parliament.

When the Prime Minister was the Leader of the Opposition, I remember him saying that any riding west of Winnipeg was only filled with Asian immigrants or recent migrants from the east. I wonder if that philosophy has changed. I think not.

If we are to have immediate action, we need to do a number of things. First, we need a balance between CBSA and CIC. We need to move more staff from CBSA back to CIC. We need to give an immediate work permit once someone sponsors his or her spouse. We also need additional staff to process spousal applications in Vegreville as well as in other offices. We do not want staff to be removed from other places where they are working on parental sponsorships and on cases of people working on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. We need additional staff. It has been proven that the timelines under the Conservative government have increased and, undoubtedly, all of us would agree that in the case of Mr. Firoozian that application has taken from 300% to 500% longer.

• (1215)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly wish the hon. member and his daughters well.

Routine Proceedings

I would ask the member to match his rhetoric to the motion. One would be naive to believe that the system would not be abused if the motion passed. I wonder if the member thinks people would abuse it. There would be people who would abuse it. The motion indicates that any applicant upon filing an application is automatically entitled to a work permit and no removal. The approval in principle is to ensure that at least there is a bona fide relationship. That is required. If that were removed, would that not allow for abuse to take place?

The length of time it takes to process an application has something to do with the backlog. The Liberals had 13 years in government, six ministers, four terms in office, some of them majorities, and the backlog has grown to over 800,000 applicants. This is clogging up the system and the resources.

The member obviously voted against the \$1.3 billion in the budget for settlement integration. That is a fair sum of money. Other moneys were put forward in the budget but they were also voted against. Bill C-50 would address some of these measures and would ensure that applications would get processed faster and families would get reunited faster. There is \$109 million over five years to back that up. I wonder if the member would support his leader in supporting Bill C-50 to ensure that this happens.

Would he agree with me that if we allow the motion as it reads to pass there would be abuse of the system?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, I was waiting for a question like that.

I took a mining course in engineering in my fourth year at university. My professor said that BS baffles the brain. Of course he was talking about a Bachelor of Science. I think the parliamentary secretary falls very much in that category because he is using one after another, approval in principle and bona fide relationship.

Did I not bring up the example of the lady with the two Canadian kids? How more bona fide does the member need? Does he want to test their DNA? Does he want to witness the couple making kids? How much more bona fide can it be? Those two children were born in Canada and what did we do? We removed them from Canada.

The parliamentary secretary seems to be confusing in Canada applications with outside the country applications. I am wondering if in the two years plus that he has been a parliamentary secretary he knows what an inland application is versus an outside application. We are talking about inland spousal applications. We are talking about applications in Canada.

Last year in committee we provided proof beyond any doubt to the minister. We provided newspaper articles to back it up. Under the Liberal regime, it used to take six to eight months to land these individuals. I am talking about faxes that I submitted to the minister. This case has gone on for three years. What more proof do we need?

The parliamentary secretary is talking about 925 cases. Hello, wake up and smell the coffee. They are outside Canada. We are talking about spousal applications inside Canada. We are talking about Canadian children who were forced to leave this country with their mother.

I am wondering if there is anybody at home on that side of the House. When God was distributing brains, I wonder if instead of

running to the platform where the brains were being distributed, everybody on that side of the House ran to the platform where the trains were leaving, because the train has left the station. The parliamentary secretary does not know what in God's name he is talking about.

• (1220)

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am familiar with the ongoing situation the hon. member described involving the two kids. It is the case of an ultrasound technician which Canada desperately needs. Imagine having to make a choice between the two kids staying with dad or going overseas with mom. The family will be separated for one or two years and costs will be incurred.

We have talked a lot about the humanitarian side already. My question is about the waste of taxpayers' dollars. It costs the Canadian government a lot of money to staff the CBSA, the Canada Border Services Agency, remove families from Canada, fly them to their home countries and then process their applications all over again.

Today the Auditor General will be issuing a report which will become public fairly soon. No doubt there will be some discussion about the cost of deportation. Even when there is a spousal application, even when there is a humanitarian and compassionate grounds application, CBSA continues to deport.

The figure I saw was something like \$23 million being used. Is that a good use of taxpayers' money?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, I have a very limited time to answer. However, last year when I asked for unanimous consent in the House not to have undocumented workers deported from Canada until we finalized their reports, it was a member of the NDP who ran into the House to say no to unanimous consent.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, I asked two questions of the hon. member but in the fit of his explanation, he omitted to answer both questions.

The first question was, is there a certain amount of naivety to believe there would not be any abuse of the system if the motion went forward as suggested?

There is no question there are compelling cases and those have to be dealt with, but what we are speaking about today is a specific motion that says that the government should allow any applicant who has filed his or her first in-Canada application to be entitled to a temporary work permit and a stay of removal. In Canada applications, upon filing, without any question, those would follow.

Does the member think there would be no abuses to the system given the motion and not what are the exigencies of the other cases?

Second, with respect to the processing, the timelines and the delays involved, given that there is an improvement proposed under Bill C-50 and that there will be funds put in place so there will be quicker processing, would the member support his leader in supporting Bill C-50, which would actually bring some improvements to the cases before us today? Would he do that?

Routine Proceedings

My two questions are, is he naive to believe that there will be no abuse of the system and will he support that which obviously needs to be supported?

• (1225)

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, to go back to my professor who said that BS baffles the brain, and he meant a Bachelor of Science, I do not think the parliamentary secretary knows what the heck he is talking about.

What abuse of the system is there by the woman who had the two Canadian children and wanted to stay in Canada? What abuse of the system is there by Mr. Firoozian who wants to support his family and he has to wait up to three years and his wife is going to have an operation?

We are talking about inland processing. We are not talking about Bill C-50. We are not talking about outside the country.

The parliamentary secretary should get his facts straight. He should get up in the morning, look in the mirror and ask, "Mirror mirror on the wall, is there any truth to what I am saying?" The mirror will look back at him and say, "I doubt it".

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on the motion to concur in the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration that was moved by my colleague from Trinity—Spadina. I think it is important that we have this opportunity to talk about the work of the standing committee, particularly with regard to this report.

The report deals with the question of spousal sponsorships and removals from Canada. Specifically, the committee recommended that the government allow any applicant, unless he or she has serious criminality, who has filed his or her first in Canada spousal or common law sponsorship application, to be entitled to a temporary work permit and an automatic stay of removal until a decision is rendered on his or her application. This is a very important recommendation from the standing committee.

I worked for a number of years on that standing committee. I know how carefully the committee members consider the propositions and the work that comes before them and how well they know Canada's immigration system. This recommendation emerged out of people's concern about how folks were being dealt with in our immigration system.

I want to stress that we are talking about first applications here. This is not a way of mounting an ongoing postponement of a removal action. It only applies to the first application.

An important aspect is that it allows the person being sponsored to work while his or her application is being considered. We know that many families in the circumstance of the spousal sponsorship application and establishing a family here in Canada are in desperate need of that income. That is very important to them. Certainly the Statistics Canada report that came out last week which shows the financial circumstances of immigrant families in Canada indicates the difficulties that they face. This drives home the point and the importance of this aspect of the committee's recommendation.

The key part of the recommendation asks that there be no removal action until there is a decision on an application. That particularly pertains to people who might not have an ongoing status in Canada when the application is made. It is very important that we not split up families in those circumstances.

The committee chose to stress this as well by the way it structured its recommendation, that serious criminality could still mean deportation. If there was serious criminality involved, that still needed to take precedence in the circumstances.

When the committee was working on this issue, it heard evidence from representatives of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. In fact, the committee heard from Mr. Rick Stewart, the Associate Assistant Deputy Minister for Operations in the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. He gave a very succinct outline of the existing policy and how it works.

Mr. Stewart noted that family reunification is a key element of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. He said that the department and the government recognized that keeping families together helps people integrate into Canadian society and contributes to their success. It was good to hear that point reiterated by the department.

Mr. Stewart talked about the two situations in Canada where spousal applications are dealt with. One is an in status application, where spouses and common law partners who are already in Canada may apply for permanent residence in the spouse or common law partner class in Canada. In order to be eligible under this class, applicants must live with their sponsoring spouse or common law partner in Canada and they must have legal temporary status in Canada.

The second stream of applications in this regard that Mr. Stewart discussed was the out of status applicant. He pointed out that many applicants in the spouse or common law partner in Canada class have legal temporary status in Canada. However, for spouses and common law partners who are in Canada without legal immigration status, a public policy was introduced in 2005 to allow these individuals, including failed refugee claimants, to apply for and be processed in the in Canada class.

He went on to note that this public policy was implemented to facilitate family reunification in cases where spouses and common law partners are already living together in Canada, but who may have certain technical inadmissibilities resulting in a lack of status. He outlined that those technical inadmissibilities included things like having overstayed their temporary status, working or studying without being authorized to do so, entering Canada without a valid passport, the required visa or other documentations, or of being a failed refugee claimant.

Routine Proceedings

•(1230)

He noted that the ability to submit an application in these cases allowed individuals to remain in Canada for a limited period of time, 60 days, to facilitate the processing of the application to the removal in principle stage. However, during this time, applicants were not allowed to apply for a work permit until they had obtained approval in principle. In addition to the initial 60 day deferral of removal. Once an applicant had obtained approval in principle, a stay of removal was granted until a final decision on the application was made.

That is the existing policy and that is how it operates.

What the committee is getting at is the need to have particular consideration of these. Where there is no question of criminality or no legal problems involved, other than questions around having legal status in Canada, immigration status in Canada, the person should be allowed to remain in Canada until the in Canada application is completely processed and a decision is made on that. This is a very reasonable consideration.

We always have said that Canada's immigration policy is not about separating families. I can remember repeating that to many constituents over the years, when I worked in the constituency office and now as an MP. It was always taken to be one of the fundamental principles of our immigration system, that Canada was not about splitting up families and that we should make this a very high priority, if not the high priority, of our immigration policies.

We all know the terrible trauma and frustration it causes when families are divided. We heard in the debate this morning the kinds of situations that arose when families were split up because of the way our immigration policy and processing system was applied. We know it is a very difficult situation for any family to face. It is particularly traumatic when it feels like it is because of some technicality or some overzealous application of the law that will separate these people, particularly when we know at some point they will be able to come back to Canada. It forces them out of the country, at great expense to the Canadian taxpayer, and then it forces them to go through the application process again, at great cost to the taxpayer. It does not seem like a reasonable approach.

There are many instances where it is very hurtful to the people involved. I think we all probably have examples of that.

I have worked with a family in my riding where there was an in Canada application. A mistake was made and the person being sponsored left Canada. When she returned, she was denied entry into Canada and removed immediately. At that time, her spouse was not allowed to see her before she was removed. The trauma and upset that caused led this person to become ill on the plane before the plane took off and she had to be hospitalized at a hospital near the airport. Again, the spouse was denied the opportunity to see her at that time, which was incredibly frustrating for them, given the trauma, the hopes and expectations they had. A further complication was the woman was pregnant. They were expecting their first child very shortly and looking forward to establishing their family in Canada.

It was a very difficult situation. She eventually was removed and then her partner in Canada had to go overseas to be with her when

their child was born. Now they are involved in the wait of having her and their child returned to Canada. He has the difficulty of having to leave his job for a period of time. The family income is in question in that period as they try to sort this situation out and as he tries to be with his wife and young child at this very important time in their family history.

We see all of these circumstances. Granted mistakes are made, but it is how the government, the department and society respond to those very difficult, humanitarian and compassionate situations that constantly arise.

•(1235)

Although I do not think it specifically addresses the kind of specific case I just recounted, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration feels that we need to ensure we have the flexibility to deal with those situations fairly and compassionately and that we do not subject people to arbitrary time periods.

One of the key things about the motion is the 60 day period that is granted for the stay of removal in the current policy. That is very arbitrary. I read in the evidence presented before the committee that perhaps not many people were removed and that 60 day period was not enforced rigorously, which is probably a good thing. However, the reality is it has been enforced from time to time and it has caused great difficulty for the people involved when that decision has been made.

The committee has recommended that an unlimited stay be granted on the first application until the decision is made, which is entirely reasonable. We should not be seeking removal in that period until a decision is made on the sponsorship application. If it is appropriate to have 60 days, then I do not understand why it is not appropriate to see an application through to its conclusion and then either land the person or seek his or her removal if there is some problem with the application. What the committee has reported to us is very appropriate and I strongly support it.

There are related issues. Why, when there is a humanitarian and compassionate application before the department and the government, would we deport someone in those circumstances? Again, if there is a serious humanitarian and compassionate issue, it should be decided finally before somebody is removed from the country.

I know the motion does not deal with this, but it strikes me that is another area where we could look to a change in policy and make it more responsive to the needs of families in Canada. This would ensure that their priorities would be first in the policies of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and the Government of Canada. Hopefully, at some point, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration will have the opportunity to review the policy and consider what is best for Canadian families in that regard.

Routine Proceedings

When I hear the government argue against a reasonable recommendation from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, like the one before use, I begin to question the government's commitment to family reunification in Canada. For many years, this has been a key principle of our immigration program. It is one of the principles on which immigration in Canada was built. It has been a cornerstone of what immigration in Canada is supposed to be about and one of the reasons why our immigration program has been so successful.

The government has questioned the need for a change in this policy by its dissenting report to the committee report. That is unfortunate because it plays into the whole sense that the current government is watering down Canada's commitment to family reunification on many fronts. The policy the committee is asking us to look at is a reasonable one. It would go to strengthening family relationships and its place in Canada. Unfortunately, the Conservatives denied that and would not support this policy when it was discussed in committee.

There are other ways the government is backing away from a commitment to family reunification in Canada. After the Conservatives became the government, I remember the first time the then minister of citizenship and immigration, who is now the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, appeared before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. It was a very momentous occasion. It was the first time a new minister in a new government appeared before a standing committee to discuss the important issues pertaining to policy related to the workings of that department. It was very instructive. The minister left family reunification out of the list of key principles of the immigration system.

● (1240)

Maybe it was an oversight, but I have to believe that on a first appearance of a new minister and a new government before a standing committee to deal with the minister's policy area, his statement was a carefully considered one, that every word, sentence and paragraph was carefully considered before the minister appeared. I would not expect it to be a last minute thing, something that was just dashed off. I would not even expect it to be something the minister himself sat down and dashed off at his computer before he came to the committee meeting. I would think it was carefully considered before that.

In the past, and even in the immigration law, we have seen the key principles of our immigration policy. It has almost been a mantra that has been repeated by all parties in the House for many years. We have talked about immigration being important to nation building in Canada. We have talked about immigration being important to the economic needs of Canada. We have talked about immigration and refugee policy being important for the protection of vulnerable refugees as a key aspect. We have always said, as part of that mantra, that family reunification was a key principle of our immigration policy.

Therefore, it was very significant when the former minister left family reunification off the list. I do not believe it was a mere oversight. I think it was intentional. When we look at the various policies and decisions of the government, we have seen that this was

probably an indication of the direction of the government. Certainly its position on this committee report is another aspect of that.

We can go to the website of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. If we go on the main pages of it and look at general categories and descriptions about what our immigration policy should be about, we would be hard pressed to find the phrase "family reunification". I could not find it. One can get the application for family sponsorship, but in the descriptions of our immigration policy and its goals, the current government has left out family reunification. Again, that is a very serious oversight and another indication of exactly where the government will go with its immigration policies.

We see it again in the whole debate on Bill C-50 and the attempt by the government to stick something in a budget bill that pertains to immigration, to give the minister significant discretionary power to ignore applications that have been appropriately submitted in our immigration system and the ability to dismiss those applications without considering them. The Conservatives say that this is a way of dealing with the backlog and the large number of applications received. However, in this corner of the House, we do not believe that giving the minister power to choose to ignore an application, is an appropriate way to proceed on immigration policy and on the processing decision for immigration applications. Every application that is submitted and qualifies to be considered should be considered carefully by the department and the government.

It is another place where families are rightly concerned that their need for reunification, their need to have family members join them in Canada could easily be ignored and pushed aside for other priorities that would instead occupy the attention of the government.

We know there is a huge backlog in Canada of immigration applications. We have seen the government establish targets, I think it is around 265,000 applications this year. However, it has also introduced a new category of application where temporary foreign workers and students can apply from within Canada to remain in Canada as permanent residents. I think there are 25,000 applications to be accepted in that new category, but that comes from the overall target established by the government, which in turn will reduce the number of places available for family reunification in the overall target.

There is a serious problem with the government with regard to family reunification. The government's lack of support for this very reasonable and limited recommendation from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration is another indication of its failure to appreciate the importance of family reunification and of keeping families together, of not separating families in Canada. I hope the government will reconsider its position on this and ultimately support the concurrence motion from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

● (1245)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that family reunification is an important pillar that we support. Obviously, we want to get them here faster, and that has been the fact in the last term and is something we look forward to into the future.

Routine Proceedings

I have three specific questions. I would ask this member if he could define what he means, specifically, with respect to serious criminality, and what criminality would not be included that would allow for the process to proceed?

Second, is there a point at which he feels that a work permit should not be issued? In other words, by simply filing the application, is that all that is required or would there be some other things required before work permits are issued?

Third, if an application were filed and a work permit issued, and the person was found to be working and the period of time extended, and then a negative decision was found, what does he think should happen in the event of a negative decision?

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's intervention and his work on this. I know it is often difficult in the position of parliamentary secretary when one is involved in policy discussions at committee level and one is also representing the government's position on things. I do appreciate that the parliamentary secretary worked hard with all of those sometimes competing aspects at committee.

With regard to serious criminality, I do not think I need to define it today. That is something that would happen in the process, if this resolution were adopted. The government would define that. I think it is well defined. I think we all know what kinds of issues would be serious and what other issues would be considered very minor. I do not think a traffic infraction is an issue of serious criminality.

I do not think it is my job here at this moment to define that, as part of this debate on a concurrence motion from a committee asking the government to review a policy that has been in place for a number of years. I think that is something that would be developed. It is something that maybe could come back to the committee at some point for discussion. I do not think that as an individual member of Parliament it is my responsibility to come up with that kind of definition.

With regard to work permits, I do think this is a really crucial aspect of the recommendation. I think it is very important that families that are here in Canada, that are in the immigration process, have the ability to earn a decent income. We all know that having both spouses work is the reality of most Canadians, not just immigrant Canadians but all Canadians. To have the kind of income they need, to have the quality of life they aspire to, both spouses need to be working. To insist that where there is an in-Canada spousal application in place and one of the spouses is not eligible to work is putting undue hardship on that family. I think that makes it a very reasonable suggestion from the committee, and one that I would hope the government would act on.

The parliamentary secretary asked about negative decisions. Well, I do support having a removal program. I believe that if people do not qualify, if they have engaged in criminal activity, if for whatever reason their immigration status has been turned down after a fair process, after an appeal, that they should be removed from Canada.

I think removal is an aspect of our immigration policy that needs to have appropriate attention given to it. I do not deny that that is an important aspect of immigration policy and the kinds of considerations we should be working on.

If we do not have a removal policy, then we really do not have an effective immigration policy in Canada. We do have to pay attention to those issues. I do not believe in endless appeals. I believe that if one has done something wrong, one should face the consequences of that. I do believe that if decisions have been made and they have been made in a fair and appropriate manner, that removal is an aspect of the process that should be engaged and is entirely appropriate.

I do not think there is any question that a removal process does have to be engaged in a situation where an application has failed and appeals have failed, and that is absolutely the appropriate step to take in those circumstances.

• (1250)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as usual the member for Burnaby—Douglas, as the member for Trinity—Spadina, who spoke in support of this concurrence motion, both have outlined in very practical terms why this recommendation coming from the immigration committee is the one that makes sense to endorse. It surprises no one that we would have a dissenting view from the Conservative Party that argues against the very simple, straightforward proposition that has been approved by the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration and now is before this House in the current debate.

I am pleased to hear the member for Burnaby—Douglas spell out why family reunification needs to be an absolutely fundamental plank in our immigration platform as a nation because of the many aspects of family reunification that make for a strong citizen, that make for the best possible start for immigrant families in their new land and so on.

I know the member has endorsed and given some examples, but I wonder if I might ask him to further speak about the current policies that are pulling away from that family reunification strength that needs to be at the centre of our policy with respect to the kinds of concerns that have been brought forward to the town hall meetings, to the round tables, that he and other New Democratic Party colleagues have been holding, as we watch the government try to slip through in a surreptitious way some changes to the immigration act that actually could cause untold irreparable damage to the lives of new immigrant families.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, family reunification has been key over the years and it has been one of the most successful parts of our immigration policy. We know that when folks come to Canada to join family members here, they are often some of the most successfully integrated immigrants in our society because they have a settlement team waiting for them here in Canada, that have family and relatives who are there to help them become part of Canadian society.

We also know they are very important in the workforce. Often, people who come as part of family reunification do not have the same expectations that people who come as part of the economic class have. We have seen the very serious problems that have arisen from the economic class and the kind of expectations it raises and the lack of jobs in key areas where people cannot get work in their areas of training that have been caused by that program. A lot of those same problems do not exist when people come to Canada to join family members here because the motivation to come here is to have the family together again in Canada.

Routine Proceedings

One of the things that is coming out of our meetings we are having, and I am having one this coming Friday at the Burnaby mosque on the immigration policy, is that there has an overemphasis on temporary foreign workers from the government, that there has been a significant expansion of the temporary foreign worker program. We know we have very serious concerns about the exploitation of foreign workers, that they are often the people who are most easily exploited in our workplaces, that often the wages they are paid are below Canadian standards, and that often the employment situation, the employment standards, the safety standards are below what Canadians would find acceptable. Many of us are concerned about their exploitation in that regard.

We also know that what the Conservatives are moving us toward is more like a European guest worker policy than the longstanding tradition in Canada where we bring people here because of the skills that are needed by our economy. We ask them to come here. We accept their application based on the skills that they have and we make them permanent residents with the rights and responsibilities that that entails, but we also encourage them to become full citizens of Canada and become full participants in Canadian society.

We know other countries have made different decisions where they have not allowed temporary foreign workers to become permanent residents, to have permanent status in the country, and certainly have not encouraged them to become full citizens. I think that has been Canada's great strength when it comes to the whole issue of temporary foreign workers and encouraging workers to come into Canada.

It is very sad, very troubling and very dangerous that the Conservatives are moving away from that, and moving away from it at breakneck speed in so many ways. We need to get back on track to ensure that people who come here to build Canada, to be participants in our economy, do so with full rights, full protection, and that we are encouraging them to remain here and become full Canadian citizens as part of that whole process.

● (1255)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate today. As the member for Burnaby—Douglas has just indicated, members of the New Democratic Party, actually I think all members, have been very much engaged in the debate around immigration issues in the last while precisely because we have seen a systematic, if not a somewhat subversive, tearing down by the government of some of the most important traditions and practices which have made our immigration policies so successful over time.

What has made this country strong and enviable in the eyes of the rest of the world is our policy of openness to people coming to this country and deciding to build a better life and contributing to the building of a better world. That is a fact. That is reality. That meant we had to be open to families who were fleeing desperate conditions. That meant we had to be open to policies that would allow new immigrants to occupy jobs that were building the infrastructure of this country. The heart of a successful immigration policy is family reunification.

What we have seen over the last while is a surreptitious shift by the government, not well disguised at all, in developing policies for

future immigration practices. These practices have a lot more to do with the narrow notion of exploiting cheap foreign labour that is the antithesis of the openness to welcome new immigrants into the Canadian family as full participants. The window is also narrowing with respect to family reunification.

That is why today the New Democratic Party immigration critic, with the support of the caucus, has brought forward a concurrence motion to support a simple proposition, one that was supported by the majority of the members of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

The committee is recommending that the government allow any applicants, unless they have serious criminality, who have filed their first in-Canada spousal or common law sponsorship application, to be entitled to a temporary work permit and an automatic stay of removal until a decision is rendered on their application.

We are all strongly endorsing this recommendation because evidence shows that reinforcing the strength of partnerships and family relationships is key to the successful settlement of new immigrants in this country. It is the single most important thing we can do to ensure that families thrive, that people who go into the workforce have the strength of family behind them, and that in general, they become much more happily and easily integrated into the larger society.

● (1300)

What is being recognized here is that it is inconsistent with that evidence and inconsistent with past practices that we should contemplate this, unless there is evidence of some kind of criminal record. I think all who have spoken have reinforced and reaffirmed our belief that a criminal record is a reasonable basis for not accepting, for not giving the benefit of the doubt, which is what we are really saying, and that otherwise we should recognize that it is a very shortsighted, counterproductive policy to actually require the breakup of a relationship and the expulsion from Canada of somebody who is stuck in that lineup of over 900,000 delayed cases being dealt with through our clogged-up immigration system. It is a very shortsighted, counterproductive policy to actually require that they leave the country when, in the overwhelming number of cases, they will be given approval because they are exactly the kind of people who we want coming to Canada and helping to build this country.

It is a very practical policy as well as a humanitarian and compassionate policy to recognize that we are constantly telling the world and telling each other, because it is a fact, that we need a lot more immigrants in this country. I remember somebody saying something once, although I do not remember who it was, in the context of Atlantic Canada, where we struggle with out-migration. We struggle with the fact that we lose so much of our productive workforce to greener pastures. We struggle because so many of our young people are forced to leave Atlantic Canada these days just to get the mountain of debt off their shoulders from having paid very heavy costs for education. They are forced to leave for where they can earn the level of income that will allow them to pay off those debts in a timely way, so they are attracted away, to where they can get better paying jobs and so on.

Routine Proceedings

In the context of Atlantic Canada, I remember someone saying once that there is nothing wrong with Atlantic Canada that two or three million more immigrants could not solve. That is the situation we are faced with in this country. We need more immigrants, so why are we not embracing the policies which we know will ensure that new Canadians get the best possible start in building their new lives?

Why are we not embracing the policies which will ensure, as this particular recommendation from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration stipulates, that such persons, while awaiting a final determination on their ability to remain in the country with their spouse or partner, should be entitled to a temporary work permit? The reality is that we have many jobs in many parts of the country that are going unfilled, or there are long delays in employers filling those jobs because of the shortages of labour in many parts of the country.

Coming back to the importance of family reunification again, what we know is that there is nothing more devastating to any family than being forced, for whatever reasons of economic pressure, economic hardship or flawed immigration policy, to split up a family and require in this case that somebody leave not just the community but the country.

This is a practical but also a humanitarian response.

Along with my colleagues, I think all of us have been very dismayed at the thinly disguised shift in policy, but it is not well enough disguised for us to not be able to recognize how dangerous it is. We now have an attempt by the government to usher in some major changes in the thrust of our immigration policy by burying it in the budget, knowing that this is exactly the wrong direction in which to go.

I am very glad today that we have had the opportunity to debate this issue. I think it reflects the compassionate considerations of most Canadians, but it also is a very practical policy with respect to what makes for both successful immigration and settlement and also a sound economy.

• (1305)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The division stands deferred until tomorrow before private members' business.

The House will now resume with the remaining business under routine proceedings. We are under the rubric of motions. The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

NATIONAL DEFENCE

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

That, in relation to its study of health services provided to Canadian Force personnel, 12 members of the Standing Committee on National Defence be authorized to travel to Wainwright, Alberta in May 2008 and to Quebec City, Quebec in June 2008, and that the necessary staff accompany the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

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

That, in relation to its study on small craft harbours, 12 members of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans be authorized to travel to Steveston, British Columbia, Port Hardy, British Columbia, Gimli, Manitoba, and the Bay of Quinte, Ontario, in May and June 2008, and that the necessary staff accompany the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

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PETITIONS

UNBORN VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present many names on petitions in support of Bill C-484, the unborn victims of crime act. These petitions keep pouring in from all areas of the country. In this particular instance, I have over 2,500 names on the petitions I am presenting today.

These people are asking that Parliament pass Bill C-484. They mention specifically my name as the sponsor of the bill and are asking us to recognize in law the life of the child that the woman wants to give birth to, give life to and give love to.

Routine Proceedings

• (1310)

PET FOOD

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over half of Canadians have pets and they love their dogs and cats. These Canadians are very worried and alarmed that there is no federal department or agency responsible for monitoring or informing the public about potentially harmful pet food.

Canadians are aware that pet food sold in Canada has caused harm to animals. The United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union all have regulations for the sale and manufacturing of pet food. The petitioners are calling upon the government to create mandatory regulations and inspections to ensure the quality and safety of pet food here in Canada.

INCOME TRUSTS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this income trust broken promise petition on behalf of a large number of petitioners from Edmonton, Alberta. The petitioners remember the Prime Minister boasting about his apparent commitment to accountability when he said that the greatest fraud is a promise not kept. The petitioners remind the Prime Minister—

Mr. Ken Epp: Where is the \$40 million?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Where is the \$40 million? There's a good question.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, if the members are shouting me down, I know I am on the right track. The petitioners remind the Prime Minister that he promised never to tax income trusts but he recklessly broke that promise by imposing a 31.5% punitive tax which permanently wiped over \$25 billion of the hard-earned retirement savings of over two million Canadians, particularly seniors.

The petitioners therefore call upon the Conservative minority government, first, to admit that the decision to tax income trusts was based on flawed methodology and incorrect assumptions, as shown by the finance committee; second, to apologize to those unfairly harmed—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Order. It sounds like the hon. member might be reading the petition, which he of course knows he cannot do. He is supposed to summarize it.

The hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar.

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Hon. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to present this petition on behalf of Saskatchewan residents. They are asking that Parliament ensure that interest is paid on all Canada pension plan benefit underpayments.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 222, 227 and 228.

[English]

Question No. 222—**Mr. Bill Casey:**

With respect to the government's efforts to improve or upgrade the Victoria-class submarine fleet so that the ships are more environmentally friendly: (a) what projects are currently underway by the Navy to ensure that the diesel engines used by the Victoria-class submarines will produce less amounts of harmful pollutants; (b) has the government made any efforts or conducted studies to find suitable alternative fuels for the diesel engines to make their emissions less harmful; (c) has the Navy succeeded in retrofitting the submarine fleet with appropriate air conditioning and other refrigerant systems so that they will be ozone friendly and, if so, what was the total cost of these improvements; (d) what is the current deadline of the Department of National Defence to replace ozone depleting substances on the Victoria-class submarines; and (e) what other improvements or upgrades are planned for the Victoria-class submarines to make them more environmentally friendly and how much has the government budgeted for these improvements?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to a) The navy has the following program in place to ensure that emissions from the diesel engines used by the Victoria-class submarines are minimized:

1. Inspections of the Victoria-class submarines are conducted approximately once a year through the marine diesel inspection program. These inspections include electronic engine analysis, to ensure that the engines operate at peak performance and that engine emissions are minimized.

In response to b) "Alternative" fuels have not been considered for submarine use due to their minimal availability and the inherent risk to submarine operations.

Like all Canadian naval vessels, the Victoria-class submarines use a high quality marine diesel fuel that meets the requirements for naval engines and is suitable for interchange with other navies when necessary. In June 2007, Environment Canada regulations came into force reducing the amount of sulphur permissible in marine fuels to 500 parts per million. Fuel procured for the Canadian navy meets this limit, and much of it is far below this limit. It should be noted that the previous specified limit was 5000 parts per million. This change means that emissions of sulphur oxides are now much less.

In response to c) The following projects will ensure that the Victoria-Class submarines' air conditioning and refrigerant systems are more ozone friendly:

1. The navy will be converting the chilled water system to a more ozone friendly refrigerant, specifically, a gas known as R134a. Since this conversion requires major equipment to be removed from the submarine, it must occur during extended docking work periods. The first vessel to be converted will be HMCS Chicoutimi. The project is expected to cost \$5 million for all four submarines.

Routine Proceedings

2. RS-24 is a non-ozone depleting refrigerant blend recently developed as a temporary replacement for R12. Investigations are underway to determine the possibility of using this refrigerant in the submarines as an interim measure to replace R12 while the full conversion project described above is developed and implemented. The expected cost of this project is \$200,000 for all four submarines.

3. The Navy is also converting the food refrigerant systems on the Victoria-Class submarines. This conversion will be scheduled during minor maintenance periods and is expected to be complete by 2010. This project is expected to cost \$3 million for all four submarines.

In response to d) There is no mandated deadline to replace the fire extinguishing agent halon on the Victoria-class submarines: however, the halon replacement project is expected to be completed by 2012. Under the halon replacement project, halon will be replaced with another fire extinguishing agent on all four submarines by 2012. The estimated cost is approximately \$5 million for all four submarines. The mandated deadline for the replacement of R12 refrigerant is 01 Jan 2015; however, the Department of National Defence is working towards having R12 replaced by 01 Jan 2010.

In response to e) In addition to the upgrades mentioned above, under the maritime environmental protection program, the Department of National Defence intends to install oily water separators in order to ensure the oil content of discharged waste water meets the International Maritime Organization regulated limit. The cost of the installations are expected to be approximately \$1.5 million for all four submarines.

Question No. 227—Mr. Bill Casey:

With regard to the Victoria In-Service Support Contract: (a) if Industrial and Regional Benefits evaluations were carried out by representatives from Industry Canada and the regional development agencies as part of the contracting process, were representatives of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) involved in these evaluations and, if so, when were they written and what are the detailed reasons as to why the Agency did not conduct any analysis on the potential impacts to employment or economic development to the Atlantic Canada region, as stated in the government's answer to written question Q-182; and (b) when were the ACOA evaluations approved and transmitted to Public Works and Government Services Canada?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, insofar as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, ACOA, is concerned, with respect to Question Q-227(a), the industrial and regional benefits, IRB, evaluation related to the Victoria in-service support bids was described by Industry Canada in its response to Question Q-182 (a). A representative of ACOA participated in the process. An analysis as described in Question Q-182 (c) was not a requirement associated with the Victoria in-service support request for proposals. Consequently, such an analysis could not be conducted. A single report detailing the results of the IRB evaluation was prepared by Industry Canada upon completion of the evaluation, and transmitted to Public Works and Government Services Canada. With respect to Question Q-227 (b), as no discrete ACOA evaluation was conducted, there was no ACOA report to transmit to PWGSC.

Question No. 228—Hon. Roy Cullen:

With regard to marriages of convenience, orchestrated for personal gain or for gaining entry into Canada as a landed immigrant: (a) has the minister or her officials taken any action to address this issue; (b) has the Minister, or her predecessor,

implemented any policies or procedures to alleviate the concerns associated with marriages of convenience; (c) is the Minister of the view that marriages of convenience that are perpetrated in Canada are growing in numbers beyond normal demographics or immigration patterns; (d) what systems, processes, or procedures are in place to deal specifically with complaints from the victims of marriage fraud; and (e) what action is being taken to restore the confidence of the victims of marriages of convenience that the government is working effectively and efficiently on their behalf?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, insofar as Citizenship and Immigration Canada is concerned, in response to a) Citizenship and Immigration Canada, CIC, and the Canada Border Services Agency, CBSA, are both concerned about marriages of convenience. Together, the departments are engaged in the investigation of these cases. CIC is currently analyzing the issue of marriages of convenience cases and will be providing recommendations on how to better address this issue.

A survey and a case assessment tool were created and distributed to CIC and CBSA regional offices in order to identify gaps. In addition, CIC developed a strategic anti-fraud action plan in May 2007, addressing key issues such as training and guidelines. It outlines the next steps in combating marriages of convenience. This includes updating and modifying the anti-fraud manual and defining fraud investigations regarding marriages of convenience. Furthermore, in 2007 CIC worked alongside the B.C. government in the production of a publication to sensitize the public on the financial responsibilities of a family class sponsorship and impact of fraudulent marriages.

In response to b) Relationships of convenience are specifically prohibited in section 4 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations. In response to the survey of September 2007, both CIC and CBSA put forth numerous recommendations that they felt could help solve the marriage of convenience problem. Some of these recommendations include: training on how to properly conduct an investigation; interviewing the subject and the sponsor in detail; and having detailed notes from the interview.

All the solutions recommended by both CIC and CBSA will be studied closely in order to implement policies and procedures that would best alleviate the concerns associated with marriages of convenience.

In response to c) Quantifying the rate of marriage fraud is difficult as relationships can break down at any time in a marriage, from the date of entry to Canada to several years into the marriage. CIC takes all tips, complaints, and reports of alleged marriage of convenience seriously and investigates where there is sufficient information to do so.

Government Orders

In response to d) The work that CIC does concerning marriages of convenience focuses primarily on preventing people involved in marriage fraud from getting to Canada. This pro-active approach, rather than a re-active one, protects Canadian citizens and permanent residents from becoming victims by taking steps to deny permanent resident visas to foreign nationals who enter into marriages of convenience. When a sponsor becomes a victim, he or she may contact CIC or CBSA and provide information. Where sufficient information is obtained, CIC and CBSA may open a marriage of convenience investigation that could potentially result in the loss of permanent resident status for the sponsored individual.

In response to e) The Immigration Refugee Protection Act, IRPA, the regulations and the overseas processing manual all have references prohibiting relationships of convenience to prevent persons in such relationships from immigrating to Canada

When a determination is made that there is indeed evidence to support an allegation, CIC then takes the appropriate steps to either refuse the case or to ensure that the individuals involved do not benefit or continue to benefit from their actions. Individuals who have entered Canada under false pretenses could be subject to removal.

Several actions have been taken to address this issue. A survey and a case assessment tool were created and distributed to CIC and CBSA regional offices in order to identify gaps. In addition, CIC developed a strategic anti-fraud action plan in May 2007, addressing key issues such as training and guidelines. It outlines the next steps in combating marriages of convenience. This includes updating and modifying the anti-fraud manual and defining fraud investigations regarding marriages of convenience. Furthermore, in 2007 CIC worked alongside the B.C. government in the production of a publication to sensitize the public on the financial responsibilities of a family class sponsorship and impact of fraudulent marriages. As well, CIC's website informs clients of the legal obligations of a sponsorship and the importance of the responsibility for ensuring a marriage is genuine.

[English]

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 226 and 246 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[English]

Question No. 226—**Hon. Roy Cullen:**

With regard to collateralized debt obligations (CDO's) and the sub-prime mortgage credit crisis in the North American financial sector: (a) in 2007, was the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions (OSFI) aware of the exposure of financial institutions in Canada to CDO's, and specifically sub-prime mortgages;

(b) when it became aware of the exposure of Canadian banks to sub-prime mortgages, how did OSFI evaluate the risk of these CDO's in the context of the solvency, liquidity and stability of Canada's financial institutions; (c) did OSFI undertake any sensitivity analysis to assess the impact of factors such as interest rate changes, economic slowdown or job losses and property market declines on the viability of sub-prime mortgages; (d) were CDO's adequately secured or insured by Canada's chartered banks, and were these CDO instruments appropriately rated by the rating agencies; (e) given the recent losses or write downs by chartered Canadian banks, what action is the OSFI taking to safeguard Canada's financial sector, its depositors and shareholders; and (f) what steps is the Minister of Finance taking to address this issue, and to ensure that this type of situation does not occur again?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 246—**Mr. Rick Dykstra:**

With regard to the tax reductions and child care support introduced by the government since the beginning of 2006, how much would a two income employed couple earning \$35,000 and \$52,000 (for a combined total of \$87,000) living in Ontario, with two children under 18, including one under 6: (a) save in taxes as the result of (i) the reduction of the goods and services tax, (ii) the reduction of personal income tax rates, (iii) the increase of the basic personal amount, (iv) the introduction of the child tax credit, (v) the introduction of the employment tax credit, (vi) the introduction of the children's fitness tax credit, (vii) the introduction of the transit tax credit, assuming the cost of the monthly pass is \$566 a year; and (b) receive from the Universal Child Care Benefit?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

NUCLEAR LIABILITY AND COMPENSATION ACT

The House resumed from May 5 consideration of Bill C-5, An Act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The hon. member for Mississauga—Erindale has just under two minutes left to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have had to make a speech over a period of two days. I have about two minutes left so I just want to summarize what I said previously in my speech, which is that the Liberal Party does not support the amendments presented by the NDP. We think that the bill as it stands, after a comprehensive study, is needed for the industry, and we urge the government to bring it back for third reading as quickly as possible.

However, I also want to summarize by reminding the Conservative government of some unanswered questions that remain in the minds of Canadians. When it comes to the future of nuclear energy in our country, there are a lot of unanswered questions, questions that the Conservative government has failed to answer.

First, we still need to know what the government has learned from the recent fiasco at Chalk River.

Government Orders

Second, we know that AECL is in need of clarification of its mandate and its future. We know that the Ontario government is waiting to hear from the Conservative government about that future in determining its bid process for the future of power plants in Ontario.

We also know that the Minister of Natural Resources intervened with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. We want to know what is the future of that commission. We want to know if the minister intends to strengthen the independence of that agency.

There are a lot of unanswered questions. Canadians have a lot of hesitancy about the competence of this government.

I notice that the Conservative government has not yet put up anybody to speak on the amendments to this bill, so I hope the Conservatives can answer these questions in their remarks. Until then, we look forward to them bringing that bill back for third reading so that we can vote on it as quickly as possible.

• (1315)

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech with interest yesterday and today. I want to thank him for his support of the bill and for the work we were able to do with him in committee. I think we have a pretty good bill here.

Yesterday he mentioned that the bill does raise the liability limit from \$75 million to \$650 million. I am going to ask him a couple of questions. Could he reflect on why the NDP has made a decision to oppose some of these things? I would like to ask him if he has any idea of why the NDP would want to leave the liability limit at \$75 million.

The bill also tightens the definition of liability, establishes clear criteria for financial instruments for operators and gives alternatives to them to use different financial instruments in ensuring their operations. Again I would like him to answer and tell us why he thinks the NDP would oppose allowing operators to seek alternatives or options when it comes to their financial instruments.

Third, a number of the amendments deal with the nuclear claims tribunal that is going to be set up in the event of a nuclear incident. I wonder if he could also reflect on why the NDP would be willing to interfere with the operation of the tribunal to the extent that it is. It does not even seem to be willing to let the tribunal function properly.

It seems to us that perhaps the NDP is just putting these amendments forward in order to try to delay the bill. Does he have any reflections on that?

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Mr. Speaker, I first want to echo my colleague's comments about the fact that our committee has been doing a pretty good job of working together and advancing good, strong, sound policies. Fortunately our committee has escaped some of the Conservative tactics. I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for working cooperatively with the committee.

He really does ask good questions. I am very interested in hearing the answers from the NDP. I cannot speak on their behalf. I can speculate that the NDP members sometimes play on the emotions and the fears of some Canadians. Their intent to pander and to be

alarmist causes them to inflame some of those emotions, fears and concerns.

Let me be clear. I do not want to undermine the debate about what the amount should be. The question of the \$650 million liability limit is a good and legitimate question. We have debated it extensively in committee. Yes, there are some good questions about what the right amount is, but given the experts and the witnesses we heard from and given the comparison to other international standards, we feel that it is a good leap from \$75 million to \$650 million. Also, the minister now has the authority to review it every five years to make sure it is adequate and comparable to international standards.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague on an issue to which he referred. He said that the bill appeared to be what the industry needs.

The concern we have in the New Democratic Party is not only what the industry needs, but what the citizens of Canada need. What do they need from a nuclear liability act? What do they need to protect them and ensure that when there is such a calamity in our country, that the compensation is done in a fair, open and prompt fashion and that the amounts geared to be put forward are adequate? How does the bill guarantee the rights of Canadians in receiving the kind of compensation that could be applicable in the event of a nuclear catastrophe?

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Mr. Speaker, I am really surprised because my colleague is not known for hyperbole and being selective in his remarks.

When I spoke to the bill, I said that not only the industry asked for it, but the host communities did as well. I do not know if he was there when the mayors testified before committee. They supported the bill. In fact they said that they wanted it now.

The member can claim that he is speaking on behalf of Canadians, but the record is clear. Mayors, host communities, the industry, the insurance industry, all stakeholders and experts support the bill.

Yes, there are some outstanding questions, and I do not diminish them, but the member cannot tell me that I only said the industry supported the bill. Host communities and mayors agree with it. The member should really read the transcript or speak to the mayors who host these power plants and get their opinion if he has any doubts.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak about Bill C-5 and debate the amendments proposed.

Perhaps we should remind the people who are watching why we are debating this bill today. As it happens, this bill was introduced by the government in October 2007. It is now May 2008. Many months passed before this bill was put back on the agenda. Later, perhaps we can try to understand why this government took so long to bring this bill back to the House.

Government Orders

Bill C-5 aims to establish a liability regime applicable in the event of a nuclear incident that makes operators of nuclear installations absolutely and exclusively liable for damages up to a maximum of \$650 million. The bill also replaces the power to create a nuclear damage claims commission with the power to create a nuclear claims tribunal.

As the member who spoke before me said, the members of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources have worked diligently and professionally and heard a great number of witnesses. We must remember that the bill is quite technical, and that it includes insurance, reinsurance and compensation terms. This bill is also very complex. The witnesses and experts who came to meet with us and give us their opinions were unanimous in their belief that this bill needs to be put into place, especially since it updates a law that was neglected by various governments—Conservatives and Liberals. The latter forgot to update this law.

It has to be said that, in recent years, nuclear energy has not been very “in”. Today, we hear a lot about it, because the energy crisis has led people to take another look at nuclear energy. Here in Canada, several provinces have nuclear plants they are having to repair. For example, Ontario has decided to refurbish its nuclear facilities and New Brunswick has decided to build new ones. Even Alberta is considering building a nuclear plant to provide energy for developing the oil sands. Nuclear energy is a topical issue. Some people are in favour of it, while others are not. My opinion on this issue is well known. Unlike the Minister of Natural Resources and the Conservatives, I do not consider nuclear energy to be clean energy. It does not emit any greenhouse gases, but it could hardly be considered clean energy.

A number of amendments were proposed. Some were debated and others were refused by the Speaker. Today, a dozen amendments are before us for debate. I have noticed that many of the proposed amendments pertain to the \$650 million liability. The current act—which applies as long as the new act is not in effect—provides for a \$75 million liability. If a major nuclear accident were to take place today, the operator's liability would be limited to \$75 million. The bill provides for a \$650 million liability. This change was long overdue. As I mentioned earlier, the different governments have neglected to update this amount. According to experts, the new amount was based on practices in other countries and the ability to insure such an amount. Like our NDP colleagues, we questioned this amount. Witnesses—especially mayors of communities that have a nuclear facility—said that in the event of a major accident, \$650 million would not be enough to cover all the damages.

• (1325)

One mayor in particular told me that in the case of a nuclear accident, we must think about the municipal infrastructure that will have to be rebuilt as well as the credibility and visibility of this municipality, which will lose its citizens and will lose appeal to industries, plants, etc. It would have a huge impact on individuals, but also on the community as a whole.

It is true that, at first glance, the \$650 million amount could seem insufficient. We questioned the witnesses at great length about this. They told us that currently, given the popularity and renewal of nuclear energy across Europe and worldwide, it is difficult to find

financing for this amount. If the amount had been changed to \$1 billion or \$1.5 billion, or if there were unlimited compensation, the reinsurance market would have had problems.

We know that there is a process underway to increase the amount. The Bloc supported the amount of \$650 million because one clause of the bill states that the minister must review the amount of compensation at least every five years. There is a difference there. It is not every five years, but at least every five years, which means that if the market changes and if he has the means, the minister could propose changes to the amount of compensation.

I understand that people—myself included—were feeling insecure the last time we debated the amount of \$650 million. Aside from the creation of the tribunal, this was really the essence of the update of Bill C-5.

We also recognize that the status quo was not working and changes needed to be made. We refused to support the bill after it was democratically debated in committee and after it was amended because the bill was not acceptable as it was. It needed further amendments. To that end, in a responsible fashion, the Bloc Québécois supported the bill, but it will not support all the proposed amendments that we are discussing here today. We do not want to end up with an outdated bill that fails to serve communities or individuals.

I would like to take a closer look at some of the proposed amendments. I do not understand why, for example, one of the amendments proposes deleting clause 22, which gives the minister the authority to regularly review the liability limit at least once every five years. I do not understand why one of the amendments proposed by the NDP seeks to delete this clause, which I think is important to guarantee that citizens and communities have a way of pressuring the minister to review the compensation amount.

As a final point, it is important to keep the tribunal mentioned in the bill and avoid allowing people to select their tribunal, which we think would delay the compensation of individuals or communities that might be affected by a nuclear accident. We believe that an independent tribunal that reviews the applications is the best tool for citizens to be able to obtain justice and redress as fairly and as quickly as possible.

I am now ready for questions from my colleagues.

Government Orders

• (1330)

[English]

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, whom I worked with on the committee, for her interest in this bill and for her interest in these issues generally. I share some of her concerns.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources suggested that the amendments would mean we would be back at the \$70 million limit. No, the sum total of the amendments would mean there would be unlimited liability for nuclear accidents, much as there is in Germany.

We originally had taken a different position in the committee, but this is the position we could bring forward as an amendment, to have it as unlimited liability. If we take into account deletion of clause 21 and the deletion of the amounts referred to in subclause 21(1) in the two amendments, the bill would then refer to unlimited liability on the part of the operators for any damages incurred by their facility.

If there is unlimited liability, then oversight as to the amount of the liability is not required. The liability is set and continues forever as unlimited liability. It is up to the insurance company to understand the nature of unlimited liability. In the case of nuclear plants, there can be very different degrees of liability according to the locations of those plants.

That is the explanation and I hope that helps my colleague.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member opposite for his explanation.

I would like to understand whether the proposed amendment in fact removes the compensation under subsection 30(1). In the current bill, a victim of a nuclear incident who applies for compensation has 30 years to do so. For example, if that person develops cancer 15 years later, he or she can, up to 3 years after he or she is diagnosed with cancer, apply for compensation.

Under the bill, a victim has this recourse for up to 30 years after the incident. Obviously, this is a very complex and technical matter. I have a hard time understanding why anyone would want to delete such an important clause that allows people to get compensation up to 30 years after the incident.

To my knowledge and in light of everything the witnesses have told us, I think that after an incident, repercussions such as illness or a condition can appear more than 30 years later. According to the witnesses, 30 years is enough time to report this.

I am surprised. Since this was not debated in committee and since we are seeing this amendment for the first time today, I would like our NDP colleague to elaborate on this.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. I simply have a question for the hon. member.

According to the hon. member, what would be the potential effects of this bill if the government decides to go ahead and privatize some or all of Atomic Energy of Canada?

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, it is hard to comment on such projections. The debate is not over. We know that the

government is currently conducting a study on Atomic Energy of Canada.

This morning the Minister of Natural Resources appeared before our committee. He told us that the study was not finished and that privatizing Atomic Energy of Canada is still a possibility.

This is certainly worrisome since there could be consequences to privatizing that agency. Nonetheless, I do not believe that privatizing Atomic Energy of Canada is problematic in the context of this bill.

• (1335)

[English]

Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support Bill C-5 in its unamended form, particularly in light of the discussion which I have been privileged to hear today in the House.

I want to pick up on the points that were raised by my colleague from Mississauga—Erindale, which had to do with a number of fundamental questions about the future of nuclear energy in this country which underlie this bill. I also want to echo what my colleague from Western Arctic said, that as we think about that future, we have to think about not only the interests of the nuclear industry, but also the interests of the whole population of Canada.

First, at the deepest level, this bill raises a number of very profound questions about the future of nuclear power in Canada, about the future of AECL itself, about the future of the nuclear regulator, about the future of Canada's own Candu reactor, the future of evolving nuclear technologies around the world, competitive technologies to the Candu reactor and, indeed, the future of nuclear power around the world.

It is evident that the great change which has occurred in the debate about nuclear power has been driven by climate change. This has radically altered the terms of debate. It has radically altered the way in which we think about these issues.

I can say that as a long-time environmentalist, I have been one of those who, over the years, has had reservations about the nuclear industry. I have moved from that position to one of being agnostic, but today, as I weigh the odds, the chances and the dangers, I now find myself on the side of a nuclear future for Canada. I believe that inevitably, nuclear power will be an increasingly important component of our national energy portfolio in the years to come.

Even if we funded and built no new nuclear plants in this country, Canada would have been having a nuclear future for a long time anyway. If we consider the very lights in this chamber, two out of every five lights in this chamber and in Ontario are powered by nuclear power. Forty per cent of all the power currently generated comes from nuclear generators.

Their importance becomes all the more compelling, because we know what the future of coal fired energy plants is in this province. That is to say they will be eliminated, which puts an even greater burden on nuclear power certainly in this part of the world for the future. There is no existing alternative source of energy on the scope and scale of nuclear power which can replace coal fired generating plants.

Government Orders

Second, the climate change argument puts us in a world in which we have to balance off risks. That is what we are here for. We are here to make choices. To govern is to choose.

On the one hand, a world in which carbon dioxide continues to increase exponentially along with other greenhouse gases puts us into a perilous future when we would reach an increase in world temperature of plus 2°C. This would take us to a place we have not been in many generations and millions of years, versus the well-known risks of nuclear power, which have been nuclear accidents, terrorist threats or how we dispose of nuclear waste. These are not trivial matters, but we have to choose. We have to decide what is the greatest peril and can we manage the risks on the other side.

Bill C-5 itself and the debate about its amendments is about risk management, about somewhere between zero liability and limitless liability. The committee came down and decided on \$650 million, increasing it from \$75 million. That is about risk management.

• (1340)

The problem with climate change is that this is not a manageable risk if we continue not to do anything about it. That is the challenge, that we are in a potentially runaway situation. Nuclear power must be part of the answer to that.

The third point I would like to make is that around the world we do see a renaissance of nuclear power. There are currently operating in the world 439 nuclear power reactors. They have been operating for a collective number of 10,000 reactor years of experience. There are now 200 new nuclear power plants being planned around the world. During the entire nuclear power period there have been only two accidents: Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. Only one of those, Chernobyl, had fatalities associated with it, and there is no denying that that was a major, major accident.

However, what we do forget as we think about risk is what happens as a result of the emissions from coal and power plants every year from mining. The number of deaths every year associated with coal mining so that we can actually power coal fired generating plants far exceeds the number of deaths associated with the Chernobyl disaster, and yet we never balance out those risks. That is what our job is as legislators, to balance choices, to balance risks and try and do the best we can for the future.

The fourth point I want to make is about nuclear waste itself. It is a problem which ultimately is technologically controllable. The exciting part, if I may say so, about nuclear waste is that it represents a potential future source of energy which we have not found a way of exploiting yet. There will be a new generation of reactors which will be able to extract from our existing nuclear waste energy almost on an indefinite, time unlimited basis. It is true we do not know exactly what that road ahead looks like of using nuclear waste for new power, but we also know that if we do not get on with change what our future looks like in a world of plus 2°C climate change. That we have a much stronger sense of. Again we have to choose; we have to balance.

My fifth point is that we have in AECL, a world leader, a company which has led the nuclear revolution not only in power but in medical isotopes and other areas. It deals with an evolving technology which has a tremendous future. Someone somewhere in

the world, some industrial group is going to be developing the next generation of nuclear plants and the question is why should Canada, pioneers in this area, leaders for half a century, not be that somebody? Why should we leave it to France or to General Electric if we are going to be having a nuclear future in any event?

This brings me to the sixth point which is national interest. We have had interesting debate recently on a Canadian owned company, MDA, which developed RADARSAT and the Canadarm, as to what our national interest is in high tech companies. The government has said, and I credit it with this, that for things like space technology, this is in the national interest. I would argue that AECL is in the same vein. It is in our national interest to give this technology the resources and the support to take us to the next level and to take that technology to the world to see it not only in terms of contributing to the climate change debate but to wealth creation.

Finally, by passing Bill C-5, clearly we are anticipating a long life ahead for nuclear power in Canada, otherwise we would not have this bill. This might as well be a future where Canada is a leader. As the member for York Centre used to put it in his former life as a hockey player with the Montreal Canadiens as they got ready to play a game but they were feeling a little discouraged, "Well, since we have to play the game anyway, we might as well win it". I think the same is true of nuclear power.

• (1345)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague really touched on some very important points in his speech, one of them being that we simply cannot deal with the nuclear industry in this piecemeal fashion, and that is correct.

We have many problems with the liability limits in the bill. We did not have a context in which to put that. We did not have a sense of providing leadership in terms of identifying the true cost of the industry to the consumer. This is one point for someone who is interested in the comparison of directions in which we have to go.

If we continue to hold the liability for nuclear accidents above \$650 million with the Government of Canada, we are instituting a long term subsidy of the industry. We are not expressing the true costs of the industry in relationship to other potential new energy sources at which we may be looking.

Our amendment would simply create an unlimited liability for the nuclear industry, much as there is in many other countries. This would ensure that the cost to deal with it would be left with the industry. It would be reflected in the prices that the industry would charge for its product.

Is that not a better situation than continuing the liability of the government in subsidizing the industry?

Hon. John Godfrey: Mr. Speaker, three points were raised, and very valid ones, by my colleague.

Government Orders

First, he raises the question of establishing true costs. However, in any discussion of true costs, we have to compare, for example, what the true costs are of coal-fired electrical generating plants. Do we take into account the true cost to health when the particulate goes up? Do we take into account the true long term cost of global warming? Therefore, I am in favour of true costs, but they have to be compared on a wide basis.

Second, on the issue of subsidy, I think that is right. This is an industry, certainly through AECL and its research side, that needs to be subsidized. It needs to be controlled by the Government of Canada because it is such a crucial technology and it is also one which, if mishandled, has very dangerous and negative consequences. Therefore, I do not shy away from the notion of subsidizing a technology which takes us to a new place and will enhance our export capacity.

Finally, on the subject of unlimited liability, I guess the issue is if we were to change it from \$650 million to unlimited liability, would we in fact destroy the possibility of there being a nuclear power future for Canada and the world?

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member almost was my university professor in Halifax. I do not know if that is his loss or mine. However, I was very enraptured by his comments, especially as I come from New Brunswick, which has put a lot of its power generating eggs in the basket of the nuclear power future.

Is the government and its climate change policy in step with the policy for nuclear power in the future and this bill in particular? What is it about this climate change policy of the government that in any way meshes with the nuclear aspects of his comments?

Hon. John Godfrey: Mr. Speaker, to the extent that there is a climate change policy of the government, I would be very hard pressed, generous as I am and creative as I am, to find a connection between a nuclear strategy and a climate change plan and also one in which we saw the wealth creating component of our future climate change plans as being part of the mix, that when we think of climate change and the future we have to think of technologies and how we can actually make money by being green and by doing the right think.

I would locate this larger debate about nuclear power in that context about innovation and wealth creation.

• (1350)

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-5, An Act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident.

These amendments are being passed off by the government and many in the Liberal Party as simply administrative changes to modernize an obsolete law. However, all Canadians should be very attentive to this legislation. It raises many questions as to who the government is really protecting through it and as to the future of nuclear energy in Canada.

Comments have been made by the government about fearmongering. I was one of those people who many years ago lived in Europe and experienced Chernobyl. I happened to be living in an area of

France that received some of the fallout from that meltdown. I was one of those people who was very opposed to the nuclear industry.

Over the years and with climate change, at this point I am open to the idea, but it has to be done following very stringent regulations. This industry cannot be privatized. It cannot follow a financial bottom line. It is out of the concern to protect all Canadians that the NDP has proposed a number of amendments.

The bill, as was suggested, proposes a new compensation limit. The cap has been raised from \$75 million to \$650 million. It would be reasonable to assume that this limit is based on the risk and the implications to Canadians, but this is not so. The NDP brought forward an amendment to clause 22, which would establish a risk based on the consumer price index for Canada, as published by Statistics Canada, financial security requirements under international agreements and other considerations. The limit to the compensation is clearly insufficient and will be even worse in coming years.

Canada has not signed any international agreements on nuclear liability and has consistently resisted taking part in these agreements. The minister needs to take into consideration more issues than the CPI, such as the risk of an accident.

Risk has been defined in the following way, as being equal to the probability of something happening times the consequences. Using this actuarial definition, the probability of a nuclear incident in Canada is, as has been said, very low. However, when one factors in the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear incident, we see that then the risk is very high. It has been estimated that a nuclear accident would cause billions of dollars in damage in personal injuries, death, contamination of the surroundings and so on. The cap is clearly insufficient.

The U.S.A., for example, has a cap of \$10 billion. Germany, which has experienced the fallout of the Chernobyl meltdown, has an unlimited amount. Many countries are also moving toward an unlimited amount.

Bill C-5 brings compensation levels up to an absolute international minimum. In the case of a nuclear accident, as remote as that might be, the damage would be catastrophic. That means with the level of compensation proposed in the bill, only a handful of dollars would be offered to Canadians impacted for loss of life, loss of limb, for contaminated property and so on.

• (1355)

In our opinion the legislation represents an almost cavalier attitude toward an energy source with the potential for catastrophic levels of damage and with no consideration of the risk levels as established by actuarial norms. We have proposed amendments to the bill to protect the interests of Canadians.

Earlier the parliamentary secretary said that the NDP wanted to have the compensation limit remain at the very low level in the earlier legislation. I must clarify that misleading statement because it could not be further from the truth. We feel that the cap proposed by the government should be unlimited. If one considers the NDP amendments together, they would have that effect. Following the principle of the polluter pays, nuclear operators should be prepared to cover a larger portion of the liability for their actions.

Statements by Members

Canadians need to ask, why such a low limit? I will start by setting the legislation in the context of the recent events at Chalk River.

As with the legislation, it is important to ask whose interests the government was protecting when it fired the nuclear safety inspector for doing her job, or when the natural resources minister mused about having the private sector build a nuclear reactor to power the tar sands.

Last December's crisis at the nuclear plant in Chalk River gave Canadians cause for concern. It certainly has not inspired our confidence that the Conservatives will put safety ahead of profits.

First, for a decade both Liberal and Conservative governments ignored deficiencies in the operations of Atomic Energy of Canada, and that has been well documented by the Auditor General.

Second, Conservatives ran emergency legislation through the House supposedly to settle medical emergencies due to a long-time dispute between AECL and Canada's Nuclear Safety Commission, and that is now questionable.

Finally, the Conservatives continued with their trademark bullying tactics of silencing those who disagreed with them and fired the head of CNSC for stubbornly standing up for the safety of Canadians.

The way in which the Conservatives handled the Chalk River crisis raises concerns about whether safety is paramount to them.

Other worrisome questions have emerged about the Conservative privatization agenda.

The minister commented publicly on this. In the *Globe and Mail*, of November 2007, the Minister of Natural Resources said:

It is time to consider whether the existing structure of AECL is appropriate in a changing marketplace.

In an interview with Sun Media, the minister said:

It's not a question of if, it's a question of when, in my mind. I think nuclear can play a very significant role in the oil sands.

He admitted that he had been involved in discussions about a two year exclusive deal with Calgary based Energy Alberta Corporation to establish the Candu reactor technology in the oil sands.

The legislation facilitates the government's intention to privatize the nuclear industry. First it fired the safety inspector. Now it wants to set up an insurance plan that would take liability away from the operators, placing it on the backs of Canadians.

The government's drive to privatize all that is government, including the nuclear industry, should be a red flag to those who think money should not be the main driver in nuclear energy. It is too risky to leave it to the whim of the market. We know the Conservatives hands-off approach to government. They look the other way at efforts to privatize our health care system. If there is one other industry where money should not be the main driver, it is the nuclear industry. It cannot be left to the whim of the market nor to its cost cutting patterns for increased efficiency. Government should be subsidizing this industry.

I see my time has run out, but I assume I will be able to continue after question period.

● (1400)

The Speaker: The hon. member's time has expired, but there will be five minutes for questions and comments consequent on her speech after question period.

* * *

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Auditor General of Canada dated May 2008, with an addendum on environmental petitions from July 1, 2007 to January 4, 2008.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), this document is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

CHARLES CACCIA

Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Hon. Charles Caccia, who passed away this weekend.

In 1993, as a veteran parliamentarian, Charles must have been bemused when 201 rookies, myself included, came to this place. I clearly recall turning up at Charles' environment committee without a starting point of a clue what committee was about.

Charles took me through the steps, always exhibiting the highest sense of respect and patience. He encouraged my participation in parliamentary associations. He emphasized the importance and the significance of members of Parliament attending on the world stage.

Charles Caccia was a man who proudly marched to his own drummer frequently leading the way where others had not gone. Although he and I had little in common politically or philosophically, it is an honour for me to have this opportunity to pay him tribute.

Charles Caccia was a man who made this Chamber a better place in his 36 years and into the future through those of us who remain. In that respect, Charles Caccia lives on in our Parliament today.

* * *

CHARLES CACCIA

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to honour Charles Caccia.

[*Member spoke in Italian and provided the following translation:*]

Statements by Members

He was an accomplished Parliamentarian and former Minister of Labour and the Environment. My heartfelt condolences are extended to his family, his friends, but above all to the community.

As a student, I involved myself in his first federal campaigns. At the time, he, like no other, succeeded in personally expressing the collective character and personality of the people he represented, people from other countries, with abundant energy and resources adaptable to the creation of a new and “just society”; as it was defined by the new Prime Minister of the period.

We, Italian Canadians, saw him as a vehicle for change, and integration into a society that emphasized civic responsibility and concerns for one’s neighbours.

In Davenport, his dedication became iconic and for new arrivals, a role model. Thanks Charles.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SOUTH SHORE VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in this House today to mark the 30th anniversary of the Centre de bénévolat de la Rive-Sud. This organization has been promoting volunteerism in various spheres of activity since 1978.

Thirty years of experience, 30 years of providing support, 30 years of helping others—that is worth celebrating.

With a dedicated professional staff, quality services, exceptional guidance and the contribution of over 900 volunteers at the ready, the Centre de bénévolat de la Rive-Sud helps meet the needs of families, children, seniors, the disabled and the most disadvantaged.

It is no secret: volunteerism represents the cornerstone of community action. In addition, this real economic engine contributed \$70 billion to Quebec and Canada and more than 500,000 full-time positions in 2000.

A big thank you to all the volunteers, stakeholders and administrators of the Centre de bénévolat de la Rive-Sud for their commitment, which is a true sign of the region's vitality.

* * *

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I represent the area of Burnaby—New Westminster which is the centre of the Canadian mosaic and the most diverse community on earth. Over 100 languages are spoken in our small area and all faiths are represented here. The population is made up of substantially new Canadians, people who have come to make a difference and help build this great country of Canada.

The changes to immigration proposed by the Conservative government will negatively impact new Canadians. Brought in with the tacit support of the Liberal leader and his caucus, these changes are designed to bring in cheap labour and temporary workers rather than put the focus of immigration on community building.

The NDP will continue our push for the recognition of credentials, so that doctors, nurses and engineers who come to Canada can practice their professions rather than do low-skill work. We will continue to push for adequate immigration funding so that new Canadians can be reunited with their families.

The NDP will fight the unfair changes. We will fight this discrimination and we will firmly stand up as the only voice for new Canadians in the House of Commons.

* * *

● (1405)

GORDON BELL

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, driving west through beautiful British Columbia, along the Trans-Canada Highway, beyond the majestic Canadian Rockies, are the Three Valley Lake Chateau and Three Valley Gap Heritage Ghost Town.

As breathtaking as these facilities and site are, what is more amazing is that they were all built by one man and his family. That man was Gordon Bell. He was a visionary, craftsman and entrepreneur.

Fifty years ago, Gordon came across this site. Others would have observed it as 27 acres of mud and marsh, but Gordon envisioned a place where he could build a dream. He began with a little coffee shop, then developed a motel, restaurant, hotel, and frontier theme park.

Gordon and his family, over the past 50 years, have been building this dream. When Gordon was asked how one man could undertake such a project, he would always say, as he put his arm around his bride of 50 years, “First you have to start with a good woman”.

Gordon Bell died earlier this year. He left an impressive tourist attraction, but more than that he left a close-knit family that is carrying on his legacy and dream.

* * *

CBC RADIO ORCHESTRA

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Thursday, March 27, was a dark day for the Vancouver-based CBC Radio Orchestra, when it was announced that its funding would be cancelled. Over one-third of the musicians in the orchestra are residents of my riding of North Vancouver. On April 20, I attended what may unfortunately have been one of orchestra's final scheduled concerts.

I urge the government to ensure that adequate funding is available to allow CBC Radio to continue its mandate to play an important role in showcasing Canadian talent and enriching our cultural heritage.

I also join with Canadians across the country to ask the government and CBC Radio management to confirm the heritage value and status of our 70-year-old CBC Radio Orchestra, and to ensure that it is able to continue to contribute to the cultural enrichment of Canadians.

*Statements by Members***ROYAL BANK CUP HOCKEY TOURNAMENT**

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Camrose Kodiaks, under the direction of Coach Boris Rybalka, are now at the top of the Royal Bank Cup Hockey Tournament with two wins and no losses.

The people in my riding back home have high hopes for our Camrose Kodiaks. We are proud that our Camrose Kodiaks have a winning tradition that dates back to the 2001 national championship. They were silver medallists in the national championship in 2003 and again in 2005. The Camrose Kodiaks were the AJHL champions in 2002, 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2008. The Kodiaks have been the Doyle Cup champions five times since 2001.

The Kodiaks have been providing the most exciting hockey in my riding for many years. We are proud of our players who have gone on to the NHL. Eight current Kodiak players have already signed hockey scholarships. These young Canadians are making a contribution to our community and setting standards to which all young Canadians can aspire.

Please join me as we cheer, "Go, Kodiaks, go".

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC CITY'S 400TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada's decision to send the Governor General to kick off Quebec City's 400th anniversary celebrations is an insult to the Quebec nation. Not only does the Governor General of Canada represent a vestige of British colonialism, but she also lacks the legitimacy to represent Quebecers at this event.

This insulting decision is a perfect example of the federal government's desire to usurp the 400th anniversary celebrations for the purposes of Canadian nation building. In fact, the federal website for the 400th anniversary has a distorted view of historic events, for example, claiming that the founding of Quebec City was the start of the history of Canada, instead of the history of the Quebec nation.

This is yet more proof that the recognition of the Quebec nation by this House was simply a ploy, and that there is no desire here to follow through.

* * *

[English]

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all the first responders and volunteers who have worked so hard to deal with the flooding in New Brunswick, and for the Prime Minister's welcome visit and show of support to our province during this time.

This is Emergency Preparedness Week. Under the theme "72 hours — Is your family prepared?" the Government of Canada is encouraging Canadians to prepare for emergencies. To launch this week, the Minister of Public Safety, yesterday, announced that \$5 million would be going to the provinces and territories to support emergency preparedness through the joint emergency preparedness program. This program is used to enhance and strengthen local

emergency preparedness, and to work with our local partners to help keep Canadians safe.

All levels of government are working together to improve our nation's readiness. This week demonstrates that emergency preparedness is a shared responsibility. I encourage all Canadians to take time during emergency preparedness week to make a plan and prepare an emergency kit. Emergencies can happen anytime, anywhere. Being prepared can make a world of difference.

* * *

● (1410)

REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, new regulations affecting the real estate industry take effect this June 23 with regard to anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist financing.

Realtors have consistently supported the federal government's efforts to monitor, document and report known suspicious and illegal activity, and have been meeting regularly with officials to develop clear implementation protocols for the new requirements.

However, it would seem that neither the government, the industry, nor the public is prepared for the June implementation deadline. There are still huge loopholes in the legislation, and interpretations and guidelines remain incomplete.

The new rules would force salespeople into a law enforcement role. The industry needs time to prepare in order to partner with government in combating criminal activity. Realtors are further asking the government to initiate a campaign to educate the general public.

Will the government act or will it again demonstrate its incompetence?

* * *

[Translation]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Liberals have missed a perfect opportunity to keep quiet. Recently, the former executive director of the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party of Canada was arrested and charged with fraud. The old sponsorship scandal ghosts continue to haunt them and remind us of that party's dubious ethical practices.

However, the Liberals keep spewing invective and pretending that they are indignant at the Conservative government's actions. They are trying to teach us all a lesson, but they seem to have forgotten that they wasted Canadian taxpayers' money on bogus contracts and partisan advertising. What happened to the \$40 million that came from Canadian taxpayers' wallets?

Statements by Members

The official opposition is having a hard time hiding its inaction and its many scandals. The Liberals are just sitting on their hands, while we are taking vigorous, transparent action on behalf of all of the people of Canada.

* * *

[English]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, another day and another thousand jobs gone from the forestry industry on Vancouver Island.

It is obvious that the forestry industry is in crisis and the federal government's response is silence. Employment insurance benefits are being exhausted and this government's response, again, is silence.

No more silence. It is time for action. Action that will ensure workers and families get the support they need, action for communities that are being devastated, and action for an industry that has been the lifeblood of Vancouver Island for decades.

This is not about partisanship. It is about people's lives. It is about communities and an industry in crisis. When will this government act?

* * *

MARINE ATLANTIC

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to announce to this House, and to every Canadian veteran as well as every member of the Canadian armed forces, that Marine Atlantic will be offering free, unlimited travel to and from Newfoundland for an extended period of time during the summer of 2009.

For several weeks, I have been working to have Marine Atlantic, a federally-owned crown transportation company, offer our veterans and soldiers the same benefits being offered to them by VIA Rail this summer.

VIA Rail is providing free, unlimited travel to every veteran and all military personnel for the entire month of July, plus 50% off the ticket price for up to five of their immediate family members. Bravo, VIA Rail. Regrettably, VIA Rail does not extend into Newfoundland, but Marine Atlantic does.

As a result of my efforts, the acting president and CEO confirmed to me Marine Atlantic's intention to act on my request and to offer a similar gesture of thanks to our soldiers and veterans in 2009, when proper planning and promotion can occur.

I made this announcement yesterday in the province and now announce it to all Canadians through this House.

* * *

[Translation]

OMAR KHADR

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, some students from my riding, Joliette, and a number of human rights advocates met on Parliament Hill today to call on the government to bring Omar Khadr back to Canada. These young people from my riding

came to see me and gave me some one thousand post cards, all calling for this child soldier, who has been wrongfully accused of war crimes, to be brought back to Canada.

These young people feel that Omar Khadr's rights have never been recognized, that he has been subjected to numerous interrogations without the benefit of legal counsel and that there has been no investigation into the allegations of the torture and mistreatment he has endured.

Despite the many requests made by Amnesty International, those of many advocates for Omar Khadr's repatriation and those of the Bloc Québécois, this government refuses to listen. That is why students from the Polyvalente Thérèse-Martin in Joliette are reaching out and calling for Omar Khadr to be brought back to Canada.

I would like to personally commend the initiative of the students and their teacher, Marcel Lacroix, as they demonstrate a social conscience that this government clearly lacks.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

BURMA

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even before the terrible cyclone, there was a huge humanitarian crisis brewing on the Thai-Burma border. Shortly, 140,000 refugees, including thousands of children, the elderly, and pregnant women, could be facing malnutrition, if not starvation.

The Thai-Burma border consortium, through CIDA and Inter Pares, delivers food rations to those Burmese refugees.

However, since I visited those refugees in January, rice prices have tripled and there is a \$6 million shortfall. People will have to be cut from the 2,000 calories a day needed to survive to less than 1,000 calories. Their diet of rice, beans, fishpaste, oil, salt, sugar and flour will have to be reduced to just rice and salt.

Could members imagine going home every day and at every meal eating only rice and salt, and half enough, at that?

Canadians, it would be shameful if we stood by and let this disaster occur. CIDA needs to give an extra \$1 million each year to inspire other donor countries and prevent a humanitarian disaster.

For Prime Minister in exile Sein Win, who is in Ottawa today, we ask that the Canadian government please act.

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to send the following message to the Liberal leader.

My constituents in Kelowna—Lake Country are not interested in his alleged fiscal plan. We do not need his higher gas tax nor his massive hikes to the GST. We sure do not need the \$63 billion in deficit spending that would pile on that national debt.

Oral Questions

Fortunately, we have what we need: a government that believes that taxpayer money should be used to provide the programs and services that will benefit Canadians; a government that believes in providing nearly \$200 billion in tax relief that will help families meet the challenges of rising prices and stimulate the economy; and, further, a government that cares about the next generation and believes it has a responsibility to pay down Canada's national debt.

That is the kind of prudent fiscal plan Canadians want and need.

As for the Liberal tax and spend plan, sorry but hard-working Canadians just cannot afford it.

* * *

[Translation]

SISTER GERMAINE BELLES-ISLES

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, today, May 6, 2008, Sister Germaine Belles-Isles of the Ursuline community in Rimouski celebrates her 107th birthday. The most senior member of the congregation in Quebec, Sister Belles-Isles is known for her vitality and cordiality. She is an active member of her community and often its heart and soul.

Sister Belles-Isles' memories span an entire century, making her invaluable to her community and richly deserving of the tributes and affection she receives.

I pay tribute to her dedication and hope she will continue to brighten her companions' days.

I thank her for devoting her life to helping, guiding and advising the people around her.

I wish her many more years of shared joy and happiness.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister of the most secretive government in our history misled the House once again. He twisted the words of Professor Roberts to justify his decision to kill the CAIRS registry.

What Professor Roberts said yesterday was that he always wanted to “make the entire thing publicly accessible”.

Will the Prime Minister admit that he misled the House and restore the registry?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the registry, as brought in by the previous government, was to centralize and control access to information calls. In fact, in 1997 there was an article in *Canadian Business Technology* where Mitchell Sharp virtually admitted that.

On the contrary, what this government has done is it has opened up access to information. Atomic Energy of Canada, the Canada Post Corporation, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Export

Development Corporation, the National Arts Centre, VIA Rail, the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation and about 60 other organizations are all subject to access to information, organizations that the Liberals wanted to keep in the dark.

• (1420)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was not only Professor Roberts who criticized the government for killing the registry. Everyone has, including the deputy information commissioner who said, “We told the government it was not a good idea”.

Will the Prime Minister reinstate the CAIRS registry or will he attack the Information Commissioner as he has attacked the Elections Commissioner and anyone else who contradicts him?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals had a purpose for the registry.

[Translation]

The objective was to centralize and control access to information. This government's objective is quite the opposite. Thanks to our efforts, more than 70 federal institutions now fall under the Access to Information Act, including Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd., Canada Post Corporation, Export Development Canada and the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation. It was the Liberal Party that was opposed to access to information.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, still more secrets and cover-ups. This Prime Minister wants to censor communications between independent entities and the public. It is eliminating the Military Police Complaints Commission. It is handcuffing parliamentary committees and hiding scientific reports. Now it wants to prevent the public from finding out about access to information requests filed with the government.

Why is the Prime Minister acting this way? Is he obsessed with secrecy, afraid of transparency or both?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is our party that increased access to information contrary to what the Liberal Party of Canada wanted to do.

[English]

I must say that this is a perfect example of the difference in philosophy.

When it came to crime, instead of fighting crime, the Liberals created a centralized gun registry, whose costs were running out of control, rather than creating a centralized access to information registry, whose costs also were running out of control.

This government instead just opened up access to information.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no government that I can think of has done more to centralize and control information than the present one.

The present government blacks out its own human rights reports. It muzzles scientific experts. It withholds information on detainee transfers in Afghanistan and it tries to control independent officers of Parliament. Now it has shut a database used by Canadians to seek information about their government.

Oral Questions

This is a consistent story of suppression and secrecy. Will the Prime Minister reverse—

The Speaker: The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the House how the Liberal scam worked in respect of CAIRS.

If anyone made a request that was considered sensitive, the request was shipped to the appropriate Liberal minister. At that point, the Liberal minister would manage, control or delay the request. That was the purpose of the system.

The Liberals had a pretty convenient system but it is not one this government will continue with.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have been in office for two and a half hours—years. I wish—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore has the floor and everyone wants to hear the question.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, either way, it feels like a lifetime.

[*Translation*]

Not only is the government refusing to give Canadians access to information but furthermore it is not consulting the Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada.

Why did it refuse to consult the Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada before deciding to eliminate the database?

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member does not need to take my word for it but he should take Mitchell Sharp's word for it.

When the former minister, David Collenette, resigned in October after an access to information turned up a letter he had written that breached cabinet ethic guidelines, Mr. Sharp said:

With the CAIR system, any request involving a minister's conduct is shipped to the PM's desk.... [So Mr.] Chretien was able to consult...decide upon Collenette's fate and choose the successor—all before the request was filled and the media feeding frenzy began.

The Liberal system was all about controlling information.

* * *

● (1425)

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL AID

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the current death toll from the cyclone in Burma is now over 20,000 and 41,000 people are missing. A number of countries, including Canada, have offered their help. The Burmese military junta has said it is prepared to allow emergency aid to enter, but under certain conditions, including obtaining a visa. We suspect that this very junta has done nothing to prevent such a humanitarian disaster.

Under the circumstances, how does the Prime Minister intend to ensure that aid will get to the local population affected by the cyclone?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, the Government of Canada and the people of Canada wish to send their condolences to the families and friends of those who have died in Burma.

The minister responsible for CIDA has already announced significant Canadian aid. We will work through international organizations to ensure that this aid is delivered to the families and people affected in Burma.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is referring to the Minister of International Cooperation who said yesterday that the United Nations had obtained permission from the military junta to allow humanitarian workers to enter the country. Nothing could be further from the truth, since a number of UN agencies are still waiting for the military junta to allow them to enter the country.

How will the Prime Minister ensure that Canadian humanitarian aid will not end up in the hands of the Burmese military junta?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will work through international organizations. Obviously, we are concerned by the reaction and position of the Burmese government. We will work with our international allies to encourage the Burmese government and to pressure that government to allow aid to get to its people.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, faced with a humanitarian crisis in which more than 20,000 people have died and over 40,000 have disappeared, the junta has postponed the referendum by two weeks in the worst hit areas, but the rest of the country is to go to the polls on Saturday. The opposition is calling for the referendum to be postponed everywhere.

Instead of accepting the junta's empty promises, does the Prime Minister not think that the humanitarian and political situation is serious enough for him to recommend that the UN Security Council get involved?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that both the humanitarian situation and the political situation in Burma are very serious. That is why we have imposed the strictest sanctions in the world against the Burmese regime, that horrible military junta. What we want is to exert pressure. That is what is needed, and that is what we have done.

We have imposed sanctions that are even tougher than those imposed by France, the United States, England and Switzerland. We are proud of those measures, and we hope that the Burmese government can understand the situation and act in the best interests of the Burmese people.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the embargo imposed by the government to prohibit Canadian companies from doing business with Burma was just smoke and mirrors. The Department of International Trade readily admits that Canada is powerless to enforce this embargo.

Oral Questions

Does the Prime Minister plan to take the same lax approach to ensuring that the humanitarian aid reaches the people affected by the disaster?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like all Canadians, I hope that the Burmese regime will open its doors to the international community, the UN and countries that want to help the people of Burma. To that end, we must exert pressure on that regime, as Dr. Win, the prime minister of Burma's government in exile, said yesterday at the press conference. Referring to the economic sanctions we have imposed on Burma, he said that Canada was taking the right approach and that he hoped other countries would follow Canada's example.

That is what we are trying to do. Canada is a leader in promoting human rights, and we will continue to demonstrate leadership in this area.

* * *

• (1430)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the gap between the rich and the rest is widening, and the Auditor General has found that the Conservatives are causing irreparable harm to aboriginal children. Because of limited financial support from the Conservatives and the Liberals before them, aboriginal children are taken from their homes repeatedly and more often than elsewhere. This is devastating for these families.

Does the Prime Minister realize that inaction is not an option for these aboriginal children?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Actually, Mr. Speaker, the government is trying to fix the problems in these services. That is why we invested approximately \$450 million in these services in 2006 and 2007. We created a new model in partnership with the Alberta government, and this year we have added another \$43 million.

I am disappointed that the New Democratic Party voted against this significant funding.

[*English*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a good thing that the Prime Minister was not able to get his spin control on the Auditor General's communications department, because her report shows that the lack of federal funding is causing irreparable damage to aboriginal kids and to their families. They are six times to eight times more often taken out of their homes as a result of inadequate financial support for home care and home support. What kind of life is that for these families?

The choices have been made. Whether it was in Attawapiskat or in Kashechewan, we cannot trust this government. Corporate tax giveaways instead of helping—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, the government is aware of the challenges in these services. I just quoted that in 2006-07, \$450 million was invested in these services. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development signed a new model with the Government of

Alberta that we are taking now across the country to improve these services. We added an additional \$43 million this year, but once again, all the NDP did was complain and vote against this funding for aboriginal people.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ELECTIONS CANADA

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite the role he played in Quebec during the election campaign, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities is still playing innocent.

Some candidates, like the member for Beauport—Limoilou, were forced to accept a transfer to their campaign account—and then transfer out again—some \$50,000, but the minister himself transferred only \$5,000. That is \$50,000 compared to \$5,000.

Given this difference in price for the same advertising, how can the Conservatives claim that the purpose of their scheme was not to circumvent the Elections Act?

[*English*]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us quote the return of the member for Don Valley West to Elections Canada. On July 9, 2004 there was a transfer from the Liberal Party to the member for Don Valley West's local campaign for \$5,000. On July 15, 2004, one week later, there was a transfer from the member for Don Valley West's local campaign to the Liberal Party for \$5,000. That is \$5,000 in and \$5,000 out. In, out, where is Elections Canada?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Elections Canada and the Federal Court have already ruled. They found that these instances were not relevant. An email sent December 19, 2005, confirms that the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and three organizers carefully chose the ridings in Quebec. They apparently chose these ridings even before the candidates had been selected. The Minister of Transport himself was responsible for Quebec candidates.

Will the Prime Minister tell his minister, who is sitting right next to him, to make public his emails and any other doings concerning—

• (1435)

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of Treasury Board.

[*English*]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about Yvan Corriveau, the Liberal candidate in Mégantic—L'Érable. On January 24, 2006, there was a transfer from the Liberal Party to Mr. Corriveau's local campaign for \$4,950. On January 24, the same day, there was a transfer from Mr. Corriveau's local campaign to the Liberal Party for \$4,950. That is \$4,950 in and \$4,950 out. In, out, where is Elections Canada?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' story was the same in British Columbia: unsuccessful candidates booking disproportionate amounts, illegally filing claims for bills they did not pay and ads they knew nothing about.

Losing candidates in Vancouver East and Vancouver Kingsway were told to book \$30,000 a piece, while the public safety minister only had to pitch in \$10,000.

Since those who lost are not here to answer questions, could the public safety minister tell the House if he will stop stonewalling the RCMP and hand over all the documents pertaining to these ad buys?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, or we could talk about Aileen Carroll, the Liberal candidate in Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford. On July 26, 2004, there was a transfer from the Liberal Party to Aileen Carroll's local campaign for \$5,000. On August 6, 10 days later, there was a transfer from Aileen Carroll's local campaign to the Liberal Party for \$5,000. That is \$5,000 in and \$5,000 out. In, out, where is Elections Canada?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker,—

Some hon. members: More, more!

The Speaker: Order. The Chair has already recognized the hon. member for Vancouver South. He has the floor. We will hear more, but we will have to have some order so we can hear.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Mr. Speaker, Elections Canada is hot on the Conservatives' heels. What the parliamentary secretary does not seem to understand is that it is perfectly legal for a party to transfer funds to a candidate to pay for his or her own local expenses. It is another thing to hide national expenses—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Vancouver South has the floor.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Mr. Speaker, it is another thing to hide national expenses on local books and order candidates to hit the taxpayers up for a rebate on a bill they never paid, on an expense they never incurred. That is called fraud.

Now that they have been caught, why do they not admit they committed elections fraud in the last election?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is beginning to make our case to Elections Canada.

The Liberals have now conceded that it is perfectly legal for national parties to transfer money to local campaigns, for local campaigns to purchase services from the national campaign, for national content to appear in local advertising and for local advertising in some cases to be broadcast outside of the constituency in which it is paid for, because of course radio signals do not stop at constituency borders.

With the Liberals having admitted all of that, what is it in essence that they accuse us of having done?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, despite what the Minister of

Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, who was the political lieutenant for Quebec during the last election, has told us, he was very aware of how advertising expenses were distributed among various Conservative candidates. The party was rerouting large invoices to candidates who had room to manoeuvre.

Does that not explain why the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities was able to put only \$6,100 into the strategy while two other Conservative candidates in the Outaouais each put in \$45,000?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to Elections Canada, on May 17, 2006, the Bloc transferred \$17,800 to its candidate in Pontiac, the very riding the hon. member talked about. On May 25, a week later, the candidate transferred \$17,700 back. So \$17,000 went in, and \$17,000 went back out.

When did the father of the in and out method find out about that?

• (1440)

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member that the candidate for Pontiac was reimbursed. Elections Canada agreed to that method, but it did not agree to the Conservatives' scheme. It is easy to see that the ministers from Quebec are afraid of defending their honour.

My question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, the member for Beauport—Limoilou. Can she tell us if the same logic applied when she paid \$37,000 for advertising for the Minister of Canadian Heritage when she herself spent—

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board.

M. Pierre Poilievre (secrétaire parlementaire du président du Conseil du Trésor, PCC): Mr. Speaker, in December 2001, the Bloc whip had this to say to *Le Soleil*:

Advertising campaigns are national expenses, just like planes and buses made available to reporters. It is very expensive. The Bloc advances the money, but technically, the candidates are each responsible for their share.

The Bloc agrees that purely national expenses, such as planes, were paid for by Bloc candidates. That is why we call the Bloc leader the father of the in and out method.

* * *

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the devastation continues in the manufacturing sector. In my riding, Shermag and Sherwood-Drolet have obtained creditor protection. Difficult market conditions, strong competition and the strong dollar are behind this decision. This government is sticking with its laissez-faire approach despite the crisis in the manufacturing sector.

When will the Minister of Industry realize that tax cuts are of no help to the manufacturing sector, which is not turning a profit and where many owners are faced with bankruptcy?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I might point out for the benefit of the hon. member that just last week I was in Quebec and I find a stark contrast between the feelings of the hon. member and what industry and workers in Quebec are actually feeling.

In the pharmaceutical industry and the aerospace industry things are going very well. That, at the end of the day, is because this government moved early to stimulate the economy, cutting the GST, reducing income tax, and it has worked. Our economy is strong. It is stronger than that of our American neighbours. We will continue to succeed in this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister should get out more.

With more than 150,000 jobs lost in the manufacturing sector over five years, the Conservatives must understand that targeted measures for troubled companies are necessary.

Does the government realize that systematically refusing to implement the safeguards in trade agreements and legislation—as the United States and Europe are doing—is harmful to companies such as Shermag and Sherwood-Drolet?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear. After 18 years in Ottawa, more than 6,000 days of eternal opposition, more than 4,000 questions posed in the House, five election campaigns, four platforms and more than 700 empty promises, it is clear that the Bloc is batting zero.

* * *

*[English]***ETHICS**

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister made a budget decision in favour of private schools. Can he not acknowledge that holding a financial interest in private schools creates a potential conflict of interest when he was the one in charge of making those scholarships tax free?

Does he, or did he or any member of his family have a financial interest in a private school, and if so, did he fully recuse himself from this file?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has been a long-time active supporter of people with developmental disabilities. He does not own a school. The school in question does not even offer scholarships.

What is outrageous is that a seasoned political parliamentary veteran would do fact checking on the floor of the House of Commons after the drive-by smear. It is absolutely disgraceful.

● (1445)

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the apology we need is from the finance minister to the one million income trust investors whose savings were devastated by that Prime Minister's broken promise.

This issue is not about special needs Canadians. All parliamentarians want to help special needs Canadians. This issue is about conflict of interest rules. These rules are in place for very good reasons. Canadians have every right to know if the finance minister has followed these rules to the letter. Has he?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thank goodness that in this country we have people like the Minister of Finance who are interested in helping people with developmental disabilities. The Minister of Finance has made a huge contribution in supporting people with developmental disabilities throughout his entire life.

What is outrageous is that the member opposite would besmirch not only the Minister of Finance and not only his wife, but his children. It is absolutely disgraceful. He should stand in his place and apologize. Frankly, I am starting to think he should resign himself.

* * *

*[Translation]***MONTREAL INTERNATIONAL**

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec has been getting his knife out and draining the lifeblood of not-for-profit organizations, including Montreal International, which does a tremendous job of attracting investment to build the Quebec economy. The minister says it is because he wants so-called projects that produce specific, measurable results but he gets his calculator out for Montreal International.

En 2007, the government invested \$2 million that in return generated some \$670 million. He should put that into his calculator and tell us whether it is measurable and profitable enough for him.

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was the previous government that allowed a situation to develop that was very seriously limiting the Economic Development Agency of Canada's room to manoeuvre. When that government agreed to pay the constantly rising operating costs of a host of organizations, it put the agency in a straitjacket.

We are going to continue supporting various economic organizations, but on a selective basis. We will continue to help both Montreal and the other regions of Quebec.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have some more figures for the cheapskate. Over the last 10 years, the federal government has given Montreal International \$66 million and the return on that investment has been nearly \$6 billion. For his information, a billion has three more zeros than a million. That means that the economic spin-offs of this investment were 100 times greater.

This decision is totally unjustifiable financially and on the basis of the figures. Was this stupid decision made strictly for ideological reasons?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, out of a budget of \$200 million, at least \$50 million went to the operating costs of various organizations. We are going to redirect these moneys toward specific projects in all regions of Quebec, including Montreal. The moneys that are redirected will remain in the same region.

I will provide an example. Recently, the Montreal Grand Prix appealed to us for an important project to ensure its survival. Using moneys that we had freed up, we were able to give a positive response to the Montreal Grand Prix.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, media reports on the research into the supervised injection site in Vancouver indicate that it has been beneficial. Members of the House have also suggested that this government has shied away from research.

Can the Minister of Health assure the House that he will take all available information into account as he makes his decision on the exemption of section 56 for Insite?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has sought and commissioned further research in order to make an informed decision on this particular exemption. In fact, the report of the expert advisory committee was posted on the Health Canada website this past April 11. I encourage all Canadians who are interested to visit our website at HealthCanada.ca and read the report for themselves.

The report says the research is mixed. More than 95% of injections occur outside Insite and less than 10% of addicts used Insite for all of their injections. I am sure Canadians would be interested in reading this information. I can assure the House that I will take all relevant and available information—

●(1450)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Windsor West.

* * *

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, air travel in Canada is getting riskier, not safer. Recent crashes of business aircraft are a cause for major concern.

The Conservatives are allowing private aircraft to have virtually limitless exposure in the skies and the Auditor General says the Liberals' so-called additional layer of security, the safety management system, is not working.

Will the minister admit that the Canadian Business Aviation Association, which is supposed to provide planned and structured oversight of private operators, simply is not doing its job? Will the minister do his job to protect air passengers in this country?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that the

business aviation community is a very safe and responsible segment of Canada's aviation industry.

Back in 2003, the previous government determined to confide in the Business Aviation Association the requirements to be able to pursue the safety regulations. In that purview, we evaluated the role that had been done. We brought in corrections. We are going to continue to bring in corrections as need be.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Quite the contrary, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General does not agree with him and said that Transport Canada was negligent when it implemented the aircraft safety system.

With the number of inspectors lower than ever, the Conservatives want airlines to take care of safety themselves. This minister failed in the implementation of a safety system for business aircraft. This has resulted in deaths and fatal crashes.

Why does he want ordinary Canadians to pay for this irresponsible risk with their lives?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as usual, members of the NDP are once again confusing two issues. The first issue concerns private operators. The second issue is the safety management system. It is a supplement to the regulations that enhances the safety of Canadians. I would really like to see the NDP support the government in its endeavour to implement this system.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in July 2006 the Minister of International Trade said he supported Vancouver's safe injection site and promised to lobby the Minister of Health to expand the program.

Obviously impressed by the research, the minister said:

—I intend to be an advocate within the federal government, once I have completed my due diligence on the research.

It has been two years. Is the minister defending Insite at the cabinet table or has he obediently succumbed to the Prime Minister's muzzle, like most of his other colleagues?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue. Last week the government announced \$111 million for treatment and prevention services because we believe that no individual in Canada should be denied the opportunity to get out of an addiction and to get off the terrible spiral that these drugs cause.

That is our commitment to the people of Canada. If the hon. member cannot get off her high horse and recognize that, then shame on her.

Oral Questions

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has always been ideologically opposed to the harm reduction provided at Insite, and the health minister continues to call for more research.

Meanwhile, 22 international researchers have validated the Insite results. So has the premier of British Columbia. So has the mayor of Vancouver. So has the Vancouver police department. Why will the Prime Minister not do so?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the expert advisory committee has reported. It is public information. It is available at HealthCanada.ca.

I invite Canadians to read it for themselves. They will see that the research is indeed mixed on this issue and that there are certain issues that have not been resolved by injections at Insite. There are other things that the site does particularly well. These are all things that will be taken into account in due course.

* * *

• (1455)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in one breath the Prime Minister acknowledges the seriousness of the 500 waterfowl that perished in a toxic pond in Alberta's oil sands, but his actions do not back up his words. This incident requires more than the government simply looking into it.

Given that these 500 ducks represent only a fraction of the wildlife that perishes each year near the oil sands, will Syncrude face charges under the migratory birds act?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member opposite that on the day I was asked to be Minister of the Environment the Prime Minister underlined the importance of environmental enforcement. He backed up that commitment to enforcement by providing a substantial amount of new funding.

This is a very serious issue. We have spoken out strongly on this issue. It will not be tolerated. An investigation is proceeding. Anyone who breaks the law will be held fully accountable.

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government refuses to take any action and denies the very seriousness of this catastrophe. The Prime Minister has the legislative means at his disposal, not only under the Migratory Birds Convention Act, but also under the Fisheries Act.

If this is as serious as the Prime Minister claims, will he use his authority and take the necessary measures? What is he waiting for?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are waiting for the results of an investigation. I say to the member opposite, who is a former minister in this House, that maybe the way the Liberal government operated, its ministers, its elected officials, could make decisions on whether prosecutions were undertaken. That is not the way our legal system works.

We are committed to taking action in this area. Simply put, what happened in northern Alberta is unacceptable. There is a full and formal investigation going on. If anyone has broken the law, they will be held fully accountable for these disgraceful actions.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT USER FEES

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the report of the Auditor General on fees imposed by departments confirms that these fees are imposed arbitrarily. The Auditor General finds that many fees do not correspond to the real value of the services provided and that a number of these fees have not been reviewed in a long time.

Given the fact that the federal government collects close to \$2 billion in all sorts of fees, and that Quebecers feel as though they are not getting what they are paying for, does the government intend to launch a public consultation on its user fee policy as soon as possible?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. I want to make sure that the House understands that this Conservative government, unlike the Liberals, who cannot stay away from grabbing the money of Canadians, is committed to ensuring value to Canadians and fairness to fee payers. Our government has directed our officials to review how the User Fees Act is applied and interpreted and expects to have a report completed by the fall.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC CITY ARMOURY

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it has been a month since the fire at the Quebec City Armoury and the federal government is showing a total lack of transparency. Journalists are unable to get any information on the progress of the investigation, Quebec City is being kept in the dark and our questions remain unanswered. No leadership, no will, no decision, no deadline: that is the federal government's record on this matter.

The festivities for the 400th anniversary of Quebec City are just two months away. Does the minister responsible for the region of Quebec City not realize that the decision to do something with the site cannot wait—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

Oral Questions

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not true. We cannot estimate the total cost of rebuilding the armoury until we know the extent of the damage caused by the fire. I can assure the House that this issue is a priority for the government and that I am working very closely with the minister of patronage.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Peter MacKay: I mean, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages. I will continue to work on this file.

* * *

• (1500)

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the agriculture committee passed a motion calling on the government to immediately implement an exit strategy for tobacco farmers. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration called the motion a cheap political trick. Farmers in her riding disagree.

The motion is the will of the committee. These farmers do not need more talk or a task force. They need real help and they need it fast. Yes or no, will the Minister of Agriculture follow the clear, expressed will of the committee?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals had shown that enthusiasm for tobacco farmers over the last 13 years, they would not be having that problem today. It was 13 years of neglect that brought us to this point. We continue to work with the parties affected.

The stunt they pulled at the committee the other day was just that. It was non-binding.

They have a supply day tomorrow. Will they be talking about tobacco on that supply day? No, they will not.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when funding disputes occur between the federal and provincial governments regarding the medical services for children on first nations reserves, the people most affected, the families and the children living on the reserve, are far too often left without the vital health services they need.

Recently we learned about a developing situation on the Norway House Cree First Nation. The financial resources of the community had run dry and medical care for the community's most vulnerable was in jeopardy.

Would the Minister of Health please update this House on what action he has taken to resolve this matter?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of Indian Affairs,

and I announced that the federal government will continue to fund the medical services at Norway House First Nations during the final negotiations with the Province of Manitoba.

Because of this government's actions, the days where children and families are left in the lurch are over. Canadians support us because when this government makes a promise, as we did last December when we voted in favour of Jordan's principle, we get the job done.

This is one more example of the Conservative government delivering for Canadians and delivering for first nations Canadians.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today's economy is showing the importance of a mobile workforce. Many tradespeople are out of work in one area of the country while another area is desperately in need of those workers.

For 30 years, the building trades have been lobbying successive governments for changes to tax policy that would allow them to move with fewer economic restrictions. For 30 years, they have been receiving empty promises.

Will the Minister of Finance abandon his predecessor's empty rhetoric and commit today to act on Bill C-390?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question of substance.

We all recognize the importance of more Canadians engaging in the skilled trades in Canada. As a government, we have been a strong advocate of encouraging involvement in the trades. In fact, we have introduced a series of tax measures, including the tradesperson's tools deduction and the apprenticeship job creation tax credit.

We will consider all such constructive proposals, like the one the hon. member brings forth, as part of the budget development process.

* * *

TEMPORARY WORKERS

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is addicted to importing cheap temporary labour. These workers are open to exploitation and abuse.

Today the Auditor General reported inhumane conditions at deportation centres. People should not be packed 10 people to a cell, sleeping on floors, with no place to sit. Many of them, in fact, are skilled labourers.

When will the government curb the addiction to temporary foreign workers and put family reunification first, not deportation?

Points of Order

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the recommendations that have been brought forward are very important ones. They are being looked at in a very serious way. As a matter of fact, some are already in the stages of being implemented. We appreciate this input.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Dr. Sein Win.

Dr. Win accepted yesterday, on behalf of his cousin, Aung San Suu Kyi, a certificate of honorary Canadian citizenship, further to the motion adopted by the House on October 17, 2007, for her ongoing work promoting peace, human rights and democracy in Burma.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

• (1505)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during question period, the Minister of National Defence made reference to a new cabinet position, the minister of patronage. He was speaking in the other official language so I simply want to clarify this point in English.

Could he please identify which of his colleagues he was referring to as the minister of patronage or did he in fact have all of them in mind?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the member opposite on his impeccable command of the second official language. I did refer accidentally to the minister of “patrimoine” and, as we all know, that is the French word for “heritage”. I apologize for not keeping the standard of the member for Wascana and I will try in the future to improve upon my language.

The Speaker: I must say that I thought the minister had slipped on that one.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-5—NUCLEAR LIABILITY AND COMPENSATION ACT—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Order, please. I am now ready to rule on the point of order raised by the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board regarding the report stage motions standing on the notice paper for Bill C-5.

Bill C-5 would establish a liability regime applicable in the event of a nuclear incident that makes operators of nuclear installations entirely liable for damages up to a maximum of \$650 million. Operators are required to maintain financial security equal to the financial liability of \$650 million. The security is in the form of

insurance from an approved insurer but may also, by agreement with the minister, be in alternative form. The risk insured by an approved insurer can be reinsured by the federal government through a special account called the nuclear liability reinsurance account.

The hon. parliamentary secretary argued that Motions Nos. 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 could have been moved in committee and therefore should not be selected by the Speaker. I am in agreement that Motion No. 10 could have been moved in committee and accordingly, as indicated in the ruling delivered yesterday, I have not selected it for debate.

However, the hon. parliamentary secretary went on to argue that these same motions, all of them deletions, infringe upon the royal recommendation that accompanies the bill. It should be noted that this is a highly unusual argument. It is a long-standing practice that motions to delete clauses are normally admissible and selected at report stage.

In this case, however, as the usual report stage was about to be delivered regarding the selection from the 21 motions in amendment, 19 of them deletions, concerns were raised that some deletions provoked concerns relative to the royal recommendation. Such requirements are rarely associated with motions to delete clauses so I ask for the House's indulgence as I explain the conclusions I have reached in this matter.

[Translation]

Motion No. 1 is a motion to delete clause 21. Motions of this type cannot be proposed in committee but are normally selected at the report stage.

Motions Nos. 2, 3, 4, 8, 11, 12 and 16 are consequential to Motion No. 1. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* at page 666 states:

—a motion in amendment to delete a clause from a bill has always been considered by the Chair to be in order, even if such a motion would alter or go against the principle of the bill as approved at second reading.

[English]

However, motions submitted at report stage still need to meet the requirements of Standing Order 79(1) with respect to the need for a royal recommendation.

Motion No. 1 proposes to delete clause 21, which sets the liability limit of \$650 million. The hon. parliamentary secretary has argued that deleting this clause would cause the potential liability on agents of the Crown, such as Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, to be increased. He goes on to argue that the deletion of clause 21 without the deletion of clause 26 would increase the liability on the government and would infringe on the financial initiative of the Crown.

The Chair is not persuaded by the arguments presented that there is an infringement on the conditions and qualifications set out in the royal recommendation attached to the bill. That said, however, I take the point that the deletion of clause 21 and of clause 26 are inextricably linked.

The Chair cannot agree that Motion No. 1, which would delete clause 21, is not admissible. Accordingly, I have maintained the original decision to select it to go forward for debate and decision. However, in recognition of the link between Motion No. 1 and Motion No. 5 which would delete clause 26, I have amended the voting pattern so that a vote on Motion No. 1 will be applied to Motion No. 5 which would delete clause 26, as well as the several consequential motions enumerated in the original decision delivered yesterday by the Deputy Speaker.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has also argued that Motions Nos. 6, 7 and 9, if adopted, would have the effect of increasing the tribunal's operating costs. The Chair believes that, with regard to Motions Nos. 7 and 9, such increases, if any, would be provided for through the usual appropriations secured through the main or supplementary estimates. These two motions shall therefore remain before the House.

Motion No. 6 proposes to delete clause 30 which would establish time limits on bringing claims for compensation. Motion No. 21 is consequential to Motion No. 6. The Chair is not of the view that doing away with these time limits infringes on the royal recommendation attached to the bill.

The revised voting pattern is available at the table. I thank hon. members for their patience in allowing me to consider the important matters raised by the hon. parliamentary secretary.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1510)

[*English*]

NUCLEAR LIABILITY AND COMPENSATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-5, An Act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: Before question period, the hon. member for Victoria had concluded her remarks and there are five minutes remaining for questions and comments consequent upon those remarks. I therefore call for questions and comments.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Ottawa South.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the ongoing debate on Bill C-5. It speaks to civil liability and compensation for damage in case we ever had a nuclear incident in our country.

The difficulty with addressing the bill in isolation is that I think for most Canadians, it has to be seen in the context of what has happened with the government with respect to the nuclear industry at large over the past roughly two and half years since it assumed power.

It is true that the bill is supported by the official opposition. I congratulate my colleague, the member for Mississauga—Erindale, the official opposition critic for natural resources, who has helped to stickhandle some of the more delicate questions around levels of compensation and standards for insurance, for example, that find

Government Orders

themselves in the bill, and for that I thank him. We will support the bill as it is presently constituted.

However, it is fair to point out for Canadians just what has transpired around the nuclear issue in Canada over the last two and a half years. Let us review what has been happening around the government's performance recently.

The first ground breaking development was when the Prime Minister of Canada stood up in the House of Commons and labelled Linda Keen, who was then the chair of the quasi-judicial Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, a Liberal appointee who he implied was simply doing the bidding of the Liberal Party of Canada by not folding to the pressure being brought to bear on her by the government.

It was quite an astonishing thing, given the fact that the Prime Minister several years ago had promised the Canadian people, in another election campaign, that they should not worry about him assuming power because the senior ranks of the bureaucracy and those who headed up our boards, agencies, commissions and our Supreme Court would "keep him in check". Obviously he was pandering for votes, knowing that his polling was telling him clearly that the Canadian people did not trust his ideological bent and his deepest motives. Now we know on the nuclear front that they have reason and cause to be concerned, despite what is in the bill. C-5.

We can recall that Linda Keen, the former chair of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, appeared before the House in a committee of the whole, with Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. They had been called to the floor of the House for an emergency debate. It surrounded the question of medical isotopes.

We have since discovered that the night before the Minister of Natural Resources's appearance before committee, after Linda Keen denounced the government's condemnation of her rocking the stability of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission as a whole, he fired her in the dark of night, just hours before she was to testify. His parliamentary secretary had pleaded with the committee to allow her to come and to allow for rebuttal, which we approved and agreed upon. However, at 11 o'clock at night, the chief nuclear safety regulator was informed at her home that she was fired.

I am a former governor in council appointee. I was involved in a whole series of appointments of members on my board and I have never ever, in my 25 years as a lawyer, heard anything of this kind. For that matter, nor has the minister. When he came to committee, he was asked to give us one shred of evidence, one ounce of questioning of this officer's performing her duties, doing exactly what her statutory responsibilities compelled her to do. The minister, carrying the line for the Prime Minister, said nothing.

Since then we have asked the minister to tell us, all in the interest of transparency and stability of the nuclear sector in our country, how much money it will cost the country to settle this preposterous lawsuit that the government has to defend because of its reckless conduct. Will it cost us half a million dollars? Will it cost us \$2.5 million?

Government Orders

● (1515)

We know there is a very aggressive wrongful dismissal lawsuit now in the hands of PCO officials, but the government will not tell the Canadian people how much it will cost. It will not tell them because it was so reckless in firing the chief regulator for the nuclear industry. Canadians have a right to be deeply concerned about exactly what the government has done on the nuclear front.

Let us turn to AECL.

The provinces of Ontario, New Brunswick and Quebec have to deal with their nuclear capacity as they seek to meet their energy needs for the future. As one of my colleagues put it earlier today, all of this must be seen in the context of reaching and achieving our climate change greenhouse gas reduction targets.

The Premier of Ontario wrote the Prime Minister, asking him to clarify exactly what he would be doing with Atomic Energy of Canada Limited before the province moved forward with an \$18 billion request for proposals to help deal with its energy needs going forward. There was no response. Is AECL now being compromised in terms of its potential success with such a bid? Of course it is.

This morning the Minister of Natural Resources was at committee. My colleague, the official critic for natural resources, repeatedly asked him exactly what role AECL would be expected to play in Canada. We know there are some 200 new nuclear power plants being built as we speak. There are 126 requests for proposals right now worldwide, which AECL ought to be winning. What was the answer? Nothing.

We asked the Minister of Natural Resources what the Banque Nationale study, which he asked to have conducted, had to say about the future of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. We asked if the government would move to privatize all of AECL. There was no answer. We asked if it would move to privatize part of AECL. There was no answer. We asked if it would infuse it with new public capital, or if no money was left over after the Minister of Finance pulled yet another voodoo economic act at the federal level? Again, there was no answer. We asked if research and development would remain public or if it would remain possibly private. There was no answer.

This is at a time when the province of Ontario has indicated to the Prime Minister that it needs an answer by June, with clarity and certainty of exactly what the federal government will do with Atomic Energy of Canada Limited.

This is not a shell game. This is an important fundamental question about keeping the lights on, keeping our industries humming and providing new forms of energy in an energy mix that Ontario, New Brunswick and Quebec at least want to see addressed by the federal government.

The bill is important because it speaks to core issues around liability, indemnification, insurance coverages and the likes. However, it is very unfortunate because while the bill is being supported by the official opposition, what we are really seeing is complete incoherence on behalf of the government when it comes to taking a position on nuclear energy in our country and the future of

what used to be and what still is arguably one of the world's pre-eminent nuclear companies.

Are we going to sit back and be out-skated by the French government and its partner in the private sector that is supplying now roughly 80% of France's electricity needs? Are we going to sit back and be outmanoeuvred by American nuclear companies? These questions have to be answered, but the government refuses to answer them. It has to come clean and come clean soon.

At the very least, the minister should admit his reckless incompetence in following suit, taking the lead from the Prime Minister, and singling out a top-notch, apolitical, lifetime official who was running the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. He bullied her, although she would not stand down. He dispatched two other ministers to bully her publicly, and she would not stand down. Now we find ourselves faced with a multi-million dollar lawsuit because of the Prime Minister's choice of what I call non-judicious remarks on the floor of the House of Commons.

The minister should apologize for that conduct. In fact, we repeatedly have called for his resignation. At the very least, he has to tell us how much money it will cost the Canadian people to settle the lawsuit caused by the reckless conduct of the Prime Minister.

● (1520)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has raised a very interesting question, about the privatization of AECL, which seems to be under consideration.

Does he not think that Bill C-5 is necessary for such privatization? A company that bought Atomic Energy of Canada would naturally fear that it might be responsible for the production of CANDU reactors and fear that it could, in case of accident, at some time be held accountable. Accordingly, for anyone who wanted to buy the company it is more attractive to have \$650 million in insurance as a first buffer, and the government responsible for the rest.

In addition, I would like to point out that this morning, during the committee meeting, the minister said that he would make a decision this year and all options are on the table. In my opinion, that seems to indicate very clearly that he will privatize it this year.

Does my colleague think it is right that after the government has invested money in Atomic Energy of Canada, it could sell it or hand it over to the private sector just when it becomes profitable?

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I would like to share with him what I heard at the committee this morning from the Minister of Natural Resources.

As the member himself has indicated, it is clear that the minister is trying to hide exactly what the government intends to do. We have no confidence in the government's intentions when it comes to the matter of privatizing this crown corporation—none at all. We know that the government appears to be following its own ideology before obtaining scientific evidence, not to mention economic evidence. We see that in all areas. We have no confidence at all in the minister's promise that there will be an answer within the next year to this very important question.

Government Orders

As I suggested in my remarks, this is very important for New Brunswick and especially for Ontario. The Premier of Ontario wrote to the Prime Minister asking him explain exactly what he intends to do with this crown corporation, before moving forward with a series of contracts worth \$18 billion for construction of nuclear stations in Ontario. We have not had an answer.

Under Bill C-5 there would be new regulations that are necessary, but all of this is being done in a vacuum. We have had no answer about the future of this crown corporation and that concerns us a great deal.

● (1525)

[English]

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the remarks of my hon. colleague, the member for Ottawa South. I sit on the natural resources committee, and we heard from many witnesses during the Chalk River debate. We talked about AECL. One of the things we learned was the Auditor General had done several reports, all pointing to underfunding of AECL over many years, not just the past two years.

I am also concerned about the prospect of the government privatizing AECL. The minister said again today that all options were on the table with the review of AECL, which is ongoing now.

We are talking about amendments to a bill, the nuclear liability act, which states that in the case of a nuclear disaster, there would be a cap on industry at \$650 million. After that amount, it basically puts taxpayers on the hook. People will be calling on the government to ensure that it is liable.

Why would the member for Ottawa South and his party let industry off the hook for the price of \$650 million?

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, first, the question of increasing operator liability from \$75 million to \$650 million puts Canada at par with the liability limits in so many other countries, and it responds to recommendations put forward by Senate committees.

Second, it gives the minister the power to review the liability amount at least every five years, which is reasonable.

It is not as simple as the member puts it here to the House or to Canadians. I understand it is hard for NDP members because they are a very anti-nuclear party, but I would like to know more about how they, for example, can reconcile their climate change and greenhouse gas reduction strategies with the role of nuclear power going forward?

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to say that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of Bill C-5 because we are in favour of safety, and we want to guarantee that people are insured if ever an accident happens. I say "if ever" but, given the law of probabilities, there will be an accident sooner or later. If it is not in Canada, then it will be somewhere else. That would effectively change the entire ideology of developing nuclear plants to generate electricity.

In any case, as I said, we are in favour of the bill because it provides a way to respond to an accident, even a small one. I just spoke about the probability of accidents. There are 60 accidents a

year in Canada's nuclear plants alone. They have always been small contained incidents, but they could become serious accidents.

I am not talking about the tritium that is released, or that has been released. It took years in order to find solutions to limit the release of tritium into the air, which really caused pollution around CANDU plants. A CANDU plant is not a safe plant. The uranium-filled pipes bend over time because they were poorly designed. And when they bend, they can impede the movement of water around them. It is an example of a dangerous but efficient plant.

The minister again mentioned this morning that they are the four most efficient plants in Korea. We are not denying that these plants are efficient; we are just saying that this is a dangerous system. That is one of the reasons why they have been unable to develop the ACR-1000. It poses the same risks of tubes bending and deteriorating prematurely.

In any case, we really do not see why the Minister of Natural Resources is calling it a clean energy. It is clean as long as we do not talk about residue. Radioactive waste is dirty and will remain so for millions of years.

According to the minister, we will soon be recovering nuclear waste and giving it a second life. I would like to point out that France studied this for 15 years and abandoned the research because there was no prospect of success. And yet, we know that France has great faith in nuclear power. France passed the file on to the United States, which is also about to give up because they have not discovered how to deal with nuclear waste that is at an almost uncontrollable temperature. Consequently, this is not a solution that will materialize and we will therefore have a nuclear energy shortage. The A235 and the A239 may perhaps be ready in 35 to 40 years.

Therefore, we support this bill, which will protect existing plants and the people living nearby. However, we do not want this to automatically encourage the development of nuclear power in Canada, especially since Ontario is presently thinking of going that route. What lies east of Ontario, in its prevailing winds? Quebec. If an accident were to occur in Ontario, we would not want the radioactivity to spread to our province. We would not want that at all. Furthermore, Quebecers generally do not support the development of nuclear power.

A few years ago, in 2002, not at the time of a referendum but when there was a movement against trucking MOX, 150 municipalities said no to road transportation of MOX.

What makes them think that it will be easy to truck enriched uranium or heavy water in a few years?

Government Orders

•(1530)

It is going to take an army and the police, before and after, to stop the demonstrators, and all that will cost a fortune. Nuclear power is expensive and cannot meet our needs.

At present, in the whole world, 12% of total electricity is produced by nuclear power. If we are going to be able to meet the needs, the rate would have to be 75% in 2050, which is totally impossible, because countries are not rich enough to pay for nuclear power. Nuclear power is necessarily a way of producing electricity that belongs to the rich. There will also not be enough uranium in the mines to supply all of the nuclear power plants.

Some people argue that this is the only solution that will not cause air pollution. That is absolutely not the case. There are other methods of producing electricity in a safe and sustainable way. I am thinking about deep geothermal energy, at a depth of two or three or four kilometres underground.

In the United States, 25 leading soil scientists participated in a \$400,000 study on this topic. The study shows that deep geothermal energy is undeniably the only way to supply all of the electrical energy that will be needed in 2050. In Canada, the same would be true, because we have the same kind of soil. There are no social consequences, given that these facilities are not obvious and make no noise. Most importantly, there is no danger.

Deep geothermal energy does not need Bill C-5, because there are no accidents possible. At worst, a little pipe might be pierced and a bit of steam might get out. On the other hand, nuclear power will always be a sword of Damocles, always. It is like with a plane: you never know what day the plane will fall. We never know what day the nuclear power plant will blow up, either.

That is why we support Bill C-5. In our opinion, the legislation as it previously stood, which provided for \$75 million of protection, was flatly and plainly inadequate if an accident happened—and they will happen. We do not know how big the problem will be, but there will certainly, and unfortunately, be accidents; it is the law of averages.

Some people will say that \$650 million is not much more. It is a little more, but it is not a huge amount. It is not comparable to the United States, where \$9 to \$11 billion has been set aside. But that is a different system.

Here, we have opted for a system under which the insurance companies would provide this guarantee against nuclear accidents, and they do not want that protection to go above \$650 million. In that regard, the government is right. It is the amount the insurance companies have agreed to commit to. Why are they not prepared to increase that amount? The reason is simple: because accidents can happen. If an accident can happen, why are we building more power stations? We should keep the ones we have and end it there.

I spoke about deep geothermal energy, but let us look at the amount of energy that can be produced just through geothermal heating—the geothermal energy found on the earth's surface. If 200,000 to 250,000 homes were powered this way, the yield would correspond to three times the energy potential of a 600- to 700-megawatt nuclear power plant.

I can see that I am running out of time. I would have liked to have spent all evening talking about nuclear energy, as I find it very interesting.

Because there is probably a very powerful nuclear energy lobby, people think it is the future. We think it is the past, and we think we should not focus on nuclear energy without consulting citizens.

The bill we have before us is interesting. However, why does the bill not state how the waste and residue will be buried? Why does it not state that the public would be consulted before we continue to produce nuclear energy? Furthermore, why did the government not say in this bill that it planned on privatizing the agency responsible for nuclear energy? This privatization would mean that we lose even more control, and that nuclear energy would be left up to the market.

Nuclear energy should not be run by the market. We must think about our health. The government is responsible for protecting the health of its citizens. Nuclear energy cannot protect our health, because there is always an imminent danger of a potential accident.

•(1535)

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member raised a number of issues that require further consultation with the public and with experts. One of them was the potential privatization of AECL. I believe another imbedded in his speech was the issue around a larger energy strategy that looks at renewable and sustainable energy.

I wonder if the member could comment on the elements that he believes need to be present in a consultative process. Perhaps he could comment on where we should be going with renewable and sustainable energy plans for Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question. She has raised a very important point.

There are alternative energies, including active and passive solar, active solar with water, geothermal, wave, run of the river hydroelectricity and any number of technologies that have yet to be developed. We could be using these kinds of energy to meet our consumption needs in order to properly function.

Serious problems are linked to corn ethanol, but ethanol can also be produced from household or industrial waste. That is what Japan is currently planning. A great deal of energy could be harnessed from what we are sending to the landfill.

I will come back to my colleague's question and explore geothermal energy a little further. The temperature of water at a depth of two kilometres in Quebec and Ontario is approximately 100 to 150 degrees Celsius, which can drive steam turbines.

Twenty-seven countries around the world have major power plants that are operating on geothermal energy. Here, we have a layer of granite. Since granite cracks easily, we can divert water, capture it and bring it up to the surface to make electricity continuously, that is, night and day, at all times.

Government Orders

• (1540)

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his speech about nuclear and geothermal energy, a field he knows well and has studied for many years. I believe that geothermal is an alternative to nuclear energy.

I read a document produced by “Sortir du nucléaire”, a French antinuclear coalition. According to the document, over the next 15 years, we will have to invest between \$15 billion and \$20 billion to keep our nuclear power plants running. That will start within 10 or 15 years, because nuclear reactors tend to last for 10 to 15 years.

My colleague suggested we look to geothermal energy. Can he provide some numbers for this alternative energy source? Can he also explain the consequences of nuclear power generation on people's health? Studies have shown that radioactive waste can cause cancer and other human health problems. I would like him to comment on that too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi has a minute to respond.

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I will respond directly: geothermal electricity costs between 2.5¢ and 3¢ per kilowatt hour. Why? Because it is costing less and less to dig the pits since this technology has already been developed to get fuel and oil out of the ground.

This winter in New Zealand, I saw geothermal projects that were 50 years old and have not required any renovation costs, except for consistent maintenance on a few pipes and valves. They have been working day and night for 50 years producing 25 kilowatt hours the whole time. There are absolutely no health risks involved.

However, nuclear energy has a whole host of health risks. Think of the danger of radon to those mining and extracting uranium. People have problems related to radon, which is quite dangerous. Sooner or later, they get lung cancer and die. Radon is odourless and invisible.

There are dangers on many levels when it comes to nuclear energy. There needs to be an in-depth study, as my colleague said—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member.

[*English*]

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Vancouver Island North.

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Speaker for the ruling on the amendments earlier this afternoon.

We are talking about a nuclear liability act that needs to be updated. The amount of \$75 million in nuclear liability compensation is far too low and needs to be increased. However, increasing it to the minimum that was recommended is also not the way to go.

I am pleased that my colleague made many amendments to this bill. In the case of a nuclear disaster the consequences could be disastrous both economically and health-wise. It could be extremely expensive and could cost billions of dollars. Our amendments taken as a whole would mean unlimited liability for the industry. That is

what we put forward today. We do not want there to be a cap that would let industry off the hook at \$650 million when we know full well the consequences could cost billions of dollars.

By making these amendments, we would bring our country into line with countries like Germany that have unlimited liability on the industry. These amendments are important because they would encourage safety in the industry. They would make the nuclear industry more accountable. The industry would be on the hook. It would want to make sure that it is a very safe industry. It would inspire public confidence in the nuclear industry, something which is important.

We have heard the minister and other parties say that nuclear power is safe, that it is clean energy. I know the minister believes this because he said again today at committee that it was a safe and clean energy source for this country.

I know that those parties want to use nuclear energy to get us out of our greenhouse gas problems, but there are some problems with that, mainly in the mining of uranium for the nuclear industry and what is done with the waste. The public does not have confidence in those aspects of the industry.

Also, because of the fact that there have been incidents over the years and the potential for another incident is still there, Canadians know that in the event of an incident, the costs could be quite high.

Some of our nuclear reactors are located quite near residential and business areas. If there were to be an accident, the cost to business, because it would be seen to be unsafe for many years to come, could be quite catastrophic, not only for that business, but economically for the community. That is where many of the costs lie when we think about compensation. We would have to ensure that the other businesses that would be impacted by an incident would be compensated fairly. When we look at future lost revenues to those industries or businesses, the costs again would be very high.

There was the recent incident with regard to Chalk River, the shortage of medical isotopes and the firing of the nuclear safety commissioner in such a way that Canadians were quite shocked. They wondered why the government would take such drastic measures and take the steps in the way that it did, which did not inspire confidence in the Minister of Natural Resources or in the government's ability to handle this situation in a fair-handed fashion. I think that has led many Canadians to wonder about safety. When a commissioner who is charged with looking after public safety is fired in the dead of night and without any notice and for no just cause, it sends a signal that the government will do what it has to do to take control of this industry.

Government Orders

● (1545)

I would like to go back to the amendments that would make sure that the industry was responsible and held accountable in the event of an accident or a nuclear incident. If we were left with only a \$650 million cap for industry, then taxpayers would ultimately be on the hook for the rest of the compensation. If there were billions of dollars in damages, as has been investigated, studied and put forward by independent bodies as the amount of money that could be required to cover the damages, Canadian taxpayers would be on the hook for that liability. That is one reason this bill should not go forward in its present form and needs to be amended.

There is also a clause that says that the industry is off the hook for life and limb after 10 years in some cases and up to 30 years. We have asked that that clause be deleted.

Military personnel were called in to clean up a disaster at Chalk River in the 1950s. Even 40 years later some people have experienced many different kinds of cancers. Compensation has been denied over many years. We have to wonder if in some cases the insurers were not waiting until the people simply died off. Sadly, we know there is the potential for waiting them out and then the insurers do not have to pay.

Sometimes problems do not manifest themselves until many years later. If we are looking at it taking 15 to 20 years for the cancers to manifest themselves and a few more years before people actually go through the process of getting compensation, people could well end up not receiving compensation. We think that clause needs to be deleted as well.

There are many issues regarding toxic waste in this country. There are many tonnes of toxic material still present at Elliot Lake. People are still being exposed to contaminants. We are concerned about the toxic waste in this country. The problem has never been dealt with satisfactorily. Now the government wants to bury that toxic waste. I do not think that is necessarily the way to go.

The industry has come a long way. There is more and better technology in place to use the spent fuel rods. There are ongoing innovations in the industry. I would certainly support those innovations, but there is still a lot of waste out there that has not been dealt with and people are still being exposed to it. It is a problem that we have not quite addressed.

We want these amendments in the bill. Taken as a whole, they would make sure that the industry was liable for all damages in the event of an accident.

Canadians are very concerned about safety. They would like to know that the industry would be held accountable in the event of any kind of accident or disaster.

● (1550)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been following this debate closely and want to commend the member for Western Arctic in particular for the very salient amendments he has brought forward on behalf of our caucus.

One of the things that has struck me throughout this debate is that members keep talking about nuclear accidents. I do not happen to

believe that these are accidents. In fact, most of the incidents that we are contemplating would be completely preventable.

The government members would like us to believe that the nuclear industry is safe. If they make the argument that the industry is absolutely safe, why is the government not putting its money where its mouth is? If the government members believe that the industry is safe, then there will not be any incidents. That means nobody will need to be compensated and it should not matter to the government whether the liability is at \$75 million, \$600 million or, as is the case in the United States, \$10 billion.

Canadians are not trusting the government on that. They do not believe the industry is safe. Moreover, they do not believe that the government is actually undertaking the inspections and regulating the industry in such a way that Canadians can feel safe. That is what is at issue here today.

We are giving a handful of dollars for the loss of homes, businesses and lives, but what we really need to do is look at not just what is happening to families living near nuclear power plants, but families and Canadians affected by any nuclear installation or, indeed, toxic waste sites.

Could the member tell me why the government is so opposed to a limit of \$10 billion of industry liability when the government is so certain that the industry is safe and no industry member would ever have to pay under this proposed increased liability?

● (1555)

Ms. Catherine Bell: Mr. Speaker, I am not from the government side. Sometimes I have to wonder what government members think, but one can only guess that the reason they favour the industry so heavily in this regard by allowing it to have a cap on the liability is that perhaps they want to privatize it.

We are hearing from the minister again that there is a review of AECL at the moment. He said that every option is on the table and he will consider privatization of AECL as well. The only guess I can make is that we are going to see that in the very near future once this bill is passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan. There are two minutes left, so I assume if she takes two minutes, the answer will be nothing.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Vancouver Island North for her comments and the member for Western Arctic for the very good work he did on proposing amendments to this bill.

One of the things the member for Vancouver Island North and I share in common is that we live in communities that are being devastated by the layoffs in forestry. Although I agree that nuclear liability is a very important issue, it is unfortunate that we are also not spending time in the House talking about the devastation in the forestry sector.

As to the bill, the member mentioned in her speech that, in part, we also need to be having a discussion about other sustainable and renewable energy sources. I wonder if she could make some comments on what she would like to see the House address in that respect.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member for Vancouver Island North has one minute to respond.

Ms. Catherine Bell: Mr. Speaker, of course we would love to see more investment in renewable energy. We heard from the minister about the amount of money that has been put into the budget for Natural Resources Canada with respect to wind and solar energy and tidal power. Unfortunately, it pales in comparison to the money that is invested in the oil sands—

Mr. James Moore: Tar sands.

Ms. Catherine Bell: The tar sands. I thank my colleague.

The amount that is invested in renewable energy in this country is very small compared to the subsidies that the tar sands and other industries like nuclear receive. I would love to see a lot more invested in renewable energy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2, 5, 8 and 12.

[*Translation*]

A negative vote on Motion No. 1 requires the question to be put on Motions Nos. 16, 17 and 18.

• (1600)

[*English*]

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): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

[*Translation*]

The recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 2 to 5, 8, 11 and 12.

Government Orders

[*English*]

The next question is on Motion No. 6. A negative vote on Motion No. 6 necessitates the question being put on Motion No. 21.

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): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on the Motion No. 7. 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): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on the Motion No. 9. 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.

Government Orders

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): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions at the report stage of the bill.

Call in the members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred until the end of government orders today.

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CANADA POST CORPORATION ACT

The House resumed from November 20, 2007 consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): When we last discussed Bill C-14, there were 10 minutes left for questions and comments for the hon. member for Hamilton Centre. Questions and comments?

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House today to support Bill C-14, an Act to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act, on second reading. This bill recognizes the reality that international remailing companies have been operating in Canada for several decades.

Why should we punish these small businesses that play an important role in our economy? As I will try to show this afternoon, it would be preferable to examine the bill in committee than to defeat it, as some members of the House would like to do, without hearing from experts and those who will be affected.

This bill seeks to address an existing weakness in the Canada Post Corporation Act. A difference in the wording of the English and French versions of the provisions of the Canada Post Corporation Act dealing with the exclusive privilege of the corporation has allowed other companies to deliver mail to people in other countries.

Acting on this difference in wording, the Canadian International Mail Association has been able to collect and distribute letters weighing up to 500 grams addressed to foreign recipients for 20 years—I repeat, for 20 years. Recently, Canada Post decided to exercise the exclusive privilege giving it a monopoly over mail to foreign addresses.

International remailers have been in operation for more than 20 years. They operative almost exclusively in three large metropolitan areas—Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. The revenue of these international remailers here in Canada is estimated at about \$50 million per year, which is less than 0.8% of Canada Post's annual revenue. There is no competition in other areas. They do not compete for distribution of mail in small rural communities where

Canada Post may be an important employer, if not the most important. Nobody competes with Canada Post for the role of the standard bearer of our presence in Canada, a contact point between government and citizens all across the country.

This sector has prospered for more than 20 years. Obviously, its success is not so great as to significantly affect Canada Post's revenue. Last year, Canada Post generated total revenue of \$7.3 billion. While the postal delivery sector was stable, remailing companies did not take in much more than \$50 million. One can see that they do not represent a Trojan horse for Canada Post, despite what the corporation and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers may say. I am a former member of that union. In fact, I was a shop steward.

● (1605)

[*English*]

As my hon. colleague, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, put it so eloquently in his speech in this House on this very bill on November 20, 2007, and I quote:

As members of the House of Commons, our first obligation is to ensure that no legislation goes through the House that damages the potential available to any Canadian and, concomitant with that, the obligation to nurture an environment that gives Canadians that same opportunity.

Indeed, members of the Liberal opposition and I have been aware of the potential impact killing this legitimate business, killing this legitimate competition, and its impact on Canadians. We have been working hard to remedy the situation.

I would like to give a little history of what Liberals have been working on, on this issue. On March 22, 2007, the member for Etobicoke Centre wrote the Minister of Transport as the then Liberal critic for crown corporations. He insisted in his letter that the government make the necessary legislative changes to continue to allow these firms to operate. If I may just read the actual letter:

Dear Minister: I am writing to you about the ongoing concerns of members of the Canadian International Mail Association who face difficult challenges due to pressure being applied by Canada Post Corporation to eliminate competition in the international mail market in Canada.

It is my understanding that the government supports the maintenance of the competitiveness of the international mail delivery market and has indicated its intention to make the necessary legislative changes to enable these firms to continue to operate.

I note that during question period on October 26, 2006, you stated that:

And my colleague is referring to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities:

"many members from all sides of the House have indicated support on this issue. Indeed, the new government supports small businesses and competitive economic conditions needed to ensure their survival. This is why the government will be coming forward in a few weeks with substantive steps to deal with the issues regarding international re-mailers".

Then my colleague from Etobicoke Centre goes on in his letter to say:

Please be assured that should you introduce this important legislation, there would be significant support from the opposition members.

Respectfully,

Member for Etobicoke Centre

Critic for Crown Corporations

Government Orders

That is not all. On October 17, 2007, the Leader of the Opposition affirmed this support in a letter to the president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Ms. Deborah Bourque. He explained that while Liberals supported international remailers, we do not support the deregulation of Canada Post. I would like to read that letter dated April 17, 2007:

Dear Ms. Bourque: On behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada and our Liberal Caucus, I am pleased to have this opportunity to respond to your letters and clarify our position in regard to international re-mailers and the deregulation and privatization of Canada Post. I regret the delay of this response.

As you can appreciate, this complex matter has stirred much debate in the past few years from all affected parties. After careful consideration and study of the issue it is our intent to support the continued operations of international re-mailers within Canada.

Although I understand your concern in regard to this issue, it is important to note that international re-mailers have been operating in Canada for several decades now. The Liberal Party does not believe that hurting these small business owners would be in the best interests of Canadians.

● (1610)

That said, it is also important to note that the Liberal Party does not support the deregulation and privatization of Canada Post.

As your correspondence and related material will also be of interest to...the Liberal Critic for Crown Corporations, I have taken the liberty of forwarding a copy of our exchange for his consideration. I am certain that he will be happy to provide a more detailed response to your concerns.

In the meantime, I hope the above helps to clarify our position on the issue. Thank you for taking the time to write, and please accept my warmest regards.

Leader of the Official Opposition

Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada

As early as March and then in April 2007, official spokesmen on behalf of the Liberal parliamentary caucus and the leader of the official opposition and Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada made it very clear that Liberals would support and do support maintaining the right of international remailers, and that we do not support any move to privatize or to deregulate Canada Post. I hope that no one in the House will try to mix both issues, because they are separate issues.

Let me go on and continue to provide a little of the history.

● (1615)

[*Translation*]

So, on May 9, 2007, the hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence, as Liberal critic for transport, infrastructure and communities, brought forward at the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities a motion which I think would settle the issue between Canada Post and the remailing companies. After several hours of discussion, my hon. colleague's motion was passed, as amended, by a vote of eight to three.

On May 18, the motion put forward by the hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence, on which other Liberal members of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities had worked, was introduced in the House of Commons as part of the fifth report of the committee. The report stated, and I quote:

That the Committee recommend that Government issue a directive to the Canada Post Corporation pursuant to the Minister of Transport's authority under Section 22 of the Canada Post Corporation Act and in accordance with the Financial Administration Act, stating that:

- i) The Corporation shall, at its option, either discontinue, withdraw or consent to a judicial stay of proceedings in respect of allegations or judicial findings that entities have or continue to violate the exclusive privilege in Section 14 of the Canada Post Corporation Act with respect to letters intended for delivery

outside of Canada and, where an injunction has been issued with respect to letters intended for delivery outside of Canada, the Corporation shall consent to an application brought to dissolve such an injunction, until the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities has the opportunity of reviewing the matter and formulating recommendations to the Government and Canada Post.

- ii) The Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities conduct this review of section 14 of the Canada Post Corporation Act by end of 2007.

The government drew inspiration from this fifth report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities for its Bill C-14, introduced on October 19, 2007. That is the bill we are debating today.

[*English*]

I also heard from people working in this sector in my own riding. On October 24, five days before the minister actually tabled government Bill C-14, I wrote to the Minister of Transport requesting that he take such action on this important issue. I would like to read my letter into the record. It states

Dear Minister...

I recently met with a representative from Spring Global Mail, an international mail delivery service company, which has an office in my constituency. The representative from Spring informed me about the deep concern he had for the international mail service industry in Canada. As of November 2004, Canada Post was granted a permanent court injunction to enforce its monopoly powers over this sector, thereby making this industry slowly disappear.

This simply is not right as it would dissolve a growing Canadian market that not only includes international mail delivery companies but small and medium sized businesses, as well as some of Canada's largest corporations in printing and financial field[s]. It would be a shame to lose a twenty year old sector of our country's economy to unequal economic practices.

I support equal economic opportunity for all Canadian businesses and would completely disagree with Canada Post having full jurisdiction over this sector. Fixing this injustice is simply the right thing to do. I would support legislation that would revitalize this industry and reverse the court injunction so as to stop the bleeding.

I signed it "Sincerely", with my name, as member of Parliament for Notre-Dame—de-Grace—Lachine, with a certified copy to Mr. Stephane Forget of Spring Global Mail.

I think this makes it quite clear that the issue of international remail delivery has been something that Liberals have been active on, as I am sure other members sitting in the House have been, and which I believe needs to go to committee.

As I said, there are people in my riding who have been working in this sector and who have been working legitimately in this field for over 20 years. Should Canada Post and CUPW succeed in their efforts at painting this as an issue that impacts rural mail delivery and succeed in having the bill killed before it truly can be examined, it will not help the honest Canadians in my riding and in other ridings in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, the centres where these companies are located. These centres are not located in rural ridings. They are not even located here in Ottawa. They are located in three main urban centres: Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

Government Orders

I am assuming, but I could be wrong, that the NDP may be supportive of Bill C-14. I hope it is supportive, but it would not surprise me if the NDP is not. Should Canada Post and CUPW and the NDP succeed in killing this bill, they will also be killing the jobs of many hard-working Canadians. To attempt to claim that this has anything to do with rural mail delivery is simply false.

I worked for Canada Post. I was a shop steward for Canada Post. I am a defender of rural mail delivery. I can tell members that Canada Post's efforts in its study on rural mailboxes, for so-called health and security reasons, are going to endanger rural mail delivery much more than international remailers will ever do.

• (1620)

I would say that anyone, including CUPW, the NDP and Canada Post, that attempts to link this to the protection of rural mail delivery or to privatization or deregulation is simply not stating the facts and is trying to fearmonger. This has absolutely nothing to do with any of those three issues.

I would beg colleagues in the House not to attempt to make that linkage, because it is a tenuous one at best and that is putting the best spin that I can on it. It is simply not true.

I will end there and say that I urge members in the House to support Bill C-14 being referred to a committee and also to protect our honest, hard-working Canadians in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver who depend on those companies for their jobs.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Order, please. 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 Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Guaranteed Income Supplement and the Budget; the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, Manufacturing and Forestry Industries.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

• (1625)

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and the congratulations that she offers to the minister, the Prime Minister and this government for bringing forward this legislation.

Indeed, I have three questions for her. First, is it true that there are approximately 10,000 jobs in the industry, which is what has been represented to me, that those jobs indeed would be lost in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver if this legislation is not brought forward? That is the first question.

Second, why did the Liberals not bring forward legislation to correct this particular issue during the period of time they were in government and this was an ongoing issue? It took this government to do so.

Finally, her seatmate two seats away, the member for Halton, has advocated privatization of Canada Post. Although this government is clear that we are not taking any steps that way, does she agree with the member for Halton that privatization of Canada Post would be in the best interests of Canadians? We certainly do not believe that is the case.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: I will begin with the last question first.

I read the letter from the Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada that was addressed to Deborah Bourque, the president of CUPW. In it, our leader makes very clear the Liberal policy. The Liberal parliamentary caucus and the Liberal Party are opposed to privatization and deregulation of Canada Post. It is clear. No, we do not support it. N-O.

In terms of the second question the member asked, about the representation that approximately 10,000 Canadian jobs are dependent on the passage of Bill C-14, I believe the member is correct in that figure. I believe that is the approximate number of jobs. These jobs are located principally in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. That is why I made the point that I did. When certain elements attempt to fearmonger and say that should the international remailers be given the legislative authority to continue to compete on that little slice of Canada Post business it will somehow put into jeopardy rural mail delivery, it is simply not true. It is not.

Shame on anyone who attempts to make that argument. If it is CUPW, shame on CUPW. I am a strong unionist, but it is not because one is a unionist that one is without error and that one's argument is always right. And it is certainly not because one belongs to the NDP that one is always right. I would say it is more that one is usually wrong.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I recognize the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé, but I would like to point out that other members would also like to ask questions. We have six minutes remaining.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will ask my question quickly.

I understand that the Canada Post Corporation is not in a deficit position; it is currently making a profit. I live in a rural area, and I am convinced that the postal service there has not improved in many years. Post offices have closed, meaning that people in rural areas must now drive several kilometres to pick up their mail.

This proposal that we are debating seeks to take \$48 to \$50 million of Canada Post Corporation's profits. I am almost certain that this would have an effect on rural areas and mail delivery. It would eat into the revenues. We typically never reduce the postal services in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver. It is usually the rural areas that feel the cutbacks.

Citizens are currently very unhappy with postal services. I do not think that this bill will improve these services.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, I will answer very quickly.

Government Orders

In 2006, Canada Post had revenues of \$7.3 billion, with a net profit of \$320 million. The remailing industry has been around for more than 20 years. This industry is not what has hurt rural mail delivery.

I worked at Canada Post and I was unionized. I can say that this has nothing to do with remailing. It is simply Canada Post's desire to make its deliveries as cost effective as possible. Canada Post did not even think that it had exclusive rights over international mail. So it has never challenged the existence of this industry.

• (1630)

[English]

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as much as the Liberals do not want anyone to think this has anything to do with rural mail delivery, privatization or deregulation, the fact is that it speaks to the very heart of the ability of Canada Post to remain the entity that it is, to provide the service it provides and to do it in a manner that does not cost the taxpayer, through any extra subsidies, any extra money. It is a stand-alone, self-sustaining organization that employs 55,000 proud Canadians.

The Liberals would have us believe that they will be supporting this, but even if it is the unions that are supporting this position, we should not let anyone say that this has anything to do with rural mail delivery.

The fact is that if we bleed away Canada Post's ability to be financially viable, we ultimately will deny it the ability to provide the service. Is that just CUPW, which, I am sure, is very proud of their former member?

It is not only the NDP. I want to ask the member a question with regards to what Justice MacFarland said on May 8, 2007, one year ago, on behalf of a three panel judge after Canada Post had won the first court case. The private enterprises that the hon. member mentioned appealed and at the appeal court the justice said:

The purpose of the statutory privilege can only be to enable CP to fulfill its statutory mandate or realize its objects. It is meant to be self-sustaining financially while at the same time providing similar standards of service throughout our vast country. Profits are realized in densely populated areas which subsidize the services provided in the more sparsely populated areas.

If we deny Canada Post the revenue it needs to be viable, rural service will be affected and the ability of Canada Post to exist as a crown corporation will be at risk.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, the answer is very simple. In 2006, Canada Post generated \$7.3 billion.

An hon. member: Is that with a "b"?

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Yes, that is with a "b", not an "m", \$7.3 billion, and \$320 million net profit.

No one should attempt to tell Canadians and the thousands of Canadians who work for the international remailers in Canada that their jobs should be lost because that business generates \$50 million.

I would like to remind the member that Canada Post had a 12% interest in one of these remailers from 1992 to 1996, and one of them has an office in my riding. At that time it was called TNT Mailfast but it is now called Spring Global Mail. Canada Post did not have any problem then.

International remailers do not jeopardize Canada Post's ability to earn profits. I might add that if the NDP succeeds in eliminating this business, it will not create one more job for CUPW.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to actually hear the Liberals support Bill C-14. There is very little we agree on in the House but from time to time we sing from the same page. Unfortunately, the NDP still is not getting that this is all about saving Canadian jobs.

This is not a complicated bill. Actually, it contains one simple clause. For most Canadians, it will have no significance that they know of but to the thousands of Canadians whose jobs will be lost if we do not pass this bill, it is critical to their livelihoods and their families.

What is remailing? Let me explain for those who do not understand what that industry is all about.

As we know, there are people in Canada who mail letter mail to each other. It is mail that is sent within Canada, collected within Canada and delivered within Canada. That mail is delivered by Canada Post and Canada Post has what is called exclusive privilege, which is simply another name for a monopoly. Canadians accept that. Our government accepts that. I believe all the parties in the House accept the fact that there is exclusive privilege for mail that is collected, distributed and delivered in Canada.

However, there is also other mail that is sent from Canada around the world. What businesses find is that the cost of that mailing can in some cases be very expensive. If a business is sending out thousands and thousands of pieces of letter mail a year, those costs can add up. They can affect one's competitiveness in a fiercely competitive international market.

Remailers are companies that will collect and bundle letter mail in Canada, take it to another jurisdiction, in most cases the United States, and mail it from there because the costs of mailing are significantly less. That is good for our economy because anything that allows Canadian businesses to compete better with the world markets is good. It is good for our economy and for families across this country, although the NDP just cannot understand that.

The change is very simple. The bill states, "does not apply to letters intended for delivery to an addressee outside Canada". In other words, the exclusive privilege will not relate to letter mail that is collected in Canada but mailed from outside of Canada.

For 20 years this was not an issue. The industry, Canada Post, the unions, the remailers all accepted the fact that the Canada Post Corporation Act actually only provided exclusive privilege for letter mail that was collected and mailed within Canada to Canadians.

What happened along the way? The remailers started building their businesses. They started investing a lot of money. They started creating jobs in Canada to provide a service to Canadian businesses. For 20 years there was no opposition to this. I am trying to figure out what happened.

Government Orders

Here is what I think happened. Canada Post obviously employs bright, young lawyers who are supposed to protect their interests, and that is fair. I am guessing that one day one of these bright, young lawyers checked the clause in the Canada Post Corporation Act, both in English and French, and, lo and behold, they found there was an inconsistency between the two clauses. The English clause did not say exactly what the French one said. It was an “aha” moment for the lawyer. He felt that he might have them and took the remailers to court.

The remailers were told that under the French version of the act they did not have a right to exist and that the people working for them should not be employed in a remailing industry. The case was taken all through the courts until it ended up in the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court of Canada had to basically choose one or the other of the two interpretations, the English one or the French one. In the end, the Supreme Court of Canada decided, in its wisdom, that it was the French that should prevail.

• (1635)

That ruling came as a shock to the remailing industry and to our government. It came as a shock to most of the members of the House because we were at risk of losing an industry that employs some 10,000 people in Canada and an industry that is worth at least \$100 million a year. Overnight this was going to be shut down.

I do not think that is fair. It is not the Canadian way and, quite frankly, it is not why I was elected as a member of Parliament. It is my job to stand up for Canadians, to defend Canadian jobs and to ensure we are fair with the Canadian people.

Our clause simply restates what everyone has accepted as the status quo for well over two decades. It says that remailers will continue to have the right to conduct their businesses, to take business mail within Canada, bundle it together and send it elsewhere in the world from another jurisdiction.

One might think that along the way Canada Post had been asserting its right to exclusive privilege over the remailing industry but that is not so. Back in 1988, Canada Post actually issued a magazine called *Manager Magazine*. In the April-May 1988 edition there was an article written by a lady by the name of Barbara Leimsner. In an article that she entitled, “Reaching for a Higher Plateau”, she said:

Outbound mail is not protected by exclusive privilege which leaves this lucrative business open to a new threat—aggressive competition from international remail companies.

That is Canada Post acknowledging that it was facing stiff competition and that it was taking on the remailers in the market legitimately. That was back in 1988.

Let us move on to 2005. A newsletter was issued by, I believe, Canada Post and, ironically, the newsletter is called, “Upfront”. It is actually in the form of a letter by the president and CEO of Canada Post no less, and is entitled, “Moving beyond our history”. The chief executive of Canada Post said:

Today, the notion of exclusive privilege is a thing of the past...We must all understand that today our customers have many opportunities to take their business elsewhere.

When she refers to taking business elsewhere, what else could she mean but that Canadian businesses have the ability to take their mail to a remailing company and have it mailed around the world from another jurisdiction.

Even as recently as 2005, Canada Post accepted the fact that exclusive privilege, this monopoly, only applied to domestic mail, mail that was collected within Canada and delivered within Canada. The CEO acknowledged in the article that exclusive privilege did not extend to the remailers.

Today, however, we have the court case that we must deal with. It says that there was an ambiguity in the law, that there was an anomaly between the English and French versions and that somehow we must reconcile those so they will choose the French version which has the impact of actually shutting down a major industry in Canada, eliminating some 10,000 jobs and \$100 million worth of business a year.

The member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine referred to the fact that Canada Post actually owned a slice of the remailing industry for some four years. Is that not an irony? The very corporation that says remailers should not exist, actually invested in a remailing company some years ago and presumably made some money at it.

I do not know if the Bloc is supporting the legislation, but the other suggestion being made by my NDP colleagues is that somehow the profits that the remailers make today, and that Canada Post would like to now make its own, is critical to continuing a rural mail delivery service across Canada.

• (1640)

That is absolutely not true. In fact, we heard the profit quoted earlier. Last year, Canada Post earned some \$320 million in profit. It is not losing money. The suggestion that somehow the bill would cause Canada Post to lose money is absolute nonsense. It does not own that business now, and it has not for some 20 years. This is a business that was legitimately carried on by the remailers. For over two decades, they depended on what everyone understood the state of the law to be, which was the English version of the Canada Post Corporation Act. Now that has changed because the courts picked up on this anomaly and decided against the remailers.

We want to correct that situation. We want to send a message to Canadians, especially those who rely on the remailing industry for their livelihoods, that we will stand behind them.

I want to give credit to the Liberals in the House. They recognized that. They got it. They understood there would be an injustice foisted upon these workers and industries, which had been acting in good faith for such a long time.

A suggestion has also been made that this is somehow a step toward deregulating postal service in Canada and privatizing Canada Post. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have made it very clear, as a Conservative government, that we will not take steps to privatize Canada Post. We believe Canada Post is performing a very useful service in Canada.

Government Orders

We have ordered that a strategic review of Canada Post be undertaken to ensure Canadians receive full value from Canada Post, to ensure Canada Post continues to pursue the objectives and purposes for which it was created and to ensure the postal corporation remains vibrant within Canada.

The suggestion that now putting the heavy hand of the law on the remailers would somehow enhance Canada Post prospects or enhance the prospects of businesses across Canada, which would like to keep their costs down, is ludicrous.

I come from an area of the country where individual enterprise is valued very highly. The remailers that have invested for some 20 years in this industry have done so in good faith. They took risks. They built their companies. They hired employees. They continued to grow. They provided a valuable service to thousands of other businesses across the country. To suggest that shutting those businesses down and getting rid of those jobs is somehow serving Canadians is absolutely wrong.

If I could just summarize, in point form, what the bill would not do and then what it would do, I hope Canadians will understand why Bill C-14 is important to them.

As I have already mentioned, it is critically important to those who rely on the remail industry for their livelihoods, but it is also critical for Canada's ongoing economic prosperity because we depend on remaining competitive. Canada lags behind many of the other industrialized countries in productivity.

How do we improve on that? One way is to ensure that Canadian businesses can reduce their costs and compete in a fiercely competitive world.

What would the bill not do? It would not result in a loss of revenue for Canada Post because Canada Post never had these revenues in the last 20 years.

This is not about a loss of jobs. I do not believe the NDP is even suggesting that it is a loss of jobs in the industry. What we are doing is protecting jobs. What those members would like to see happen is that those jobs go elsewhere. In fact, members may not know this but a number of the remailer companies have shut down their business in Canada and have gone elsewhere. Do members now where those jobs went? They did not stay in Canada. They left the country. Therefore, why would we want to risk that happening to the 10,000 remaining jobs we have in Canada? It is not about a loss of jobs; it is reaffirming the status quo of the last 20 years.

Is this about deregulation? Absolutely not. We have made that clear. My colleague across the floor has made that clear. This is not an attack on Canada Post. We continue to support exclusive privilege to Canada Post and its critical role in allowing Canadians to communicate with one another.

•(1645)

This is about protecting jobs, protecting our industry, our remailers, ensuring that we protect the trust that Canadians have, especially Canadian businessmen, when they see government and Canada Post moving forward in reliance on a certain law, that we will not flip-flop down the road. Finally, this is about maintaining Canada's competitiveness in the global economy.

Is Canada Post an important federal institution? Absolutely. It has a presence throughout our country. Does it need the remail industry to survive? Absolutely not. The profits last year of \$320 million speak for themselves. There is more than enough money for Canada Post to do a good job in ensuring that Canadians have good rural mail delivery. Canada Post will continue to collect and transmit mail within Canada, and it is entitled to compete with the remailers in sending mail outside of Canada.

This is about protecting jobs. It is about standing up for Canadians. I appreciate the opportunity to defend this industry today with Bill C-14.

•(1650)

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech with interest. Would he clarify one thing for me? In his speech he said that he came from an area of Canada where they valued private enterprise, and I am sure that is the case.

Could he name an area in Canada where private enterprise is not valued? I am very interested in hearing if he actually believes that, or if he could clarify that point.

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I named the area I come from and represent, which is the city of Abbotsford, and I love it. It is one of the most dynamic communities in the county. It has been built on the fact that people have understood the value of free enterprise, the right of individuals to develop themselves, to be free from government interference.

I hope this sentiment extends across our country, and I suspect it does. In every community there are pockets, some more than others, where we have this understanding of the value of free enterprise and where we are willing to go to bat for workers and industries wanting to build our economy.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member who just spoke if he could assure us that the purpose of this bill is absolutely not, directly or indirectly, to start deregulation. That is my first question.

My second question is: why tinker with a universal service? Some companies, for whatever reason, acted illegally. The court ruled that they had six months to shut down their business. The Conservative government decided to take away Canada Post's chances to potentially make \$80 million.

I would like to know the reasons behind this decision, when rural areas are suffering the consequences. A number of members in this House see this situation every day as they represent their constituents.

[English]

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, first, I assume the member listened to my speech. I believe I confirmed on three occasions that this was not about deregulation. Nor is it about privatizing Canada Post. I want to lay her fears to rest. This is not about deregulation.

Government Orders

Second, she talked about tinkering with universal service. For well over two decades, the universal mail service in Canada, the exclusive privilege, has been restricted to domestic mail, in other words, mail collected within Canada and delivered within Canada. The suggestion that we have somehow had universal mail delivery in the area of international, outbound mail is wrong. It is simply wrong.

Why is she not standing up for the people in Montreal who depend on the remailing industry for their livelihoods, for their jobs? What will she say to the families that will now have individuals and members who are without jobs, if in fact she does not support Bill C-14?

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question. The minister responsible for Canada Post recently announced the establishment of an advisory committee to conduct a strategic review of Canada Post. That committee is to report to the minister in December 2008. Why does the government not wait for that report? Will that committee continue to sit even if the bill is passed?

[*English*]

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is, yes, we will continue to sit and it will do its work. The key issue is to ensure the status quo, the 10,000 jobs we presently have in Canada, remains intact and the families that rely on those jobs continue to live knowing they will be employed.

My concern is, as the strategic review plays out, that Canada Post moves forward and shuts down the remailers. There is the immediate consequence to 10,000 jobs in Canada. I am sure the member, who comes from Quebec and would obviously be worried about jobs in Montreal that would be lost if in fact we did not pass Bill C-14, would be concerned. He has to be concerned. That is his job, to stand up for the people of Quebec and ensure their jobs are protected.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, mine is more of an observation and comment rather than a question, although I welcome the hon. member's reflection on what I will say.

I have been struck by some of the comments that have to do with concern for rural Canada. Over the course of the last couple of months, the issues related to delivery of mail to rural Canada has really centred around the relationship between Canada Post and CUPW. There have been differences of opinion about when and how CUPW will deliver that mail. It has put some demands forward to Canada Post that it would not recommend its members deliver mail in rural communities where the issue of safety, by its own definition rather than by others, would cause it to say no, it would not deliver. The bill does not address that at all. The bill has nothing to do with rural communities. From what I can see, it has everything to do with a business that has been in operation for some 20 years in three major cities and not anywhere else.

The positions of my colleagues from the other parties are every bit as legitimate as anyone else's, but why would they think a corporation, which has net profits of 5% of its gross revenues, should shut down 10,000 other jobs generated by other businesses in order to improve its efficiency? The corporation has gross revenues of \$7.3 billion. It is one of the largest corporations in the entire

country in terms of revenues. It can boast that it has net profits of \$320 million, roughly 5%. Why would anyone support its shutting down operations that provide 10,000 jobs for people who are not part of Canada Post?

Why anyone would say the corporation is right to shut down 10,000 jobs and deprive 10,000 families of a livelihood so it can have a chance of perhaps getting their revenues? Are we talking about social justice, labour justice, or exclusively about business and administrative practices? That is why I support Bill C-14. It has everything to do with supporting 10,000 families in the continuance of their livelihood. One does not have to be a member of the NDP, or Conservative, or Liberal, or Bloc, or independent to believe that is social justice.

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, my colleague does have it right. This is about protecting 10,000 Canadian jobs in Vancouver, in Toronto, which is where he is from, and in Montreal. Our Conservative government is standing up for those jobs. Unfortunately, we have NDP members saying no, that those jobs are not important. Shame on them.

We want to ensure that we have representatives across the country standing up for Canadians and speaking out when their jobs are at risk. Senator Fortier is speaking out for Montrealers. MPs across the country recognize that Bill C-14 is absolutely critical to ensure that we protect those Canadian jobs. Make no mistake, it is very clear that if Bill C-14 does not pass and Canada Post Corporation shuts down the remailers, these 10,000 jobs will not be kept in Canada; they will go elsewhere.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have to say from the outset that we oppose the principle of Bill C-14.

As we know, this bill seeks to deprive the Canada Post Corporation of its exclusive privilege with respect to letters intended for delivery outside of Canada.

We are surprised that an advisory committee was recently set up, in April 2008, to review this issue. The committee is going to table its report in December 2008. Therefore, this bill seems premature at this point.

Why was that committee established? Why is the government introducing this legislation? As the member for Abbotsford wondered, why is the government implementing both measures at the same time?

It seems incredible that the government would decide to set up an advisory committee, but would not take the time to listen to it. The government has decided to draft its own legislation, because its ideology is well established and its principles are very clear: it only thinks about the private sector; the rest is no good.

Government Orders

Incidentally, I was surprised to hear the member for Abbotsford say, somewhat naively, that we would lose 10,000 jobs in one fell swoop. At no time did he think or say that, among these 10,000 jobless people, perhaps 9,000 would go to Canada Post. And why not, if there is a need? If 10,000 people are working in remailing companies, it means that a need exists.

It is certainly possible that some of the offices in communities close to the United States would move there. This does not mean though—and the advisory committee will enlighten us on this—that when the mail leaves the United States, Canada Post will agree to deliver mail posted in Hong Kong, for example, at a quarter of the cost of posting it here. It certainly would not bother Hong Kong to put stamps on it because all they do is put it back in the boxes and away it goes. When it only costs a quarter of the price, they laugh their heads off. When the mail arrives here, though, Canadian Post Corporation has to deliver it without getting anything in return.

These consultations should also make it possible to assess the situation of Canadian mail that is turned over to a foreign postal system, that is to say, how it will be delivered. These are things that the advisory committee will surely study, although the government does not want to wait for it.

We are convinced that if Canada Post were to lose the exclusive privilege it currently enjoys, its revenues would be endangered because, contrary to what was just said, remailing would grow exponentially. Even little things within Canada would be affected, and this would have dire consequences. It is unrealistic to think there would not be any repercussions because mail delivery would be re-organized in rural areas. There would certainly be a second-class delivery system because revenues would decline.

Earlier, someone mentioned that Canada Post has been making fabulous amounts of money. It should be said, though, that this is a very recent development. We feel that this is a very ill-advised bill at a time when Canada Post is starting to make money, and deservedly so. We should remember that the money it makes produces a dividend that goes directly to the government. The government does not put this money in the bank or in its pockets but redistributes it to Canadians in general through the services it provides.

Rather than having a dividend flow back to the government to the benefit of all, some people want one or two or three individuals to make money and pocket it. That is the difference between the private sector and the public sector.

● (1705)

The post office is currently a public service. We fail to see why private enterprise should make money and redistribute it outside Canada instead of our government redistributing it inside Canada to meet the needs of Canadians and investing it in various services. The surpluses that Canada Post generates could be used for this purpose. We would not want to see too many surpluses. What is most important to us is high quality mail delivery in Canada.

I represent a rural riding and I see the extent to which the quality of services provided in rural communities is being threatened. Small post offices are being closed. In my own municipality, the post office has not closed yet. Why? I have been told that there were some rather important people in the riding, for which I am glad, who are

able to get Canada Post to bend. Post offices were the traditional, cultural gathering place for people to meet, to pick up their mail and to have a chat. It is too bad they are being closed. It is not the Internet that is doing this. It is the desire to make as much profit as possible and keep fewer and fewer post offices open. Today, delivery to rural mailboxes is threatened because of safety. We agree that some roadside mailboxes were not safe for letter carriers. We agree on that. But to say that two thirds of the boxes in Quebec will be eliminated is going a bit too far.

There is something that has not been grasped here. One imagines that they want to save money like this so they can make a company even more profitable for private enterprise when it gets privatized. A little earlier, there was talk about Atomic Energy of Canada. The intention is to privatize everything. They want to privatize the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. All of this because of the dogmatic principle that it is more profitable, which is totally false. They are forgetting that the money that goes to the government gets redistributed to everyone and not merely to two or three people.

In 1981, the federal government gave the new postal authority the autonomy it needed to adopt business objectives that would allow its services to be self-funding. That is why I said a moment ago that Canada Post has not always been profitable. It has only been profitable for a few years. If it is profitable now, why are they so bent on eliminating so many rural mailboxes? It seems that it is precisely to cut back letter carriers' delivery times, so that mail can be consolidated in a few locations.

A moment ago I was going to say that this hurts private enterprise. A rural mailbox is not used only by Canada Post, it is also used for commercial delivery of leaflets, advertising and local newspapers. Those people will no longer have anywhere to leave that kind of mail, which is often very bulky, if there are no more mailboxes. Someone will tell me that they need only send it through Canada Post and that way it will end up in the community mailboxes, the green boxes. Well no, because often the postage for that much mail, the kind of volume that the weekend advertising flyers or daily newspapers represent, would cost so much that people would not be able to pay for it.

On the other side of the House they were talking about job losses. Taking away rural mailboxes is going to result in jobs being lost.

● (1710)

What about older people who can not get out any further than the end of the road to pick up their mail? I have some of those people in my riding. They get out once a week when their son or daughter or a neighbour takes them to do their errands. As a result of this system, they get their mail once a week. That is really inhuman and unthinkable.

Why did someone think of putting the mail into boxes mounted on posts in front of people's homes? Because, in the country, people are far from each other and because it was a good system. Often, a mail box could be moved a few metres—at the most, 30, 40 or 50 metres—and the box would no longer be a danger, since it would not be on the edge of the road. Or, the mailbox could be put on the other side of the road.

Government Orders

I made the rounds with some people from Canada Post who told me that if the box were on the other side, people would have to cross the street. However, they prefer to force them into automobiles to drive to a community mailbox, in a place that is often just as dangerous, in order to collect their mail. We see very clearly that their arguments are convoluted and give no assurance that they will provide the same quality of service as they did previously. It is all to ensure that Canada Post makes the most money possible so that they can sell this crown corporation at the highest price.

At present, despite all of Canada Post's profits, this corporation quite properly still provides the equivalent of \$60 million in free postal service to Parliament and the military. Often, it is the only way for members to keep in touch with their fellow citizens. Many of our voters do not buy a newspaper or watch the news on television, but when we mail them a pamphlet, they read it. This service is open to everyone in the House. That \$60 million per year is money very well spent. If it were privatized, that might be something we would lose.

It goes all over the country. It is an extraordinary service. There are also services for the blind and other services that deliver to the far north at the same price. That is something very important in our country: to be able to provide the same quality of service to everybody at the same price. Just because someone lives far out in the country does not mean that it should be different. People are useful in the country. If you are a farmer, you should be able to correspond with all the other people and receive things from other people at the same price.

In my view, the purpose of this bill is to prepare for privatization, not to protect jobs in Canada. Those jobs would be saved in any event. Canada Post would open new buildings and get them back that way.

A few years ago, Canada Post initiated legal proceedings against several remailers. Earlier, someone said there were never any problems. Not so, the dispute has been going on for years. Between the proceedings and the appeals, the issue was brought before several courts. We know how long this all takes. In every instance, the courts upheld Canada Post's interpretation of the act, under which it has an exclusive privilege.

This exclusive privilege ought to be maintained, and the committee that was put in place must be allowed to review the issue and report back to us. Should we ever happen upon an appropriate middle course in the legislation, we will take it. Currently, I believe that Bill C-14 is really far from meeting our expectations regarding a universal postal service for all Canadians.

In fact, the Ontario court ruled in 2004 that section 14 of the Canada Post Corporation Act gives the corporation the exclusive privilege of collecting mail. It was first determined in 2002, then confirmed in 2004, and again in 2005, not to mention that the court of appeal for Ontario upheld the interpretation of the Canadian legislation. Proceedings have been underway for several years, seven or eight years maybe. Over a 20-year period, it is fair to say that there have been proceedings underway half of the time. We have heard that there had never been any problems in 20 years. Sorry, but there have been problems for the past eight years.

This is an attempt to deregulate the market, but the Conservatives would like us to believe that this is not deregulation.

● (1715)

What is their conception of deregulation, if they claim that this is not deregulation? When something is rigid, when it is dismantled and when everyone can get their hands in the cookie jar, we think it is because deregulation has just occurred. The government lets those hands get in the cookie jar. Until then, that was not allowed. This is what deregulation is about. At least, it seems to me that this is what it is. Otherwise, I did not understand how people get their hands on the cookies.

The Bloc Québécois feels that before restricting or eliminating the exclusive privilege of Canada Post, the government should conduct a public and rather exhaustive review of the issue, and not simply decide whether we are in favour or opposed to private business, as we hear in this House. We must also assess the impact on the requirement to provide a universal and affordable public service. That is the whole issue.

If we privatize and sell Canada Post, postal rates will no longer be controlled by the government. They will be controlled by private enterprise, and we know what the consequences of that have been in other areas. Private businesses apply various rates and keep increasing them. They obviously do not deliver mail in the far north, or in small remote communities, for the same rate.

Canada Post is making money. With operating profits amounting to \$300 million, as someone said earlier, the corporation pays income tax as well as a dividend. This is a money-making operation for Canada. Of course, companies would also pay income tax, but we all know that people would not have a hard time avoiding it.

We have to assess how a legislative change like this one would directly or indirectly affect the financial viability of the Canada Post Corporation and its ability to keep providing a universal, affordable service. Universal because it is everywhere and affordable because it is provided at a reasonable cost. It is not at all clear that this would be the case if things change.

The Canada Post Corporation must also devise a plan to ensure the survival of its rural service. There is a reason the corporation is trying to get rid of roadside mailboxes and has closed almost all small post offices. In response to an inquiry by the minister responsible, the Canada Post Corporation said that such an operation costs between \$475 million and \$640 million over more than five years.

The corporation needs money to carry out these transformations. It is not news to anyone here that the corporation is moving toward full automation for mail sorting, and when that happens, major changes will take place. These changes are already in the works, and we believe that the government needs to take control of the changes that are about to happen, not leave it up to private enterprise.

I would like to propose an amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill C-14. I move, seconded by the member for Richmond—Arthabaska:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

Government Orders

Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act, be not now read a second time, but that it be read a second time this day six months hence.

• (1720)

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

The hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my hon. colleague's presentation. He began with words like "principle" and "naïveté". Are we here today discussing the principle of employing 10,000 people, or are we discussing another principle? I would like to see a discussion on this.

When we talk about letters that must be sent by mail, we must also consider all the advertisements and flyers, everything that does not constitute letters that Canada Post currently distributes.

Personally, I am not naive. As I have said in other presentations, this bill is not a question of rurality, but aims simply to determine how to solve a problem caused by a difference of opinion concerning the terminology in the act that has been in place for the past 20 years.

I have a question for the member who proposed another amendment here today. Does the member really believe that if all the revenue from this commercial remailing activity went to Canada Post, the Canadian public could expect dividends totalling more than \$600,000? At present, Canada Post gives only 1% of all its revenue to the Canadian government. If—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I must interrupt the hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

The hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi.

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I think it is actually a matter of principle. In my opinion, the bill truly shows that we could retain a certain part of the private enterprise. It is not about destroying private enterprise. Far from it.

As a colleague said earlier, Canada is in favour of private enterprise. That is not the issue.

What we want is to ensure that Canada Post provides universal and affordable service everywhere. I do not agree with the naive belief, on the other side, that withdrawing this right would result in the loss of 10,000 jobs. It was never a question of this right being withdrawn. That decision should be based on a study by the advisory committee and not on the principle of the bill. If remailing were eliminated, it would not necessarily result in the loss of 10,000 jobs because almost an equal number of jobs would be recovered.

• (1725)

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I will keep my question short to allow other members of this House to put their questions.

My hon. colleague has no doubt heard, as I did, Liberal and Conservative members shout themselves hoarse defending 10,000 jobs. I am not saying that we should not shout ourselves hoarse defending jobs in this country. But did the hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi who just spoke notice that, regarding the manufacturing and forestry sectors, both of which are going through a real crisis, while the people across the way were in a position to address

the issue, they did not make any noise about 10,000, 15,000 or 20,000 jobs?

All of a sudden, they bring up this totally opportunistic argument.

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

It is true that they defend jobs only when a bill is concerned. When manufacturing jobs are lost, the government just says it has allocated \$1 billion, even though it realizes that Quebec will get only \$76 million a year over three years. That is nothing.

It is true that the Liberals and Conservatives get up in arms over potential job losses, but not over the jobs that are actually being lost every day. Yesterday, it was Shermag's turn, but no one on the other side stood up to say how terrible it was that Shermag was going bankrupt.

Jobs are being lost in my riding. In fact, on May 9, a company will declare bankruptcy. But the members on the other side will not get upset.

The decrease in the number of rural roadside mailboxes by Canada Post will cost jobs. In any event, that is why they are taking that step. I did not hear the members on the other side of this House say they were concerned that Canada Post was cutting jobs.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been following this issue very closely because the question of where Canada Post is going in terms of privatizing service is a discussion that we must have with the Canadian people.

In my riding of Timmins—James Bay, for example, the downtown postal service in the city of Timmins that supplies the entire city now is no longer able to provide postal service because it is being shipped out and privatized.

I wonder what other businesses in the world would actually not provide a service when it is their primary service. The primary service of Canada Post in Timmins is to provide parcel post, pick up and postal service for citizens. Yet, it is unable to do that.

Workers are being told they cannot provide the service. Businesses in the downtown are no longer able to use this service because it has been shipped out to a local drug store. Canada Post does not sell hair sprays; it does not sell toothpaste. It is in the business of serving the public with a postal service.

We are seeing the same situation in our rural communities where Canada Post is walking away, leaving boxes out on rural roads, as opposed to real people who service the public.

I guess the question I have for my hon. colleague is, where else but the House of Commons should we be debating the fact that a national service, the postal service, is being shipped off, cut apart, split apart and citizens are being denied service that they have come to expect?

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I agree completely with my colleague that this is where we should be debating this issue. In our view, this debate is premature. We should wait until the advisory committee has looked at the issue. The people on the committee work in the field and are much more in touch with reality. We are ill equipped to make decisions before the advisory committee, which has just been announced, has been appointed.

However, I recognize that Canada Post will not provide better service by closing offices. This is incredible. Canada Post is closing offices, but jobs are being lost elsewhere at the same time. Yet jobs have been lost in the offices that have been closed, and Canada Post is having to retrain people and assign them to new duties elsewhere. This is truly incomprehensible, because Canada Post is making money.

People ask me if things are going well elsewhere. The mail service in the United States was losing money at a terrific rate. The Americans restructured the service, without closing even the tiniest post office in the smallest town in rural Nebraska, and succeeded in turning a profit.

* * *

● (1730)

[English]

CANADA MARINE ACT

The House resumed from May 5, consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Canada Marine Act, the Canada Transportation Act, the Pilotage Act and other Acts in consequence, be read the third time and passed.

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 at the third reading stage of Bill C-23.

Call in the members.

● (1755)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 96)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	André
Arthur	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Barbot
Barnes	Beaumier
Bell (North Vancouver)	Bellavance
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Bigras	Blackburn
Blais	Blaney
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Boucher
Bourgeois	Brisson
Brown (Oakville)	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)

Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Cardin	Carrie
Carrier	Casson
Chan	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coderre	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crête
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cummins
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	DeBellefeuille
Del Mastro	Demers
Deschamps	Devolin
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Doyle	Dryden
Duceppe	Dykstra
Easter	Emerson
Epp	Eyking
Faille	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Galipeau	Gallant
Gaudet	Godfrey
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guarnieri
Guergis	Guimond
Hall Findlay	Hanger
Harper	Harris
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Holland	Hubbard
Jaffier	Jean
Jennings	Kadis
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laforest	Laframboise
Lake	Lalonde
Lauzon	Lavallée
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lemieux	Lessard
Lévesque	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lussier
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Malo	Maloney
Manning	Mark
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Matthews	Mayes
McCallum	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Ouellet
Pacetti	Paquette
Paradis	Patry
Pearson	Perron
Petit	Picard
Plamondon	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Rae	Rajotte
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Scheer	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shipleigh
Simard	Simms
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	St-Cyr

Government Orders

St-Hilaire
St. Denis
Steckle
Strahl
Telegdi
Thi Lac
Basques
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews
Trost
Tweed
Van Loan
Verner
Volpe
Warawa
Watson
Williams
Wrzesnewskyj

St. Amand
Stanton
Storseth
Szabo
Temelkovski
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tilson
Tonks
Turner
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Vincent
Wallace
Warkentin
Wilfert
Wilson
Yelich— 240

NAYS

Members

Angus
Bell (Vancouver Island North)
Charlton
Christopherson
Crowder
Davies
Godin
Layton
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
Nash
Savoie
Stoffer— 25

Atamanenko
Bevington
Chow
Comartin
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Dewar
Julian
Marston
Masse
McDonough
Priddy
Siksay

PAIRED

Members

Asselin
Breitkreuz
Gravel
Hinton
Pallister
Smith

Batters
Brunelle
Guay
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Roy
Sweet— 12

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

[English]

NUCLEAR LIABILITY AND COMPENSATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-5, An Act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions on the motions at report stage of Bill C-5.

[Translation]

The question is on Motion No. 1. The vote on this motion will also apply to Motions Nos. 2 to 5, 8, 11 and 12.

[English]

A negative vote on Motion No. 1 requires the question to be put on Motions Nos. 16, 17 and 18.

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I think if you were to seek it you would find the unanimous consent of the House to apply the results

of the vote just taken to the motion presently before the House, with Conservative members present this evening voting no.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, Liberals present will be voting no.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois will vote against this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the members of the NDP who are present will be voting yes on this motion.

● (1800)

[English]

Mr. Blair Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I will be voting no.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Thibault: Mr. Speaker, I am voting against this motion.

Mr. André Arthur: Mr. Speaker, I would like to vote against this motion.

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 97)

YEAS

Members

Angus
Bell (Vancouver Island North)
Charlton
Christopherson
Crowder
Davies
Godin
Layton
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
Nash
Savoie
Stoffer— 25

Atamanenko
Bevington
Chow
Comartin
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Dewar
Julian
Marston
Masse
McDonough
Priddy
Siksay

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Albrecht
Allen
Ambrose
Anderson
Arthur
Bagnell
Baird
Barnes
Bell (North Vancouver)
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Bigras
Blais
Bonsant
Bouchard
Bourgeois
Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Barrie)
Byrne
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cardin
Carrier

Ablonczy
Alghabra
Allison
Anders
André
Bachand
Bains
Barbot
Beaumier
Bellavance
Bernier
Bezan
Blackburn
Blaney
Boshcoff
Boucher
Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bruinooge
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie
Casson

Government Orders

Chan	Chong	Thi Lac	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Clarke	Clement	Basques)	
Coderre	Comuzzi	Thibault (West Nova)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Cotler	Crête	Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cummins	Toews	Tonks
D'Amours	Davidson	Trost	Turner
Day	DeBellefeuille	Tweed	Van Kesteren
Del Mastro	Demers	Van Loan	Vellacott
Deschamps	Devolin	Verner	Vincent
Dhaliwal	Dhalla	Volpe	Wallace
Dion	Dosanjh	Warawa	Warkentin
Doyle	Dryden	Watson	Willfert
Duceppe	Dykstra	Williams	Wilson
Easter	Emerson	Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich— 240
Epp	Eyking		
Faille	Fast		
Finley	Fitzpatrick		
Flaherty	Fletcher		
Folco	Freeman		
Fry	Gagnon	Asselin	Batters
Galipeau	Gallant	Breitkreuz	Brunelle
Gaudet	Godfrey	Gravel	Guay
Goldring	Goodale	Hinton	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Goodyear	Gourde	Pallister	Roy
Grewal	Guarnieri	Smith	Sweet— 12
Guergis	Guimond		
Hall Findlay	Hanger		
Harper	Harris		
Hawn	Hearn		
Hiebert	Hill		
Holland	Hubbard		
Jaffer	Jean		
Jennings	Kadis		
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karetak-Lindell		
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)		
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan		
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)		
Laforest	Laframboise		
Lake	Lalonde		
Lauzon	Lavallée		
Lebel	LeBlanc		
Lee	Lemay		
Lemieux	Lessard		
Lévesque	Lukiwski		
Lunn	Lussier		
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)		
MacKenzie	Malhi		
Malo	Maloney		
Manning	Mark		
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)		
Matthews	Mayes		
McCallum	McGuinty		
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)		
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Menzies	Angus	Atamanenko
Merrifield	Miller	Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bevington
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	Charlton	Chow
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani	Christopherson	Comartin
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)	Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Murray	Nadeau	Davies	Dewar
Nicholson	Norlock	Godin	Julian
O'Connor	Obhrai	Layton	Marston
Oda	Ouellet	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Pacetti	Paquette	Mathysen	McDonough
Paradis	Patry	Nash	Priddy
Pearson	Perron	Savoie	Siksay
Petit	Picard	Stoffer— 25	
Plamondon	Poilievre		
Prentice	Preston		
Rae	Rajotte		
Ratansi	Redman		
Regan	Reid	Abbott	Ablonczy
Richardson	Ritz	Albrecht	Alghabra
Rodriguez	Rota	Allen	Allison
Russell	Savage	Ambrose	Anders
Scheer	Schellenberger	Anderson	André
Sgro	Shiple	Arthur	Bachand
Simard	Simms	Bagnell	Bains
Skelton	Solberg	Baird	Barbot
Sorenson	St-Cyr	Barnes	Beaumier
St-Hilaire	St. Amand	Bell (North Vancouver)	Bellavance
St. Denis	Stanton	Benoit	Bernier
Steckle	Storseth	Bevilacqua	Bezan
Strahl	Szabo	Bigras	Blackburn
Telegdi	Temelkovski	Blais	Blaney
		Bonsant	Boshcoff

PAIRED

Members

Batters
 Brunelle
 Guay
 Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
 Roy
 Sweet— 12

The Speaker: I declare Motions Nos. 1, 2 to 5, 8, 11 and 12 lost.
[English]

The question is on Motion No. 16. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, were you to seek it you would find unanimous consent of the House to apply the results of the vote just taken to the motion presently before the House.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(The House divided on Motion No. 16, which was negated on the following division:)

*(Division No. 98)***YEAS**

Members

Atamanenko
 Bevington
 Chow
 Comartin
 Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
 Dewar
 Julian
 Marston
 Masse
 McDonough
 Priddy
 Siksay

NAYS

Members

Abblonczy
 Alghabra
 Allison
 Anders
 André
 Bachand
 Bains
 Barbot
 Beaumier
 Bellavance
 Bernier
 Bezan
 Blackburn
 Blaney
 Boshcoff

Government Orders

Bouchard
Bourgeois
Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Barrie)
Byrne
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cardin
Carrier
Chan
Clarke
Coderre
Cotler
Cullen (Etobicoke North)
D'Amours
Day
Del Mastro
Deschamps
Dhaliwal
Dion
Doyle
Duceppe
Easter
Epp
Faille
Finley
Flaherty
Folco
Fry
Galipeau
Gaudet
Goldring
Goodyear
Grewal
Guergis
Hall Findlay
Harper
Hawn
Hiebert
Holland
Jaffer
Jennings
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Laforest
Lake
Lauzon
Lebel
Lee
Lemieux
Lévesque
Lunn
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Malo
Manning
Marleau
Matthews
McCallum
McGuire
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Merrifield
Mills
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murray
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Pacetti
Paradis
Pearson
Petit
Plamondon
Prentice
Rae
Ratansi
Regan
Richardson
Rodriguez
Russell
Scheer
Sgro

Boucher
Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bruinooogé
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie
Casson
Chong
Clement
Comuzzi
Crête
Cummins
Davidson
DeBellefeuille
Demers
Devolin
Dhalla
Dosanjh
Dryden
Dykstra
Emerson
Eyking
Fast
Fitzpatrick
Fletcher
Freeman
Gagnon
Gallant
Godfrey
Goodale
Gourde
Guarnieri
Guimond
Hanger
Harris
Hearn
Hill
Hubbard
Jean
Kadis
Karetak-Lindell
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Khan
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laframboise
Lalonde
Lavallée
LeBlanc
Lemay
Lessard
Lukiwski
Lussier
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malhi
Maloney
Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayes
McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Mourani
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau
Norlock
Obhrai
Ouellet
Paquette
Patry
Perron
Picard
Poilievre
Preston
Rajotte
Redman
Reid
Ritz
Rota
Savage
Schellenberger
Shipley

Simard
Skelton
Sorenson
St-Hilaire
St. Denis
Steckle
Strahl
Telegdi
Thi Lac
Basques)
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews
Trost
Tweed
Van Loan
Verner
Volpe
Warawa
Watson
Williams
Wrzesnewskyj

Simms
Solberg
St-Cyr
St. Amand
Stanton
Storseth
Szabo
Temelkovski
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tilson
Tonks
Turner
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Vincent
Wallace
Warkentin
Wilfert
Wilson
Yelich— 240

PAIRED

Members

Asselin
Breitkreuz
Gravel
Hinton
Pallister
Smith

Batters
Brunelle
Guay
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Roy
Sweet— 12

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 16 lost.

The question is on Motion No. 17. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, it is the same scenario. If you were to seek it, I think you would find the unanimous consent of the House to apply the results of the vote just taken to the motion currently before the House.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(The House divided on Motion No. 17, which was negated on the following division:)

*(Division No. 99)***YEAS**

Members

Angus
Bell (Vancouver Island North)
Charlton
Christopherson
Crowder
Davies
Godin
Layton
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
Nash
Savoie
Stoffer— 25

Atamanenko
Bevington
Chow
Comartin
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Dewar
Julian
Marston
Masse
McDonough
Priddy
Siksay

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Albrecht
Allen
Ambrose
Anderson
Arthur
Bagnell

Ablonczy
Alghabra
Allison
Anders
André
Bachand
Bains

Government Orders

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Albrecht
Allen
Ambrose
Anderson
Arthur
Bagnell
Baird
Barnes
Bell (North Vancouver)
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Bigras
Blais
Bonsant
Bouchard
Bourgeois
Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Barrie)
Byrne
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cardin
Carrier
Chan
Clarke
Coderre
Cotler
Cullen (Etobicoke North)
D'Amours
Day
Del Mastro
Deschamps
Dhaliwal
Dion
Doyle
Duceppe
Easter
Epp
Faille
Finley
Flaherty
Folco
Fry
Galipeau
Gaudet
Goldring
Goodyear
Grewal
Guergis
Hall Findlay
Harper
Hawn
Hiebert
Holland
Jaffer
Jennings
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Laforest
Lake
Lauzon
Lebel
Lee
Lemieux
Lévesque
Lunn
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Malo
Manning
Marleau
Matthews
McCallum
McGuire
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Merrifield
Mills
Moore (Fundy Royal)

Ablonczy
Alghabra
Allison
Anders
André
Bachand
Bains
Barbot
Beaumier
Bellavance
Bernier
Bezan
Blackburn
Blaney
Boshcoff
Boucher
Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bruinooge
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie
Casson
Chong
Clement
Comuzzi
Crête
Cummins
Davidson
DeBellefeuille
Demers
Devolin
Dhalla
Dosanjh
Dryden
Dykstra
Emerson
Eyking
Fast
Fitzpatrick
Fletcher
Freeman
Gagnon
Gallant
Godfrey
Goodale
Gourde
Guarnieri
Guimond
Hanger
Harris
Hearn
Hill
Hubbard
Jean
Kadis
Karetak-Lindell
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Khan
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laframboise
Lafonde
Lavallée
LeBlanc
Lemay
Lessard
Lukiwski
Lussier
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malhi
Maloney
Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayes
McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Mourani

Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murray
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Pacetti
Paradis
Pearson
Petit
Plamondon
Prentice
Rae
Ratansi
Regan
Richardson
Rodriguez
Russell
Scheer
Sgro
Simard
Skelton
Sorenson
St-Hilaire
St. Denis
Steckle
Strahl
Telegdi
Thi Lac
Basques)
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews
Trost
Tweed
Van Loan
Verner
Volpe
Warawa
Watson
Williams
Wrzesnewskyj

Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau
Norlock
Obhrai
Ouellet
Paquette
Patry
Perron
Picard
Poilievre
Preston
Rajotte
Redman
Reid
Ritz
Rota
Savage
Schellenberger
Shipley
Simms
Solberg
St-Cyr
St. Amand
Stanton
Storseth
Szabo
Temelkovski
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les

Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)

Tilson
Tonks
Turner
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Vincent
Wallace
Warkentin
Wilfert
Wilson
Yelich — 240

PAIRED

Members

Asselin
Breitkreuz
Gravel
Hinton
Pallister
Smith

Batters
Brunelle
Guay
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Roy
Sweet — 12

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 18 lost.

The question is on Motion No. 6.

[*Translation*]

A negative vote on Motion No. 6 requires the question to be put on Motion No. 21.

[*English*]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Hon. Jay Hill: No, Mr. Speaker, it is not the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion. If you were to seek it you would find unanimous consent to apply the results of the vote just taken to the motion presently before the House.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(The House divided on Motion No. 6, which was negated on the following division:)

*Government Orders**(Division No. 101)***YEAS**

Members

Angus	Atamanenko
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bevington
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Comartin
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Davies	Dewar
Godin	Julian
Layton	Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathyssen	McDonough
Nash	Priddy
Savoie	Siksay
Stoffer — 25	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	André
Arthur	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Barbot
Barnes	Beaumier
Bell (North Vancouver)	Bellavance
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Bigras	Blackburn
Blais	Blaney
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Boucher
Bourgeois	Brison
Brown (Oakville)	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinoooge
Byrne	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Cardin	Carrie
Carrier	Casson
Chan	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coderre	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crête
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cummins
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	DeBellefeuille
Del Mastro	Demers
Deschamps	Devolin
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Doyle	Dryden
Duceppe	Dykstra
Easter	Emerson
Epp	Eyking
Faille	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Galipeau	Gallant
Gaudet	Godfrey
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guarnieri
Guergis	Guimond
Hall Findlay	Hanger
Harper	Harris
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Holland	Hubbard
Jaffer	Jean
Jennings	Kadis
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)

Laforest	Laframboise
Lake	Lalonde
Lauzon	Lavallée
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lemieux	Lessard
Lévesque	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lussier
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Malo	Maloney
Manning	Mark
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Matthews	Mayes
McCallum	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Ouellet
Pacetti	Paquette
Paradis	Patry
Pearson	Perron
Petit	Picard
Plamondon	Poillievre
Prentice	Preston
Rae	Rajotte
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Scheer	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shiple
Simard	Simms
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	St-Cyr
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Stanton
Steckle	Storseth
Strahl	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thi Lac	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thibault (West Nova)	Tilson
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tonks
Toews	Turner
Trost	Van Kesteren
Tweed	Vellacott
Van Loan	Vincent
Verner	Wallace
Volpe	Warkentin
Warawa	Wilfert
Watson	Wilson
Williams	Yelich — 240
Wrzesnewskyj	

PAIRED

Members

Asselin	Batters
Breitkreuz	Brunelle
Gravel	Guay
Hinton	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Pallister	Roy
Smith	Sweet — 12

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 6 lost.

The question is on Motion No. 21. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I think we are getting encouragement from all members of the House to apply the results of the vote just taken to all of the amendments that you have to present to the House.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(The House divided on Motion No. 21, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 102)

YEAS

Members

Angus	Atamanenko
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bevington
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Comartin
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Davies	Dewar
Godin	Julian
Layton	Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	McDonough
Nash	Priddy
Savoie	Siksay
Stoffer — 25	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	André
Arthur	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Barbot
Barnes	Beaumier
Bell (North Vancouver)	Bellavance
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Bigras	Blackburn
Blais	Blaney
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Boucher
Bourgeois	Brison
Brown (Oakville)	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Cardin	Carrie
Carrier	Casson
Chan	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coderre	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crête
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cummins
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	DeBellefeuille
Del Mastro	Demers
Deschamps	Devolin
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Doyle	Dryden
Duceppe	Dykstra
Easter	Emerson
Epp	Eyking
Faille	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Galipeau	Gallant
Gaudet	Godfrey
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guarnieri
Guergis	Guimond
Hall Findlay	Hanger
Harper	Harris
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Holland	Hubbard

Government Orders

Jaffer	Jean
Jennings	Kadis
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laforest	Laframboise
Lake	Lalonde
Lauzon	Lavallée
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lemieux	Lessard
Lévesque	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lussier
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Malo	Maloney
Manning	Mark
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Matthews	Mayes
McCallum	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Ouellet
Pacetti	Paquette
Paradis	Patry
Pearson	Perron
Petit	Picard
Plamondon	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Rae	Rajotte
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Scheer	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shipley
Simard	Simms
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	St-Cyr
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Stanton
Steckle	Storseth
Strahl	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thi Lac	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Thibault (West Nova)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Turner
Tweed	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Vincent
Volpe	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Wilfert
Williams	Wilson
Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich — 240

PAIRED

Members

Asselin	Batters
Breitkreuz	Brunelle
Gravel	Guay
Hinton	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Pallister	Roy
Smith	Sweet — 12

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 21 lost.

Are we proceeding in this fashion with Motions Nos. 7 and 9 as well?

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1805)

(The House divided on Motion No. 7, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 103)

YEAS

Members

Angus	Atamanenko
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bevington
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Comartin
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Davies	Dewar
Godin	Julian
Layton	Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	McDonough
Nash	Priddy
Savoie	Siksay
Stoffer — 25	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	André
Arthur	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Barbot
Barnes	Beaumier
Bell (North Vancouver)	Bellavance
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Bigras	Blackburn
Blais	Blaney
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Boucher
Bourgeois	Brisson
Brown (Oakville)	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinoooge
Byrne	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Cardin	Carrie
Carrier	Casson
Chan	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coderre	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crête
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cummins
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	DeBellefeuille
Del Mastro	Demers
Deschamps	Devolin
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Doyle	Dryden
Duceppe	Dykstra
Easter	Emerson
Epp	Eyking
Faille	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Galipeau	Gallant
Gaudet	Godfrey
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guarnieri
Guergis	Guimond
Hall Findlay	Hanger
Harper	Harris
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill

Holland	Hubbard
Jaffer	Jean
Jennings	Kadis
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laforest	Laframboise
Lake	Lalonde
Lauzon	Lavallée
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lemieux	Lessard
Lévesque	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lussier
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Malo	Maloney
Manning	Mark
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Matthews	Mayes
McCallum	McGuinity
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Ouellet
Pacetti	Paquette
Paradis	Patry
Pearson	Perron
Petit	Picard
Plamondon	Poillievre
Prentice	Preston
Rae	Rajotte
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Scheer	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shipley
Simard	Simms
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	St-Cyr
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Stanton
Steckle	Storseth
Strahl	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thi Lac	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Thibault (West Nova)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Turner
Tweed	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Vincent
Volpe	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Wilfert
Williams	Wilson
Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich — 240

PAIRED

Members

Asselin	Batters
Breitkreuz	Brunelle
Gravel	Guay
Hinton	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Pallister	Roy
Smith	Sweet — 12

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 7 lost.

(The House divided on Motion No. 9, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 104)

YEAS

Members

Angus	Atamanenko
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bevington
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Comartin
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Davies	Dewar
Godin	Julian
Layton	Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	McDonough
Nash	Priddy
Savoie	Siksay
Stoffer — 25	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	André
Arthur	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Barbot
Barnes	Beaumier
Bell (North Vancouver)	Bellavance
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Bigras	Blackburn
Blais	Blaney
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Boucher
Bourgeois	Brisson
Brown (Oakville)	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Cardin	Carrie
Carrier	Casson
Chan	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coderre	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crête
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cummins
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	DeBellefeuille
Del Mastro	Demers
Deschamps	Devolin
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Doyle	Dryden
Duceppe	Dykstra
Easter	Emerson
Epp	Eyking
Faille	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Galipeau	Gallant
Gaudet	Godfrey
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guarnieri
Guergis	Guimond
Hall Findlay	Hanger
Harper	Harris
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Holland	Hubbard
Jaffer	Jean
Jennings	Kadis
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)

Government Orders

Laforest	Laframboise
Lake	Lalonde
Lauson	Lavallée
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lemieux	Lessard
Lévesque	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lussier
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Malo	Maloney
Manning	Mark
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Matthews	Mayes
McCallum	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Ouellet
Pacetti	Paquette
Paradis	Patry
Pearson	Perron
Petit	Picard
Plamondon	Poillievre
Prentice	Preston
Rae	Rajotte
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Scheer	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shipley
Simard	Simms
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	St-Cyr
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Stanton
Steckle	Storseth
Strahl	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thi Lac	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Thibault (West Nova)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Turner
Tweed	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Vincent
Volpe	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Wilfert
Williams	Wilson
Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich — 240

PAIRED

Members

Asselin	Batters
Breitkreuz	Brunelle
Gravel	Guay
Hinton	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Pallister	Roy
Smith	Sweet — 12

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 9 lost.

Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Government Orders

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 105)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	André
Arthur	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Barbot
Barnes	Beaumier
Bell (North Vancouver)	Bellavance
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Bigras	Blackburn
Blais	Blaney
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Boucher
Bourgeois	Brison
Brown (Oakville)	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinoooge
Byrne	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Cardin	Carrie
Carrier	Casson
Chan	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coderre	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crête
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cummins
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	DeBellefeuille
Del Mastro	Demers
Deschamps	Devolin
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Doyle	Dryden
Duceppe	Dykstra
Easter	Emerson
Epp	Eyking
Faillie	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Galipeau	Gallant
Gaudet	Godfrey
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guarnieri
Guergis	Guimond
Hall Findlay	Hanger
Harper	Harris
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Holland	Hubbard
Jaffer	Jean
Jennings	Kadis

Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laforest	Laframboise
Lake	Lalonde
Lauzon	Lavallée
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lemieux	Lessard
Lévesque	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lussier
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Malo	Maloney
Manning	Mark
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Matthews	Mayes
McCallum	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Ouellet
Pacetti	Paquette
Paradis	Patry
Pearson	Perron
Petit	Picard
Plamondon	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Rae	Rajotte
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Scheer	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shipley
Simard	Simms
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	St-Cyr
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Stanton
Steckle	Storseth
Strahl	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thi Lac	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thibault (West Nova)	Tilson
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Toews	Turner
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Tweed	Vellacott
Van Loan	Vincent
Verner	Wallace
Volpe	Warkentin
Warawa	Wilfert
Watson	Wilson
Williams	Yelich— 240
Wrzesnewskyj	

NAYS

Members

Angus	Atamanenko
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bevington
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Comartin
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Davies	Dewar
Godin	Julian
Layton	Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	McDonough
Nash	Priddy
Savoie	Siksay
Stoffer— 25	

Private Members' Business

PAIRED

Members

Asselin
Breitkreuz
Gravel
Hinton
Pallister
Smith

Batters
Brunelle
Guay
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Roy
Sweet— 12

Le Président: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

It being 6:13 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1815)

[English]

TREATMENT OF RARE DISORDERS

The House resumed from April 14 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the remainder of my time to speak to this important motion. As I mentioned before, I am always honoured to stand in the House to speak on behalf of the people of Cambridge and North Dumfries.

The government understands the seriousness of the issues faced by Canadians who suffer rare diseases. We have taken action on these issues for this vulnerable population of Canadians and we have every intention of continuing to do so. This government recognizes the challenges facing Canadians who suffer from rare diseases, including limited treatment options, high costs and uneven approaches to reimbursement by the provinces and territories. We have worked with the member for North Vancouver and we appreciate the cooperation of the member. I am pleased today to move the following amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "That" and substituting the words:

"in the opinion of the House, the government should respond specifically to the challenges faced by Canadians with rare diseases and disorders, in collaboration with provinces and territories (P/Ts) and stakeholders by:

- (a) examining options for defining serious rare diseases;
- (b) examining options, including the possible creation of a specific fund, to improve access to rare disease treatments, building on the recent work undertaken by federal and provincial/territorial governments under the National Pharmaceuticals Strategy;
- (c) considering the establishment of a multi-stakeholder advisory body, including the Common Drug Review, treaters and patients, to recommend treatment access for life-threatening or serious rare disorders, based on scientific standards and social values;
- (d) exploring options to consider national and international expert advice in developing criteria for treating patients based on scientific evidence and patient impact, and to link these activities with ongoing post-market monitoring of real world drug safety and effectiveness;
- (e) considering options to encourage research and development into treatments for rare diseases and other unmet health needs;
- (f) considering internationally accepted standards for conduct of clinical trials in rare disorders appropriate for the challenges inherent to very small patient populations;

(g) considering how Health Canada's work on a progressive licensing framework could provide appropriate support to the design of clinical trials for very small patient populations and appropriate review of evidence submitted from these trials; and,

(h) reporting the progress accomplished to the House within 12 months".

Rare diseases mean just that. They are rare. That is the good news. Very few people get them—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): It is my duty to inform hon. members that pursuant to Standing Order 93, no amendment may be proposed to a private member's motion or to the motion for second reading of a private member's bill unless the sponsor of the item indicates his or her consent. Therefore, I ask the hon. member for North Vancouver if he consents to this amendment being moved.

Mr. Don Bell: Mr. Speaker, yes, I do consent. I am in agreement with the amendment.

• (1820)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The debate is on the amendment.

The hon. member for Compton—Stanstead.

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to the motion of my colleague from North Vancouver. I know that his family has been touched by a death related to a rare disease and I sympathize with him and his loved ones.

I have been following the development of treatments for rare diseases for a number of years now. I became aware of this issue when I learned that a number of people in my riding, in the Eastern Townships, have these types of diseases.

Every day, these patients are fighting Pompe's disease, Fabry disease, Hurler's syndrome, or Gaucher disease, to name a few. If you are like me, those diseases do not sound familiar at all, but they have a terrible impact on the physical and emotional health of those afflicted.

I first encountered this issue not because it was a current issue—it still is not. As their name suggests, these are rare diseases and they affect only a few people. Today's motion talks about a disease that affects less than one person in 2,000. There are therefore few known cases of such diseases. These diseases have long been neglected by our health care system, by government action and by the biomedical field.

People with rare diseases are often forgotten and left to fend for themselves. From a biomedical standpoint, it is more cost-effective to conduct research on a certain type of cancer than on a rare disease. However, to date, roughly 6,000 to 8,000 diseases are considered rare in the world. In the past 25 to 30 years, pharmaceutical companies that focus their research only on rare diseases have begun appearing. These companies have made major advances. More than 200 drugs and a number of natural products have been identified.

Private Members' Business

In the entire process, once a drug has been approved, it is not access to it that is prohibitive to patients, but the cost. In my riding, when I looked into rare diseases I found out that treatment for these diseases costs a small fortune. I am talking about \$250,000 a year for replacement enzymes to treat Fabry disease or close to \$400,000 a year to treat Hurler's syndrome.

You and I, Mr. Speaker, who earn very good salaries, would not have enough money to pay for such expenses. For people who have to stop working to treat their disease, it is impossible to pay for such an essential need.

I am certain I will be told that, in Quebec, drug plans are mandatory and coverage can be either public or private. That is the problem. Although a drug has been approved by Health Canada, it is not automatically covered by drug plans. In Quebec, several drugs are not covered by the Régie de l'assurance maladie.

At present, some patients can take advantage of pilot projects run by the Government of Quebec whereas others benefit from the goodwill of pharmaceutical companies that provide the drugs for free for a certain period of time.

Things are difficult enough when you are sick. Just imagine if you had a rare illness. There are few doctors specializing in rare diseases and the drugs that help cost more in one year than what some individuals earn in a lifetime.

I would add a third concern, that of distance. At least it is a very concrete concern for patients from the Eastern Townships. Some have to travel almost one hour from Stanstead, Victoriaville or even Lac-Mégantic to receive specialized care at the Centre hospitalier universitaire in Sherbrooke.

That is what a patient suffering from an orphan illness has to deal with provided drugs exist to treat the illness.

I would also like to point out that, in November 2005, the federal health department and Quebec ministry of health initiated talks on a national orphan drug program. This program was to be introduced while respecting Quebec's jurisdiction.

• (1825)

Unfortunately for the patients who are waiting for such a program, the 2005-06 federal election and the arrival of a new government considerably delayed this agreement from moving forward. Two and a half years later, the agreement still is not signed. I can easily explain why.

It is all because the Conservatives' open federalism is nothing but smoke and mirrors. Before signing an agreement on rare diseases, the current government wants to impose its conditions, which is not acceptable to Quebec.

Today's motion still does not respect the Quebec nation's jurisdiction over health matters. If Canada wants to create a national fund for rare diseases, then it can go right ahead.

The Quebec nation must be able to opt out of such a strategy and receive its share of the funding. It is not the federal government's place to tell Quebec where to invest in its own areas of jurisdiction.

In a letter I received on April 11 from the Portail québécois des maladies génétiques orphelines, the organization stated that provision B of this motion should be changed to respect provincial areas of jurisdiction. This letter even mentioned that one option would be to transfer the amounts of money to the provinces, based on the number of patients affected.

And, as you know, February 29 was the first International Rare Disease Day. CORD—Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders—was on Parliament Hill to raise awareness amongst members of Parliament about rare diseases and to promote the Chance for Life Fund. That day, I met a doctor from my constituency who is involved with both the Portail québécois des maladies génétiques orphelines and CORD. This devoted woman wants to see a fund equivalent to 2% of the total public drug expenditure budget established for rare diseases, echoing the motion from the member for North Vancouver. She understands that this could be problematic for Quebec, and she will respect the Bloc's position.

As you now know, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the member for North Vancouver's motion in principle. However, we have asked for the motion to be amended to take Quebec's system into account and to clarify the implications of the motion on our system. Quebec does not participate in the federal drug plan, and we would like to see that fact recognized in the motion. As long as that recognition is not there and the motion is not amended accordingly, the Bloc cannot support the motion as it stands.

[*English*]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity this evening to participate in the debate on the private member's Motion No. 426 which addresses the very complex issue of rare diseases and disorders and the toll it takes on the lives of an untold number of Canadian.

It may seem like something of an oxymoron to say that because, at first glance, a person might think that if the diseases and disorders are so very rare then how can it be that so many people's lives are affected. The reality is that there is a vast array of rare diseases and uncommon disorders that afflict the lives of a great many Canadians and, in many cases, cost them their lives, but the number of Canadians affected by any one of those rare disorders or rare diseases is relatively small.

That poses some very serious challenges for the individuals who are suffering from the effects of those rare disorders and diseases, for their families and for the health care system.

I want to say at the outset how much I admire the leadership that has been shown by the member for North Vancouver, not only in bringing this issue to the attention of parliamentarians and educating us, through a variety of means, about the real impact of the current inadequacy of our health care system to respond to this situation, but for going so much further than that, so much further than just making us aware.

Private Members' Business

I am one of many members of Parliament who was privileged to be in attendance at an awareness event that was co-sponsored with the Speaker of the House. I want to express my appreciation to the Speaker for having shown an interest and a commitment to support the efforts of the member for North Vancouver when he hosted an event here on Parliament Hill. Some of the good work that does get done is not often evident to the public. The member and members of his family shared the devastating story of losing first one and then a second grandchild to a rare disease for which there was no treatment available that might have saved or prolonged the life of those grandchildren.

I want to express my deep admiration for the courage and persistence the member has shown in bringing this issue forward. To state the obvious, the member, having done this, will never bring back his loved ones but I think it has been evident that this is a labour of love and it is not only in support of his son and daughter-in-law but also other families who are struggling with similar circumstances. I am sure it cannot be easy to again and again muster the energy, the inner resources and the courage to share that story because it is so devastating.

Not only did the member himself but his son, who suffered the loss of his two young children to a rare disease, stood among parliamentarians to tell this very difficult story about such a deep loss to him, his wife and the extended family.

However, the efforts did not stop there. The member serves as president, or certainly did, although I am not sure if he still does, of an organization formed to bring this fight to life, an organization known as CORD, the Canadian Organization for Rare Diseases.

● (1830)

This has been a persistent information campaign and advocacy group to bring to the light of day, to bring to the attention of Canadians, to lobby parliamentarians and to say that our current government's response to the plight of so many people is simply inadequate.

Some might ask, how can we expect to develop the kind of resources that would be needed, very expensive treatment regimes and pharmaceuticals, when only small numbers of people are afflicted by each of these different disorders?

If one closely examines the motion brought forward by the member, some very practical considerations are contained in it. I do not have time to go through them in detail, but they seem eminently reasonable and practical. There is nothing unrealistic about what has been put forward. I think that is why there has been absolutely no hesitation about members coming forward to indicate their support.

The fact is we are one of the few remaining countries in the developed world that does not have a comprehensive policy to address this very challenging problem. We do not have an official definition of a rare disorder. Nor do we have an orphan drug policy. There is no reason for us not to move on this. I hope all members will see the wisdom of supporting the motion.

I know the member from Quebec has raised a jurisdictional question. It is really a question about what often arises in regard to Quebec's handling of similar social-economic policies. I hope this

would not in any way, shape or form be used as a reason not to achieve unanimous consent on the motion.

Although there has been some compromise, some elements lost in the motion as a result of the government indicating that it would support some amendments, it is nevertheless some kind of progress that we can move forward to put in place some very specific recommendations. It is unfortunate that the government, as I understand it, has insisted that the requirement for it to come forward with report within six months not be contained in the motion. Instead the government has indicated 12 months is the only timeframe to which it is prepared to commit. At least it gets us on a path to begin to look seriously at what kinds of policies and programs need to be put in place to deal with this.

When I first began to become sensitized to the devastation of the rare diseases and disorders, which have such an impact on families, I knew only second-hand of some of the persons who were struggling with such disorders. As chance would have it, during the last year, I had a very close family member who was stricken initially by a completely undiagnosed illness. It went on for a considerable period of time. It turned out to be an extremely rare disorder. The good news is there is progress in dealing with such disorders.

One very important thing in the motion is the recognition that there needs to be accommodations for the kinds of clinical trials that would be conducted and what the regulations to govern those trials would be. We are talking small populations, and one has to accommodate that reality.

It is too easy to say that we cannot really do that, that this is very expensive. An appeal was appropriately made to the intended universality of the Canada Health Act that because we had small numbers afflicted by these various rare disorders and diseases, that did not mean people should not expect to be covered by the intended provisions of the act. Regardless of where one lives and how much money one has or one's family has, people should receive as close to equal treatment as is possible.

● (1835)

I am very pleased we are now looking at this motion, which I hope will be universally endorsed. With the modern breakthroughs in scientific advances and modern research, this is an area in which there is no question we can make enormous gains and have a huge impact on the lives of people who are afflicted by such diseases and disorders, on their families and on the health care system to apply these new breakthroughs in knowledge.

The most shocking and obscene thing is the amount of money spent on using new information and technology to develop new weaponry, weapons of war, for example, as if this is some kind of a step in the direction of civilization. We need to recognize that we have to harness new knowledge and new research advances for the betterment of humankind. What better example could we have than the one now before us, as a result of the hard work by the member for North Vancouver. He would be the first to—

● (1840)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I will have to stop the hon. member for Halifax since she has gone over her time.

The hon. member for West Nova.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to this important bill.

I would like to begin by congratulating the hon. member for North Vancouver for all his work, as well as all the members who gave him their support.

I find the Bloc Québécois' approach to this issue rather unfortunate. We are looking at the issue of rare diseases and how the family members of those afflicted with such diseases often find themselves in serious difficulty. And rather than getting some cooperation from all the parties of this House, it has become a constitutional and federal-provincial issue. There must be some way to come together on this.

Perhaps this bill does nothing to advance the constitutional matters the Bloc Québécois are always talking about. In any case, I do not think it holds them back or is a disadvantage to them in any way.

I hope the members will find the courage to support this bill and support our member for North Vancouver. He has done an enormous amount of work, made some compromises and landed the support of some government members, NDP members and of course his own colleagues for this important bill.

[English]

I listened to the member for Halifax. She said a lot of the things I wanted to say, so I will try not to repeat them.

She talked about the investments in weapons of mass destruction as opposed to investments to help people. I remember a friend of mine, Gerald Percy O'Neil. He was at the golf course reading *The ChronicleHerald* and started swearing his head off. On one page there was an article, and I do not remember the exact amount of money, about \$14 million or \$15 million having been spent to develop the Jarvik 7 artificial heart to keep people alive while waiting for heart transplants or other treatments. On the next page was an article about an equal amount of money being spent on developing lethal injections to kill healthy people. It is one of the contradictions of our society.

When we look at the motion brought forward by the member for North Vancouver, we have to evaluate a couple of things. We have to step back and think of how our society will be measured by people 200 years from now. It will be done the same way that we have evaluated societies and civilizations that were before us, and that is by the way they treated their minorities and the weakest in society.

If we look at the people who need help, who need all of us to come together to give them some assistance, the victims of rare disorders would be among the first. They are not numerous enough to ask for assistance or have purchasing power. There are not enough to cause research to happen on therapies, drugs and treatments that can help them.

Do not forget that when we encourage research on treatments to help people with rare disorders, it helps all of us. It helps civilization in general because it brings other treatments that can be used by others. Nothing is in isolation in science. Any information we discover, whether DNA research, nerve regeneration and all these

types of things we need in these cases, will help all of us and society generally.

I was looking at the definition and rare disorders, which include such conditions as cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy, thalassemia, mucopolysaccharides, pulmonary hypertension, Fabry disease, Gaucher's disease, Waldenstrom's anemia, kidney cancer and acromegaly. I will add Alström, as well as spina bifida. We could add to that again and again.

I lost a brother who I never knew. He died shortly after childbirth of a disease for which at that time, the mid 1950s, there was no hope, no chance, no consideration given to survival. We found out later it was encephalitis. Now 99.9% of such cases survive. If the research had been done on those things, my mother would have had another child.

A friend of mine has only one child, who has smooth brain syndrome. I do not know the proper term for that disorder. Because there was a 25% chance that his next child would have the same syndrome, he and his wife chose not to have more children. We are not too far away in the research where the parents can find out, but it requires research. It will happen. The capability is in Canada and internationally, but there has to be payback for this research. It is not in isolation.

Therefore, it requires some assistance from us as a society to purchase the therapies for rare disorders as they become available. There are always ways to negotiate with the producers of the pharmaceuticals or the therapies, reasonable ways.

The member for North Vancouver brought up the case of pulmonary hypertension, for which he is very familiar. He lost his grandson to it, a grandson who was fortunate enough to live longer than expected. It very seldom happens to children. Usually people who are diagnosed with this are a little older. The member's family was able to have him around. I congratulate his father, Durhane, for accepting the position of president of the CORD organization to try to get assistance for other people.

● (1845)

Many people in my community have Alström's within their families. Two of my former co-workers have experienced that disorder. It is prevalent in western Nova Scotia. Some research is being done on the genetics of it at Mount Desert Island in the village of Bar Harbour. When we look at all the genetic work that is being done everywhere, I think at one point we will be able to identify it very early, perhaps in the fetus, and be able to do the DNA treatments that will avoid the consequences of that disease.

We know the same thing is being done for people who suffer from spina bifida and people who suffer from spinal accidents. We do not know how far away we are, but we know the research is coming. We will be able to do the regeneration of nerve cells that will allow them to regain the use of their limbs. We must keep going. If we provide support for these types of rare diseases, there will be a lot of ancillary benefits for many other people as well.

When I look at the question of cystic fibrosis, I am reminded of Dan Nadeau who served as an RCMP officer in my riding for quite some time and is now working in Regina. Dan lost three sons to cystic fibrosis. It would be easy for a person in that position to withdraw from society, to be very discouraged, to lament his loss, but that is not the position that Dan took. Dan volunteers as a volleyball coach with many community organizations and continues to work. He would be the first to stand in line to support the member for North Vancouver so that other families are not struck with this illness.

Maybe 30 years down the line it will be cystic fibrosis. Maybe 20 years it will be pulmonary hypertension, maybe Alström's in 10. Who knows what the next breakthrough will be? We know what we have been able to accomplish with Fabry's disease, which has a huge concentration in Nova Scotia. People in other communities across the country have this disease. Alberta has quite a few cases. Tancook Island in Nova Scotia seems to be the hot bed.

With some assistance from the federal government, working with pharmaceutical manufacturers and the provincial government, we have been able to give quality of life to those people. They are able to continue working. They are able to look forward to a reasonable life expectancy. Without the treatments available they had a very short life expectancy and no quality of life, no ability to work or to raise a family, or the other things that we all take for granted.

I believe that the potential is there if the desire is there. I want to congratulate all members of the House who are supporting this motion. I want to thank the government for having negotiated in good faith with the member for North Vancouver, so that we could come to a compromise resolution.

I also want to thank NORD, the National Organization for Rare Disorders, that was part of the discussions all along. What we are putting forward in the House is not everything the organization wanted, but it understands that this is a step forward. This motion seeks to bring everybody together at the same table to find the long term solutions. It has been a pleasure to speak to this motion. I look forward to voting in favour of it.

• (1850)

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Parliamentary Secretary for Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that this government echoes the member for North Vancouver in his compassion for Canadians suffering from rare diseases.

This member has been touched personally by a rare disease in his family and has brought that real-life experience to the House in a way that I have not seen any other member do in the short time I have been here. The member for North Vancouver has approached this issue with passion, compassion, empathy, understanding, and with the knowledge of how to get things done in the House of Commons.

In a time where we are in a minority Parliament and a lot of people talk about the toing and froing and the partisanship of the House, it is, I think, a testament to the member for North Vancouver that he was willing to work with other members of the House, including myself, to come up with wording that would have an effect in the long term, wording that would actually mean something a year from

now or five years from now, and wording that would help people with rare diseases.

This would not have happened without the intervention of the member for North Vancouver and his motion and, may I say, it would not have happened without the courage of his family, his son and his grandchildren.

As we move forward with this motion, I look forward to seeing many positive results because rare diseases are generally lifelong conditions, resulting in a lifetime of struggles for patients and their families.

Given the limited amount of information about these diseases, some of which may affect maybe up to three people in Canada, very small numbers, getting diagnosed is even a challenge and once diagnosed, there are often limited treatment options, which are often very expensive.

Once a drug is licensed, decisions are needed regarding whether it would be paid for publicly while patients wait for access to therapy. Manoeuvring through our health care system can be daunting, particularly when dealing with the day-to-day challenges of a life-threatening illness or disease.

I would also like to call to the members' attention the role of drug manufacturers that are setting extraordinarily high prices for these drugs, both in Canada and internationally.

I understand that treatment can run upwards to \$1 million per year, per patient, in some cases. Clearly, no single person can afford these costs, leaving governments to determine whether and how these drugs should be publicly reimbursed.

This government takes this issue very seriously. As I mentioned, I have worked very closely with the member for North Vancouver to make several amendments to the proposed motion. These amendments would allow us to explore a wider range of options for addressing the challenges posed by rare diseases.

However, we recognize that we cannot respond to this issue alone. Patients and caregivers, health care providers, provinces and territories, medical researchers and the public, which ultimately foots the bill for treatment, all have roles to play in responding to these challenges facing Canadians suffering from rare diseases. The amendments we have proposed reflect the diverse and essential roles of each stakeholder.

Our amendments highlight the need to work with the provinces and territories, in particular. They have an important role in delivering health care benefits to their residents, including determining public drug coverage for their residents. As such, they are faced with the majority of difficult decisions regarding whether and how they will fund treatments for rare diseases. These decisions are complex, not only because of the sheer cost of the drugs, but because there is often limited evidence on how they work.

Private Members' Business

•(1855)

The common drug review was created to assist jurisdictions with these challenges and the reimbursement costs. It plays an important role by reviewing drugs for clinical and cost effectiveness, and providing evidence-based recommendations to drug plans on whether and under what conditions a drug should be publicly reimbursed.

I should note that the Standing Committee on Health recently wrote a report on the common drug review. In the response we committed to continuing discussions with the provinces and territories with respect to how the common drug review looks at drugs for rare diseases. Our amendments therefore reflect the fact that the common drug review needs to be included in any considerations of an advisory body for rare diseases.

We have also further proposed that the motion be amended to examine options to improve access to rare disease treatments by building on recent work undertaken with provincial and territorial governments under the national pharmaceutical strategy.

The government believes that there are a range of possibilities to be examined with the provinces, territories and other stakeholders. Drugs for rare diseases raise a host of complex issues that are by no means unique to Canada. Other countries are grappling with the same problems and struggling to find appropriate, sustainable and ethical solutions. Even defining what counts as a rare disease is problematic as there is no international consensus on it.

Our amendments therefore reflect the need for more consideration before deciding on a single definition. We also need to be realistic with our timelines for meaningful progress on these issues recognizing the amount of work that needs to be done and the range of stakeholders involved. It is for this reason why our amendments propose extending the timeline to 12 months.

There is evidently much more work to be done with the stakeholders and with governments here in Canada and abroad. We need to ensure that we have the right approach with regard to research, regulations, and the right approach to reimbursement. We need to ensure that the processes by which we make decisions are transparent, evidence-based, rigorous, and take into account the patients' needs. We need to ensure that all parties, federal, provincial and territorial governments, researchers and health care providers have the right tools with which to make these decisions.

I believe that the motion that has been proposed with the amendments is another step in the right direction. I want to say that it has been a pleasure working with the member for North Vancouver. I have had the opportunity to know the member on a personal level and I am really touched on how he has approached this issue, and the impact that this issue has had on his family. I am sure there are many families that can relate to the member for North Vancouver's very difficult challenges, but together I think the House is making a statement, that progress can be made, and it will be made and the lives of Canadians will be better for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): There being no other speakers, I will give the hon. member for North Vancouver his five minutes right of reply.

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking those members of the parties who have supported this motion. I need to give particular recognition to the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, for the support he has given in helping to craft the amendments and work this motion through the government.

The inspiration for Motion No. 426 is found in the Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders "Chance for Life Fund". This is an action plan that CORD developed to address this issue and begin the process of establishing a made in Canada policy that will ensure patients with rare disorders have the exact same right and access to effective therapies or the same chance for life as all Canadians.

Durhane Wong-Rieger, president of CORD Canada, has been very helpful in drafting this motion also. I should mention that my son, Darren, is not associated directly with CORD but is in fact the president of Pulmonary Hypertension Association of Canada and has also been of assistance.

I am sure many Canadians can identify a family member or friend who suffers from a rare disorder. It affects one in eight Canadians as either a carrier or in fact a sufferer from a rare disease.

In my own riding, young Nicklas Harkins has MPS 1, an enzyme deficiency disease that is life-threatening. Eleven-year-old Szymon Cajmer from Toronto and young Trey Purcell from North Vancouver have MPS 2, otherwise known as Hunter syndrome.

Quite often, members are motivated by personal experience or tragedy to champion an issue. In my case, my grandson, Dylan Hunter Bell, was diagnosed with pulmonary hypertension at the age of two. For the last 10 years, Dylan required continual drug treatment administered directly into his heart, delivered from an intravenous pump which he wore in a backpack on his back. He was able to lead an activity restricted but otherwise generally normal life. He attended public school, played with his dog Teddy, was a whiz with computers and enjoyed meeting people. He would visit and take plush animals, which he called "stuffies", up to other children who were hospitalized in the Children's Hospital in Vancouver. He passed away July 14, 2007, the day after his 12th birthday.

I consider this motion to be a legacy to my grandson Dylan and to add meaning to his short life and the challenge he faced so bravely, as well as the many others, both patients and families, who continue to face personal health challenges in dealing with rare diseases.

I have heard it often said that a nation can be measured by how it treats its most vulnerable citizens, the elderly, the young and the sick. This is a way in which we can show that Canada is one of those nations that is to be recognized and honoured for the way it does treat its most vulnerable.

It is also often said that a long and difficult journey begins with a single step. I would suggest that this motion represents not only one but several steps in this journey for rare disease patients and their families.

I again thank the House for the support that is given for this and I look forward to the passage of this motion.

• (1900)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The question is on the main motion as amended. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Pursuant to Standing Order 93 the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 7, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT AND THE BUDGET

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, just before the budget was presented, I asked the Minister of Finance if he planned on putting in place measures that would really make a difference for seniors living in poverty.

Seniors whose only income consists of old age security combined with the guaranteed income supplement are living below the poverty line. All of us in this House and I believe the majority of Canadians and Quebecers know that. In my region and elsewhere, these individuals barely manage to balance a modest budget that covers only necessities. The poor are becoming poorer and their sad plight will not improve on its own. Quite the contrary.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Conservatives often respond with statistics—I imagine that is what they will do shortly—when confronted by human misery. However, statistics can be used to downplay the harsh realities. According to observers, although the poverty rate has fallen among seniors, the cost of basic needs is rising and is placing seniors in an increasingly critical situation.

Take, for example, the growing number of seniors who are forced to use food banks. This is not an urban legend. It is really happening. The price of basic goods is rising and the cost of getting from place to place is going up—think of the price of a litre of gas—as is the cost of housing, food, medications and other basic necessities.

The Conservative government is responsible for enabling seniors to meet their basic needs and to live with dignity. The government must honour that responsibility.

The budget did not really improve living conditions for the people I am talking about, except for those who continue to work after turning 65. These people will still be penalized, but a little less so than before. My motion, which was agreed to by a majority of the members of this House, would have improved things for seniors by 50% more than what the government did, but because I always applaud small steps in the right direction, I supported what the government did.

The budget failed to resolve the biggest problem with respect to seniors living in poverty. We know that there is a class—I hate using the word, but it is the one that fits—of seniors, those who are alone, who are having an even harder time than others, and who are mostly women.

Many groups and experts have asked the government to do something about this problem. We have a simple tool, the guaranteed income supplement. We know that this is a benefit for people who do not have private retirement fund income and for whom the government pension is not enough. The motion proposed raising the supplement for people who are single, widowed or divorced. We need to focus on helping our poorest seniors and women.

It met an urgent need, and I do not think that, as a society, we can allow ourselves to ignore these people who really need our help. The government did not help them in its budget. It still has a chance to help with the release of its next economic statement. I would like to remind the government that this is what a majority of members of the House want and that it should act now.

• (1905)

[*English*]

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for raising this issue in the House again. I know she cares deeply about seniors issues, as do all members of the government.

It must have been frustrating for the member during her three years with the Bloc Québécois when she had to sit idly by while it was completely incapable of accomplishing a single goal on the seniors file.

Adjournment Proceedings

Thankfully, Canadians now have a government that not only takes seniors issues seriously, but a government that is actually getting things done. We have spoken about this important issue in the House several times and once again I would like to point out to my friend from Rimouski that income for Canadian seniors has risen dramatically over the past 25 years.

According to Statistics Canada, the income of Canadian seniors has more than doubled during that time and the rate of poverty among seniors has been cut from 21% in 1980 to less than 6% today. Although we must recognize these facts, it is imperative that we also recognize that we cannot stop working hard to further reduce these numbers. I state this because even one senior living in poverty is one too many.

That is why this government has acted, and acted quickly, to support seniors issues and that is why, within months of being elected, this government introduced Bill C-36 to strengthen the Canada pension plan and the old age security programs for all seniors.

We have simplified the application process. We changed the rules so that seniors do not have to apply year after year for the benefits that they deserve, changes that the previous Liberal government never made during the 13 years it was in power.

In an effort to further reduce the number of seniors living in poverty, this government has overseen two increases to the guaranteed income supplement. Effective January 2006, we raised the guaranteed income supplement by 3.5%. We did this again in January 2007.

These measures are providing all single recipients of the guaranteed income supplement with an additional \$430 per year and \$700 more per year for a couple. These increases will raise the total guaranteed income supplement benefit by more than \$2.7 billion over the next five years. This will benefit more than 1.6 million GIS recipients and this will include more than 50,000 seniors who were not eligible for programs under the previous Liberal government.

Again, I want to thank the hon. member across the way for her question tonight. I want to assure her that Canadian seniors finally have a government that is interested in their issues and a government that will get real results.

• (1910)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Thibault: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I reject the first remark made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, although it does not surprise me. I reject it because no member of this House is more important than any other. I have no doubt that we all have the best interests of our constituents at heart. It is quite unpleasant to hear what she just said to me.

As for seniors, as everyone knows, our debt ranks as the lowest among industrialized countries. The Conservatives will not stop boasting about it. So why did they not use the surplus to help seniors, in particular, instead of using that money to pay down the debt? It is the responsibility of a government to redistribute wealth

and take care of the common good. Why did the Conservatives fail to do so, when they had the perfect opportunity?

[*English*]

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this evening to let all Canadians know that the government is doing a lot for seniors. It is an impressive record and one worth talking about.

The government cares deeply about seniors, which is why we introduced pension income splitting. We raised the GIS earned income exemption from \$500 to \$3,500, which will allow seniors to continue working if they want to. This will let them keep more of their hard-earned money and that is why we have proposed such measures as a tax free savings account.

We have cut the GST from 7% to 6%, to 5% in the two years we have been elected and we did this for all Canadians. This has been a major tax cut for low income seniors because often it is only the federal tax that the seniors pay.

I am thankful to my friend across the aisle for again allowing me the opportunity to remind and discuss the government's accomplishments for Canadian seniors.

[*Translation*]

MANUFACTURING AND FORESTRY INDUSTRIES

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, today it feels as though I am reading the weekly newspaper obituaries. Despite each adjournment debate on questions we asked a few months ago about the manufacturing sector, day after day, more businesses are closing and hundreds of jobs are lost, while the government does absolutely nothing.

I remember that on January 31 we asked what concrete action would be taken by the federal government. At the time, a budget surplus of \$10 billion had already been announced. The Conservative government had a choice: it could pay down the debt, or put some towards paying down the debt and use the rest to stimulate the economy. It chose to throw it all at the debt, a real obsession of this government.

Today we can see the results. In all regions of Quebec—yesterday in the Sherbrooke region, last week in the Montreal region, or a few weeks ago in my region, the Lower St. Lawrence—businesses are shutting down. However, the federal government has not put forward an action plan for the manufacturing industry. The Government of Quebec, which has much more limited financial means—since the fiscal imbalance has yet to be corrected—is trying to create a plan. But this plan would have to be backed up by a similar one from the federal government. This has not happened.

In January, when I asked the question, the Prime Minister was still saying that the \$1 billion trust would be part of the budget and that we would have to vote in favour of the budget to have it adopted. The negative reaction was so strong that he had to backtrack and agree to have a separate vote for the \$1 billion, and that was done.

Adjournment Proceedings

That is why today, I am raising the issue again and I am telling the government that the need for action in response to the crisis in the manufacturing and forestry industries is as urgent as ever. In Quebec and Ontario, the crisis has been aggravated by the rising cost of petroleum, of gasoline, which has resulted in even more undue competition for our manufacturers.

Earlier, the parliamentary secretary said that the government had cut the GST. The last GST cut did a lot more to support manufacturing jobs in China than it did to strengthen our own manufacturing industries.

We expected the government to move forward. Today, we are reiterating demands from union members and the groups that represent them, as well as from employers, such as Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. They are all calling for additional measures. Perrin Beatty, a former Conservative minister, expressed his support for these demands, as did Jason Myers, executive director of Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, and major unions.

In closing, what I would like to know is, has the government finally realized that the crisis in the manufacturing sector is a real problem and that it must put all of the tools in its toolbox to try to deal with this problem?

• (1915)

[English]

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I strongly disagree with the member's assertion that the government is not supporting communities affected by the loss of manufacturing jobs.

I want to thank the member for giving me the opportunity to highlight all of the positive steps this government has taken since we have taken office.

We continue to work with all the provinces and territories to help them deal with the economic challenges they are facing. For example, in January we announced a \$1 billion community development trust. This investment will support communities and workers who are affected by international economic volatility.

Furthermore, the government moved quickly to pass Bill C-41. We did this so that payments through the trust could be provided. Bill C-41 was supported by all parties in the House, including the Bloc Québécois.

Through the trust, the provinces will receive a base amount of \$10 million and the territories \$3 million, with the balance being provided on an equal per capita basis.

As a result, Quebec will get \$216 million to help its communities and workers. The Province of Quebec can use the money provided in the community development trust to invest in job training and skills development, to support the development of community transition plans, and to support initiatives that help diversify local economies.

Budget 2008 went even further by building on funding that was provided by the community development trust. It did so by providing an additional \$90 million to extend the targeted initiative for older workers to 2012 to help older workers stay in the workforce.

It also provides \$10 million over two years to Natural Resources Canada to promote Canada's forestry sector in international markets as a strong model of environmental innovation and sustainability.

Furthermore, it allocates \$72 million over two years to farm programs. It improves access to \$3.3 billion in potential cash advances to Canadian farmers.

I question why the member is ignoring the fact that since 2006 we have provided key support for the manufacturing and forestry sectors.

We are also helping manufacturers and processors, including those in Quebec, through the Advantage Canada framework by helping them to better invest and compete.

For example, the government will provide over \$9 billion in tax relief by 2012-13, including broad-based tax reductions.

Through the community development trust, as well as other measures introduced in budget 2008, this government is helping the manufacturing sector in Quebec, as well as all communities across Canada that are affected by global economic uncertainty.

• (1920)

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, I would like the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development to explain to me how the government can provide support to the tune of \$2,000 for each job lost in Quebec and \$20,000 for each job lost in Alberta. Is that equity?

Could the government not have used tools such as refundable tax credits? It is lowering taxes for companies that make hefty profits, such as the oil companies. But it is not giving refundable tax credits to companies that are barely keeping afloat and are not turning a profit, companies that could use refundable tax credits to invest and offer competitive products.

Why did the government decide to use \$10 billion to pay down the debt when the manufacturing industry is in crisis and over 100,000 jobs have been lost in recent years? Is that how the Conservative government has provided "key support" since early 2006?

[English]

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Mr. Speaker, all the member has to do is look at the facts. When it comes to job creation, Quebec had its best showing in five years in 2007 and was above the national average.

In fact, employment in the province of Quebec has increased by over 140,000 since our government took office. Recently, Morgan Stanley announced that it will be creating 500 new, high paying jobs in Montreal. Overall, over three-quarters of a million new jobs have been created since we have formed the government, 80% of which are full time. The unemployment rates of Canada and Quebec, and Quebec is included in Canada, remain near 33 year lows. Employment is up in every region.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Conservative government's policies are working. The job creation numbers speak for themselves.

I see that the member did not stay to listen to my final remarks.

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 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:22 p.m.)

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