



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

---

VOLUME 144 • NUMBER 008 • 2nd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

---

OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, February 4, 2009**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

## **CONTENTS**

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

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

**<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 4, 2009

The House met at 2 p.m.

---

*Prayers*

---

• (1400)

[*English*]

**The Speaker:** It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem, led by the hon. member for Brampton West.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

---

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### SPIRIT CATCHER AWARD

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one of the most prestigious awards in Barrie is the city council Spirit Catcher Award. The spirit catcher stands high above the city's waterfront and symbolizes the city. This year's recipient was Arch Brown, who is no relation, by the way. Arch already holds an incredible array of honours, including the chamber of commerce's hall of fame, honorary colonel of Canadian Forces Base Borden, a senator of the Grey and Simcoe Foresters, the Queen's golden jubilee medal, and the Order of Canada.

Arch has been a tremendous supporter of the MacLaren art gallery in Barrie and Georgian College. His donation to Georgian College resulted in the building of the Helen and Arch Brown Centre for Visual Arts, and Arch's friendship with former premier Bill Davis also played a big role in the development of Georgian College in the 1970s.

Arch has had a distinguished career with Canadian Tire as its national sales director. He introduced the company's groundbreaking cash bonus program, Canadian Tire money, and set up most of their stores across Canada.

Today I salute Arch as Barrie's 2009 Spirit Catcher Award recipient and I salute the work he has done in building Barrie for the better.

### SENIOR CITIZENS

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to you on behalf of the senior citizens of Vancouver South, southeast Vancouver in particular, and on behalf of the Southeast Vancouver Seniors' Arts and Cultural Society and the president, Lorna Gibbs. There is a dire need for a seniors centre in this area of Vancouver. The census indicates that there are 25,000 seniors living in the southeast quadrant of my riding. That is almost a third of the senior citizens living in Vancouver.

There are nine seniors centres in the city of Vancouver, eight of them west of Main, only one east of Main, and none in this area, so there is a significant need.

I can tell you that Vancouver City Council and the Province of British Columbia are trying to find ways of making this a reality for senior citizens. I would urge the federal government to work with the provincial government and the City of Vancouver to make this a reality for the senior citizens of Vancouver, senior citizens who have actually built this country into what it is today.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### QUEBEC TEACHERS' WEEK

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec Teachers' Week takes place from February 1 to 7. Today I would like to pay tribute to the thousands of dedicated teachers in Quebec who play such a skilful role in the transfer of knowledge.

The teaching profession often comes under criticism. However, we must remember that we owe our education and that of our children to teachers. They gave us a wealth of knowledge, values and skills that have made us successful today.

School officials and parents rely on our teachers to meet the challenges inherent in education. Teaching, like learning, is not always easy, but both are essential. It does not matter what subject or what grade is being taught; teachers deserve an A+.

Their work is appreciated. We recognize their abilities and the quality of the work they do to ensure that as many of our youth as possible succeed. They have taught us, they continue to—

• (1405)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

*Statements by Members*

[English]

**WORLD CANCER DAY**

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to highlight World Cancer Day, a day of action against a disease which, as it has with far too many, has touched me personally. Two of my children have battled cancer, one as an infant and one while in university.

In the 1990s I was proud to be an initiator of a parliamentary study on breast cancer, which resulted in the groundbreaking report “Breast Cancer: Unanswered Questions”. These committee hearings were a turning point. Many of the women who testified are leaders today in the fight against cancer.

We have come a long way. Research funding is up. Every province has a breast screening program. Canada led the way on a vaccine for cervical cancer.

But so much more needs to be done. Cancer patients need a catastrophic drug plan so that they can focus on fighting cancer, not on fighting to make ends meet.

Today I join thousands of Canadians across the country in a call for political action and public engagement in the campaign to control cancer and to beat it.

\* \* \*

**CANCER**

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today on World Cancer Day, I rise to speak to an issue of great personal significance.

Every week thousands of Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer. Cancer is not discriminatory in who it affects. In September my family and I experienced the tragedy of losing a loved one to cancer, a tragedy many Canadians have also experienced. That is why I am proud to be part of a government that has risen to the challenge of working towards a solution.

We began a Canadian strategy for cancer control in 2006, and this has led to new research and initiatives such as the Canadian partnership for tomorrow project, which began in 2008. It will explore how genetics, environment, lifestyle and behaviour contribute to the development of cancer.

I believe it is important for the millions of Canadians affected by this disease to know their government is working hard on their behalf to help beat this terrible disease.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SAINT-LÉONARD ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION AWARDS GALA**

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on November 12, I had the pleasure of attending the Saint-Léonard economic and community development corporation's awards gala, where Claude Poirier, president and CEO of Magnus Poirier, was honoured as part of the event's “community builders” theme.

The tribute highlighted his contribution to Saint-Léonard's development and his generous social, community and philanthropic involvement.

In addition to being a member of 14 boards of directors and the honorary president of many an event, he distinguished himself by setting up the Quebec branch of Youth Net, a not-for-profit organization working to prevent suicide among young people.

As the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, I would like to thank Mr. Poirier and offer him my most sincere congratulations for this well-deserved honour. People like Claude Poirier make it possible for us to achieve great and wonderful things.

\* \* \*

[English]

**DONALD JASPER SPROULE**

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to remember a dear friend of our community, Mr. Donald Jasper Sproule, who I am sad to say passed away on December 20, 2008.

Don, who was born and raised in Dufferin County, was an outstanding pharmacist, an involved and dedicated citizen and a tremendous father, husband and grandfather.

In his over 30 years as a pharmacist and as owner of Sproule's Drug Store in Orangeville, Don compassionately provided countless residents of our community with sound advice and guidance, and always did so with a smile.

His dedication to our community carried over to his work with the Orangeville Optimist Club. He was a member for 35 years and was known for his infectious enthusiasm. He also served as an energetic board member and volunteer for Hospice Dufferin for several years. His proudest achievement was his family.

Don will be greatly missed, but will always be fondly remembered for his remarkable community service, his dedication to his family and his incredible spirit.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**QUEBEC SOVEREIGNTY**

**Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, with the support of the Liberal Party, the Conservative government has opted to abandon Quebec. The results are: crass interference in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction; a unilateral change to equalization, to Quebec's detriment; a reduction of Quebec's political weight in the House of Commons; the creation of a Canada-wide securities commission. That is what the federalists have to offer Quebec.

The government prides itself on practising open federalism and claims to recognize the Quebec nation, but these few examples demonstrate once again that Quebec has everything to lose by staying in Canada.

The Canadian parties continue to impose measures on us that are at odds with measures shown to be successful in Quebec. Quebec has the ability to take charge of the economic, political, cultural and social means at its disposal. It is capable of controlling its own destiny.

Quebec sovereignty cannot come soon enough.

\* \* \*

• (1410)

[*English*]

#### MEMBER FOR CALGARY EAST

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to acknowledge my colleague and friend, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the hon. member for Calgary East.

Last month the President of India bestowed upon the parliamentary secretary the highest honour given to overseas Indians, the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman award.

As an Indo-Canadian, the member for Calgary East has displayed a leadership role in the Indian diaspora in Canada and has been tirelessly active in the promotion of Canada-India relations.

Whether during the years of the Liberal government, when our relations with India were foolishly left to the side, or today, when our improved relations with India are blossoming into expanded and mutually profitable trade, the member for Calgary East has been front and centre, helping build the personal and professional links between the countries.

I congratulate my friend on this very prestigious honour, a testament to the value of his continued efforts.

\* \* \*

#### WORLD CANCER DAY

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today we stand to support the International Union Against Cancer in recognizing World Cancer Day.

Each year a staggering seven million people die from cancer and close to eleven million new cases are diagnosed worldwide. Last year in our country alone, 166,400 people were diagnosed, and 73,000 people died from this disease.

The theme for this year's World Cancer Day is encourage a balanced lifestyle based on a healthy diet and physical activity. This is especially important for parents, who need to encourage their children to eat well, be active and maintain a healthy body weight, for 30% to 35% of all cancers can be prevented by doing this, and we know that the earlier the start, the greater the benefits.

On this World Cancer Day it is vitally important that we encourage children and adults alike to eat well, exercise and not smoke. In this way we can reduce the incidence of cancer and save lives.

#### Statements by Members

##### ZIMBABWE

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, recently an agreement for unity government was struck between the parties of Morgan Tsvangirai and Robert Mugabe. While this is a positive development, the people of Zimbabwe need real change.

Since the signing of the global political agreement on September 16, 2008, Canada's position has been very clear. Effective change in Zimbabwe requires actual political shift by the country's leadership. This extends to the Government of National Unity as well.

Canada has been and will continue to be insistent upon this point. In September, Canada imposed targeted censures against Zimbabwe's ruling elite and associated entities. These censures will remain in effect until Zimbabwe has demonstrated positive shifts in policy that result in improvements in freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Canada continues to stand in solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe.

\* \* \*

##### GAÉTAN ROBERGE

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Warrant Officer Gaétan Roberge served his country for 28 years. He was known as a soldier's soldier. Roberge showed this quality in his final days when he returned early from a three day break to help his fellow soldiers. It was on that day, December 27, 2008, that Gaétan was killed when his vehicle struck a roadside bomb just outside of Kandahar City.

Gaétan was a soldier in the 2nd Battalion of the Irish Regiment of Canada based out of Sudbury.

His Lieutenant Colonel John Valtonen had this to say about Roberge, "He was the embodiment of a proud, professional Canadian soldier".

Roberge was not just an exemplary soldier, he was a loving son, dedicated father, caring husband and a fun loving brother. As his father says, "an all around great man". Gaétan was known to be quick to help and lend a hand. He was a family man through and through and enjoyed skating with his family and taking his children to hockey games.

His service to our community and country will not be forgotten. May he rest in peace.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

[*Translation*]

##### THÉRÈSE LAVOIE-ROUX

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this week, Quebec and Canada lost a distinguished politician, the former Minister of Health of Quebec and Conservative senator, Thérèse Lavoie-Roux.

### Oral Questions

Born in Rivière-du-Loup, Ms. Lavoie-Roux obtained a degree in social sciences. Her professional life took her to the Montreal Children's Hospital, the school of social work at the Université de Montréal, the school of rehabilitation at the Université de Montréal and the Institut Marguerite-d'Youville. She chaired the Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal, now the Commission scolaire de Montréal, until she was elected to the National Assembly in the riding of Acadie in 1976.

Under Ms. Lavoie-Roux's leadership, the Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal supported institutions in disadvantaged areas. The reforms she introduced as minister of health and social services led to greater employee versatility, legalization of the profession of midwifery and decentralization of the health care system.

I would like to express my sincere sympathies to Ms. Lavoie-Roux's family.

\* \* \*

### FORESTRY INDUSTRY

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last week we witnessed a sorry sight. The member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean professed to one and all that the government's hands were tied by the softwood lumber agreement, preventing it from supporting the forestry industry. The member raised the ire of the industry and also of forestry workers in his riding who cannot believe his lack of commitment.

What citizens need to know is that the government does have the right and the ability to take action, for example, by providing loan guarantees to the forestry industry, a measure proposed by the Bloc Québécois a long time ago.

Faced with the forestry crisis that has deeply affected his riding, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, and all of Quebec, the member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean preferred once more to ignore it. He has abandoned the workers and families that he had promised to help, choosing instead to spout his party's ideology.

\* \* \*

[English]

### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, February is a special month for me. Black History Month allows us to celebrate Canada's accomplishments and recognize the remaining challenges.

I was 16 years old when Hon. Lincoln Alexander became the very first black Canadian elected to the House.

I am grateful, beyond measure, that my own daughter witnessed my election in 1997 as the first ever black Quebec MP and that she, at 16, also witnessed the election of the very first black President of the United States.

We still have a long way to go. Right now I am the only black MP sitting in the House. However, it is the capacity of democracies like Canada's to effect fundamental change based upon the belief in equality that brought me to this chamber and my daughter to a world where she, and not the colour of her skin, will choose her future.

### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since 2003, cattle producers in my riding have been unable to export to Jordan as a result of a ban imposed because of BSE.

Yesterday the Canadian government re-secured full access to the Jordanian market for Canadian beef and cattle exports. As a result of this announcement, the value of Canadian beef exports to Jordan will increase.

This news, along with a similar deal with Hong Kong and the signing of several free trade agreements, is proof positive that the government is delivering for livestock producers.

Last month the agriculture minister announced the creation of a market access secretariat to better coordinate government initiatives with producers and industry to aggressively pursue new markets.

As the Prime Minister said yesterday, in regard to the U.S. COOL, "This is the government...that recently got changes to the country of origin labelling".

In these times of global economic turmoil, the Conservative government is reducing trade barriers, opening new markets for Canadian exporters and standing up for Canadian producers.

---

### ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[English]

### AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a year ago the Minister of Finance refused any direct support for the auto sector, saying they would not get into the business of picking winners and losers. While the Government of Ontario was trying to keep auto plants open, the minister criticized it for "old-fashioned thinking" and "Band-Aid fixes".

Because the government allowed ideology to get in the way of action, we now need surgery and not Band-Aids. What does the government and the Prime Minister propose to do to stop the bleed in the auto sector?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the House will know that the difficulties of the auto sector are not just in Canada. They are continent-wide and, in fact, worldwide. Particularly the Detroit Three companies face major challenges.

That is why I have joined with Premier McGuinty and we are working in collaboration with the government of the United States to facilitate the restructuring of this industry, which is going to have to happen, to ensure in the process that we keep our share of this vital industry in this country.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is too late. The auto sector crisis affects workers not only in Ontario, but also in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces. It is a national crisis.

All last year, the government refused to take action. Why did the government sit on its hands? Does it believe that the demise of this sector is inevitable, but does not dare say that?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are working in collaboration with the Ontario government and the American administration to restructure this industry, which is so very important for the Canadian economy. I would invite the opposition to work with us for the benefit of this industry and the entire Canadian economy.

[English]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all last fall the government sat by, waiting for the Americans to put together their package. By waiting so long, it may have caused Canadian auto workers their jobs.

What specific measures is the government taking in Washington to ensure that Canada does not lose product mandates, production jobs and assembly line capacity when the U.S. government and U.S. industry finalize the rescue package for their industry?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a completely integrated continental industry. We cannot fix this problem ourselves. That is why we have acted in full collaboration not just with the government of Ontario here, but with the American administration. Our officials are in touch with their counterparts in treasury and in the U.S. government each and every day. I would be happy to provide the Leader of the Opposition with briefs on that, if he so desires.

**Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is speculation that General Motors may pull out of Canada entirely.

While the industry has struggled to meet his February 20 deadline, the Minister of Industry has been idling. The Detroit Three are working hard. The auto workers are at the table. The U.S. government is on the ball. While Canadian communities remain desperate to retain auto sector jobs, the minister is the flat tire slowing down progress.

When exactly did the minister actually meet with his American counterpart to ensure our Canadian jobs would be protected?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government has been working, as the Prime Minister indicated, with officials in the United States as well as with the Government of Ontario. We have a strict set of conditions that mirror what the Americans are also looking at for the industry to restructure that industry and to preserve our 20% production capacity.

### Oral Questions

The hon. member asked me to meet with my American counterpart. When President Obama appoints that counterpart, I will meet with that person.

\* \* \*

### CHILD CARE

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have just heard that the city of Toronto has announced that it is being forced to cut over 6,000 child care spaces, almost one-quarter of all the subsidized spaces in Toronto, due to a shortfall in federal funding. We fear this may be just the beginning.

How can the Prime Minister claim that his government is helping the most vulnerable when he imposes these short-sighted cuts on Canadian families?

• (1425)

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has her facts entirely wrong. There have been no cuts to child care funding. In fact, through the Canada social transfer, the funding for child care to the provinces this year will be going up 3%.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### FORESTRY INDUSTRY

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, according to the Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), the government was unable to offer the forestry industry loan guarantees because doing so would have contravened the softwood lumber agreement. Guy Chevrette, president of the Quebec Forest Industry Council, does not understand why what is good for the automotive industry is not good for the forest industry, and he thinks that the real problem is lack of political will.

Will the Prime Minister tell his Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec) that giving loan guarantees to businesses in the forest industry would in no way contravene the softwood lumber agreement?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the leader of the Bloc knows, the Forest Products Association of Canada supported this budget. Instead of spreading his propaganda about the budget, the Bloc leader should take his own MPs to task for having circulated propaganda promoting terrorist organizations.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the member apologized; she did not know what was on the video. That being said, the Prime Minister just refused to answer the question. In 2004, he stood with me and demanded loan guarantees for the forest industry. During the 2004 leaders' debate, he asked for the same thing.

I would like to know whether he will talk to his minister today and ask him to stop spreading falsehoods around to everyone when there is nothing to prevent giving loan guarantees to the forest industry. He should stop avoiding reality and answer my questions.

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the industry's priorities are respecting our agreement with the United States and maintaining access to the American market. Once again, instead of picking the budget apart, the Bloc leader should make a clear statement about how praising terrorist groups is not in line with true Quebec values.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that is detrimental to Quebec's manufacturing sector as well as the environment. Instead of looking towards the future and promoting green energy sources, the Minister of the Environment is staking his money on the past by becoming an ardent defender of the oil sands and spokesperson for the oil companies.

How can the minister take such a clear position in favour of one of the most polluting energy sources on the planet, one that President Obama wants to move away from, and yet still call himself a defender of the environment?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government's position is very clear, as are our intentions.

[English]

Our intentions are very clear: first, a North American approach to combatting greenhouse gas emissions. That is our position. That has been the position of President Obama. And, frankly, that has been the position of their coalition.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in its most recent budget, the government deliberately allocated significant amounts for the development of nuclear energy, so dear to the hearts of the oil sands promoters.

Can the government deny that its budget illustrates perfectly how it favours the wrong energy connections and that its choices eloquently reveal its total disregard for renewable energy, a sector that benefits Quebec?

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the clear fact of the matter is that this government is a world leader in renewable energy. Over 70% of our electricity comes from non-emitting resources. As well, we are moving toward 2020, when over 90% of our electricity will be emissions free. This government is moving forward on this file. We are a world leader and we are the ones moving us to a cleaner greener future.

• (1430)

[Translation]

**CHILD CARE**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government's efforts to meet the needs of families are truly a failure. We have learned that 6,000 spaces will be lost in Toronto. That means that 6,000 families will face a crisis and will have to find care for their children. In addition, almost 1,000 day care workers will lose their jobs because this government is neglecting the needs of families.

Why is there no support for child care centres in this Liberal-supported budget?

[English]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the truth is that there have been no cuts to child care transfers to the provinces. As I said a few moments ago to the other member of the coalition, the transfers to the provinces through the Canada social transfer will be going up 3% this year.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is really for the leader of the new coalition in the House between the Conservative Party and the Liberals.

I notice that the Prime Minister had trouble finding his way to ensure that the issue of women and their needs were mentioned in the budget. I am hoping that he will rise in his place and respond now that 6,000 families at least are going to lose child care for their families and 1,000 child care workers stand to be thrown out of work, which would make the Prime Minister and his government just as guilty of throwing people out of work as any multi-national corporation.

Why do we see no action to support child care from—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development.

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the facts are that we are spending three times as much money on early learning and child care as the previous Liberal government ever did.

We are increasing the Canada social transfer to the provinces by 3% and that includes significant amounts for child care to help families. In the last year alone that funding has been used to create over 60,000 new child care spaces right across this country to help families make a choice.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is that people are about to be thrown out of work and families are about to lose child care spaces.

Mothers and fathers, who are already at their wit's end with the economic crisis, are trying to figure out how they are going to find care for their children. This is about to roll out in many communities. The answer we are getting from the Conservative government is that it is about to do absolutely nothing about it.



*Oral Questions*

In reading the budget, we see no action being taken around one of the most important issues facing us. How are we going to make sure that we get proper care for our youngest kids and support for their families if this is the kind of attitude we get? Where is the—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development.

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, three years ago we took action when we launched the universal child care benefit. That was designed to allow parents the choice of where and how to have their children cared for. We believe that they deserve to have that choice.

On top of that, we are providing incentives to corporations so that they can create child care spaces on-site to help families. We will be increasing the Canada social transfer to the provinces, which includes child care funding, by 3% next year. We have already created 60,000 new child care spaces across the country.

\* \* \*

**CHALK RIVER NUCLEAR FACILITIES**

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, citizens in the nation's capital were shocked to learn that last Thursday two truckloads of sewage waste from Ottawa's water treatment facility were refused entry into the United States because the material was radioactive.

Yesterday, two more waste shipments were found to have elevated levels of radioactivity.

I have a simple question. Could the minister tell the House unequivocally that there is absolutely no connection between this radioactive waste and the nuclear facility at Chalk River?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, when we were contacted by the city of Ottawa, we immediately phoned the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission in order to enquire what aid it could give to the city of Toronto in the matter. It has dispatched an inspector to the city of Ottawa to help it track down the radioactive contamination.

The CNSC has assured me that the radioactive material is more likely to be a medical isotope, Iodine 131, that is associated with the Chalk River facility. It has further assured me that it is not related to the incident at Chalk River.

I would expect that the member would listen to this and understand this instead of fearmongering.

• (1435)

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, is the minister suggesting that the citizens of the national capital should not be worried about a nuclear spill? Is she actually serious?

Sewage waste triggering a radioactive alarm is unprecedented in this country. It automatically places shipments from Ottawa on the United States post-9/11 nuclear high-risk watch. Why does she not tell Canadians that?

Second, the safe management of nuclear waste is strictly a federal responsibility. I want the minister to answer this question simply, unequivocally, yes or no. Are they linked?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was anticipating the question, but I suppose it got caught in the rhetoric beforehand.

What should be clearly understood by the member for Ottawa South is this. We have indicated that at Chalk River there was no radioactive leak into the Ottawa River. CNSC has assured us of that. If he continues on with his CSI investigations of linking two completely unrelated incidents, he is fearmongering.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, federal authorities were informed Thursday of this shocking incident. Municipal authorities and the public were only informed yesterday. Once again, this government has not provided vital information about nuclear safety.

Can the minister explain why the City of Ottawa is leading this investigation? Why has the minister again failed to fulfill her obligations?

[*English*]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in my conversation last evening with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission president, and in a memo given to me today by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission in a statement, it has been indicated that this is not a matter for the CNSC to look into because the city of Ottawa is not a licensee underneath the CNSC.

However, we are more than happy to help our friends in municipalities when they do need aid in the matter. We have dispatched an investigator to come and help them with respect to the identification of the radioisotope. We are doing everything we can to help the city of Ottawa.

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has stated that there were no radioactive leaks into the Ottawa River. Yet, as a matter of course plumes in the reactor are released into Perch Creek which flows into the river.

Can the minister simply confirm that a leak of radioactive water occurred at Chalk River, contained or not, on December 5 or since and can she confirm this leak continues today?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the incident in December at Chalk River has been described by the CNSC as one that did not have a radioactive leak into the Ottawa River. It has assured us of that.

I have further indicated previously in the House that we have asked for reports from Atomic Energy Canada Limited, Department of Natural Resources officials and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, so that we may look at what happened in December, study what happened, and report on the matter. That is where the issue stands right now.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**CULTURE**

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages prefers to spend \$25 million to bring foreign artists to Toronto and to cut \$45 million from artists here who promote Quebec and Canadian culture abroad. As a result, the entire arts community is against him.

How can the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages claim to be listening? How can he have the gall to say that the budget is a good thing—and it is for his two chums in Toronto—when Quebec's entire cultural community is against it?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, where do I begin? First, it is not true that the cultural community is against the budget.

“By including the arts and culture in its policy for fighting the crisis, the Prime Minister recognizes the role and power of this sector for the national economy.” That is what the CEO of the Just for Laughs Group said.

We are investing unprecedented amounts in the arts and culture. Whenever we make such investments, the Bloc Québécois votes against artists.

• (1440)

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this minister has a very strange concept of arts and culture. When his government transfers \$21 million to the Olympic torch relay, I believe he thinks it is modern dance.

Will the minister come to his senses and announce that he will shortly be restoring the millions of dollars he took away from artists for foreign tours?

[English]

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to say one thing. In her first question, the member criticized the Canada prize. Our government is putting forward an endowment of \$25 million to create the Canada prize. It will be the largest multidisciplinary prize for arts in the world. It will put Canada permanently as a cultural capital in the world.

It is a remarkable achievement for this country to have such an incredible event, such an incredible opportunity, record prizes for arts and culture in this country. It is going to make this country stronger on the international stage. That is why the Bloc Québécois is against it, because we are making this country stronger through arts and culture.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**NATIONAL BATTLEFIELDS COMMISSION**

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a letter dated October 26, 1999, addressed to the Minister of Public Works at the time, Alfonso Gagliano, clearly shows that André Juneau, chair of the National Battlefields Commission, sold himself long ago to the Canadian government's visibility strategy, a strategy that led to the sponsorship scandal.

How can the Prime Minister, who recognized the Quebec nation, show it such a lack of respect and impose on Quebec a celebration of what is considered its conquest?

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to remind the hon. member that it is not a political event, but rather a historical one, and the chair has assured us that all events will be carried out with the utmost respect.

However if the hon. member for Québec were the least bit responsible, she would denounce—and she would convince her fellow Bloc colleagues to distance themselves from—the contemptuous, vulgar and threatening comments made by Mr. Falardeau and Mr. Bourgeois in an interview in Quebec City.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, by defending André Juneau's plans to re-enact the battle of the Plains of Abraham, the Conservatives are defending the same approach defended by Jean Chrétien with his sponsorship program.

How can the Prime Minister, who denounced the Liberals for that scandal, now endorse the re-enactment of the battle of the Plains of Abraham, which is clearly nothing more than federalist propaganda?

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is obviously looking for an excuse to promote its sovereigntist option. However, an article in the February 1 edition of *Le Soleil* states:

The president of the Compagnie de canoniers-bombardiers de Québec (CCBQ), whose members are for the most part sovereigntists, was disappointed to see [the reaction] of the Bloc Québécois.

\* \* \*

[English]

**AEROSPACE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when I asked the Conservatives what their plan was for the aerospace sector, the minister told us that Lockheed Martin was making investments. I am happy for Lockheed Martin, an American company, but what does this have to do with our government's plan to strengthen the Canadian aerospace industry in these challenging times?

Let me ask the question again. What is the government's plan for the Canadian aerospace sector?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is the very plan that the hon. member voted for. It is called the budget. It is called our action plan, an economic plan for Canada. That is what he voted for.

This plan is multi-faceted. It obviously includes an economic stimulus, a way to give a break to Canadian taxpayers and to small businesses. It also includes plans to continue to encourage and support an aerospace sector in this country, including the Canadian Space Agency, I might add, which the hon. member knows a little bit about. I would say that this plan is going over very well with those in the sector because they know we are on the side of a growing industry and an industry where Canadians can compete and win.

● (1445)

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in other words, this government has no strategy. As I pointed out to the minister, hundreds of jobs in the aerospace sector are at risk.

While he dithers, foreign countries that compete with our Canadian champions are taking action. In France, the government has made 5 billion euros available to support Airbus sales.

What are the Conservatives waiting for to support our aerospace industry? Are they going to allow our foreign competitors to profit at our expense?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that we support the industry with a program called SADI. It is well known in Quebec.

The *Montreal Gazette* wrote that our local aerospace industry is strong and effective, and we agree.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is not at all what we are hearing, because taxpayers have invested a great deal in the success of the aerospace industry. Programs like Technology Partnerships Canada have made it possible to develop high-tech products here. The current crisis demands that we protect these investments.

What are the Conservatives waiting for to safeguard the investment Canadian taxpayers have made in the aerospace industry?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, our budget, Canada's economic action plan, supports this sector in this country and also in Quebec. There are many announcements and programs, of course. This sector is competitive on the world stage.

[English]

This sector is competitive with the world and will continue to be. We will continue to support it, just like we support businesses that are moving ahead across this country and support Canadian jobs and opportunity. That will continue.

[Translation]

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, those are empty words. In Quebec, aerospace is a \$12 billion industry that employs tens of thousands of people. And the Conservatives have no plan. I am not hearing any figure from the ministers. When we ask them how they plan to protect this industry, all they do is trot out platitudes.

Will the minister admit that the Conservatives' plan is to sacrifice the aerospace industry in Quebec? We want figures.

### Oral Questions

[English]

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the figures are clear. They are found in the budget. They are found in the SADI program.

The hon. member's colleague, the hon. member for Markham—Unionville, when confronted with a situation earlier this year, said:

I think it's clear this decision is driven by seat-gain aspirations because the money is going to aerospace in Quebec and not into the auto industry in Ontario.

That is what that member said. When will members of the Liberal Party get their facts and their arguments straight?

\* \* \*

### CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

**Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is a trading nation and our largest trading partner by far is the United States. Canadians are rightly concerned about protectionist rumblings in the United States Congress.

Can the Prime Minister give us an update regarding this critical situation?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the House yesterday that the American administration shared our concerns about the present state of the stimulus package. In fact, President Obama said yesterday:

I think it would be a mistake, though, at a time when worldwide trade is declining for us to start sending a message that somehow we're just looking after ourselves and not concerned with world trade.

[Translation]

The President also acknowledged the very real risk of causing a trade war, which is not in the best interests of any country, including the United States. We are encouraged. All Canadians are encouraged by what President Obama said.

\* \* \*

[English]

### RCMP

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, police officers are often the unsung heroes of Canada who put their lives on the line every day to keep our families and communities safe. They deserve our full support. Why then has the government done the unthinkable and unilaterally cut the wage increases that RCMP officers and their families were given and were counting on?

How is it the Prime Minister has millions of dollars to stack the unelected Senate with Conservative friends, but not enough for an RCMP wage hike that the RCMP was granted by Treasury Board last June?

● (1450)

**Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we value and respect the good work that the RCMP is doing to keep our communities safe.

*Oral Questions*

It is critical, however, given our current economic circumstances, that we all tighten our belts. Everyone is being asked to do his or her fair share to help manage government expenditures. I might point out that in no way is the RCMP being singled out. Public sector unions and other public sector employees have understood the situation we are in.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA**

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court of Canada recognizes the rights to free collective bargaining for public servants, yet the government will not. It has unilaterally capped public service salaries instead of bargaining those salaries at the negotiating table. It has rolled back negotiated wage increases for the RCMP, and other government workers fear the same. These workers are not fat in the system. They are essential to the safety and security of Canadians.

Will the minister commit today to uphold Canadian law and grant all public sector workers the right to free and fair collective bargaining?

**Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could expand on my other answer and say not only do we value and respect the good work of the RCMP, we respect and value the good work of public servants generally. I have been a public servant for most of my life. I know that they work hard and they do a good job.

It is critical, given our current economic circumstances, that we all contribute to this. I believe that MPs will also be asked to contribute in that fashion.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EXECUTIVE PAY**

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States announced his intention to impose conditions on companies that will be receiving government help and to cap the salaries of their executives.

Does the Prime Minister intend to follow President Obama's lead and force Canadian companies that are receiving help from the federal government, notably banks, to limit the salaries and bonuses of their executives?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

[English]

The G20 has looked at this issue. As the member knows, we are working together with our G20 partners to create mutual economic stimulus around the world because that will help relieve the global recession. This also is one of those points that was agreed on, and members will note this week that some Canadian bank executives have voluntarily restricted their compensation. The member needs to note also that we also have not put one cent of Canadian taxpayers' money into our banking system, unlike the United States and the United Kingdom.

[Translation]

**SENIORS**

**Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, seniors were the big losers in the most recent budget. Needy seniors who receive only the old age pension and guaranteed income supplement will live below the poverty line.

What does the Minister of Finance have to say to the President of FADOQ, who stated “we are not talking about a fortune, but of a minimum income that everyone should be guaranteed in a society that claims to respect its seniors”?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have a great deal of respect for seniors and that is why we appointed a Minister of State for Seniors. We have also established a council that will identify and analyze the concerns of seniors so that we can take action to help them as we did with the supplement.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CHILD CARE**

**Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister stands and answers leaders' questions on every subject but child care. Why?

I would also like to suggest that the Minister of Human Resources leave her office, go into a child care centre and ask parents. Then she would find out that the impact on child care of her government's programs has been zero. Not a little bit, zero.

This is another example of the Prime Minister's attitude on government programs. Programs? Who really knows whether a program's money is in place or whether it is for next year or the year after, and the public has been the loser. When will the Prime Minister act like a prime minister?

● (1455)

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is very clear the action we have taken to help parents, to help families get the form of child care that they choose. Sometimes it is at home with mom or dad, sometimes it is with granny, sometimes it is informal daycare. We have made all of those options possible through our universal child care benefit which we delivered inside of six months to every parent with a child under the age of six. We know through our relationships with the provinces and the funding we provide them that so far in the last year they have created over 60,000 new daycare spaces.

**Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is the Prime Minister's self-proclaimed political genius: give the public what it wants even if it does not get it. Reality is not the program itself, it is the announcement. But then for the Prime Minister this pesky economic crisis ruined everything. Now program money actually needs to be spent. People need services. Because of our budget amendment, the Prime Minister now has to report that he is actually doing what he said he would do.

The Leader of the Opposition realized that somebody—somebody—has to act like a prime minister. For three years, why has the Prime Minister not?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister has demonstrated tremendous leadership.

Thanks to his leadership, our country is better prepared than any other country to face this global economic crisis. Thanks to his leadership, we are entering later than most countries in the G7. We expect to go shallower into it and to come out sooner and stronger.

That is leadership. The others should try it.

\* \* \*

#### THE BUDGET

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is an \$8 billion hole in the Conservative budget. In November's economic update, the government was ridiculed for padding its books with the phantom sale of government assets. Despite criticism from all sides on this scam, it is in budget 2009. In table 4.2 in the budget there is a gaping hole.

Could the government tell taxpayers where the money will come from to fill it: a fire sale of assets, layoffs, program cuts or higher deficits?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** As the budget makes clear, Mr. Speaker, there will be a capital asset review, just as we have an ongoing expenditure management review with respect to the operating and program expenses of government. This has not been done since the early 1990s.

It is incumbent on the government, as good managers, to ensure we review assets as well as operating expenses and that is precisely what we are going to do in this budget, which the hon. member voted against.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** This Ottawa member actually read the budget, Mr. Speaker. The finance minister is not coming clean.

We have a budget that is based on rosy numbers of the sales of billions of dollars in public assets at the bottom of a market no less. Great deal.

Exactly what public assets are the Conservatives planning to sell and what other programs are on the chopping block: the former U.S. embassy perhaps, the CN Tower or maybe CBC? Is that what they are intending?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** That is why we do an asset review, Mr. Speaker. It is to look at all of the assets of the government to see if it is appropriate to have public ownership of all

#### Oral Questions

of these assets, many of which were acquired many years ago. We do the same thing with respect to government operating programs.

As I say, that is just good, sound economic management of government.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, two days ago I was surprised when I received a message from the member for Ahuntsic in my personal e-mail account. She sent a series of articles and videos about the recent conflict in Gaza to all MPs. What shocked me the most was the fact that some of the 27 attachments applauded the actions of Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. This is the same member who, in 2006, claimed in a false statement that Israel had committed war crimes in Lebanon.

Can the Minister of Public Safety inform the House of the official status of these groups and—

● (1500)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Public Safety.

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I, too, received the surprising email from the Bloc member for Ahuntsic.

I can confirm that Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the al-Aqsa martyrs' brigades are all formerly listed under section 83.05 of the Criminal Code as terrorist groups, all of whom have knowingly carried out terrorist activities.

I would hope that all members of the House would condemn terrorist activity and I certainly do not think it is appropriate for members of the House to use their House facilities to distribute that kind of propaganda.

I would certainly ask that the hon. Bloc member apologize to the House and Canadians for having distributed terrorist group propaganda.

\* \* \*

#### FREEDOM OF SPEECH

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, free speech and the right to oppose government is vital to any democracy and yet the Prime Minister seeks to crush it, to punish it at every turn. Most recently, the government used the budget as an instrument of revenge against a particular province, now Conservative operatives are pushing a bogus investigation to destroy a former member of their caucus who dared to speak his mind. It seems there are no limits.

Will the Prime Minister apologize to the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley on behalf of the Conservative Party of Canada and uphold the reputation of this good and decent man?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is, of course, an RCMP matter and the government does not interfere or direct in RCMP matters. However, I can observe that the RCMP did confirm yesterday that this file was closed. I can further advise the hon. member, who apparently missed it, that Conservative Party officials have also made it clear that they do not believe that the hon. member in question, the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, did anything wrong.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Amnesty International, like other civil society organizations, is urging the Prime Minister to repatriate Omar Khadr. The upcoming visit of President Obama is an opportunity for the Prime Minister to ask that young Khadr be repatriated according to the international convention on child soldiers.

Does the Prime Minister intend to request that Omar Khadr be repatriated, knowing that President Obama has clearly announced the upcoming closure of Guantanamo?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our position on this matter is the same as the position of past governments. We know that the charges against this individual stem from serious crimes. We also know that the President of the United States has decided—and issued two orders—to review this matter. So, we will wait for the process that is underway to take its course.

\* \* \*

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Public Service Agency have not submitted a report on official languages to Parliament since 2006. The Official Languages Act requires that a report be submitted every year. Last year, the former Minister of Canadian Heritage pointed out that all federal institutions are required to submit annual reports, and that any institution failing to do so could be subject to prosecution.

Will the government respect the law of the land and submit the missing reports on official languages, or does it have something to hide?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have nothing to hide. We are proud of our investments in official languages. For example, our roadmap means \$1.1 billion over five years. That is 20% more than the former government did for official languages.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. James Moore:** Watch out!

The information is on its way. I will appear before the Standing Committee on Official Languages and I will answer all their questions. All the reports will be tabled. All the information will be

very clear and will show that our government is investing more heavily in official languages than ever before in this country's history.

\* \* \*

[English]

**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, livestock producers in my riding and across Canada have been hurting since the BSE crisis hit them in May 2003. For years the former Liberal governments failed farmers and did nothing to reopen markets for our livestock producers.

Could the Minister of Agriculture please tell this House what action he has taken to open up new markets and help the bottom line for our cattle industry?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know the livestock industry appreciates the great work done by the member for Lethbridge on this file and the work that he continues to do.

We were very fortunate in January, on our trip to Hong Kong in conjunction with the livestock sector, to reopen that market to a lot of the cuts we do not make use of here in Canada, or internationally for that matter, which will double our sales to the Hong Kong market.

Yesterday we received great news from a small, dynamic market in Jordan that will open its doors to complete access to us after the BSE crisis. That is the beginning of many good announcements to come.

● (1505)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, crews began killing 60,000 turkeys at a farm in Abbotsford, British Columbia after the CFIA confirmed several of the birds had contracted an H5 avian influenza virus. Farms in the Fraser Valley also suffered avian flu outbreaks in 2004 and 2005.

What specific steps have been taken to determine the source of these outbreaks in this particular region?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as members well know, two turkey barns have been put down in the Fraser Valley. Some 36 farms are under quarantine and we are testing those birds. No other instances have come to light. It is a low pathogenic strain. As far as we can decipher, this is contained in the wild birds that are abundant on each of these farms as well.

*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## CORRECTION TO OFFICIAL RECORD

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to clarify for the record that when I said that the Canada social transfer would be going up 3% this year I did mean the fiscal year of 2009-10.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during the answer provided by the Minister of Natural Resources, she referred to a report that she said she had in her possession that apparently tells the House of Commons and the Canadian people that there is no connection between these two nuclear events.

This Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission report should, in my view, be tabled immediately for Canadians to peruse and to put this extremely important question to rest today.

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has been in the House long enough to know that tabling is required if a minister quotes from a document. The Minister of Natural Resources did not quote from the document. It will not be tabled.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, could I ask the government House leader to reflect on this issue for a few moments? While the minister may not have made a direct quotation, the subject matter is obviously one of enormous public interest.

In order to lay this issue to rest and to satisfy any public concern that may exist, would the minister please consider the point that the documentation she has could be very useful in resolving this matter once and for all? It would be a public service to table that document.

**Hon. Jay Hill:** Mr. Speaker, this issue is resolved. It is only the fearmongering of the hon. member that leaves it unresolved.

[Translation]

**The Speaker:** I will now give the floor to the hon. member for Lévis—Bellechasse, who also wants to raise a point of order.

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on working so hard to bring a little decorum to this House. We are just beginning a new session and we have passed a budget. Some members seem to be frustrated, and they are saying most unfortunate things, things that would not be tolerated in Quebec's National Assembly.

I would formally request that the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, the leader of the Bloc Québécois, withdraw his unparliamentary remarks.

Let us behave like mature adults, shall we? Words like “idiot”, “stupid” and “chicken” have no place in either Quebec City or Ottawa. The leader of the Bloc Québécois should stop being such an embarrassment to Quebecers and parliamentarians, and stop insulting voters, parliamentarians and the people listening to us today.

I would ask him to withdraw his remarks. Let us have a little decorum in the House. I would like him to apologize immediately.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, I did not say he was stupid; I said that his remarks were stupid and that he did not know anything about his portfolio. Once again, people have been telling tales in the House and outside, and the Prime Minister is refusing to set the record straight. I said that he did not know anything about his portfolio, and I will say so again.

• (1510)

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, we could keep playing word games, but this is a matter of basic respect. I am appealing to the leader of the Bloc Québécois' sense of honour and asking him to use parliamentary language and behave appropriately in the House. If he wants to end up in Quebec's National Assembly one day, he needs to know that what he says here in Ottawa does not—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. This is not the appropriate place for this discussion. In my view, this discussion may be continued elsewhere, but not here. This is not really a point of order.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

**WAYS AND MEANS**

## NOTICE OF MOTION

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1) I have the honour to table a notice of ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009, and related fiscal measures.

I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion.

\* \* \*

**OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME**

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table the first annual report for the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime. The report provides an overview of the activities and operations from the creation of the office in April 2007 to the end of March 2008.

I also table the government response to the annual report of the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime.

[Translation]

The response demonstrates our support for the recommendations in the ombudsman's report and gives a sense of how the government plans to address the issues identified by the ombudsman as needing action.

*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

**INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS**

**Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, reports from the Canadian Branch of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association concerning four conferences of the Ministerial Debt Sustainability Forum by the World Bank in Washington, DC, April 9, 2008, the CPA UK Branch seminar held in London, June 8 to 20, 2008, the 33rd Regional Conference of the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic held in Anguilla, June 28 to July 3, 2008, and the International Parliamentary Conference on International Development held in London, November 17 to 21, 2008.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following reports of the Canadian Delegation of the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group respecting its participation at the Council of State Governments' Southern Legislative Conference 2008 annual meeting held in Oklahoma City this past July 11 to 15, the Council of State Government Eastern Regional Conference 48th annual meeting held in Atlantic City, New Jersey this past August 10 to 13, the Democratic National Convention held in Denver, Colorado this past August 24 to 28, and the Republican National Convention held in Minneapolis, Minnesota this past August 31 to September 4.

\* \* \*

**PAY EQUITY TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS ACT**

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-284, An Act to implement the recommendations of the Pay Equity Task Force.

She said: Mr. Speaker, the right to equal pay for work of equal value is a basic human right. Although pay equity is protected in Canada by the Canadian Human Rights Act, pay equity in Canada is not a reality for Canadian women.

Proactive pay equity legislation helps to compensate women for the historic devaluation of women's work. Traditionally women have worked in undervalued and underpaid occupations, like caregiving, cleaning and nursing. Canada must implement effective pay equity legislation to advance women's equality.

Pay inequity has wide-reaching negative social and economic consequences for all women and their families. That is the reason for this legislation. We need proactive pay equity, as outlined in the 2004 pay equity report, and a pay equity commissioner to end the disparity experienced by Canadian women.

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

\* \* \*

●(1515)

**MODERNIZATION OF INVESTIGATIVE TECHNIQUES ACT**

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-285, An Act regulating telecommunications facilities to facilitate the lawful interception of

information transmitted by means of those facilities and respecting the provision of telecommunications subscriber information.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am quite proud to present this bill again in the House. You have already mentioned the title of the bill, but it is also commonly known as the modernization of investigative techniques act, or MITA.

The modernization of investigative techniques act, MITA, would ensure that the law enforcement community in Canada and our Canadian Security Intelligence Service would maintain an ability to investigate crime and terrorism in the face of rapidly evolving communications technology. The bill would reduce the ability of criminals, organized crime members and child pornographers to use sophisticated technologies to carry out their activities undetected. Under MITA, telephone and Internet service providers would be required to include an interception capability in new technology.

The bill is about ensuring that Canadians and their communities are safe. Police and CSIS need to have the tools necessary to intercept, legally, new communication technologies. If adopted, this legislation will ensure that criminals can no longer take advantage of new technologies to hide their illegal activities from the law.

I hope that the bill will receive the support of my colleagues on both sides of the House.

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

\* \* \*

**OIL AND GAS OMBUDSMAN ACT**

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-286, An Act to establish the Office of the Oil and Gas Ombudsman to investigate complaints relating to the business practices of suppliers of oil or gas.

She said: Mr. Speaker, after the unexpected and premature prorogation of the House in December, I am so pleased to finally have the opportunity to reintroduce a bill that would establish the oil and gas ombudsman. The bill is being introduced on behalf of irate consumers who are tired of continually getting hosed at the pumps. As members will recall, the bill would create the office of the oil and gas ombudsman, which would be charged with providing strong and effective consumer protection to ensure that no big business could swindle, cheat or rip off hard-working Canadians.

I am pleased to report that the bill has been endorsed by the Consumers Association of Canada.



*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

## CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

Currently, people can only complain to each other about being gouged at the pumps. My bill would create a meaningful vehicle for having those complaints taken seriously, with mechanisms for investigation and remediation to help consumers fight the squeeze.

Since this is not just an issue in my riding of Hamilton Mountain, I am pleased to have my bill seconded by the member for London—Fanshawe. I am hopeful members from all regions of the country, and indeed from all political parties, will endorse my efforts to put an end to highway robbery.

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

\* \* \*

● (1520)

**HOLIDAYS ACT (REMEMBRANCE DAY)**

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-287, An Act to amend the Holidays Act (Remembrance Day).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to reintroduce a bill, which its adoption I have advocated since I was first elected to the House. My bill to amend the Holidays Act (Remembrance) would honour those who have sacrificed their lives for our country by making Remembrance Day a legal holiday.

I look forward to the bill's quick passage to honour all of those who have died serving our country.

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

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS**

## INTERPROVINCIAL BRIDGE

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition signed by constituents from both sides of the river in the national capital region. It concerns the possibility of building a bridge to get the heavy truck traffic outside of the core of our capital city.

In particular, the petitioners ask that the government instruct the National Capital Commission to proceed with a detailed assessment of an interprovincial bridge linking the Canotek industrial park to Gatineau airport, which is option seven of the first phase of the interprovincial crossings environmental assessment.

[Translation]

## CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by 900 people at the most, many of whom are responsible for organizations that provide services to immigrants. These petitioners are asking the government not to move the downtown offices of Citizenship and Immigration Canada to Lebourgneuf, an area poorly served by public transit. People will have to travel by car. We think that it is illogical to move the offices of Citizenship and Immigration Canada to Lebourgneuf.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after the unexpected and premature prorogation of the House in December, I am pleased to finally have the opportunity to table two petitions on behalf of some of the thousands of seniors who are supporting my national campaign to fight for fairness for ordinary Canadians and, in particular, for seniors who were short-changed by their government as a result of an error in calculating the rate of inflation.

The government acknowledged the mistake made by Statistics Canada in the last Parliament, but has refused to take any remedial action.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to take full responsibility for this error, which negatively impacted their incomes from 2001 to 2006, and take the required steps to repay every Canadian who has been short-changed by a government program because of the miscalculation of the CPI.

The petitioners have worked hard all their lives and played by the rules and now are finding it harder to make ends meet. All the petitioners are asking for is a bit of fairness from their government.

It is a privilege to table these petitions on their behalf.

[Translation]

## TEXTILE LABELLING ACT

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in favour of Bill C-545, An Act to amend the Textile Labelling Act. This bill is identical to Bill C-271, a new bill that I introduced in the House last week. It would require labels on clothing to include a reference number that consumers could use to identify the name and address of the factory where an item of clothing was produced. This bill has the support of the Ethical Trading Action Group and Amnesty International.

I would also like to congratulate Samuel Bergeron, a young man from Nicolet, Quebec, who took the initiative to circulate this petition and collect more than 500 signatures for a cause that he believes in. Young people like Samuel, whose conviction is catching, give me hope for the future.

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE PROGRAM

**Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I wish to present to this House a petition with more than 800 signatures from Manicouagan voters, most of whom are workers.

Illness comes on surprisingly and suddenly and is not limited to any particular social class. These petitioners are asking Parliament to review the employment insurance program to ensure an acceptable minimum of benefit weeks, which would better correspond with timing of medical treatments for workers who are forced to quit their job to deal with an illness that, by its nature, requires prolonged treatment.

*S. O. 52*

• (1525)  
[English]

SRI LANKA

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today from residents of Don Valley West, expressing concern about current hostilities in Sri Lanka.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to put pressure on the government of Sri Lanka to provide the Tamil population with food, shelter, medicine and other fundamental necessities. They also call upon the government to call upon the United Nations and other international relief agencies to enter the area to provide witness to what is going on. In addition, they call upon the government to call for an immediate ceasefire and to take immediate steps to call for the UN to provide an observer to monitor human rights abuses.

\* \* \*

#### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

#### MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

#### REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SRI LANKA

**The Speaker:** The Chair has received eight notices of application for emergency debates. They are all on the same subject.

I will call the member who first filed a letter, the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth, who may wish to make some submissions on this point at this time.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the efforts of other members who have submitted the same request.

In the northern part of Sri Lanka right now there is a devastating violent situation unfolding. Thousands and thousands of civilians are under threat. A great many of them have suffered the attacks. The situation is deteriorating.

I have had the chance to speak with members of the Tamil community here who literally, as we begin to speak with them, break

down into tears as they speak about their family members and what they are facing.

We have an obligation and an opportunity as a country to take bold action, to call for a ceasefire on all sides, to ensure that we are in the lead in providing medical and humanitarian aid to those who are suffering, and to play a role at the United Nations to call for the UN to be intervening in a very direct way.

The tragedies that are unfolding now are causing enormous pain to Canadian citizens, and literally every hour that passes, new images of the terrible consequences are coming to our attention.

Mr. Speaker, you will know this has been a subject of discussion in the House, but I would appeal to you to consider the urgency of the situation and the will of so many members of the House who wish to have this matter discussed as a matter of urgency.

I can add in closing that other countries are calling for a ceasefire. They are taking action. They are moving very directly, and Canada should be among them.

[Translation]

This is the time for action. I hope that you will envisage the possibility of having an emergency debate on the very serious and urgent situation in Sri Lanka.

[English]

**The Speaker:** I want to thank the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth for his submission, which I am inclined to grant at this time.

I want to indicate that the Chair has received similar requests from seven other members in the following order: the hon. member Toronto Centre, the hon. member for York West, the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt, the hon. member for Beaches—East York, the hon. member for Don Valley West, the hon. member for Scarborough Southwest and the hon. member for Etobicoke North.

Rather than hear submissions from them at this time, since I will grant the debate anyway, I suggest they control their enthusiasm for debate until later this evening when they will have an opportunity to speak on debate, if that is satisfactory.

• (1530)

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to deal with just a brief procedural item. I wonder if, among House leaders and whips, there is agreement that, with respect to the emergency debate that you have just announced for this evening pertaining to the situation in Sri Lanka, the normal provisions with respect to no dilatory motions, adjournments, in the usual form, that those rules would apply to the proceedings with respect to Sri Lanka this evening.

**The Speaker:** So there will be no requests for emergency debates, no dilatory motions, no requests for unanimous consent, and no quorum calls during the debate this evening. Have I listed everything? Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### CANADA-EFTA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed from February 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the States of the European Free Trade Association (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland), the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Republic of Iceland, the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Kingdom of Norway and the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Swiss Confederation, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** When this bill was last before the House, the hon. member for Windsor West had the floor and he has 12 minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks.

I therefore call upon the hon. member for Windsor West.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise again to speak on this very important issue, namely Bill C-2, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the States of the European Free Trade Association, in particular Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

It is important to recognize that our trade relations are very key to how we develop our sector economies, how they affect Canadian employment, and how they affect even issues of national defence and strategies related to growth industries in terms of technology and so forth.

We believe in fair trade, and one of the principal components of fair trade is to ensure that when a country that we are trading with has had a strategic advantage or has a system in place that is providing a benefit, we actually deal with that and have a plan in place for our workers and our people in Canada.

In particular, there is a problem with this trade agreement, as it currently stands, which we find very difficult. There are some issues with regard to agriculture, but in particular the hardest one is the issue of shipbuilding.

Norway has had several years, in fact over a decade, to develop and implement a strategy regarding its shipbuilding industry. What will happen in this agreement is that over a series of years we will see the phase-out of a 25% tariff that partially helped protect the shipbuilding industry, which is still struggling over here in some respects. We would like to see this as an opportunity, in terms of what is happening right now with the laws of trade that are out there, to actually rebuild our shipping industry.

It is something that should be noted. It is done in other countries. It would not create an offensive front. It would not be seen as protectionism because quite frankly, the United States, for example, under the Jones act has a protection of its procurements. As well, under its defence policies, it actually has local and domestic procurement that it controls.

### *Government Orders*

We do not begrudge the United States for that. We can certainly understand the fact that it would want to maintain some of its base industrial elements that protect its national interests and national defence. It is something that is important for the United States in terms of its sovereignty and how Americans view themselves in the world, but also in terms of the workers who have good skill sets.

Value added work is very important with regard to the notation of shipbuilding. It is not a case of simply sending natural resources out of the country. It is something that actually has value added components. It is also something that is actually changing right now, with new technology, so we get those advancements in technological development clustered around the shipbuilding industry. That also includes the elements that it connects to passive shipbuilding industry as well.

I am familiar with this as well in terms of the auto sector. It has that strategy and it is a strategy at which we have not stood up and raised our fists in anger. At the same time, on the Canadian side, we have done the very least of things to protect our industries and provide the same things.

It is interesting to note because this is a big difference, especially right now with the heightened discussion of what is happening in the United States with its buy American clause, with what Canada can do and cannot do, and what the United States can and cannot do. We do not even do the base minimum that the United States would respect.

One of the most egregious situations that has now come to the public discussion forum is the fact that the government has chosen to procure \$250 million worth of trucks from Texas. That is unacceptable because our trade agreement right now allows us to have defence procurement and to purchase from our own country.

Ironically, we have a facility in Chatham, Ontario, that was actually going to close a few years ago and there was government support. The then Liberals said that they could not do it, that it was against NAFTA and against everything else, and there was no way they could save this plant. We hit the streets and we worked really hard. We saved the plant and it has actually been very successful until recently. It was well worth the investment it got from the government which it paid back to the coffers, not just from the company but also more particularly from workers who have paid taxes and have been able to raise their families with some dignity and integrity and also chase the Canadian dream of having a prosperous life in this country.

Sadly, what has happened now though is that the plant is in jeopardy. Ironically, the government has decided to abandon it. There is a \$250 million of work going to Texas when retooling is estimated to cost \$800,000 at the Navistar truck plant in Chatham.

*Government Orders*

• (1535)

Let us weigh this out. For \$800,000 of retooling, done by Canadian workers and a with lot of Canadian content, it would facilitate the improvements that are necessary on the truck that would make it meet the obligations of the Canadian military. It would also allow for new innovation in the plant, which is a very good plant that has been known for its quality. Prior to much of its production being sent down to Mexico from Navistar, we used to get some of the Mexican produced vehicles into Canada to fix them. The men and women are very good, adept at their skills and solid workers. We know that the quality would be of the highest calibre and I am sure that the workers in Chatham would take a lot of pride in building vehicles for our military. They would get behind this 100% and produce the best vehicles possible.

Instead of putting that \$800,000 into the retooling that would have had workers paying taxes again and going forward into the future, they have decided to ship it all down to Texas. When one compares the \$800,000 with the \$250 million of the defence procurement contract one has to wonder where the strategy is in this government. Why does it not believe that Canadian workers are just as capable of building vehicles for our soldiers and our military infrastructure?

It would also guarantee, and this is a key element in the trade agreement that worries me, a key element of our industrial complex that is still necessary for the world that we live in. We need to have a manufacturing capacity that is going to protect our national interests. The trucks would be used for a whole series of operations. We know that if we have control over that, we could actually continue to produce those vehicles for future contracts. If other countries have an interest in the vehicle, they could come to us. Perhaps we could have a continued expansion of the facility or a continuation of the work, which would go on for nearly a couple of years.

It is really disappointing when we pull away from that opportunity, especially at a time when down in my region unemployment in the Windsor-Essex County area is at 10%. Chatham is up there as well. That those individuals would not be the men and women who would be assembling the vehicles for our country is very frustrating. We lack the visionary elements from this government to see that forward. It comes forward with plans in this budget to help Canadians put sod on their lawns, but it will not help Canadians maintain the industrial complexes that are necessary for our national security and that will benefit the overall economy. On top of that, it is going to be the cutting edge of the new development of the actual manufactured vehicles. They will be the newest and latest in the field.

This is a problem with regard to our concerns on the shipbuilding aspect. There is going to be a loss of opportunity there. It is not just us who are calling for this. I want to read a quote that shows that the New Democrats are not alone on this. A number of different shipping associations have commented on this and made objections. The president of the Shipyard General Workers' Federation of British Columbia George MacPherson states:

The Canadian shipbuilding industry is already operating at about one-third of its capacity. Canadian demand for ships over the next 15 years is estimated to be worth \$9 billion in Canadian jobs. Under the FTAs with Norway, Iceland, and now planned with Korea and then Japan, these Canadian shipbuilding jobs are in serious jeopardy. In these terms, this government's plan is sheer folly and an outrage.

He gets it right because he understands that it is not just about the current capacity we have and need to protect right now. It is about making sure that we are going to continue to be able to reap the rewards of the investment that we have done before.

When I was part of the industry committee, we had over 20 recommendations regarding the manufacturing sector. One of the things that has been moderately positive with regards to the budget is that we came forward with a policy on the issue of a capital cost reduction allowance for machinery and tools. It was supposed to be a five-year policy. First, the government had a position of doing it for a two year period. Now, it is proposing to do it for a three year period, so it has the accumulation of the five years. Unfortunately, not having it done properly through a one five year period undermines the planning necessary for the capital cost reductions on some of the more expensive and thought-out equipment changes that will be necessary in the future.

• (1540)

It is a modest step forward, and it is something that we certainly support. At the same time, it also provides some of the elements that are necessary for the actual procurement of additional capacity that could be important for our shipbuilding industry. We should not simply be relying on the hope of having our yards filled right now. We would like to see expansion.

In this economic downturn it is easy to use elements like this as a way to have procurement, especially when we look at some of the defence contracting that needs to be done. The budget notes that there is going to be \$175 million allocated for a number of different craft. Small craft are going to be built and we hope that they will be done in our own shipyards. The proper policy is needed to do that. That is what worries me. It is why the example of Navistar with regard to the trucks being built in Texas instead of Chatham, Ontario is disturbing. That \$175 million contract could be awarded in several different ways for procurement in South Korea, Norway or the United States, all of those things. As we go through trade agreements like this we have to be very careful of the details.

One element I would like to touch on is that the past Liberal government thought it had it right when it brought in the free trade agreement and other trade agreements after signing the auto pact. The auto pact made us one of the strongest auto manufacturers in the world, but when we brought in the other trade agreements the auto pact was killed, despite the government of the day arguing that we would stand up and would be able to have it. Since that time our auto industry has crumbled around us as others have decided to move forward.

I hope that is a lesson we keep in mind. We should vote this down and vote for Canadian action instead.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-55 not only affects shipbuilding but it also affects many other areas in Canada.

Destructive legacies, such as the softwood lumber sellout have eroded our confidence in the ability of the government to defend the best interests of Canada through trade agreements.

*Government Orders*

There is a lot of agriculture in Nickel Belt, especially in the Verner area. The NFU is concerned about this agreement because the provisions within the agreement concerning agriculture defer to the World Trade Organization dispute settlement mechanism which will have a very negative impact on supply management by weakening Canada's position.

What could the government do to improve this bill as it relates to agriculture?

**Mr. Brian Masse:** The hon. member for Nickel Belt is absolutely correct. It is important to note that Terry Pugh, executive secretary of the National Farmers Union, has identified the concerns that if we actually had to bring the agriculture component forward in the bill potentially under the WTO we could get a challenge with regard to supply management.

Even though agriculture and auto do not often meet up together, they are a good example here. I referred to what happened with regard to the auto pact and I think the concerns are there. It was the WTO on a challenge from Japan which eventually killed our auto pact.

Our auto industry was fourth in the world in assembly and it has gone down to ninth and is falling even further back. Despite the challenges we are facing, it is important to recognize that other things are developing in the industry. General Motors, for example, is bringing out the first plug-in electric vehicle in Detroit, Michigan. It has just bought South Korean technology to bring its battery system on line for that vehicle. That is because the U.S. has set aside a \$25 billion investment strategy of low interest loans.

Despite the challenges for the auto sector, and we have seen plants go down here in Canada, the United States is actually increasing plant production on certain measures. That is a good example of the environment being connected.

It is really important. The government today does not worry too much about that. At the time, trade minister Pierre Pettigrew downplayed the WTO decision originally with regard to the auto pact. That is traditionally what governments of the day do. They downplay decisions as they work themselves through the court system and at the same time it undermines our ability to control our own destiny.

It is a warning sign. It is something that is very important. It is also one that sets a good example for the concerns expressed in the agriculture sector about this bill.

• (1545)

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in listening to the member's presentation, I thought about my home riding of Halifax where shipbuilding is a huge issue.

Canada has no strategy for shipbuilding and it sounds as though there is no strategy for the auto industry in Canada and no strategy for getting trucks built in our country. I think the problem is beyond the EFTA. Our country lacks a comprehensive industrial strategy. The EFTA is just another example of a piecemeal approach to trade deals. There is no coherent fair trade vision or policy. There is no industrial strategy.

What are the member's thoughts about the bigger issue of Canada's lack of an industrial policy as it relates to the EFTA?

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to tour the Halifax shipyards and talk to the workers and management there. There is a strong confidence element involved there in that the people there feel that they could be part of something bigger. They feel that they could be a part of the future of procurement for Canada, whether it be for the military or the coast guard. That is what they would like to do. It is not only about having a job. It is about having pride in a country that can produce the goods necessary for us to defend ourselves and also serve our citizens. There is a natural connection that needs to be recognized. It instills a nation's sentiments.

It is sad that we do not have that policy in Canada. It is sad that we do not have the necessary overall sectoral strategies.

Other countries are doing it. There is an interest to get into Canada. Other countries know that we could be vulnerable to competition because they have had so much support in the past. Norway is the example. Norway implemented a plan and developed significant shipbuilding facilities and capacity. The important thing is that Norway had a head start. It is difficult in a 100 yard dash to catch up with one's competitor who is already 50 yards ahead. That is what we are talking about. We want to see a fair race in many respects.

It is important for Canada to recognize that there are other stimuli packages out there. We are not talking about adding other layers of protectionism. We are talking about using the tools that we have available in this country. European countries, the United States and Japan use the models of their economy within their trade agreements to expand their services and capabilities.

It is an exciting time right now with the greening of many of the different types of technologies. Even though we face deep challenges, our opportunities are great. We can see a lot cleaner, a lot leaner, and more important, a stronger connection between the lifestyles that we lead and the environmental footprint that we leave behind.

This is a great opportunity to build on sectoral strategies. That is why I would like to see the government take this opportunity to heart and move forward. Sadly, we are still moving backward. We cannot be a nation that just supplies raw resources to the rest of the world.

• (1550)

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like the member for Windsor West to address the impact of the Navistar truck contract on his community and surrounding area, because not all those folks actually live in Chatham. When a situation of that magnitude impacts a city, a county and a community, it is a shame that we did not rectify it when we had the opportunity. As the hon. member said, a \$250 million contract for trucks for our armed forces being built in Texas rather than Ontario just does not seem to work out well.

*Government Orders*

The member's riding is in Windsor, which is in close proximity geographically to Chatham. I would like him to comment on what happens to a community when it loses hundreds of well-paying jobs. What happens to United Way organizations in those communities? What happens to the non-profit organizations in those communities? What happens to the kids who want to play hockey or ringette or gymnastics whose parents no longer have the ability to fund those activities?

Perhaps my hon. colleague could comment on that.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, it is important to make that correlation because there is a spiralling effect that really brings down other elements of the economy, everything from the person who operates a small business and provides food services to those who want to invest in the area and look to clustering around a major manufacturing facility. It also hurts the social infrastructure, be it the United Way or other charitable groups. The CAW and other types of philanthropy is taking place because of that economic activity.

This really hurts on a psychological level in the sense that what the government has said to the workers of Chatham and Kent area is that it wants to have our trucks for our military built in Texas. It seems they are not good enough in Chatham and area for the \$800,000 retooling. That is all that is necessary, a small pittance. It is all the jobs too that would be done by the people of our own country, many of whom are laid off right now. The government has said to those people that they are not going to be the ones to build the trucks for our men and women who are serving this nation. That really hurts them. I have talked to them and that is how they feel. It is sad because it could be different.

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill. I have concerns about this bill for a specific reason, as I will explain.

A number of my colleagues on the Liberal side, in particular my friend the hon. member for Halifax West, have worked very hard on this as well. We are prepared to support the movement of this bill to committee, where it can be examined and studied and where we hope some positive work might come out as a result.

I support freer trade, in general, and I suspect many industries and suppliers would benefit from this bill, perhaps some even in my own region. However, the issue for me is clear, and it has been talked about before. It is the issue of the shipbuilding industry.

I come from Nova Scotia, a province with a proud tradition of shipbuilding. We are a world leader, in fact. Today we still have a shipbuilding industry. It is a proud one and an effective one, but one that has not been supported as it should have been, and not in the way that some other countries have done, in particular Norway, which is one of the four countries in the EFTA deal. This deal is with those four countries: Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Iceland and Norway.

Norway is the tricky one. I want to be very clear. Norway is a great friend of Canada and Norway is a great friend to the world. Norway is a successful nation that takes care of its citizens. It is also a world leader in assisting others. In fact, I admire Norway. It is wholly admirable as a world leader. From 2001 to 2006, it was number one in the human development index. In 2007, it was actually chosen as the most peaceful nation on earth.

In fact, in terms of overseas development assistance, Norway contributes about the same level of total dollars to overseas development assistance as Canada, the difference being that Norway has a population of less than five million people and Canada has more than thirty million.

In terms of hitting millennium development goals, Norway is far ahead of us. Its ODA contribution, its percentage of GNI, is 0.95%, while ours is 0.29% and has dropped.

Norway is a nation with which we should do business. I admire the principles on which it governs its citizens and governs itself in the world.

Canada and Norway are long-time friends. In fact, in my own constituency, one of my favourite events commemorates this friendship between Canada and Norway. The event is the Convoy Cup. It is the brainchild of one of our most remarkable citizens, Steiner Engeset, Norwegian consul to Nova Scotia.

The Convoy Cup honours those who served in World War II escorting merchant ships and naval vessels from North America to war-torn Europe. This critical function played a major role in the eventual outcome of World War II.

Following the invasion of Norway by Nazi Germany in 1940, members of the Royal Norwegian Army and Royal Norwegian Navy maintained training and repair bases in Nova Scotia. The Convoy Cup commemorates this close relationship between the two countries. I am proud that the Dartmouth Yacht Club in my own riding is the club of record for the Convoy Cup. I know other members from this House—the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, the member for Halifax West, perhaps the new member for Halifax, and certainly her predecessor—would share my enjoyment of the Convoy Cup and would share my admiration and that of many others, including my late father, of Steiner Engeset.

My concern with this bill is not primarily because I am opposed to Norway's subsidization and management of its shipbuilding industry; it is because we have not done enough to support our own. We have a shipbuilding caucus in Parliament, to which I proudly belong. We have heard at that caucus from just about everybody in the shipbuilding industry, and they have also appeared before various parliamentary committees.

What is remarkable about this industry is that both management and labour are very much aligned as to the solutions for a way forward for shipbuilding. This is not an industry in which management is saying one thing and labour is saying something entirely different. That is why I and other members from this House, including the member for Halifax, the member for Halifax West and the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, welcomed the announcement in December by the Minister of Defence, when he said shipbuilding should be part of a stimulus plan. However, we were perplexed when he also suggested that shipbuilders and trade unions should set aside their differences. In fact, I have been in numerous meetings at which shipbuilders and trade union representatives have come together, presented together and identified strategies for the industry together.

*Government Orders*

The minister indicated the government had done its homework by examining how other shipbuilding nations had found success. He even cited Norway as an example. We are not Norway; we have not protected our industry or promoted it as Norway has or as other nations have.

We know about the Jones act and the Merchant Marine Act of the 1920s in the United States, in which the United States actually carves out shipbuilding and treats it specifically in trade agreements.

●(1555)

It is a tricky bill. It is a very tricky bill for my colleague, the member for Halifax West, for these reasons.

I meet regularly, as does he and as do other members, with marine workers such as Les Holloway, Karl Risser, Gerard Bradbury and others in Nova Scotia. I trust and value their views and I consistently agree with them.

I also meet with shipbuilding companies and executives who know how to build a shipbuilding strategy, and I have spoken to MPs, to ministers and to bureaucrats on a number of occasions.

I recognize the frustration of those who are concerned that we are not as vigilant as other countries in promoting our industry. This is not about ability or competitive spirit; our industry has those things.

A few weeks ago local Halifax-area MPs issued a release in which we called on the minister to follow through on his pledge to make shipbuilding part of the stimulus package.

In that release I said the following:

Shipbuilding is still an important industry in Canada, an industry in which labour and management have worked together to provide options for action in these uncertain times. We call upon the government to come to the table and make shipbuilding part of the stimulus package as they have previously said they would.

In December Karl Risser himself spoke to the historic role of shipbuilding in Nova Scotia, the quality of our work, the great tradition of the industry and our potential for the future when he said:

We have the people, technology, the will and the skill to see it continue.

There are many aspects to this trade deal. Many could be positive for the country and could be positive for our region, but there is work that must be done.

Our critic, the member for Kings—Hants, is aware of these concerns. He spoke to this bill on Monday in the House when he said:

We need a comprehensive shipbuilding policy in this country, one that actually helps build a world-class shipbuilding industry that can compete and succeed. We can do a number of things in terms of our industrial strategy and policy to make this happen. As the government deals with the EFTA, I think it also has to ensure that some of these industrial policy issues are addressed, and we as the official opposition will hold the government to account on that.

I am proud to be a member of Parliament for a shipbuilding region and certainly will not abandon the cause. I am also in support of fair trade and, in most cases, free trade.

I will support sending this bill to committee and at committee I look forward to hearing from those who know this industry best. Hopefully we will work to create a national shipbuilding strategy that will rival those with whom we compete and those with whom we trade.

●(1600)

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Nova Scotia for his words and in particular for talking about our historical relationship with Norway and the Convoy Cup. As a member of the Scandinavian Society back home, I know it is a really exciting event for us.

I was hoping that the member could actually comment on the decline of the shipbuilding industry in Canada, and in particular the impact it has had on his riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, which is a neighbour to my riding of Halifax.

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague's commitment is for the shipbuilding industry. It is a big part of our shared community. It is a big issue for me in my community. I do not think we have done enough to protect shipbuilding.

There have been some ministers in the past who met regularly with industry and with labour, ministers who had a vision for shipbuilding in Canada. I am thinking of the Hon. Brian Tobin.

This EFTA bill came up some years ago. It is not brand new to the House. A lot of people, including a lot of people from our party, have expressed concern about whether this specific bill should go forward without a comprehensive shipbuilding strategy as part of it.

What can we do? There are a number of things we can do. First of all, we need to accept that there needs to be a national shipbuilding strategy that includes things like buying Canadian. The industry has indicated there may be a direct allocation component to our shipbuilding strategy, which would provide for more stability in the labour force and also in business. The structured facility financing with the accelerated capital cost allowance being simultaneously applied is another piece.

We have a lot of work to do. It bothers me when people suggest that this is a dying industry. We cannot say that in a place like Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia was a world leader in building ships. It is part of our tradition and part of our heritage.

We have the technology. This is a modern industry. We have everything we need to make this a viable part of our national industrial strategy. We just need to accept that we need a specific shipbuilding strategy for the country.

There are answers. As I said before, the people who run the companies and the people who work in the companies share a common view as to how we go forward. They have talked about it before. We do not need anything new. We have the answers. We just need to be serious and not make promises about being part of stimulus or about what it might be. We just need to actually have some action and movement forward.

*Government Orders*

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his speech. It was a thoughtful speech and one that offers a way out of somewhat of a dilemma.

It seems to me that many in the House are in favour of free trade. They speak in favour of free trade and then they say that this and that industry have to be exempted, so free trade becomes something less than free trade, and after a while we have no trade at all.

That position seemed to be admirably advocated by the leader of the NDP in the last couple of days, when he was complaining about the attitude of the U.S. Congress and its “buy American” policy, while at the same time advocating the “buy Canadian” policy on infrastructure.

The hon. member made reference to an industrial strategy that would make the shipbuilding industry a competitive and viable industry. Is this a free trade exception, or is this free trade in which we can have both free trade and a viable industry?

• (1605)

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member asked me right now what my preference would be, I am very concerned about a free trade deal, but as Liberals we support free trade. However, it has to be fair trade as well.

With regard to exceptions to trade arrangements, people consider the United States to be the great free trader of the world, but it has carved out shipbuilding since 1920. The United States takes care of its industry.

Norway has subsidized the industry for many years. They will not stop doing that because they have a free trade agreement with Canada.

We can have free trade, but it is only normal to have some exceptions. I also think that the bottom line is that we do need a shipbuilding strategy for Canada. We need to look at the structured facility financing and the accelerated capital cost allowance being put together to help the industry. We need to have a buy Canadian plan, just as the United States has a buy American plan in some industries.

We need a strategy first, and then we need to look at the deal and the impact the strategy would have on the deal. Whatever happens, Canada needs and has a remarkable level of integration, in my view, between management and labour.

Canada needs a strategy. It is out there. It is possible for us to find it, to come up with a solution and to move forward in a way that not only protects but enhances our shipbuilding and gets us back to the levels of employment we have seen in years past.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments. The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for saying the name of the riding, because if I did, I would use up all my speaking time.

I listened with considerable interest to the last several speeches. Certainly the plight of the workers in this industry is one we should all care about.

However, I would like to ask the Liberal member opposite who just gave his speech to reply to a question. We have heard his colleagues chiding the government for not dealing with the “buy American” policy that could result in the loss of Canadian jobs. As he advocates a “buy Canadian” policy, how does he rationalize that position with the need for us not to spark trade wars that would hurt not only Canadians but also our trading partner friends?

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Speaker, when I talk about a buy Canadian policy, it is not with specific reference to any trade deal. If we need coast guard vessels or frigates or anything similar that can be made in Canada, it just makes sense that as a Canadian government we would look first to the Canadian industry to do it.

I am not suggesting we should enter a deal and say no to everything right up front. I just think it makes sense. When the hon. member and his colleagues were on the opposite side of the House, they used to raise these same questions about doing or not doing this or that to protect the industry.

When we need vessels, I think it makes eminent sense for us to say that. For security reasons, most nations have specific regulations about shipbuilding and would like to have the shipbuilding done on their home soil. That approach only makes sense. There are all kinds of reasons to look at a buy Canadian policy.

The United States has the most rigorous controls over its shipbuilding industry, in the form of the Jones act. It carves it out so it cannot be hurt by trade deals.

Whether it is fair trade or free trade, we need to go forward. The world is getting smaller. We need to do more, but we also need to make sure we protect Canadians workers here at home.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, could the member differentiate between free trade and fair trade? We have seen what happened with the softwood lumber industry and now the impact on our jobs here in Canada. Yesterday, Tembec announced that it would be laying off about 1,500 more workers. We do not disagree that there needs to be a fair trade agreement. The problem is that the free trade agreements have not been working in our favour.

We need to look at what we are doing with regard to our shipbuilding. If we want to promote a buy in Canada procurement policy or program, how can we do that if we are not building our ships or similar products here in Canada? Will the member acknowledge that the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement with regard to the softwood lumber certainly was not to our benefit at this point in time given the fact that we are losing a lot of our mills? Would he not be supportive of carving the shipbuilding out of this agreement we are talking about today?

• (1610)

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Speaker, no matter what happens to the EFTA deal, our first priority is to have a national shipbuilding strategy. We need to get everyone at the table, especially the people who run the companies and, the people who work in the companies, and anyone else we need to get at the table. That is the first and most important thing.



Will we have a national shipbuilding strategy by the time this bill comes back for a final vote? I do not think we will but we need to make some serious strides toward getting this done. It is really important for this industry which means a lot in my area and in other areas of the country.

\* \* \*

### PRIVILEGE

#### ALLEGED MISUSE OF INTRAPARLIAMENTARY INTERNET

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for coming back to the chair in order to take my question of privilege.

On Monday, February 1 at 10:59 a.m., I received on my House of Commons BlackBerry an email from the member of Parliament for Ahuntsic. This email, from the list of names to whom it was also sent, appears to have been sent to all members of this House.

When I perused the articles and images contained in the email from the Bloc Québécois member of Parliament for Ahuntsic, it immediately became clear to me that it contained text and images supporting and glorifying three organizations that the federal government has deemed to be terrorist organizations.

That is not all. Several of the text and the images contained in this email can only be characterized as hate propaganda against a religious group; that is to say, they incited hate against Jews.

I am proud to have been part of a government that amended Canada's Criminal Code to include the criminal offences of hate crime and to provide a legislative framework with a clear, objective criterion for determining whether an entity is a terrorist organization and thus be listed as such with all of the legal ramifications that follow.

However, even more to the point, it is a privilege to be elected to this House of Commons, which is a point I made today in my Standing Order 31 statement. In my view and, I believe, in the view of all members of this House of Commons and reflected in our standing orders, is that part of the privileges that ensue from being elected to the House is that we are each allotted moneys through a member's operating budget and equipment that we are allowed to use in fulfilling each of our parliamentary duties and privileges.

We have a Conflict of Interest Code for Members of Parliament. We also have the standing orders that explain and determine how these resources can be used. However, beyond that, we each have an ethical and a moral duty, beyond any requirement under our Conflict of Interest Code for Members of Parliament, beyond but including our standing orders, to use the resources, material and human, provided to us as members of Parliament through the House of Commons and which are paid for from the public purse, wisely, prudently, legally and in full respect of our laws and the rules of the House of Commons.

The content of the email from the member of Parliament for Ahuntsic can only expose and did expose myself, other members of this House, communities within my riding and communities in the ridings of other members of Parliament to anti-Semitic propaganda. They were an incitement to hate and, in my view, constitute a clear misuse of the resources of the House of Commons.

### Privilege

It was not even sent to my House of Commons email. It was sent to the BlackBerry, which is the personal email address of each member of Parliament which normally is given to us precisely so that we can screen out and ensure that we only receive emails from certain individuals and certain organizations, and it is not widely publicized. It is only publicized to other members of Parliament as a matter of course through the whips' offices and then each member of Parliament can determine to whom else they will allow access to the BlackBerry email address.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge you to actually view and peruse the email that was sent from the member of Parliament for Ahuntsic. I believe it will become clear to you that there is an incitement to hate against Jews, clear anti-Semitic statements and images that are contained in that email, and that there is a glorification of three organizations that have been deemed to be terrorist organizations by the federal government under our duly adopted and constituted laws.

● (1615)

I believe that it was a clear misuse by the member for Ahuntsic to have used parliamentary equipment and parliamentary services, i.e. our intraparlimentary Internet service, in order to disseminate this information.

The member apparently has stated that she had not viewed all of the images. Given that we do not pay for this equipment or the services and that it is paid from the public purse, I do not know how she was raised, but I was raised by my parents to take care of whatever was given me. If it belongs to someone else and I am using it through the good graces of someone else, in this case the public, it is a privilege that is given to each and every one of us as a member of Parliament to have access to a member's operating budget, to have access to all of the services provided to us, including Internet services and intraparlimentary Internet services through the House of Commons, then I have an added duty to ensure that I do not intentionally or unintentionally expose members of the House to incitement to hate, to anti-Semitic comments, statements and images, and statements and images that glorify terrorist organizations that are all dedicated to the eradication of a certain population, the Jewish population.

If the member did not do so intentionally, then she was derelict in her duty because when using parliamentary services and resources she must ensure that anything that she sends out is not contrary to our laws, is not contrary to our morals and is not contrary to the privileges of every other member in the House.

I have not heard an apology from her because the statement she sent the following day was not an apology. Nowhere in that statement did I see the words "I apologize for not having carried out my duties, to ensure that I did not expose my colleagues to hate and to the glorification of terrorist organizations, and that I used parliamentary resources in order to do so".

Everyone who was sitting in the House when I made my statement about Black History Month now knows why I take that kind of hate propaganda and that kind of incitement to hate seriously. I find it repugnant that a member of the House would misuse services, which are paid through the public purse and which are a privilege to each and every one of us, to expose other members and other Canadians to that kind of hate propaganda and incitement to hate.

*Government Orders*

Mr. Speaker, I hope you will rule that it was a misuse of parliamentary services and it did indeed constitute a violation of my privilege as a member of Parliament and as a Canadian.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the question of privilege raised by my colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

I do not wish to discuss the merits of the matter. However, with all due respect, I would like to say to my colleague that there is a certain confusion of issues when we refer to use of parliamentary equipment and disregard for the code of ethics. In my opinion, we should stick to the facts and to the apology sent by email.

Having said that, by virtue of the rules of natural justice and the right of all individuals to be heard, given that my colleague from Ahuntsic is not present in the House, I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you give my colleague from Ahuntsic the opportunity to explain herself before this chamber before giving a ruling and examining any further this question of privilege raised by my colleague.

**The Speaker:** The Speaker will certainly consider the situation. I think it would be appropriate to wait for the hon. member concerned in this complaint to explain herself before the House.

Perhaps the reactions to this matter will be different after her remarks.

[*English*]

We will leave the matter there and go back to the debate that was before us.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Halifax.

\* \* \*

#### CANADA-EFTA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the States of the European Free Trade Association (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland), the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Republic of Iceland, the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Kingdom of Norway and the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Swiss Confederation, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to speak to Bill C-2, the enabling legislation of the Canada EFTA trade agreement, signed on January 26, 2008, by the government. This enabling legislation is something of the utmost importance to my riding and the country as a whole.

I would like to begin by quoting a question, “I’d love to see someone answer the question, what is Canada going to get out of this agreement?” Those are the words of Mr. Karl Risser, union president of the Halifax shipyard and a constituent of mine when he appeared before the Standing Committee on International Trade in April of last year. They are words we should be asking ourselves whenever we are considering international trade agreements.

Ships are a part of my family's past, as they settled on the shores of Georgian Bay when they came to Canada. My grandfather, Allan Leslie, worked on a steamer called the *SS Caribou* to pay his way through university. When I was little, we used to go down to the grain elevators to have a good look at whatever freighter was docked. My grandfather talked about what a blow it was to the area when the Collingwood shipyards closed. Half the jobs in the area were lost and the economy suffered greatly.

This trends continues across the country, leaving us with the limited shipyards we see today. Despite having the largest coastline in the world, Canada has no strategy for the shipyard building industry and the neglect of this industry makes it vulnerable.

Now, as the member for Halifax, I represent a place with even stronger roots in shipbuilding, and the great work of this sector continues today. We can be proud of our strong traditions in this area, from the construction of wooden sailing ships in the 19th century to the establishment of our powerful navy in the 20th. Through it all, Halifax has been a central force in that development.

However, as my colleagues, the members for Sackville—Eastern Shore and Burnaby—New Westminster and others, have pointed out during this debate, we have deep concerns about the impact of trade deals and, in particular with the bill, their impact on the shipbuilding industry.

Speaking with workers down at the Halifax shipyards recently, I heard about the need for targeted investment in the shipbuilding industry as part of an economic stimulus plan. With the government's plan to construct new joint supply ships and Coast Guard vessels delayed, workers are left hanging. While the shipyard there presently employs 400 to 500 people, that number could rise to 1,000 or more if it were working at full capacity. Those are good paying jobs. It has been noted that one shipbuilding job created creates about four spin-off jobs. The economic benefits of a strong shipbuilding industry are obvious.

Unfortunately, the government has no industrial strategy. Whether it is forestry or manufacturing, our industries are being hindered by the lack of vision for a sustainable and prosperous economic future. In my consultations for the budget, constituents made it very clear that investment in shipbuilding was a priority. The government's budget may promise of a \$49 million investment over two years to the industry, but there is worry that much of that will go to small craft and perhaps to repairing larger ships that will continue to be built elsewhere.

That is hardly the kind of stimulus that the members in my community were hoping for. My constituents wrote to me in my call for budget submissions. They called for investments in the green economy of the future. They called for housing and EI reform. However, they also wrote to me about shipbuilding. I would like to share some of those today.

Bob Cameron, a constituent in my riding, wrote to me:

*Government Orders*

In reply to your request for budget items, I would like to suggest that with the need to replace aging destroyers our shipbuilding industry could certainly use at least one to be built in the Halifax metro area.

Leslie Pezzack wrote:

First I want you to know how pleased I was to see in *The Chronicle Herald*, you along with Liberal, Independent and Provincial NDP together supporting local shipbuilding.

Sally Hodgson, who is not from my riding but from Dartmouth, felt compelled to write in, and I will share these comments with my colleague for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. She wrote:

We have been learning that both the Naval Fleet and the Coast Guard/Department of Fisheries fleets are again aging and there is need to replace several vessels. Also the cost of maintaining these older vessels is becoming prohibitive. The other part of the consideration is the inability of the Canadian Ship Yards to handle this type of work because they cannot obtain and retain the necessary skilled personnel due to the Spike nature of equipment acquisition programs.

This long term program also has to be viewed as obtaining and maintaining a “Strategic” resource. We have basically three choices of shipyard: Vancouver or Victoria, Lauzon, Quebec and Halifax. These yards should be told to build a ship a year and their instructions as to what to build will be given in January of each year.

• (1625)

These were responses to a call for submissions about people wanted to see in a budget.

I was not asking, specifically, for shipbuilding feedback, yet I received so much of it. It is clear that this is an important issue to Halifax. I would like to point out what Paul Ellis from my riding wrote. He wrote:

Being from Halifax, I feel that shipbuilding requires a boost. We have the means but not the work.... Please vote for the people...

In the budget consultations, I had the opportunity to take Tim Bousquet, the news editor of *The Coast*, a Halifax weekly newspaper, around on an economic stimulus tour of the riding. We stopped by shovel ready projects in the riding that were waiting for federal investment.

I would like to read from the article he wrote in *The Coast*, which states:

From there, we go to the Halifax Shipyard and speak with Karl Risser, union president at the yard.

There are unfunded plans for two “joint supply” naval ships, four Arctic patrol vessels and 12 smaller coastal patrol vessels, says Risser. “All we have to do is get that work on the ground. We start building ships, all of a sudden we can say to our workers, “We’re not going to employ you for three months, lay you off for a month, employ you for three months, lay you off for a month.”

Many of the laid-off went to find temporary work in Alberta to hold them over the lean times, but that work too has dried up. Presently, there are 400 to 500 people employed at the yard, but contracts for just two Arctic Patrol vessels would bring the yard to full capacity, with 1,000 workers, says Risser.

While shipbuilding was failed by the budget, we are standing in this honourable House debating enabling legislation that, if passed, will fail this industry again.

We have seen the shipbuilding industry fade due to lack of investment from consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments. It is clear that this industry is facing hard times, and much of that is due to unfair trade deals that pitted our shipbuilders against those in other countries where the production was subsidized. A 25% tariff is all that protected our industry from being erased entirely. Now, this otherwise innocuous trade change could be the final blow for this

struggling industry. Workers and their families in my riding deserve more.

To return to Mr. Risser's testimony before the committee last April, he testified that:

—this EFTA deal is a bad deal for Canada. I'd love to see someone answer the question, what is Canada going to get out of this agreement? I know we're going to destroy our shipbuilding industry, a multi-billion-dollar industry in Canada. It's on its last legs now and needs a real boost. We have that opportunity in front of us, but whether we take it or not is the question.

The hasty signing of this trade deal would unfairly disadvantage workers in my riding and across Canada. For this reason, I must voice my opposition. However, there is a very simple solution before us. The NDP is calling for shipbuilding to be removed from the trade agreement and for the government, instead, to invest in the industry to increase its competitiveness. It is a simple solution that could save our shipbuilding industry and hundreds of jobs in Halifax and elsewhere.

I ask that other parliamentarians to join us to ensure that trade deals like the EFTA are fair to both partners.

Just yesterday, I met with Bernie MacDougall and Jack Ferguson, two dairy farmers from Nova Scotia who are concerned about their industry and how the WTO negotiations would impact the production of Nova Scotian dairy products. Not often do we see dairy and shipbuilding linked in the House of Commons, but their question was, “What will Doha negotiations do for Canada? What will it do to support our dairy industry?” It is a different industry, but it is the same questions and it is the same demand for fairness in trade negotiations.

While there are no dairy farms in my riding, the people of Halifax pride themselves on being able to buy locally and support Nova Scotian agriculture.

When the subject of the EFTA came up while I was meeting with the dairy farmers, the farmers noted that the impact of the EFTA on shipbuilding is similar to the situation that they face regarding trade in the dairy industry. They also acknowledged the importance of the shipbuilding industry as part of a strong Nova Scotian economy and they said that they hoped it worked out for those shipbuilders because those were good jobs, and if they were employed, they would benefit.

I reiterate, one shipbuilding job creates about four spinoff jobs.

Once again, it shows that folks on the ground producing goods and working in the real economy understand what a fair deal is. It seems the government has not come to the same understanding.

*Government Orders*

• (1630)

It brings us back to the question of what Canada is going to get out of this agreement.

As my colleagues have pointed out over the course of this debate, EFTA has some merits, but let us carve out shipbuilding until it can fairly compete with subsidized European shipyards.

This has been the testimony of witnesses who have testified before the international trade committee. There are simple solutions. These are some of the solutions that were proposed.

Andrew McArthur from the Shipbuilding Association of Canada and Irving Shipbuilding Inc. testified:

So our position from day one has been that shipbuilding should be carved out from the trade agreement. We butted our heads against a brick wall for quite a number of years on that and we were told there is no carve-out. If the Americans, under the Jones Act, can carve out shipbuilding from NAFTA and other free trade agreements, as I believe the Americans are doing today with Korea, or have done, why can Canada not do the same?

We have to do something to ensure shipbuilding continues. The easiest thing is to carve it out from EFTA. And if you do one thing, convince your colleagues in government to extend the ship financing facility, make it available to Canadian owners in combination with the accelerated capital cost allowance, and you will have as vibrant an industry as exists.

Even those who are from the business community and who have a vested interest in actually accelerating the implementation of the EFTA, such as the Canadian Shipowners Association, justify their support on the basis that Canada has forever lost its ability to build ships.

We do not share its pessimism. With proper and intelligent support from the federal government, Canada's domestic shipbuilding industry could be rapidly up and running, as Karl Risser has testified and said repeatedly to media and to government. All that is missing is the political will of the government.

The U.S. has always refused to repeal the Jones act, the legislation that has been in place since 1920 and that protects the U.S. capacity to produce commercial ships. The Jones act requires that commerce between U.S. ports on the inland and intracoastal waterways be reserved for vessels that are U.S. built, U.S. owned, registered under U.S. law and U.S. manned.

The U.S. has also refused to include shipbuilding under NAFTA and has implemented in recent years a heavily subsidized naval reconstruction program. Why are we not doing that here in Canada? Why are we not learning from both the mistakes and successes of other parties?

While we are learning from the successes of other parties, I would like to bring up the case study of Norway.

During the last 20 years, Norway, Canada's EFTA main competitor in this sector, has built a strong shipbuilding industry by initially protecting its market and heavily subsidizing production. Now Norway is actually able to compete in a zero tariff environment, something that Canadian industry is not currently able to do.

During all that time Canada had kept a 25% tariff on ship imports, but without a shipbuilding policy of any kind and no money to

support the industry, something for which my friend from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour recently called.

The so-called generous 10 to 15 years phase-out term simply means a stay of execution for Canada's shipbuilding industry. It is precisely this type of policy that allowed Norway to become the world-class player it is today, and it is precisely what the federal government has failed to do by completely gutting Canada's shipbuilding industry.

When we talk about business being an unlikely supporter, because it does want to fast track the benefits of the EFTA, we can point to Mary Keith, who is the spokeswoman for Irving Shipbuilding Inc. This is a situation where labour and industry are on the same page, singing from the same fire book so to speak.

Ms. Keith was quoted in the *Chronicle Herald*, my local paper, as saying:

Canadian shipbuilders and marine service operations should be carved out from the agreements in the same way that the Jones Act carves out U.S. shipbuilding and marine operations from NAFTA and in the same way that Canadian agriculture is protected. We have been advised that this will not be done. The future of skilled Canadian workers and the communities where they live is being traded away by our own federal government.

• (1635)

We have lost workers at the Halifax shipyards to the west. I do not begrudge the west for the work that it is doing, but our workers are skilled specifically in shipbuilding. They are taking whatever jobs they can because they know those jobs will be for the long term, or at least for the medium term, whereas in Halifax with shipbuilding we get a little contract here, a little contract there. There is absolutely no security. I do not blame those workers for leaving, but they have skills and talent that they can bring to this industry.

Earlier I talked about meeting with the dairy farmers and how it was a bit of an unlikely allegiance between farming and shipbuilding in this situation. I would like to read a quote from Terry Pugh, the executive secretary of the National Farmers Union. He also testified before the standing committee and brought a new perspective to this issue from the perspective of farming. He said before the committee:

But the most critical and highly negative aspect of this deal, from our point of view, is its impact on supply management, for example, in the dairy industry. It's true that our access commitments remain in place for imports of certain commodities, as specified under the WTO agreement, but the tariff rates on some of those imports have been dramatically lowered, some of them to the point of elimination entirely.

It's good when the tariff rates on our exports are reduced. It's another matter when we see tariff rates on imports of dairy products, for example, coming into Canada reduced.... I think the Ag Canada representative, in early March, pointed out that, for example, on butter, under 4,000 tonnes of butter coming into Canada, which is our access quota, right now under the WTO—that's a 7% tariff. Under this deal, that 7% goes down to 0%. That is, without a doubt, a tariff cut from 7% down to 0%. The amount that's coming in stays the same, but the tariff rate is actually reduced.

That is a key point, because what that does is effectively facilitate access to the Canadian market for imports of dairy products. We have to keep in mind that the more we open up our market to imports, the more we shut out Canadian producers from their own domestic market. As I pointed out, that cut from 7% to 0% for some dairy products coming in is definitely a cut in tariff rates.

This is exactly what the Dairy Farmers of Nova Scotia came to talk to me about yesterday.

*Government Orders*

We have an opportunity to learn from the shortfalls of previous trade agreements. I urge all members of the House to join the New Democrats in opposing this bill as it stands to ensure that Canada's shipbuilders get something out of this agreement.

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I note that the NDP members have voted against all of the investments in the armed forces since we have been in government, so I am gratified today to hear that the hon. member and her party are very supportive of some of the investments that we are making in our brave men and women in the armed forces.

I wonder if the member would agree that Canadian workers and businesses are among the best in the world and able to compete with anyone in the world. The best way in which to protect jobs and in fact create new jobs is to open up markets so that our businesses can sell their products around the world. When we do that, they will be able to do it better and more productively. This agreement will create more jobs. It will help protect Canadian industry and in the long run will be better for Canadian business.

I wonder if the member could comment on that.

• (1640)

**Ms. Megan Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, while I very much believe in the Canadian shipbuilding industry and in our ability to compete, I would like to point out to the member that other countries support their industries.

I would like to draw attention to Norway as an example on this issue. First of all, in Canada we are not operating anywhere near our maximum capacity. That is because we lack support from the federal government. Unlike Canada, Norway has actually used its period of tariff protection to heavily invest in and expand its shipbuilding industry, making it competitive and efficient. That is what has not been happening in Canada.

Norway was actually able to phase out its government subsidies by 2000. Because the shipbuilding industry has been worn away here for so long by a lack of interest by the federal government, by the time the tariffs are dropped in 15 years, if no aggressive policy is put in place, there will be very little left in Canada other than foreign shipbuilding firms.

I actually disagree with the member. I think it is time for us to have an industrial strategy all around and that industrial strategy should include making firm investments in shipbuilding because the industry is hurting, my riding is hurting and the workers are hurting.

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, allow me to commend my colleague from Nova Scotia on her speech. I must say that she conducts herself very well as a member of Parliament. In spite of the fact that I hope the Liberals win in Halifax next time, I think she is doing a very good job as a member of Parliament.

She was part of a press conference that we held just before Christmas. There were two Liberal members, two NDP members and also the independent member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley. We called upon the federal government to follow through on a commitment it made to make shipbuilding part of a stimulus package.

One of the issues with shipbuilding is that it cannot just ramp up and ramp down, as she and others have mentioned, as we lose our skilled workers to other parts of the country. We just cannot run an industry by ramping it up and ramping it down. That is why things like direct allocation of contracts and having a national shipbuilding strategy are so important.

After having that press conference about shipbuilding being part of a stimulus package, as the Minister of National Defence indicated it would be just before Christmas, how does she think that shipbuilding did in the recent budget?

**Ms. Megan Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his question and for his kind words. And I am hopeful that an NDP member will take the seat in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, but until then the hon. member is doing a fine job in the House of Commons. It is nice to see him here.

That was one chilly press conference. There we were at the harbour in Halifax. It was -20° with the wind chill, although I know that is nothing compared to Ottawa. We were out there with the workers. We came together for a non-partisan press conference to say that we need to invest in shipbuilding in the budget. The workers were there with their flags. They rallied around us. It was quite an optimistic moment.

Then the budget came out. While there is a line for shipbuilding in the budget, and if we do scan, it does pop up, it is simply not enough. It seems to be only for small craft, which would mean about six months of contract work. There is some money in there for repairs, but generally that is repair of vessels that are built in other countries.

When I talked to the locals at the shipyard, they said that the problem with these short-term contracts is that we cannot lure our workers back home. Sure, it is six months' worth of work, but will people actually come back home so that they can work for six months and then be out of a job?

We need a long-term strategy and the budget absolutely fails the shipbuilding industry. I am proud to say that is why I voted against it.

• (1645)

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member on her speech. She certainly speaks to something about which we all have concerns, and that is how we protect the traditional industries of this country and the jobs that they provide to our communities.

I remember being in New Brunswick in 1987 and visiting the shipyards in Saint John. I remember seeing the Algoma Steel stamp on big sheets of steel that had come from my own city. In seeing that I understood the interconnectedness between these industries.

*Government Orders*

When we build ships in Nova Scotia, we provide an opportunity for a steel mill in Sault Ste. Marie or Hamilton to sell its product and that provides jobs in those communities. Shipbuilding in Nova Scotia, British Columbia, or wherever it happens in this country has a major ripple effect on other parts of the country that we cannot ignore or deny.

I wonder if the member would comment on that.

**Ms. Megan Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, the member's comment is a very good one. This is something I was alluding to earlier. People who are working on the ground understand the connection. They know exactly what is going on. I could cite the statistic that one shipbuilding job creates four spinoff jobs, but what does that mean?

I find it quite remarkable that a dairy farmer from Antigonish county, which is nowhere near the shipyards in Halifax, would say to me, "Gee, I hope things work out for those shipbuilders because that could really help my industry". I can only imagine the pride of seeing the stamp that something was made in Sault Ste. Marie when one is in Halifax.

This is not just about using steel from mills in Sault Ste. Marie or Hamilton, it is about local economies everywhere. It means that workers have good-paying jobs. They will be able to weather this recession. They will be able to purchase goods, which means that we have to create more goods. It is a win-win situation for local economies and communities, but also for the federal economy. That is why we are calling for investment in infrastructure through shipbuilding and to have a dedicated industrial plan that includes shipbuilding.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to congratulate the member for Halifax for doing such a fine job in representing Halifax. I am sure she is going to win the riding again next time, not only because she is doing such a fine job but because the Liberals are supporting the Conservatives.

In her statement, she said that for every shipbuilding job that is created, four other jobs are created in the offset industries.

In the budget the Conservatives added five weeks to EI at the end of the period. I would like the hon. member for Halifax to tell me what kind of a difference it would have made if the government had added two weeks at the start of EI and then three weeks at the end. Would this have helped the shipbuilders who are currently unemployed?

**Ms. Megan Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. That two weeks at the beginning would have made all the difference in the world. Two weeks is a very long time to wait before one evens apply.

The one thing that we often forget is that a person applies and then the person continues to wait. It is quite a bit more time before the person sees any money coming in. Despite what the minister has said in the House that two weeks is plenty of time to find a new job, two weeks is not sufficient. People need that support at the front end, and it is something we would like to have changed in the EI regulations.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to join with my colleagues in denouncing this bill which will have long-term implications for the workers of this country. It is a bill which further commits Canada to

a free trade agenda when what we should really be pursuing is a fair trade agenda.

I find it interesting that we are continuing to negotiate these types of trade deals given the difficulty we have had recently with the rise in protectionism, particularly from the U.S., our biggest trading partner and close signatory in the North American free trade agreement. It can be argued that we are the poor cousin in that arrangement, bringing only concessions to the table and having to live with the whims of our partners. We are seeing this with respect to iron and steel procurement in the U.S. stimulus package.

We have also witnessed the long struggle to get an acceptable softwood lumber agreement with our American partners. In northern Ontario we are particularly aware of the failure of successive governments, both Liberal and Conservative, to protect an industry that goes to the heart of our economy. In northern Ontario we have watched the trend in the softwood industry as workers are being asked for concessions, mills are shutting down and those lucky enough to still have jobs in the forestry sector are not confident those jobs will be there in the future.

It is not because of a crisis in confidence of our products, work ethics or the future of the resource. It is because these people recognize that they are working within the confines of a flawed agreement that does little to protect jobs here in Canada.

[*Translation*]

In my riding, there was the loss of 120 jobs at the Haavalsrud mill in Hornepayne, the closing for four weeks of the Tembec mill in Kapuskasing and its announcement yesterday of lay-offs in Hearst, not to mention the concessions that Columbia Forest Products in Hearst tried to obtain from its workers. All these events have an immediate impact on our small towns.

● (1650)

[*English*]

Forgive me if I fail to see the silver lining in this latest free trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association, comprised of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Although we are the larger partner in this agreement, at least in terms of population, once again we are conceding ground and making it difficult to ensure the future survival of important national industries.

I am talking about our shipbuilding industry now. We are entering into an agreement that will all but guarantee that our shipbuilding industry continues to contract and loses ground to foreign producers. This trade agreement will reduce tariffs on ships from 25% to zero in a period of 10 to 15 years, depending on the type of ship.

*Business of the House*

The main source of competition for shipbuilding will be Norway. Norway has pursued a long-term industrial strategy for shipbuilding. It has a state-of-the-art yard that has been subsidized and is well established. Canada does not. We do not have an industrial policy for shipbuilding and the infrastructure in the yards we do have is not state-of-the-art. Canadian yards are not on a level playing field as we set them loose to compete under the terms of this agreement.

I would be remiss to go on any further without mentioning the good work of my colleague, the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore. Had governments listened to his call for improvements in Canadian shipbuilding capacity, we would not be voicing many of our concerns today. We would be entering into this agreement on a level playing field and be able to compete not only with Norway but Japan, Korea and any of the best shipbuilding yards in the world. Sadly, his repeated call for a shipbuilding industrial strategy has been ignored, and we in the NDP are forced to fight on behalf of the remnants of this once proud industry to ensure it does not simply vanish.

I would also like to echo the sentiments of my colleague from Thunder Bay—Rainy River. I too am appalled that not one ship is being built in the Thunder Bay shipyard, not now or even in the past year, yet at the same time we are moving ahead with an agreement that will forever hamstring this industry. It is inconceivable that we would like to merely walk away from these good jobs in a time when we are meant to be moving heaven and earth to protect jobs in Canada.

It does not end with shipbuilding though. Our concerns go beyond that. There are serious implications for our agricultural sector in this agreement as well. The provisions within the agreement concerning agriculture defer to the World Trade Organization principles and dispute mechanisms, which will have a very negative impact on supply management by weakening Canada's position. The NDP opposes these WTO mechanisms and has strong concerns about their effect on our domestic agriculture capacity.

Terry Pugh, the executive secretary of the National Farmers Union, told the Standing Committee on International Trade in April of 2008:

—the most critical and highly negative aspect of this deal...is its impact on supply management, for example, in the dairy industry. It's true that our access commitments remain in place for imports of certain commodities, as specified under the WTO agreement, but the tariff rates on some of those imports have been dramatically lowered, some of them to the point of elimination entirely.

He points out that butter coming into Canada in shipments of under 4,000 tonnes has a 7% tariff. Under this deal, that 7% goes down to 0%. The amount that is coming in stays the same but the tariff rate is actually reduced. That just opens up Canadian markets to offshore products, and every time we do that, we shut Canadian producers out of their own domestic market. Is that not a shame? It might be free trade but it certainly is not fair trade.

We have standards in Canada and our dairy farmers are demanding. They work hard and they deliver a safe product through reliable supply routes, operating under a supply management system that ensures as much.

●(1655)

They operate under the basic tenets of fair trade. These are commitments to health and safety, respect for human rights, worker rights and right to assembly. They operate in good faith. That is more than can be said about a government that rushes through trade agreements just to be seen to be doing something, a government that has made promises on icebreakers, the Arctic patrol vessel and the joint support ship project, none of which are moving ahead despite the fact that they could all be done in Canada.

I would like to quote Andrew McArthur of the Shipbuilding Association of Canada and Irving Shipbuilding who appeared before the Standing Committee on International Trade on April 2, 2008. I know it has been mentioned a few times in the House already, but I think it is important that we keep hammering away at it. He said:

So our position from day one has been that shipbuilding should be carved out from the trade agreement. We butted our heads against a brick wall for quite a number of years on that and we were told there is no carve-out. If the Americans, under the Jones Act, can carve out shipbuilding from NAFTA and other free trade agreements, as I believe the Americans are doing today with Korea, or have done, why can Canada not do the same? [...] We have to do something to ensure shipbuilding continues. The easiest thing is to carve it out from EFTA. And if you do one thing, convince your colleagues in government to extend the ship financing facility, make it available to Canadian owners in combination with the accelerated capital cost allowance, and you will have as vibrant an industry as exists.

In closing, I would like to remind the government that this agreement threatens Canadian industry and agriculture. This agreement sets adrift, perhaps forever, our shipbuilding history and its industry. It could also have dire consequences on dairy producers and should be reviewed with a healthy dose of skepticism.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions with all parties in the House and I believe that if you were to seek it, you would find that there is unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That during the debate pursuant to Standing Order 52, following the first intervention of each of the recognized parties, members rising to speak may indicate that the period of debate be divided in four.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Government Orders*

(Motion agreed to)

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

● (1700)

[English]

**CANADA–EFTA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT  
IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the States of the European Free Trade Association (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland), the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Republic of Iceland, the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Kingdom of Norway and the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Swiss Confederation, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking for her fine speech today. As a neighbouring riding to Nickel Belt, the hon. member knows that many mines in Nickel Belt are affected by the shipbuilding industry. The more ships we build, the more steel we need. The more steel we need, the more nickel we need, especially for building from stainless steel. Also, the more ships we build, the more wood products we need, which affects the member's riding in particular. I would like the hon. member to tell me how shipbuilding in Canada would help these two industries?

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Madam Speaker, when we are looking at shipbuilding, it does not just impact those people who are actually building the ships, but it does have a ripple effect into other industries, especially the mining and forestry industries. Everyone would benefit from that, not to mention some of our small business communities and the construction industry as well. Certainly, it would impact greatly. Given the fact that we have seen job loss after job loss in Canada, imagine that, we could start building up our manufacturing industry once again. Would that not be a great thing to put people back to work?

We have been seeing skill shortages over and over again. Again, by losing our shipbuilding capacities we will be losing skills. I want to reiterate that the ripple effect of job creation would certainly benefit Canada greatly.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Weland, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I always find it somewhat amusing from time to time when people speak about six degrees of separation. I listened with great intent to the member for Halifax who spoke about her grandfather working in the shipyard in Collingwood. I could not help but reflect that my father actually came here as a new Canadian in 1963 and perhaps they worked side by side in that yard. What a legacy that would be indeed if the yards across this country were to be booming again like that yard that once was. I repeat, once was, in Collingwood.

However, to the hon. member who has just spoken so eloquently about shipbuilding and farming across this great land, we look at the trade agreements that have been signed by the last couple of governments, whether it be the North American Free Trade Agreement and now this one with Europe, and the one that was

attempted with Korea and of course with Colombia. My question forms around what those do for us.

Let me first quote George MacPherson, who is president of the Shipyard General Workers' Federation of British Columbia. Really this is an industry that is across this land from coast to coast to coast. He said:

The Canadian shipbuilding industry is already operating at about one-third of its capacity. Canadian demand for ships over the next 15 years is estimated to be worth \$9 billion in Canadian jobs. Under the FTAs with Norway, Iceland, and now planned with Korea and then Japan, these Canadian shipbuilding jobs are in serious jeopardy. In these terms, this government's plan is sheer folly and an outrage.

My question for the hon. member is this. Who benefits from these types of agreements, which are called free trade rather than fair trade?

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Madam Speaker, who does actually benefit from free trade? Basically what we have seen is that those at the top of the big industries almost ensure that the smaller entities will have difficulty surviving. There is no such thing as free trade. It just ensures that the biggest players dominate the industry.

It is just like big corporate tax cut credits. The big banks and the big oil companies get the big credits. Sixty dollars for every tax credit that goes to the big corporations only \$1 goes into EI. I think that is a shame. The rich keep getting richer and the poor keep getting poorer.

When we are looking at the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, chapter 11 of NAFTA allows for corporations to usurp the democratic will of Parliament. Therefore, I think it is important that we keep track of what really has been going on because no matter what Parliament's will is, free trade agreements override that.

● (1705)

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned in her intervention the recent budget and its deficiencies. Despite the fact that there has been a great deal of concern expressed, the recent budget gives \$60 in tax cuts to the most profitable corporations including banks and oil companies and fails those workers who have been unemployed by only returning \$1 in a pitiful lack of reform to the employment insurance program. I am wondering if the member could comment about the effects of this lack of employment insurance reform on her community, on my community, and on your community, Madam Speaker.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Madam Speaker, before I go into the details about EI, I will say that the impact is quite great. Just in the last two months of 2008 over 100,000 people lost their jobs and we have been hearing about job loss after job loss ever since.

On the free trade agreement, if we had fair trade, that would be great. We would be able to compete, and we can compete, as long as the government is willing to invest in the industries that we already have.



*Government Orders*

With the lumber industry, for example, when we did our prebudget consultations we heard that what that industry wanted was access to credit. Reasonable access to credit would have kept some of those mills going and kept the jobs going.

It is the same thing with our shipbuilding industry. If the government wanted to be serious about investing in shipbuilding, we would certainly be able to protect the jobs that we currently have and eventually create more jobs.

On the EI part, access to EI certainly has grave impacts across the north. Again, because of the inefficiencies across Canada, the required hours are not the same for everyone. I put forward a private member's bill to reduce that to 360 hours for everybody. I am hoping the House will support that bill when we discuss it.

As I said, when we consider that for every \$60 given as a corporate tax credit only \$1 goes to EI, that is an atrocity. Economists have said that an EI recipient spends that money in his or her community and there is economic stimulus right away. Within two weeks of a recipient receiving his or her EI cheque, he or she will have spent it on necessities. What happens with big corporate tax cuts? The corporations put that money in their pockets and go away, and sometimes that money is invested overseas.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** There is one minute left for a short question.

As there are no questions, resuming debate, the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway has the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak to the issue before the House for a number of reasons. We are debating Bill C-2, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the States of the European Free Trade Association (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland), the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Republic of Iceland, the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Kingdom of Norway and the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Swiss Confederation. This bill has been reintroduced. It was formerly known as Bill C-55, enabling legislation of the Canada-EFTA agreement signed in January 2008 by the present government during the 39th Parliament.

One of the reasons I am pleased to speak to this issue is that the bill was initially introduced by my predecessor in the riding of Vancouver Kingsway, the former minister of international trade.

I would like to take a rather different approach to a proper trade policy for Canada, vis-à-vis the policy that was being pursued in the previous Parliament.

I would like to begin my remarks by talking about the opportunity this legislation gives us to analyze what would be an appropriate trade policy for Canada in 2009 and as we go forward.

In my view and the view of our party, the principles that ought to be attached to an intelligent policy on trade at the present moment and in the years ahead are based on the following:

We must base our policy on the concept of fair trade, not free trade. We must base our policy on the notion of having balanced and reciprocal agreements, that is, agreements that actually respect the principles enshrined in the agreements and which guarantee that both countries have equal and untrammelled access to each other's markets. I will speak about this a bit later and we will see that a number of our recent agreements have failed in this regard.

Our trade policy ought to be based upon a foundation of a strong Canadian industrial strategy; that is, we profit best on the world stage and in our trade relationships when we have strong industrial sectors in Canada and approach trade from a position of strength for our Canadian businesses and workers.

We also need to build our policy on a position of a sound agricultural sector and well-functioning professional and service sectors. In other words, we need to build our trade policy on a strong foundation of a well-functioning and healthy domestic economy.

Unfortunately, this trade agreement does not meet the test of the principles I have just outlined. It falls short in several key areas.

As has been pointed out by several of the eloquent speakers who have preceded me, the essential problem with this piece of legislation is that it would phase out tariffs. This would put at risk a couple of very key and pivotal sectors of the Canadian economy, including the shipbuilding and agricultural sectors.

To elaborate more upon the concept of free trade, and fair trade as a distinction, I want to explain what I mean when I say fair trade. What we in the New Democratic Party mean by that is that we must ensure that we enter into agreements with other nations that respect the principle of fair wages for their workers and respect the principle of avoiding unfair subsidies to their industries. I will speak about this particular aspect with respect to shipbuilding and what Norway has done in contrast to what the Canadian government has done over the last decade.

Any agreement must be based on the concept of true reciprocal access to each other's markets and enforce standards in environmental protection, safety and employment standards.

If we enter into trade agreements with countries that do not have respect for each and every one of these principles, then we put at risk Canadian domestic sectors and we do a disservice not only to Canadian businesses but also to the workers they employ.

● (1710)

Agriculture and shipbuilding are two pivotal key sectors that are put at risk by the provisions in the agreement. Both sectors are particularly important to British Columbia, the province from which I come.

*Government Orders*

Agriculture is a very important industry in the province of British Columbia. I see a number of MPs who joined me last night at an event put on by the dairy producers. Dairy production is a very important part of British Columbia's agricultural sector. British Columbia has the third largest production of dairy products in Canada. It employs thousands of families. It is a clean and renewable sector. It is an important part of our domestic food supply. We need to ensure that this sector remains healthy in Canada so that we have a stable food supply for our country not only today but in the years ahead.

Shipbuilding is an industry which my colleagues have spoken about. It has a long proud tradition in this country from the east coast to the west coast. On the west coast the shipbuilding industry has been under a severe strain for the last several decades. This bill, unfortunately, would do nothing to help in that regard.

Essentially, this legislation would reduce tariffs on ships from 25% to 0% over a period of 10 or 15 years, depending on the types of products. One category of ships would go down to 0% right away. This provision refers to very large ships in the category of post-Panamax, which are ships that are not able to go through the Panama Canal.

If this bill were to pass, the Canadian shipbuilding industry, which we want to encourage to build ships, would have to compete with shipbuilding industries in other countries that have been supported by their governments in a manner that the Canadian government has not done domestically. This would put our domestic shipbuilders at great risk. Specifically, our analysis has shown that Norway has had a great head start in terms of support for its domestic shipbuilding industry and with that head start, Norway is able to produce ships which, unfortunately, Canadian shipbuilders would have a difficult time competing against.

Andrew McArthur of the Shipbuilding Association of Canada has made a compelling case on behalf of Canadian shipbuilders to have this industry explicitly excluded from this bill, as it is from NAFTA, I would point out. He notes that Norway's world-class shipbuilding industry is not subsidized today, but it does owe its present competitiveness to generous government support in years past.

This is not just a position that is taken by our party. It is a position that has been validated by industrial sectors and business people in civil society in Canada.

It is precisely the type of policy that has allowed Norway to become the world-class player that it is today. This is precisely what the federal government, once again, has failed to do by not supporting Canada's shipbuilding industry.

In terms of British Columbia, recently the current federal government and the present Liberal government in British Columbia declined to stand up for our shipbuilding industry. The example is British Columbia ferries. Hundreds of jobs were lost by the shortsighted government investment in a German shipbuilding industry rather than supporting British Columbia jobs for building ferries in B.C. coastal waters. Our party has asked that the import duties on three super C-class B.C. ferries built in Germany be entirely sent to support the shipbuilding industry in British Columbia. This very reasonable request has been refused by the

current government. It would go a long way to providing some much needed money to kick-start the shipbuilding industry in British Columbia.

Shipbuilding and agriculture, besides being two key industries, are industries that not only provide good jobs but they are the jobs of the future and are sustainable.

● (1715)

In terms of shipbuilding, not only does it provide good, well-paying jobs upon which families can be raised, it also has multiplier effects and spin off jobs in a lot of areas in our economy, which I would think all members of the House would be interested in supporting, including research and technology, development, skilled trades, professional designing, engineering and other types of jobs that are not only the jobs of the future, but are jobs that our children will want to be trained for and occupy in the years ahead.

It is very important, when we talk about developing a trade policy that works in the years ahead, that we pay homage not only to the concept of having access to markets, but also one that promotes a strong national economy at the same time. I think I mentioned earlier that I would speak of an example where a previously poorly negotiated trade agreement resulted in us not getting the access that was promised. This example is illustrated by the softwood lumber agreement, where not only do our producers end up having to forfeit billions of dollars in duties to the United States, but at the end of the day we do not have the untrammelled access to the market we were promised by the agreement.

In my home province of British Columbia forestry is an incredibly important sector that at present is suffering in a terrible way. An almost record number of mills have shut down. I have been told by both trade unions and representatives of the business sector that they cannot remember the forestry sector being in such poor shape in living memory. Those who have studied the issue compare it to the worst state since the Depression. Tens of thousands of workers and their families have been laid off. We simply have a problem that is harming the economy of British Columbia and Canada, and part of its roots can be traced to poor trade agreements.

It is so critical, when we do negotiate trade agreements like the present one, that we ensure we get them right. In this case, we have to ensure that the interests of our domestic industries, like shipbuilding, agriculture and any other industrial sectors, affected by this are taken into account and taken care of so we do not subject them to further erosion, job loss and difficulties in terms of bringing their product to market, which is what this bill would do.

There are some good things in the bill. Entering into trade agreements with progressive countries that have respect for their workers and the environment, like the types of countries covered by this agreement do, is a good step. However, the legislation can be improved. In that respect, I would ask that the government listen to the remarks made by my colleagues and all members of the House, who seem to consistently point out the same problems, and ensure we develop and enforce policies that will ensure we have a strong shipbuilding industry, on both the west and east coasts, and a strong agricultural sector across the Prairies, Ontario, Quebec and wherever we have vibrant food production in this country.

We need to ensure we have a vibrant forestry sector and industrial and professional classes in our country, which will ensure we create the jobs that are not only so needed today in this time of economic crisis, but which will also form the basis for a strong economy in the days, weeks, months and years ahead.

There is some money in the budget for shipbuilding, and it is pleasing to see that. While that is a good start, as has been pointed out by my colleagues, it is far too little. There is a bit of money for some Coast Guard vessels. There is a bit of money to replace some aging infrastructure, including some wharves. However, in terms of a true Canadian policy that will kick-start and sustain our shipbuilding industry, the budget simply does not do that.

● (1720)

I would encourage the government and all members of the House to pay attention to this, because we all have an interest in developing a vibrant Canadian economy in this regard.

George MacPherson, the president of the Shipyard General Workers Federation of British Columbia has stated the following:

The Canadian shipbuilding industry is already operating at about one-third of its capacity. Canadian demand for ships over the next 15 years is estimated to be worth \$9 billion in Canadian jobs. Under the FTAs with Norway, Iceland, and now planned with Korea and then Japan, these Canadian shipbuilding jobs are in serious jeopardy. In these terms, this government's plan is sheer folly and an outrage.

That is from someone who is involved intimately with the shipbuilding industry in our country. The House would do well to follow and listen to his warnings in this regard.

Again, Mr. Andrew McArthur from the Shipbuilding Association for the management side takes a similar view. He says, "We have to do something to ensure shipbuilding continues".

The easiest thing is to carve it out from EFTA, the present legislation before the House, and if members do one thing, it is this. They should convince their colleagues in government to extend the ship financing facility, make it available to Canadian owners in combination with the accelerated capital cost allowance and we will have as vibrant an industry as exists.

When we have the unique situation of both the industry businesses as well as representatives of the workers joining and meeting minds on this issue, it would well behoove the members of the House to pay attention.

It would be my great hope that the members of the House would join together and urge the government to amend the legislation, which, once again, does go some distance in arriving at an agreement that may derive benefits for our country and improve the legislation.

In the case of the government, the previous minister has stated that the shipbuilding industry is of strategic importance to the sovereignty of this nation. Our defence minister, in a press release last summer stated that the "government recognizes the challenges being faced by the shipbuilding industry and is taking real action to help both in the short and longer term". He said that as a marine nation, Canada needed a viable shipbuilding industry to support our sovereignty.

### *Business of the House*

Those are good words and I hope the government backs up those good words with policies and actions that are consistent with that rhetoric.

It is vital in this legislation that we heed not only the comments made by members of the House, both within and outside the House, but that we pay heed to the comments of the industry and to the interests of the workers and that we continue to work toward a policy that will create the kind of economy that will serve us in the future.

My colleague from Halifax had an all party press conference in Halifax at a shipyard. Once again, this underlines the fact that all parties of the House ought to be interested, as is my party, in developing and reinvigorating a shipbuilding industry that can derive and produce benefits for this country.

Reference has been made to the Jones act in the United States, which has been in place since the 1920s and which the United States has studiously refused and resisted abolishing, including during the NAFTA negotiations. That act requires the United States to have American built, American registered, American staffed vessels operating on intracoastal waters in the United States. That is sound policy for the United States and it is a policy that we should be pursuing in Canada as well. Once again, it is a principle that, unfortunately, the legislation before the House does not respect.

I hope members of the House would join me in standing up for a strong, vibrant Canadian shipbuilding industry, a strong and vibrant agricultural industry and fair trade policies upon which we can continue Canada's proud tradition as a trading nation.

Those are my comments. I would be delighted to entertain any questions that any members of the House may have.

\* \* \*

● (1725)

### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Madam Speaker, with the indulgence of the hon. member who just made his presentation, I would like to interrupt the proceedings for a couple of motions.

There has been, I would suggest, quite extensive consultations among all four of the parties, and I believe if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following two motions.

First, I move:

That notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, all questions necessary to dispose of Ways and Means Motion No. 6 shall be put immediately at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions on Thursday, February 5, provided that a period of time equal to that used for the taking of the division shall be added to the time provided for the government orders of that day.

● (1730)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

*Government Orders*

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

---

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Madam Speaker, second, I move:

That, for the purposes of subsection 4(4) of the Director of Public Prosecutions Act, the proposed appointment of Mr. Brian J. Saunders as the Director of Public Prosecutions be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Does the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

---

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### CANADA-EFTA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the States of the European Free Trade Association (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland), the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Republic of Iceland, the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Kingdom of Norway and the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Swiss Confederation, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member for Vancouver Kingsway made a wonderful presentation. Mill after mill has closed down in the past several years in Northern Ontario because of the policies of the Conservative government, especially its signing away of \$1 billion to the American government.

The hon. member spoke about fair trade in his statement. Would he tell me how not only British Columbia, which he represents, but also the rest of Canada would benefit if we had a fair trade agreement in the softwood lumber and shipbuilding industries as well as in agriculture?

**Mr. Don Davies:** Madam Speaker, I will focus a little on the agriculture aspect of the member's question. I will start by answering

with a quote from Terry Pugh, the executive secretary of the National Farmers Union, who said:

—the most critical and highly negative aspect of this deal, from our point of view, is its impact on supply management, for example, in the dairy industry. It's true that our access commitments remain in place for imports of certain commodities, as specified under the WTO agreement, but the tariff rates on some of those imports have been dramatically lowered, some of them to the point of elimination entirely.

It's good when the tariff rates on our exports are reduced. It's another matter when we see tariff rates on imports of dairy products, for example, coming into Canada reduced....I think the Ag Canada representative, in early March, pointed out that, for example, on butter, under 4,000 tonnes of butter coming into Canada, which is our access quota, right now under the WTO—that's a 7% tariff. Under this deal, that 7% goes down to 0%. That is, without a doubt, a tariff cut...The amount that's coming in stays the same, but the tariff rate is actually reduced.

That is a key point, because what that does is effectively facilitate access to the Canadian market for imports of dairy products...the more [this happens], the more we shut out Canadian producers from their own domestic market.

That is a good illustration for the hon. member. When we have free trade but not fair trade, our Canadian producers have difficulty competing because the playing fields are not the same.

We must ensure that any country that wants to import or export products into our country, that wants to trade with us is committed to principles of fair wages and of respect for environmental protection, ensuring the environment is not degraded to the point where our environment is sacrificed so it can lower the price of its goods. We also must have reciprocal access to that country's markets.

If any one of those three factors is not respected, then we see cheap imports flooding into our market without the reciprocal ability of our domestic producers to export our products there. In the case of the dairy producers, as I just mentioned, it even harms the ability of our domestic producers to supply our domestic market. That just hurts our businesses and it hurts Canadians across the country.

• (1735)

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Madam Speaker, this past week the Dairy Farmers of Canada have come to visit many of us on the anniversary of its 75th year as being an organization which was absolutely memorable. It was great to meet with those members, especially since those dairy producers are actually close to our own ridings and in some cases in our ridings. One of the things that they wanted to talk about was the supply management system. My question for my colleague will be around that issue and what that means in the sense of fair trade.

They asked me what was my sense of the quality and the security of the product they were delivering, in particular milk, and what were my constituents saying to me. One of the things that came to mind was that one of the most secure systems in the world is the supply management system. One of the validators for that is mothers. It is mothers who buy milk for the youngest of us, for their children, and who never have a question about its quality and the security of it. That speaks immensely to the supply management system and how well it works.

I think that is a tribute to the type of system that we have had and continue to have, and indeed could build upon if we so chose. Then again, it is the choice that we have to make and one that is in front of us today. It is that very choice, that we could look to build on that type of a system, augment it in other sectors, and look to that and ask what are the good parts of that.

*Government Orders*

Consumers are very satisfied across the country with the dairy products they receive from the perspective of quality and security. We have seen around the world, when it comes to dairy products, that there are some systems that are not as secure as our own. I am not so sure that we would want to have those systems given to us, because we had no other choice, because we let ours disappear.

If we look at that system and we were to say to ourselves, what are the good attributes of that system and could we take those attributes and indeed overlay them on to things like shipbuilding and to other parts of agriculture in the context of a fair trade system in this particular case? Could we allow the shipbuilding industry to have a kind of managed system, not so much like dairy but use those attributes that say that once we allow it to be on a level playing field with its competition, it would be more than happy to compete?

I wonder if my hon. colleague would comment on that. Does he see any kind of linkages and does he see any overlap? Can we use and learn from those good things that we see in the supply management system in those particular dairy products?

**Mr. Don Davies:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Welland for his astute observations and for bringing up a player in this entire debate that perhaps has not been focused on enough and that is the Canadian consumer, and the fact that we take for granted in this country that we have a safe and fair system of delivering food and bringing it to market. We can easily take that for granted when we start opening our borders in trade agreements to the introduction of foodstuffs from other countries.

I neglected to identify before that my own grandfather was a farmer who homesteaded on the Alberta-Saskatchewan border and began that in 1926. He was an ardent and firm believer in supply management and the need to make sure that the people who grow our food and produce, all of our foodstuffs in this country, are treated fairly.

Once again, this was reinforced last night in the meeting with the dairy producers of this country who also have made a further plea for us to remain committed to supply management in this country.

With the focus on the environment that has really begun in the last 20 years, I think it is very important that we all become very aware of the fact that we have a very clean and safe food production system. Not only that, it allows us to produce food locally, so we do not have to, nor would we want to, begin having a trade system that sees us transporting foodstuffs from thousands of kilometres away when we can produce those foodstuffs locally and consume those products locally.

Therefore, not only does it benefit our farmers, not only does it benefit our agricultural industry, not only does it benefit our consumers but it also benefits our environment by having a strong trade deal that is based on supply management and principles that go beyond simply price, and simply introducing products into this country that are cheap. There is so much more to a trade deal than just the price of cheap goods.

Once again, our party is standing up to enshrine those principles into trade legislation and the bill before the House unfortunately falls a little bit short in that regard.

● (1740)

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am very proud tonight to rise and speak to Bill C-2, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the States of the European Free Trade Association (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland), the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Republic of Iceland, the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Kingdom of Norway and the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Swiss Confederation.

I do not know if I have ever told the House about my late uncle, John Lindsay MacNeil. He quit high school, which was common in those days, and he was a jackleg miner in the McIntyre Mine. I know members are thinking to themselves that MacNeil must be a Cape Breton name, and it certainly is. The MacNeils left the beautiful region of Iona to come to northern Ontario because working in the dangerous gold mines in northern Ontario was safer than working in the collieries in New Waterford and Glace Bay. John Lindsay worked underground on the drills and decided that he should get himself an education. It was not easy then. Actually it was a Russian immigrant who taught my uncle Latin on the night shift. This is a true story. I can see that I have the House's complete attention on this.

He learned Latin on the night shift and went back to university at St. FX, where all the Cape Bretoners go. He became a trade negotiator for Canada and he was in the first trade negotiations for Iceland. Iceland might seem like a small country to many, but we are a trading nation and we send out our trade negotiators to come back with great agreements.

As a very interesting aside, when he was in Iceland meeting with the Icelandic trade commission, he had another Cape Bretoner with him. After three days they had a few shots of Icelandic vodka and the Icelandic trade commissioner looked at my uncle said, "MacNeil, you are not one of those pithy little Celts. Look at your stature. You are one of us. You are a Viking. You are Neilson, not McNeil". Not only was he able to deal with trade negotiations at the international level, but he also learned a lot about the heritage of the people from Iceland.

I say that because when a trade agreement comes back from our trade commissioners, who bring it to the House, it is the role of the opposition to ensure that the trade agreement is in the best interest of the country. That is our job. If we fail to do that job, we have no business being here.

There are many elements about international trade deals that are important. I know many people, for example, are looking forward to Norwegian cheese coming in. My kids have always wanted to have access to the famous Norwegian blue parrots, which have a beautiful, remarkable plumage. They stun easily though and one has to watch them, especially when they are pining for the fjords, but in a trade agreement that might be something that we might be able to assess.

*Government Orders*

We have to then ask ourselves, if we are making the trade agreement, what are we giving up? That is the rub of international trade. It is not to close our borders or to be protectionist. It is to ensure that we are on a level playing field. When we go up against a country such as Norway, which has a coherent national strategy in terms of shipbuilding, and we look at Canada that has been completely derelict in terms of a national strategy in key sectors such as forestry, auto and shipbuilding, we are not on a level playing field.

We are signing an agreement with the country of Norway and we have to ask ourselves what is on the table. We are looking at billions of dollars in lost opportunities in Canada, and I simply do not think there is any way we can sell that to the Canadian public and say that it is in their best interests.

Time after time, Canadians have been hosed at various levels of trade agreements. The most notorious of course was the softwood sellout, engineered as a photo op by the Conservatives. From northwestern Ontario to Abitibi region, we can count on one hand the number of saw mills that are still running. When we talk to anybody in those communities who are trying to get value added agreements off the ground, to get small manufacturers going, they do not have quota. They are not allowed to compete anymore, because under the Conservatives' idea of trade, we give up our ability to compete on a fair and open field against the Americans. We have seen that even if they actually produce value added products, they end up paying more in the softwood tariffs. The Conservatives' idea of trade was to have a disincentive against our own producers, who could compete against anybody on the global scale.

Another example of course is the notorious chapter 11 provisions of NAFTA, which have left Canadians on the hook. In Mexico we have seen the same problems.

• (1745)

If one has not dealt with the provisions of chapter 11, then one might not believe how bad some of these trade provisions are. I could give the example of the Adams Mine garbage plan. This was a municipal contract in the province of Ontario to haul waste from a city. It was a notorious crackpot scheme that was eventually shut down. It took the Ontario government to step forward and expropriate the site. A number of years after this was shut down there was suddenly a chapter 11 challenge, which I have here, by a guy from the U.S. calling himself Vito Gallo. He claimed that he was the sole owner of this property through his 1532382 Ontario Inc. company.

This Vito Gallo asked the Conservative government, which is notorious for not standing up for trade interests, for \$350 million. We go into chapter 11 without knowing what kind of testimony Vito Gallo is going to bring to defend his claim. The interesting thing to note is that he tried to sue the Ontario government, but his claim was thrown out of court. He could not win in court so it was brought to chapter 11. There is another interesting thing about this Vito Gallo. If we try to find out who owns the Adams Mine, we find that 1532382 Ontario Inc. is registered in North York. It is an Ontario-based company.

In 2004, 1532382 Ontario Inc. gave \$4,000 to a leadership bid in the Ontario provincial Conservative Party. Who was the person given this money by this supposed Vito Gallo, this American

investor who was robbed of his international rights? It was our own august finance minister.

This case involved a numbered company, registered in North York, Ontario, that gave money to the man who is now the finance minister of Canada, and yet he went to chapter 11 claiming \$350 million from the taxpayers of Canada without having to do proper disclosure and without having to prove anything. We have to ask ourselves how could this numbered company that is registered in North York actually be able to sue Canadian taxpayers for a municipal waste contract in the province of Ontario.

A lawsuit was filed by Canadian Waste Services, the Canadian arm of Waste Management Canada, on February 28, 2003. Canadian Waste Services filed a lawsuit against Notre Development, the Cortellucci Group of Companies, which also has given a fair amount of money to the Conservative Party, and 1532382 Ontario Inc. for \$4.6 million over the ownership of the Adams Mine. The lawsuit referred to the 2002 sale to 1532382 Ontario Inc. as the Cordellucci agreement, not Vito Gallo. Nobody ever mentioned Vito Gallo but they mentioned Mario Cordellucci, who was very well known to the old Mike Harris wrecking crew and a number of our frontbench people.

We see in this bizarre world of NAFTA that this Vito Gallo, who appeared out of nowhere, can take his case behind the curtain without any public prying eyes or the normal obligations of fair disclosure and public disclosure of evidence. As a citizen of the U.S., he can claim to hit the taxpayers of Canada up for \$350 million because we signed on to this in a trade provision. The only thing defending our interests is the Conservative government with the present finance minister. I am not saying there is any connection, but he also received money in the past from the same company.

We have to look to the Conservative Party of Canada to defend our interests in this matter. Oh my God, the Canadian taxpayer will have to wonder what is going to happen to that \$350 million. Is the government writing the cheque right now?

This all comes back to Bill C-2. Before we sign a trade agreement, we need to actually squeeze the Charmin and make sure that the kind of things the Conservatives are bringing forward are actually coherent and in the national interest. We need to push them back to the drawing table where they can write a coherent bill of which we can all be proud.

I would be more than willing to entertain questions and comments.

• (1750)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay, if his uncle MacNeil was alive today what would he think about the bill we are discussing today?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, I would never deign to put words in the mouth of a MacNeil because they certainly were never afraid to speak loudly and, being somewhat superstitious, my good old Uncle Lindsay might actually pay a visit. However, I know one of the principles of trade that he always talked about was that one needed to have a really clear agreement in place. I think that is what we are talking about.

*Government Orders*

It is not that an agreement with Liechtenstein and Switzerland is not in the national interest. I certainly think the more trade agreements that we have the stronger we are because we are a trading nation, and the more that we can actually get our products out there, with rules based, that is what we need.

I believe there are problems with this agreement and we need to look at them.

We can look at the complete unwillingness of the European Union and the Americans to play by the rules by which Canada always plays. There are EU export subsidies on agricultural products and it is dumping its products internationally. The U.S. is continually mucking with the price of grain and distorting the price. Our farmers and our industries play by the rules internationally and we are always on the losing end.

We need to learn a lesson when we sit down with trade partners. Liechtenstein might not be the biggest country that we have ever dealt with but it becomes an equal partner and we need to ensure there are not huge flaws in the agreement. The fact that we would be losing our shipbuilding capacity in a country that has probably the largest sets of coastlines in the world is simply not good public policy. The refusal of the government ideologically to actually have a coherent industrial policy is clear.

General Motors is musing publicly about leaving Canada. Ten years ago that would have been unheard of. The government sits back and tells us all to whistle a happy tune and everything will be all right. The lack of an industrial sector strategy is devastating, particularly in Ontario right now and regions of Quebec.

As I said earlier, we can count on one hand the amount of sawmills that are running from northwestern Ontario to Abitibi. That would have been a situation unfathomable 15 years ago and yet we see a government that shows complete and utter indifference to the devastation in the forestry communities and the devastation facing forestry families as they slip through the EI cracks.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Madam Speaker, as I was thinking through all of the interventions I have heard over the past two days in talking about workers, we would all be remiss in this House if we did not think back to all those veterans of the merchant marine who served this country, not from the perspective of an armed combat role but sailed those seas in perilous times. I think back to those veterans of the merchant navy who are today looking at us and saying, "Whatever happened to our shipbuilding? Why is it disappearing?"

I wonder if the hon. member could comment on what it means to those veterans, in a sense, to see this slip away.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, my father-in-law was on the Murmansk run. He was in Burma with the Navy. At that time, Canada, a country of 11 million, as poor as we were coming out of the depression, ended up with the fourth largest navy in the world. It showed the will of this nation, not only of our air force, our massive armed presence in Europe, but our navy. What we built in ships in that period of time is a marvel that we should be proud of. Many of those ships are long gone and Canada walked away on the incredible capacity that we built in that period. I think that to our previous generation, we dropped the ball and we cannot allow the ball to be dropped any further.

● (1755)

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Madam Speaker, in our discussions today on Bill C-2 and the discussion around the trade agreement in question, the question we really need to be asking is: What is our vision of Canada?

Growing up as a proud Canadian, I know that words like fairness, equality and justice are words that characterize who we are. Today we stand reeling from a budget so recently passed without our support, where we believe that a failed and disjointed attempt was made to deal with the current economic challenges and a failed attempt to look at the future and build a country that is better for all of us.

We felt that in so many ways the budget was wanting, wanting in terms of establishing that fairness for working people who are losing their jobs, in giving support for people whose industries are now falling apart and in establishing equality. We saw the taking away of pay equity and issues around collective bargaining. We also saw a failure to achieve justice for so many Canadians, Canadians living in poverty, Canadians of different backgrounds, women and aboriginal peoples.

We need to be looking ahead at how we can ensure that vision. We also need to be asking serious questions about this trade agreement and encourage members to vote against it. This trade agreement is fundamentally about our trade relationship with European countries. I am proud to be of European descent. I am proud to be of Greek and British descent and we have a great deal to learn from Europe.

We can look closely at the trade partners we are talking about in terms of this bill. Countries like Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein of course. We have a great deal to learn from countries like Norway, Iceland and Switzerland that have been leaders in terms of establishing fairness, equality and justice in their own countries. While they are open to trade, they ensure it is part of a vision in which their country is better off for it.

That is where Canada can learn. Canada ought to learn and our government ought to stand up on the fact that this trade deal is bad for the country that we want to build. We can learn from the way these countries profit from certain lucrative industries. We have heard that Norway is a leader in terms of its shipbuilding industry and how it reinvests into social programs, whether it is child care, health care programs or women's advocacy groups and other programs that aim to achieve gender equality in their country. Canada has a great deal to learn from countries like Iceland, which has the highest number of women parliamentarians in the world, whereas I believe only 21% of Canada's parliamentary representatives are women. This is shameful in a country where 51% of our population is made up of women.

*Government Orders*

Let us learn from these countries in terms of building a vision where trade and economic development serve to strengthen us socially in terms of our economy but also in terms of our social rights, equality and quality of being in general. What we are saying here is that we should continue building relationships with countries and to applaud building relationships with countries that are forward-looking in terms of their dealings while ensuring that what we are going for as Canadians benefits us across the board.

I would like to turn to the region that I represent, a region that many people would classify as rural. I know that in northern Manitoba we refer to ourselves as being north, but in terms of many characteristics there are similarities to rural regions. In our region, we are suffering a great deal as a result of the economic downturn. The softwood lumber deal and the economic downturn have led to losses of jobs and the shutting down of what was once a lucrative lumber mill in The Pas, Manitoba. We are also dealing with losses of jobs generally in the forestry industry across our region.

• (1800)

Another industry that is hurting is mining, an industry that, except for a positive commitment to mine exploration, was not referenced in the budget despite a government commitment in December to do so. Mining is an area in which many Canadians in our region are also losing their jobs and families are suffering for it.

I think in both of those industries we have seen what many of us are warning against today. It is the loss of the Canadian government and of Canada to say, "Wait a second, let's look at the benefit for our country. Let's look at the benefit for Canadians". As a result of the softwood lumber industry, the softwood sellout, an agreement that was signed by the Canadian government, thousands of jobs are being lost and mills are shutting down all across the country. That was our opportunity to act in terms of looking out for the well-being of our own people.

In terms of mining, we have seen in the last few years a rise in foreign ownership of what were previously Canadian companies. That is certainly something that concerns us a great deal in northern Manitoba as we saw a major company being bought out by foreign owners. Once again, we see Canada unable to step up and say, "Wait a second. Let's look out for the benefit of our own people".

We are seeing the palpable threat of this continuing to happen to the shipping industry, an industry that we hear is not just part of the economic fabric but is part of the cultural and social fabric of our country in so many regions.

Shipping has a very deep connection in our riding, the home of the Port of Churchill, where a great deal of trade goes through Manitoba and all across Canada. We have a great deal of international trade but there are also Canadian ships and Canadian industries that benefit as a result.

We need to be making those linkages between the steel that is produced in Ontario, the nickel that is mined in Ontario that goes to producing the steel, that goes to producing the ships, and also looking at the lumber that goes to building infrastructure all across our country and contributes to the shipping industry.

We need to be making those linkages and seeing how these linkages are actually the stories of people all across the country who

are working and making a living off these jobs. The moment we cut off one part of it, whether it is shipping, forestry or mining, when we see the shutting down of these industries, it is people's lives and well-being that is at stake.

It is Canada that has the ability to step up and say that it will not stand for it. That is what we in the NDP are doing and that is what we are looking forward to seeing from the government.

Another real point of contention as a result of the bill is the issue around supply management. Yesterday many members of Parliament from the opposition and from the NDP had the opportunity to meet with dairy farmers. I had the opportunity to meet with three dairy farmers from Manitoba. These were gentlemen who had their farm passed on to them from their fathers and, thankfully, all three of them assured me that they were planning to pass it on to their children as well.

Those people are taking a real leadership position because they are afraid of what might come to be, whereby Canada will not stand up and say that this kind of legislation helps our communities. Besides the contribution of healthy food in the dairy industry, milk, yoghurt, butter or whatever it might be, these are people who build communities and these are the communities that Canada is made up of.

I know many of these communities, speaking as a rural member, are actually represented by people on the governing side. What concerns me is that representatives of these communities would stand to support a bill that goes against the protection of people's jobs in the communities they represent and of the well-being of not just families but the communities and regions. It is a concern I share for my region where there are dairy farmers, but also all across Manitoba. I would urge the Conservatives to look at that. We are certainly concerned on this side in terms of what that might mean in terms of other areas of agriculture with respect to the Canadian Wheat Board.

• (1805)

Finally, I would like to conclude with that question of vision. Speaking as one of the youngest members of Parliament, I am concerned about the future of our country. I believe we all are concerned. However, we have the opportunity to stand up and say no to legislation that is bad for the future of our country, that is bad for the present, that is bad for young people in Canada, that is bad for people involved in industries all across Canada and ultimately bad for the whole of Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech from our hon. NDP colleague. She mentioned that she met with representatives from Dairy Farmers of Canada, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year.

I also met with representatives from the Quebec group yesterday. One of the points they raised was about yogourt production and how it is regulated. I imagine the representatives that the member met with also raised this question.



Did the farmers she met with suggest, as those from Quebec did, that the federal government adopt a national strategy and regulations, using Quebec's standards—which are the highest in Canada—as a model? Quebec produces 90% of Canada's yogourt. And if they were to make such a proposal, would her political party agree? I can say that we would.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Madam Speaker, we definitely foresee serious problems in terms of the future of this industry. The people I spoke with mentioned the leadership of both Quebec and Canada in cheese production.

Why not say the same thing about yogourt, a product that we are all familiar with and that is now touted as essential for health?

There must be a frank and honest discussion with the government in order to protect the quality of this product, of course, but also to support the work these people do in every Canadian community.

[English]

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I was very thrilled to hear my hon. colleague talk about the importance of yogourt, cheese and milk, because it deals with issues of trade.

For example, in my region we had Parmalat, the largest milk company in the world. Parmalat decided that it did not want to be in the Temiskaming region any more, that it had bigger things to do and it would simply take its quota and leave. It would not matter how much money was being made in that little plant in Temiskaming, it was not enough for Parmalat.

Through our local efforts, we pushed back and said no to Parmalat, the same as we should say to forestry companies or anything else, that if they want to leave, they can leave, but the quota stays. The quota stayed in Temiskaming and our local farmers took over that plant. Now the Thornloe cheese plant is not only sustainable, it has moved from 30,000 litres to 90,000 litres because it is so successful.

There is a lack of vision in this country where there is no plan to ensure that regional and local operations are sustained. If we simply allow ourselves to be governed by larger and larger multinational units, we will reach a point where there will never be enough money coming from the regions unless they are being basically pillaged to entice these multinationals. We have seen this in forestry, in mining and in cheese.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague what her experience in the wonderful region of Thompson and Churchill, Manitoba is on the need to have a local and regional strategy for the economy?

• (1810)

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Madam Speaker, certainly in our region there are some very exciting initiatives in terms of food security and local food production. Fortunately, we have a provincial government that has taken a leading role in supporting these initiatives.

However, the question in our riding is, where is the federal government? May it step up to support local industries, to prevent the selling out of our jobs across the oceans or south of the border. May it step up and say no, we will look at the well-being of our communities and work to support the jobs in our country right now.

### Government Orders

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The division stands deferred until 3 p.m. tomorrow.

\* \* \*

[English]

### CANADA NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS ACT

**Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC)** moved that Bill C-4, An Act respecting not-for-profit corporations and certain other corporations, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Bill C-4. This legislation will establish a new Canada not-for-profit corporations act. It will also transfer 11 corporations established in years gone by by special acts of Parliament to the Canada Business Corporations Act. It will then allow for the repeal of the outdated Canada Corporations Act.

*Government Orders*

This is a bill that touches all of us. I suspect that all members are active participating members, if not board members, of at least one not-for-profit corporation. Passage of this bill will result in the modernization of one of Canada's most important framework statutes. A new federal not-for-profit statute would act as the main 21st century vehicle for federal incorporation of not-for-profit corporations and other corporations without share capital. It would ensure that federally incorporated not-for-profit enterprises are governed by an up-to-date legislative framework that is flexible enough to meet the needs of both small and large organizations while providing the accountability and transparency necessary to meet the expectations of the Canadian public.

There is widespread recognition of the importance of strengthening Canada's not-for-profit sector, including the social purpose enterprises that form its backbone. These organizations are an important pillar of the economy as a whole. There are approximately 160,000 not-for-profit organizations operating in Canada. When universities, colleges and hospitals are included, the 2003 revenues of the sector were over \$136 billion, up from \$86 billion in 1997, a decade ago.

The not-for-profit sector is one of the country's largest employers, employing more than two million people who are supplemented by over twelve million volunteers. Of those 160,000 plus not-for-profit organizations, approximately 19,000 are incorporated under federal law. They range from community associations with just a few volunteers to national organizations run by professionals with multi-million dollar budgets. They will all benefit from the provisions of Bill C-4, the Canada not-for-profit corporations act.

Right now, these organizations unfortunately are not well served by the current law, the Canada Corporations Act, or CCA. The CCA has not been substantially amended for more than 90 years. The corporate world, even for the not-for-profit organizations, has dramatically changed over nine decades. Advances in corporate governance, communications technology and financial reporting demand that framework laws meet the exacting standards expected by the public and the corporations themselves.

The not-for-profit sector has repeatedly said that the current statute no longer meets its needs. For example, under the current statute, the incorporation process is slow and cumbersome. There are no provisions for amalgamating two or more corporations. There are no provisions for modern communications technologies. Financial accountability and transparency is inadequate. Directors do not have adequate defences against unwarranted liabilities. Members have few rights, and the list goes on.

Passage of this bill will in large part address these inadequacies and demonstrate the government's commitment to strengthening the sector. The Canada not-for-profit corporations act proposed in this bill has been modelled after the Canada Business Corporations Act, which is a modern legislative framework based upon 21st century principles and practices. The new NFP act will help to ensure a vibrant not-for-profit sector that supports Canada's economy.

Make no mistake, this is definitely a bill whose time has come. Stakeholders strongly supported proposals for a new statute during a consultation process that included three rounds of national

consultations in the fall of 2000, the spring of 2002, and the fall of 2005.

• (1815)

Bill C-4 will bring about major improvements. Although it is not possible to list them all in 20 minutes, I would like to briefly review the main features of this reform.

First of all, the bill provides for the long-awaited modernization of the incorporation process. Currently the only way for a not-for-profit organization to be federally incorporated is through the issue of letters patent by the Minister of Industry. This process, which is mandated by the statute itself, is burdensome, lengthy and potentially expensive.

Bill C-4 will allow incorporation status to be granted quickly to any organization that has submitted the required forms, including articles of incorporation and fees. The act will allow corporations broad discretion in setting themselves up and conducting their day-to-day affairs. In particular, they will be able to tailor their bylaws to suit their individual needs.

Under the current statute, there are many prescriptive sections about how an organization must conduct its affairs. The new statute will allow them to focus on what they do best.

A second modernizing feature of the bill is the area of electronic communications to facilitate member participation in corporate activities. Electronic communications is one of the most essential tools of the modern corporation. It speeds up the ability to gather information, make decisions and ensure those decisions are implemented.

In the context of not-for-profit corporations, it can cement the relationship between the corporation and its members, many of whom may be hundreds or even thousands of miles away. As a result, the bill will allow electronic communications between the corporation and its members, including the ability of the corporation to hold meetings entirely by electronic means if members wish.

In recent years, the need for business enterprises to be transparent and financially accountable has increased. This need exists in the not-for-profit sector as well, because they must establish and maintain a high level of public confidence in order to succeed. Bill C-4 addresses the need for financial responsibility with the introduction of a flexible set of rules that can be tailored to meet the needs of individual corporations.

Canadians expect that corporations that benefit from government grants or public generosity should be more transparent. Thus corporations funded by public donations or government grants must adhere to more rigorous requirements respecting the review and disclosure of financial statements.

In addition to making their financial statements available to their members, a requirement for all corporations under this bill, publicly funded corporations would be required to submit their statements to the government, which in turn will make them available to the public.

Another issue that has been addressed in this bill is the question of the liability of directors and officers. The present act contains unclear and inadequate standards for the rights, duties and responsibilities of directors and executives of non-profit corporations. That is a major source of concern for the non-profit sector.

Bill C-4 provides clear, objective standards of diligence based on modern concepts of corporate law. Under Bill C-4, directors and officers will have an explicit duty to act honestly and in good faith in carrying out their duties.

They will also have a clear defence against undue liabilities, including a due diligence defence. This defence, which is well known by the legal community and the courts, is a standard feature of other modern corporate statutes. In essence it states that if a director or officer acts with the care, diligence and skill that a reasonably prudent person would exercise under like circumstances, he or she would have a defence against a liability claim.

The bill would also allow corporations to pay defence costs when a director is accused and would allow for the purchase of liability insurance.

These measures are of particular importance. Not-for-profit corporations have been saying for years that because of liability concerns, they often have difficulties in attracting and retaining good directors, who are often volunteers. This bill will go a long way toward alleviating their concerns.

Bill C-4 provides members with a number of remedies in the event of a dispute with the management or directors of a corporation. These are well known to corporate law practitioners, as they are found in most other corporate statutes, including the Canada Business Corporations Act. They include court-ordered investigations to look into possible corporate malfeasance, including fraud and environmental issues among others.

•(1820)

The new act also introduces to the not-for-profit world the concepts of an oppression remedy and a derivative action.

The bill recognizes, however, that because many voluntary and non-profit corporations active in Canada are faith-based, it is vital that the courts not become a battleground where their tenets of faith can be challenged. Accordingly, the bill excludes the use of the oppression remedy and a derivative action when the court is of the opinion that the action being challenged is based on a tenet of faith.

This bill does not deal only with not-for-profit corporations. There is one other important component of Bill C-4: the transfer of jurisdiction of 11 special-act-of-Parliament business corporations from part IV of the Canada Corporations Act to the Canada Business Corporations Act, or CBCA. Bill C-4 therefore also benefits those few profit-generating corporations that are subject to the Canada Corporations Act.

### *Government Orders*

Similar to the sections of the CCA that deal with not-for-profit corporations, this part of the act dealing with special-act business corporations lacks modern corporate governance features. The corporations subject to these provisions should be given the opportunity to operate more efficiently and effectively in today's global marketplace. By moving these 11 special-act business corporations into the CBCA, the bill gives them that opportunity. The CBCA is the main statute governing business corporations existing under the federal laws of Canada. It is a state-of-the-art statute that provides a proper accountability framework by defining the rights and responsibilities of directors, officers and shareholders. The CBCA also contains provisions relating to corporate finance, trust indentures, insider trading, financial disclosure and other forms of corporate transactions. With the passage of this bill, these modern corporate governance features will now be available to all these special act business corporations.

In closing, I want to emphasize that Bill C-4 is good for the Canadian economy. It will allow not-for-profit corporations to be more efficient and effective in the modern Canadian economy. Bill C-4 will also reduce the regulatory burden on these corporations. The new not-for-profit act is far less burdensome.

Once Bill C-4 becomes law, and after a three-year transition period, it will be possible to repeal the entire outdated Canada Corporations Act.

Bill C-4 springs from the need to replace an 18th century piece of legislation with a modern framework that reflects the imperatives of the Canadian economy's diversity and the changes that have come about in recent years. It directly addresses these issues, and what is more, provides a solid basis on which healthy, dynamic, well-run not-for-profit corporations may flourish.

I urge all members to support this important legislation.

•(1825)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Madam Speaker, Bill C-4 does not include a classification system. The framework is permissive and flexible, allowing organizations to choose how to apply the relevant provisions.

Does the minister consider the lack of a general classification system to be a flaw?

[*English*]

**Hon. Diane Ablonczy:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the opportunity to clarify the corporations that will be included in the new legislation. They will be not-for-profit corporations or corporations without share capital. Those corporations will be included in this new act.

Business corporations that do have share capital will be included in the Canada Business Corporations Act. That is the difference. I hope the matter has been clarified for my friend.

S. O. 52

## EMERGENCY DEBATE

[English]

### SITUATION IN SRI LANKA

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** As it is now 6:30 p. m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of a motion to adjourn the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely the situation in Sri Lanka.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP)** moved:

That the House do now adjourn.

He said: Madam Speaker, I would first like to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

I am very honoured, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, to have requested and been granted this emergency debate on the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka. I want to thank all other members who requested the same thing.

• (1830)

[English]

Let me open with the traditional greeting that we share when we meet the many members of the Tamil community in Canada.

[Member spoke in Tamil]

[English]

Too often when tough times are hitting at home, we forget that many around the world are suffering from violence, displacement and deprivation. In Sri Lanka renewed conflict between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam has created a humanitarian crisis of profound proportion. At least 250,000 civilians—innocent men, women and children—are at immediate risk.

Canada cannot let that stand. We have a duty to pursue peace, to supply aid, and to use the full power of our influence to protect those innocents. To do so, the Government of Canada must act and must act now.

[Translation]

Here is the situation in Sri Lanka today. It is a country that has been torn apart by a bloody conflict for the past 25 years. Some 70,000 people have been killed since the beginning of the civil war and thousands more have been displaced, not to mention all those who have fled the country and the violence. Unlawful killings, murders of journalists, parliamentarians and judges, the loss of freedom of speech, and the violation of fundamental human rights are all now the norm in Sri Lanka.

[English]

In January last year the uneasy ceasefire agreement between the government and the LTTE rebels fell apart and the relentless government campaign against the rebels has devastated the northern regions of Sri Lanka. Thousands have died. There are many simply innocent civilians caught in the conflict, ravaged by aerial bombings

and artillery bombardments. Many bombs have hit so-called safety zones, killing and wounding hundreds of civilians, and destroying villages and hospitals.

Amnesty International estimates that there are less than half of the shelters that are needed for the monsoon season, leaving 20,000 families without shelter for that reason alone.

Foreign journalists have been denied access to the conflict zone, helping to keep this tragedy off the front pages and ensuring that those around the world who are concerned will have great difficulty in discerning precisely what is taking place. This also of course removes pressure from the Sri Lankan government itself.

Groups such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the ICRC say that both sides must bear responsibility for human rights violations. The laws of war require that parties to a conflict take all feasible precautions to minimize the loss of civilian life. It would appear that neither side has done so.

We want to simply acknowledge to those who are here in Canada and who are so deeply concerned that we sense their deep sense of tragedy and loss. Just today, here on Parliament Hill, thousands gathered. As I was leaving, having spent some time with them, one man grabbed hold of me and there were tears in his eyes as he spoke about how he had lost his brothers and his sister and their children. The anguish was seen on the streets of my city just last weekend when a remarkable gathering took place, a human chain linking hand to hand up and down the sidewalks of downtown Toronto all the way from Bloor and Yonge to Union Station and all the way back up University Avenue. It was peaceful. It was passionate. It was a call for us to respond.

I am very pleased that such a response is happening here tonight and that members of all parties are participating, some of whom I may say have been very engaged in this issue for a long period of time. I want to acknowledge that.

I want to also say that we hear about hospitals being shelled, and of course we cannot confirm all these things as yet because of the limited access of journalists, but we hear stories of a nurse being killed along with 11 people in a hospital in a conflict zone, a hospital that treats 600 patients. Both sides have been notified that this was a location where treatment was being offered, nonetheless the shelling continues. No one can even identify who was responsible for this particular attack. Both sides must bear responsibility for the violence.

It is the innocent. It is the wounded. It is the medical workers who have lost the most. The humanitarian crisis is far and distant to the thousands of the Canadians whose origins are in this part of the world. There are a 250,000 Tamils in Canada. Many have family and friends already killed or caught up in the conflict. There is no question that right across the country on the phone-in shows and using all the techniques that are possible, people are trying to find out what is happening back home and they are desperately looking for all of us here to help to bring an end to the violence.

Back on October 22 the Governor General urged the Sri Lankan High Commissioner to protect civilians by saying:

Canada believes it is important to ensure that civilians in conflict zones are protected, that they have access to humanitarian organizations, and that their human rights are respected.

I have to say that it seemed to take too much time for us to respond here in Canada. I think this is one of the reasons why the community is mobilizing with such passion. Last week we had the expression from the press release by the Minister of Foreign Affairs indicating that we were deeply concerned and we will deliver strong messages about the importance of a return to the peace process. We did not feel that that was strong enough.

• (1835)

I am glad to hear that there has been an announcement today that the Canadian government will supply \$3 million in emergency aid. We welcome this initiative. This may prove to be only the beginning of what is required in the face of this catastrophic humanitarian crisis, but it is an important step. We also understand that there has been a call today from the government for a ceasefire on both sides, as the community and many of us here had been calling for. We welcome that.

[*Translation*]

However that is not enough. Canada can, and must, do more. We should join Great Britain, Germany and others who are taking on a leadership role in very actively exerting diplomatic pressure, demanding an immediate ceasefire.

[*English*]

We are calling on the government to apply all possible diplomatic pressure to achieve the ceasefire and to put a sustained effort toward this goal. We are also calling for an immediate end to the apparent use of cluster bombs by the Sri Lankan military. We know that this is against international law. We also have to do everything we can to ensure the supply of emergency aid and access to the conflict zone for international aid organizations. This should include the provision of safe corridors for the transmission of the aid and for the movement of people.

We have to use all available channels including our influence at the United Nations and at the Commonwealth to achieve these goals and others that I am sure will be raised here in this important debate. The time for delays is past. I urge the House to join with our party in calling on the government to apply all possible diplomatic pressure to end the suffering and the violence against the innocents.

[*Member spoke in Tamil*]

[*English*]

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to begin my remarks by thanking the member for Toronto—Danforth, the leader of the NDP, for leading the call today for this emergency debate. I also want to thank the other members present who are taking part in something that is so crucial and so important to the Sri Lankan community in Canada.

We heard just now from the leader of the NDP that the people in Sri Lanka are in crisis and many Sri Lankan civilians are caught between the government forces and the Liberation Tigers in a war zone with nowhere to turn. Earlier today, Human Rights Watch issued a release saying that there are continuing reports of high

*S. O. 52*

civilian casualties in the Mullaitivu district of the Northern Vanni area. The Sri Lankan government recently issued a statement saying that it is not responsible for the safety of civilians who remain in the areas controlled by the LTTE.

In addition, we have the International Committee of the Red Cross as well as local health workers reporting over the past week that a hospital was hit by three volleys of government artillery in a 24 hour period which left nine people dead and numerous injuries. Again, on February 2, that same hospital was struck again, killing three additional people and injuring 10 more.

Members present will know that under the laws of war, hospitals are strictly prohibited from attack so long as they are not being used for military purposes and both sides, as my leader has indicated, had been told that these hospitals were not being used in the conflict. In any conflict that reaches such a point of indiscriminate battle, both sides hold a measure of responsibility when it comes to protecting non-combatants.

Reports from Human Rights Watch, as well as Amnesty International, point to accusations of both sides in this conflict putting Sri Lankan civilians at risk and indeed, as we have heard regarding the hospitals and other cases, civilians have died as a result.

One of the problems faced by the international community is the fact that the Sri Lankan government has prohibited independent journalists and human rights monitors from accessing the area. As my leader indicated previously, that has put a wall around getting the story told and engaging the world community.

There is no independent field investigations taking place into the conduct of the government forces, nor for that matter the LTTE. But one thing is very clear, Sri Lankan civilians are being maimed and are dying in this conflict. When either side in a war zone violates the rules of war, it does not in any way legitimize their opposition resorting to similar violations.

Amnesty International says that reports coming from the Sri Lankan government suggest that government forces and the LTTE are violating the laws of war by targeting civilians and preventing them from escaping to safety. My point is that we have numerous reports that civilians are being injured and are dying in this conflict. There are reports of horrendous acts and horrors that the civilians of Sri Lanka are facing. To that point, there is no way under these conditions that these claims can be investigated unless and until countries like Canada use their diplomatic powers to gain a ceasefire.

I believe, and the NDP believes, that Canada must work further with the United Nations and the world community to ensure that the aid that is so desperately needed in the announcement of today reaches the most affected in the conflict, the innocent people of Sri Lanka.

*S. O. 52*

I submit that this is not the time nor the place to try to decide who is more to blame for this situation. It is all too easy to place blame when such a conflict has festered for so many years. I do not want to see my country, Canada, stand by and allow civilians to be so forsaken in such a war zone.

I do not want to see Canada's hard-earned reputation as a nation of people, who believe in peace and who have been counted on in so many ways and so many times in the past to be the voice of peace, have that hard-earned reputation squandered. The Government of Canada must continue to stand up along with the world community and ensure that we take a lead position fighting for an immediate ceasefire and in doing so, open the doors for emergency aid to reach the embattled people of Sri Lanka.

● (1840)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I would like to clarify, as it appears there was some confusion, there is a five minute period for questions after every ten minute speech, so I will recognize the hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague and leader of our party for their interventions.

As we hear the news coming out of Sri Lanka, when it does come out, because as has been mentioned, that is part of the problem, it is causing not only concern for us as citizens but it is destabilizing the opportunities for peace in the region.

We have to be very clear that what we see in Sri Lanka is not something that just happened. Today the government has acknowledged that a ceasefire is necessary, that there is money to be given to help in aid, but we know there are things that Canada must and should do on the diplomatic side.

With regard to things like the use of cluster bombs, with the need for humanitarian corridors to be established, and with Canada wanting to be more involved with the UN, could the member give us some ideas about what we could do as a country when it comes to going beyond what we have heard today and what was announced by the government?

● (1845)

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** Madam Speaker, it is very clear that within the borders of Canada there is a community that is desperately hurting and there is a level of compassion that needs to be shown to those people.

In the past, certain members of this conflict have been labelled by our government and others. It is time to put aside the labels and talk to the ordinary people in the street, the Sri Lankan families who have moved here and made Canada their home, and who are so desperately looking back to their homeland. We have to do what we can to support them. Today in the demonstration in front of this place, we saw terror and fear in their eyes. It is very important that we support these people.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Madam Speaker, about half an hour ago in Toronto there was a vigil that was well attended by over 10,000 people. It was not just people from Sri Lanka and the Tamil community. It was people who have a yearning for peace and for humanitarian aid to get into the war zone. They are

speaking in one voice and are asking the Canadian government to do more.

For those who are worried, for Canadians who want to contribute and express their desire for peace and for humanitarian aid, what are some of the things they could do to assist?

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** Madam Speaker, precisely the point that the member made is what I was referring to moments ago. When this community comes together and is demonstrating and marching and we join with them, at that time we will come to understand their needs more closely in a personal and tangible way.

Many times we lose sight in these kinds of discussions as to the hurt that families and individuals feel when they are separated not only by an ocean but by a conflict such as this one. Everything that we can do in a very personal way is important at this time.

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs.

Canada is deeply concerned by the plight of those affected by the ongoing conflict in Sri Lanka. My colleagues and I have heard from many within our own communities and also from Sri Lankans. We are taking our responsibility seriously.

Sri Lanka is a low to middle income country that made rapid progress during the 1950s and 1960s, including the remarkable achievement of a 92% literacy rate. Despite this accomplishment, Sri Lanka's development progress has been undermined by decades of civil war. Close to half the population is highly vulnerable, living on an income of less than \$2 U.S. a day.

Since December 2004, Sri Lanka has also been coping with the devastating effects of the tsunami which killed 31,000 people and displaced close to a million. The tsunami destroyed the country's coastal infrastructure and the livelihoods of those who live there, pushing an additional 250,000 Sri Lankans below the poverty line. Together with the international community, Canada committed to help restore those communities and the livelihoods of those who were affected.

Since the tsunami, Sri Lanka has made impressive progress toward recovery, but despite this recovery, Sri Lankans have seen continual civil war in their country. Just this past year, in August and September alone, there was a mass displacement of 80,000 people, many of whom had already been displaced several times since the renewal of the fighting. The situation was made worse when tropical cyclone Nisha hit in November 2008, just a few months ago, displacing more than 30,000 families in the Vanni region, making it very difficult for humanitarian convoys to get through because of the damage to the roads at that time.

In 2008, Canada provided nearly \$3 million in humanitarian assistance through trusted humanitarian partners such as Doctors Without Borders, the International Committee of the Red Cross, World Vision, CARE Canada and the World Food Programme. Just last November, in response to a Red Cross appeal, Canada committed over \$30,000 to help civilians in the war zone, but in fact, last year Sri Lanka barred nearly all aid groups from the area.

Today we see the images, we hear the reports and we read of the violence and devastation, but most concerning to all Canadians is the impact on the innocent civilians. Just yesterday over 52 civilians were killed in one area. The last hospital in the war zone had to be evacuated. It is reported that 250,000 civilians are trapped in the war zone.

We recognize the severity of the situation. We share the concern of the Sri Lankan community and all Canadians, and feel how frustrating it must be to watch such violence happening and to watch the conflict happening. Clearly the situation is grave.

Let me assure members of the House that Canada is committed to helping the people of Sri Lanka. Earlier today I announced that Canada will provide up to \$3 million for life-saving emergency humanitarian aid to those people living in the conflict zone. Canada is committed to meeting those emergency needs.

• (1850)

We will do this through working with our partners, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Oxfam Canada, Médecins Sans Frontières, World Vision and CARE Canada. These organizations have been working in Sri Lanka for years. Over time these partners have established a well-deserved position of trust with the local people in the local communities, and they have demonstrated they can make a difference in the lives of those civilians. Canada will make sure that the humanitarian needs of those civilians will be met and in an effective way.

It concerns me that in situations such as this one, the experience in the past is that due diligence was not made by the people who were responsible for Canadian aid to ensure that those humanitarian supplies and needs would go through organizations that had the ability to move freely in the devastated areas in order to deliver directly to those affected. Consequently, we have now confirmed that every one of the partners I have just listed has the ability for access into and nearby the war zone. They will be providing shelter, food, clean water, medicines and needed drugs.

That is why Canada is also calling for a ceasefire, so that these emergency needs and supplies can be delivered. We are calling for full unhindered access for all humanitarian organizations and for the evacuation of the sick and wounded.

Canada condemns the shelling of the hospital. We also condemn a tax on vehicles delivering humanitarian aid. We support all efforts and actions to prevent further civilian casualties and human suffering.

Canada calls on all parties in the conflict to respect their obligations under international law to protect civilians, particularly by granting them the freedom of movement to leave the conflict areas, and by allowing humanitarian workers safe and unhindered access.

We, along with all Canadians, want to assure all Sri Lankans that we will build on our long-standing relationship with them and with that country.

We are taking action. We take the concerns of all Sri Lankans and all Canadians very seriously. We are monitoring the situation hourly. I am in constant contact with our humanitarian aid partners who are

*S. O. 52*

active in and near the war zone, and we will respond as we, as a responsible and caring country, should do.

That is why we are here this evening, to join together to ensure that Canada and the international community are there for the Sri Lankan people.

• (1855)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the Conservative government has been in power for three years. Before the Conservatives were elected to government, a Conservative member of Parliament from Nova Scotia said, “As soon as we get in power, we are going to list the LTTE”. As soon as they got elected, they listed the WTM. The Conservatives are saying that they are a caring government and they will do things differently from previous governments.

I am baffled. Not only am I baffled, I am bamboozled. The Conservatives want to do things different from previous governments. I am wondering, why have they not done anything from the day that they were elected until now, except list a community and equate the community by saying, “If you are a Tamil, you are a Tiger and you are a terrorist”. That is the signal that is coming from the government, and if they say I am wrong, there is a lot of people in the audience tonight who will attest to what I said. During the election, in different areas the Conservatives went as far to say that the Liberals had not done anything for the Tamils but that they would so people should vote for them. The consequences in Sri Lanka are a country that is totally divided and people are killing each other.

My question for the minister is, why did it take her so long to do something? Why did it even take her government so long to react when member after member were telling the Conservatives to do something? Why did it take so long?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Madam Speaker, as I said, this is now a time for all of us in the House to come together and recognize that we have a people who are victims of a conflict of a civil war. We now have to say what it is that we together as Canadians can do.

I can report, and I know my colleagues will also be able to fill the member in, that we have called for a cessation of fighting since last year. Since last year, Canada has also contributed in international aid and humanitarian assistance to help the development of that country. We have been working in governance, in building houses, improving literacy, education and health care. We have trusted partners that we have been working with over the years. They are now able to jump into action and focus on the area that needs the greatest help at this time.

We should now come together and not let partisan interests stop Canada from doing what is right.

• (1900)

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for her actions today, for announcing humanitarian aid and for other calls for a ceasefire from the government. In that same spirit of co-operation, as an individual member of Parliament, I want to work with her on this.

*S. O. 52*

I do have a concern about the aid that has been announced and our ability to actually get it flowing through to the Tamil people in the areas, particularly those areas that have been controlled by the LTTE. Last summer, it was very clear when the United Nations refugee agency, the UNHCR, acknowledged that the supplies were low and aid was not flowing because the Sri Lankan government would not allow it to flow. Subsequently, it took aid workers out of the area, saying it was no longer safe for them. Those agencies have not been there for a number of months.

I am worried about how Canada can help get them into the area with safety and how we can get the money that the government has announced today, and more, flowing.

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Madam Speaker, as I said, that is a priority for our government. We want to ensure that whatever aid we give will go directly to those who most need it. We have been on the telephone with our partners and have asked those very same questions. Are they able to get into the area? Are they able to transport? What is the security situation?

Because we are utilizing and working with organizations that have been there many years, they have built up local volunteers and workers who have more access and freedom of movement. They have built up the confidence of those communities. They also have agreements. Of the parties that are part of the conflict, there is an agreement that certain organizations like Red Cross International can continue the work. When the hospital was bombed, the Red Cross was able to evacuate and remove those who were sick and wounded from the hospital.

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC):** Madam Speaker, over the years, governments of Canada have been and continue to be deeply concerned about civilian casualties and the humanitarian situation in the continuing civil conflict in Sri Lanka.

This government has conveyed its concern regularly, but most recently, with great urgency, in a public statement on January 28. The Minister of Foreign Affairs also conveyed this concern directly to the government of Sri Lanka when he spoke with the minister of foreign affairs, Rohitha Bogollagama, on February 2. Today our concerns were raised again in another statement. Our Minister of Foreign Affairs called for an immediate ceasefire and support for the statement released yesterday by the co-chairs of the Tokyo Donor Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka. As the minister just said, we have called for a cessation of hostilities for some time now.

We support the call of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the LTTE, commonly known as the Tamil Tigers, to discuss with the government of Sri Lanka the terms for ending hostilities, including the renunciation of violence, the laying down of arms and the acceptance of the government of Sri Lanka's offer of amnesty as the first step toward an inclusive political dialogue that should contribute to a lasting peace.

Canada is particularly concerned about the grave threat faced by a large number of civilians caught in the conflict zone. Canada strongly condemns the shelling attacks on the hospital which is in contravention of international humanitarian law. Equally disturbing have been continuing accusations by both the government of Sri

Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam of the other side firing into a government-declared safe zone.

The Government of Canada is continuing its efforts with like-minded countries to deliver strong messages to all parties to the conflict about protecting civilians, including humanitarian workers, allowing their safe and voluntary movement from combat zones and ensuring unhindered access for humanitarian workers to reach civilians in need.

In light of the grave humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka, Canada will continue to provide assistance to Sri Lanka's vulnerable populations. In fact, as we just heard, the Minister of International Cooperation today announced that Canada will provide up to \$3 million in humanitarian aid to Sri Lanka to help those affected by the current crisis.

Canadian assistance in Sri Lanka is focused on the immediate needs of the affected populations and is provided by organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, United Nations agencies and key Canadian non-governmental organizations with a proven capacity and track records in Sri Lanka.

Canada's food aid funding is primarily directed through the United Nations World Food Programme, an experienced implementing partner with demonstrated ability to address the needs of the most vulnerable populations.

Canada also provides assistance for broader initiatives in Sri Lanka such as the sponsorship of a regional conference in Colombo, on pluralism, that took place in South Asia in March 2008. This conference focused specifically on minority integration and participation in government and civil society, and included participation from the government of Sri Lanka. Canada intends to host follow-up events in Sri Lanka. We believe that continued assistance with such initiatives is important for the promotion of human rights and democracy.

Canada continues to urge the government of Sri Lanka to move toward a new and meaningful political solution to the conflict that will address the legitimate concerns of all communities. The decades old conflict will not be ended on the battlefield, but through political accommodation.

We have therefore called on the Sri Lankan government to demonstrate leadership and move forward with the tabling of further details for meaningful power sharing agreements that will be acceptable to all the communities of that beautiful island.

We have also repeatedly impressed upon all parties our grave concern over the deteriorating human rights situation and the need for an international presence to report on human rights violations. Through bilateral meetings and multilateral fora such as the Human Rights Council, the Government of Canada continues to express our concerns regarding reports of violations of humanitarian rights and humanitarian law.



●(1905)

The increase in attacks on journalists in Sri Lanka is also very troubling. In the Minister of Foreign Affairs' call with the Sri Lankan foreign minister, he urged the government of Sri Lanka to conduct open and independent investigations into all attacks on journalists and to hold those responsible to account. The lack of neutral reporting underlines the pressing need for independent media to have unfettered access to the conflict area.

The Government of Canada will continue to work with like-minded countries to urge all parties to the conflict to protect civilians, to ensure respect for international humanitarian law, to provide humanitarian actors the full, safe and unhindered access to conflict-affected populations, and to return to the peace process.

As members may know, Canada is home to the world's largest Sri Lankan diaspora of over 200,000, comprised mostly of Tamils, who arrived as asylum seekers in the 1980s and the 1990s. These Sri Lankan Canadians, proud Canadians, are passionately interested and follow developments in Sri Lanka very closely.

However, the LTTE, the Tamil Tigers, are also known to be present in Canada. In April 2006, the Government of Canada listed the LTTE as a terrorist organization, thereby freezing its assets and prohibiting any and all fundraising, whether voluntary or through extortion. In June 2008, again after an extensive investigation, the World Tamil Movement was listed as a terrorist organization under Canada's Criminal Code for financing the Tamil Tigers, the LTTE.

The government regularly meets with representatives of civil society and NGOs which work on Sri Lankan issues in Canada. I would like to emphasize that the large and vibrant population of Canadians of Sri Lankan origin means that Canada has a very real interest in developments in Sri Lanka, an interest that is regularly communicated to the government of Sri Lanka.

Finally, I would like to underline that Canada continues to deliver clear messages to the government of Sri Lanka on Canada's grave concern over the human rights and humanitarian situation in the country. Canada works with like-minded countries and through multilateral fora to address key issues and to continue to press for steps toward a durable political solution to the conflict that will address the legitimate concerns of all communities in Sri Lanka.

●(1910)

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the comments of the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), and I appreciate the comments made in terms of the extremely recent activity by the government, which up until today was steadfast in its determination not to do anything and not to recognize the obvious.

I hear the calls by members, suggesting this is not a partisan issue. Considering that his government took a position to list various organizations on terrorist lists, would he explain to the House how that has been able to further enhance the ability for Canada to engage in an even-handed way in a conflict that has existed for some time?

The hon. member will remember the fact that in 1983, as this conflict began in earnest and the subsequent peace protest led by our friends in Norway, one of the most important and critical elements in

*S. O. 52*

that peace process, as fragile as it was, was to ensure that Canada took no drastic action until such time as a peace negotiation could take place. Instead the Canadian government, his government, took the position of going out and providing labels.

I appreciate the fact that the hon. minister may have a perspective on this, but I would ask the hon. minister this. Since he has pointed out that he is prepared to work in the area of political accommodation, would such an accommodation include Canada deploying troops, preparing itself to work with the United Nations, preparing to serve in a humanitarian capacity? How soon could we expect the government, now that it has made a 180° reversal in its position, to act to stop the unfolding tragedy, which was avoidable, in that part of the world?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I would first remark that the Government of Canada was not only deeply concerned by the fact that Canadian dollars were travelling across and around the world to fund a terrorist organization, the Tamil tigers, which has been credited universally as the first creators of suicide bombings, that Canadian dollars were fuelling, aiding and abetting the terrorist operation of the tigers in this decades-old conflict, but for its fundraising and extortion of Canadians of Tamil origin who had—

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Who did? You can't prove it. Table it.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I would respond to the member that the RCMP are continuing their investigation.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** You are making allegations. Table the proof.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Members of the community were intimidated on a regular basis.

I would also remark that members opposite deepened the conflict and the conflict within the Tamil community by appearing at fundraising events clearly associated with the terrorist organization known as the Tamil tigers and which this government had the courage—

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I take exception to what the minister said. He said that members opposite went to fundraising events for the tigers. I was one of those members who did go to a fundraising event for FACT, the Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils, an organization in my riding. The minister said that there was extortion. I did contact 42 division in my riding and there was no such thing.

I challenge the minister to say that outside or to table exactly what he has that Canadian Tamils were extorted.

●(1915)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. That sounds like a point of debate, not a point of order.

*S. O. 52*

The hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt is being quite vocal when he has not been recognized by the Chair. I would appreciate a bit of order from him.

The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government must be very clear on two things this evening.

First—and this is what I want to ask the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas) about, the government has to draw a clear distinction between the Tamil population in Quebec and Canada and the issue of terrorism. The Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas) must be very clear that there is a definite difference between the population and the movement as such and that this evening's debate is meant to help bring about a ceasefire.

Second, we owe a debt of gratitude to this community that, for the past two days, has come to the Hill to give us a better understanding of the reality of the situation and has led the government to call for a ceasefire today.

What new steps will the government take in the coming days and months so that this issue is not put on the back burner again?

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for getting us back on track.

The Government of Canada will continue to press the Government of Sri Lanka to ceasefire and to allow the transport of humanitarian aid to civilians and civilians to pass through the conflict lines.

However, first and foremost, the conflict must come to an end. It is time for the tigers to put down their weapons and for the Government of Sri Lanka to do the same and for all parties to talk about power sharing on what should be a beautiful, productive and peaceful isle.

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Mount Royal.

I want to spend my time in the debate talking a little about the challenges that we face. I appreciate the comments that have been made by the two spokesmen for the government. It does represent a change on the part of government policy. It means that Canada is finally catching up with the views that have been expressed by a number of countries around the world over the last several weeks.

It has been very troubling to me that the Government of Canada has been consistently behind the concerns that have been expressed by a great many other governments and countries, including the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Mr. Brown; the foreign minister, Mr. Miliband; the spokesman for international affairs for the European Union, Louis Michel; Secretary of State Clinton a couple of days ago; and a number of people who have been moving ahead.

It has been troubling for me as a Canadian to see that our government has been behind, but the glass is always either half full or half empty. I prefer to see it as half full. I am glad the minister has

made the statement that he has made today with respect to the position of the Government of Canada. I had a chance to say that to him today. I also appreciate the comments made by the Minister of International Cooperation

A number of my colleagues in the Liberal Party will be speaking this evening, based on their own personal experience. I want to just say a couple of things. I have had an opportunity over the last decade to be involved in the terribly tragic situation in Sri Lanka. I think it is fair to say that like so many other people around the world who visited and who have been affected by what has gone on, it is a situation that has touched me a great deal.

Like my leader and friend, the Leader of the Opposition, I have lost friends: journalists, political leaders, activists on all sides of the conflict who are no longer with us because they have been killed. My experience is nothing in comparison with the experience of a great many people, many of whom are in the House tonight, who have lost family. I have seen whole towns destroyed by bombing. I have seen rubble stretching for miles on end.

I had an opportunity to meet with the rebel leaders in the Vanni in Sri Lanka nearly a decade ago after the ceasefire. I have since been back many times. I have spent many days and indeed weeks meeting with them as well as with Government of Sri Lanka trying to see if there was not a way of resolving the profound differences that exist between the two warring parties. Perhaps I can just provide the House with some observations as to where I think we need to be and where we need to go as a country in terms of our policy and our direction, and what the nature of the dispute in Sri Lanka really is.

I want to make it very clear that I am not one of those people who is carrying an argument on behalf of anyone. I have been around too much, I have seen too much mistrust and, frankly, I have seen too much bad behaviour, really bad behaviour, in terms of intimidation, in terms of assassination and in terms of steps that have been taken for me to turn around and say that one side in the dispute is all angels and one side in the dispute is all evil. It is more complex than that.

However, I do believe that there are a couple of things we need to understand and really focus on as a country. The majority in Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese people, have yet to make the critical decision that a majority in every country has to make at some point and that is a deep willingness, not just a verbal willingness or a willingness on paper, but a deep willingness to share power. They have not been able to make that in critical moments, in critical junctions in the history of the country. There have been times when they have come up to saying "Yes, this is something we should explore", whether it is a federal model or a devolution model, whatever name we might happen to give to it, they have come to a certain point and then it is pulled back.

● (1920)

There is a political contest in Sri Lanka between different political parties. When one party representing the majority says that it is prepared to go, then it is attacked as being weak by the other party, and when that other party gets into power and it recognizes that a compromise is necessary, it, in turn, gets criticized. That is the problem on the one side.

*S. O. 52*

There clearly was a decision taken by the new administration led by President Rajapaksa to say that it would force a military solution to the conflict. I took great issue with it when I saw it unfolding and I was subject to rather intense criticism from the Government of Sri Lanka for taking that position. I thought it was a path that would not succeed and a path that would lead to tremendous human devastation and terrible consequences for the people in the north and east.

On the other side, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, like every gorilla army, at one point face a choice. It is a choice that was faced by the PLO and by the African National Congress. The choice is clear: Do we make the transition from essentially looking at the world through a military lens, through the lens of a gorilla army, and shift to political tactics and to becoming a political force, or do we maintain the war up to the end? The IRA faced the same choice.

Yes, we can say that this is a terrorist organization because it kills civilians, it carries out suicide bombings and it recruits children. However, let us be clear, behaviour can change. Behaviour is not a label that lasts for a lifetime.

[*Translation*]

It is always possible that the group will change its behaviour. That is why I worked very hard with all the Tamil Tiger leaders I met with several times to tell them they had to change. Otherwise, the world would decide to take a very difficult course of action.

I can clearly recall the conversation I had directly with Mr. Thamilselvan, who is now dead because he was killed by the Sri Lankan army. I told him that if the group did not change, the military conflict would continue and the outcome could not be guaranteed. And that is what we are seeing.

[*English*]

It is perhaps not a very original thing to say that if we want to end a conflict then both sides need to change. Both sides need to understand that there needs to be a turning in the road and a change in behaviour.

As a Canadian I am very proud of the Canadians I have met who have been working in Sri Lanka, the young men and women who have been working on removing landmines before the Tsunami, which is now a much more difficult thing to do, and the aid workers. We have some fantastic aid workers who are working for all of the NGO organizations that the minister has named, as well as many others. They are risking their lives and their health. Many of us have family there. My friend from Dartmouth's sister is working as an aid worker in Sri Lanka. We have so many ties with this country, the ties that existed through the Commonwealth, the ties that have been hugely strengthened and changed by the hundreds of thousands of people of came to Canada.

I happened to be in office at the time in Ontario when we had a tremendous influx of Tamils coming in. Now we see their children doing brilliantly in school. We see such a tremendous new generation of Tamil Canadians growing up and it is an extraordinary thing to see.

Right now we are in the middle of a humanitarian disaster. It is a disaster that we could all see coming as the logical outcome of people looking for an exclusively military solution to this conflict. I

was so pleased to hear the minister today say that the solution would not be found on the battlefields of Sri Lanka or in the jungles of the Vanni, that the solution would be found when people finally recognize that they need to talk.

Canada needs to be at the lead in those talks. We have an experience with devolution. We have an experience of a majority population understanding that it has to share power. We can argue with our friends in the Bloc Québécois about how fair that sharing is but, nevertheless, I am sure even those members would say that the Canadian federal example is one of civility. We can have our differences but they are based on civility. It is that value and that issue that we have to take forward.

This is a humanitarian tragedy and we need to debate this question going forward. We need to do everything we can, working with the Government of Sri Lanka and through whatever channels of communication we have with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, to say that both sides need to change. The perpetuation of an attempt to find a military solution to this conflict simply will not work and that is what needs to change.

I am very pleased to have been able to participate in the debate on behalf of my party.

• (1925)

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Toronto Centre and a former leader of mine. He does understand, probably more than any of us, the intricacies of this issue.

I want to get straight to it. I do not want to descend into a debate that will take us to other places tonight. I think what we are here to do tonight is to discuss what Canada's role should be, what we can do productively, and how we can seek peace in a place where right now there does not seem to be a lot of hope.

The member referred to Mr. Miliband and others in the world community. I am wondering if he can give us some of his ideas of other international forums where we could advance the voice of peace and be constructive.

We are not at the United Nations Security Council. I know we want to have a chair there, but is it plausible for Canada to raise in the UN General Assembly the issue of ceasefire to the Security Council? How realistic is that idea, and what can we do to advance it? That is my first question to him.

Second, lately the Commonwealth has been a fairly dormant institution, but if it is not for this cause, then for what cause can it be? Does the member see any possibility in working with that institution as well?

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Speaker, it is a fair comment to say that the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Sir John Holmes, has spoken out about this. The Secretary-General has spoken out about it. It is very difficult. The Government of Sri Lanka very strongly resists any notion that the United Nations has jurisdiction over something they regard as an area of their national sovereignty.

*S. O. 52*

I know my colleague, the member for Mount Royal, is one of the experts on this question of the doctrine of our responsibility to protect. At what point does the condition of a civilian population give the United Nations the right and the ability to intervene?

Mr. Gareth Evans, the former Australian foreign minister, now the president of the International Crisis Group, has talked extensively about this question, as has our leader, who was involved in drafting the protocol on the question of responsibility to protect.

I think the UN is going to be engaged administratively. Whether we can get the Security Council engaged is another question. Many powers on the Security Council may not be interested in seeing that happen.

I also agree with him that the Commonwealth is one mechanism.

I want to make one point and I do not want to engage in a debate with the minister or with others. The group that has to make a decision now, as much as any group, as to how it is going to proceed is the LTTE. It is up to the diaspora community in this country and around the world to ask this question of their friends, cousins, relatives and others: what do we think we are going to achieve by perpetuating a military conflict in the way it has been conducted over the last while?

I think we have to recognize that this was what the Tokyo group was saying yesterday, and I think it is something Canada should support.

• (1930)

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member on a very knowledgeable speech on this area. I know he has been there many times.

I would suggest that in his capacity as a participant in the Forum of Federations, there was a significant opportunity a few years ago to talk at a meaningful level to the various actors in the piece about the issue of whether a devolved federation could in fact be achieved.

Since this war is unwinnable and there is no military solution to it, is that still the starting point once hostilities cease, as they inevitably will? Is that a starting point for the participants?

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Speaker, in December 2002 I was in Oslo when both parties agreed that they would use federalism as the basis for future discussion. Can we return to that? I personally hope that we can in some way. Let us not forget that the basis of federalism is self-government and shared government. That is the decision we made as a country, historically, in the years leading up to 1867: self-government and shared government.

That is one of the ways in which one could look at finding a solution that would allow the island to remain as one, which is a very important objective of the majority, and at the same time provide for some self-government for the Tamil community.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by commending my colleague, the member of Parliament for Toronto Centre, for his moving statement this evening. I do not think any member in this House has the experience and expertise that he has in this matter. His statement reflected his own sustained personal

and professional involvement in this matter, and we should both heed and act upon his words.

Today Sri Lanka commemorates its independence day. We are home to the largest number of the Tamil diaspora outside of south Asia. Tamil Canadians are gathering to mourn the loss of innocent civilians who have been killed in hostilities with the Sri Lankan government. Indeed, we grieve with them for the deaths of innocents and the death of innocence, as well as for the ongoing violations of human rights and humanitarian law. As we meet, over a quarter of a million Tamil civilians are trapped within a 300 square kilometre conflict area. They are in need of urgent medical care, humanitarian assistance, media access and independent verification with respect to the conflict situation.

As the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, recently stated:

It is the Government's duty to provide safety to all Sri Lanka's citizens, whatever their ethnic origin or political views. That means not only protecting civilians during military operations in the north, but also ensuring space for journalists and human rights defenders to seek out the truth and expose abuses.

As we meet, candlelight vigils are taking place in Canadian cities this evening, urging the Canadian government to, among other things, take decisive action to end the unfolding humanitarian crisis. They will be lamenting the deaths of innocents and innocence. However, the question for us this evening is not only to lament what is happening, not only to grieve with respect to the death of innocents, but to undertake those necessary initiatives to protect human security, to promote the peace and to put an end to the human suffering.

I appreciate the statements made on behalf of the government this evening, statements that included a commitment with regard to humanitarian assistance and a framework for conflict resolution.

• (1935)

Again I say that we in Canada have a particular nexus to this conflict, for all the reasons mentioned in particular this evening by my learned colleague. The initiatives that can be taken have been referenced this evening, and I do not want to repeat them. I want only to identify them in terms of a sequenced framework.

First is an immediate ceasefire with a framework for a sustained and enduring end to hostilities, for while an immediate ceasefire is necessary, it is not enough. We need an accompanying framework to ensure that the ceasefire will be sustained and will endure.

Second, we need a return to the negotiating table for the mediation of a peaceful resolution to the armed conflict in Sri Lanka. That solution will include what a government representative mentioned this evening, an equitable power sharing arrangement within the framework of a federalist orientation, as my colleague has mentioned. Canada can play a particular role with respect both to the federalist framework and to the protection of minority rights within that federalist framework.

Third is that the Sri Lankan government must allow the free flow of humanitarian aid to the conflict zone and allow international aid workers unimpeded access to the affected areas.

The fourth item is that journalists must be given and allowed unfettered access to the conflict area so that they can not only report on the current situation in the north and east but also determine the nature and scope of assaults on press freedom.

Fifth, all parties must be called upon to respect the rights of civilians in armed conflict and to adhere to human rights and humanitarian law norms, including—and here I make this particular appeal to the Sri Lankan government—ceasing and desisting from any targeting of civilians and protected persons and from targeting those in protected zones.

Sixth, we must support the call for the appointment of a United Nations special envoy for Sri Lanka to monitor and guard against abuses and to assist the peace process, as has been recommended by the United Nations itself, by the United States Department of State and by other international actors.

Finally, I have excerpts of letters of the past six U.S. ambassadors to Sri Lanka, which have been echoed in other international comments in that regard. They make the point that in fact, the major threat to democracy and the rule of law in Sri Lanka has not only been that which has come from the actions of the government or that which has come from the actions of the LTTE; we need to appreciate the threats that come from those who wish to undermine constitutionalism, who seek to undermine the rule of law, who seek to undermine the independence of the judiciary and the proper functioning of public institutions.

In conclusion, we need to guard against the abuse of authority to destroy dissent.

The concerns I cited above are the major causes of the serious deterioration of the rule of law, human rights and democracy in Sri Lanka.

In concert with the government and the international community, there is a lot for us as a House to do to put an end to the suffering in Sri Lanka, to protect human security and to promote peace.

• (1940)

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, may I congratulate the hon. member. He has spent his life fighting on human rights issues and knows this issue very well.

We talk about intervention from the UN. For quite a long time now the UN has been recommending that someone with an observer status should be there. I seem to have little faith in seeing that the UN really accomplishes something at the end of the day.

Your recommendations on the things that need to be done are clear examples, and I would hope that the government would respond to them very actively to try to help resolve this terrible conflict.

What other suggestions would you have vis-à-vis the United Nations? What other things could we possibly be doing? We could certainly ride the government, which has finally wakened up in recognizing the issue after my asking questions for at least two or three years. I know my colleagues have done the same.

From your experience, what else should we be trying to do?

*S. O. 52*

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would just remind the hon. member for York West to address comments through the Chair and not directly to other members.

The hon. member for Mount Royal.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Mr. Speaker, I want to share my colleague's skepticism, if I may put it that way and I hope I am not unduly attributing an attitude to her, with respect to the United Nations. If we look at the role of the United Nations with regard to Sri Lanka, regrettably the United Nations has not been sufficiently engaged.

If we look at the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council, which succeeded the somewhat discredited predecessor, the United Nations human rights commission, it has yet to even take up the question of the conflict in Sri Lanka. In all the emergency sessions that have taken place, and there have been 10 emergency sessions, not one session has been devoted to Sri Lanka. In the 25 resolutions that have been passed since the advent of the UN Human Rights Council itself in 2006, not one resolution has been passed with respect to Sri Lanka.

Therefore, I understand the skepticism and that is why I began by limiting my remarks to the appointment of a UN special envoy for Sri Lanka, with an appropriate authority with respect to the investigation, monitoring and protecting against human rights abuses in the conflict area, that would report back not only to the United Nations General Assembly and the like but hopefully will spearhead a further engagement by the United Nations at the General Assembly level, and in particular at the level of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his interventions and his background in the area of international law. I have a fairly quick question about Canada's role and next steps, as he provided a couple of ideas for us.

One of the dilemmas he has had, and I know he has studied the R2P, is that if we do not have a body like the United Nations to be able to be engaged with it, when we call on Canada and other countries such as the U.K. and Norway to provide a ceasefire, how do we do that without having an institution like the UN and the Security Council involved? If not the UN, then how? If not another country, then how can Canada do that and how can Canada provide a support for a ceasefire?

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member appreciates, the responsibility to protect, a doctrine which Canada had a singular involvement in developing and articulating, invites intervention only if the state is unwilling or unable to do anything about human rights violations in its midst, or in fact is the author of such human rights violations. Of course, for that responsibility to protect intervention to be authorized, it requires a United Nations Security Council resolution and that has been difficult to obtain.

It would appear at this moment that what is needed would be an emergency United Nations Security Council resolution to put an end to the hostilities, to call for a ceasefire. We were able to do that with United Nations Security Council resolution 1680 with respect to the hostilities in Gaza. There is no reason that we should not be able to have the United Nations Security Council convene and put an end to the hostilities here.

*S. O. 52*

● (1945)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate today even though it is a very difficult situation. We hope it will end as soon as possible. I feel we should thank the NDP who asked for this special debate and the Speaker for granting the request. This is an emergency debate. Therefore, Parliament has recognized the urgent nature of the situation. I believe that this also exemplifies democracy in action. Above all, we should thank the Tamil communities in Quebec and Canada, who have made extraordinary, heartfelt representations here in Ottawa over the past two days.

Often at the end of a debate, we wonder if we have accomplished anything, if our efforts have made it possible to achieve results. Today, the minister's press release indicates a change in the Government of Canada's position. Two days ago, they would not ask for a ceasefire. Now, the Government of Canada is calling for just that. I believe that this is the result of the actions of people who met with all members of the House of Commons, in groups and individually. It must not end here; these efforts must be only the beginning.

I am not an expert on Sri Lanka. I first heard about this country and the Tamil situation from a young man from Toronto, who was part of a Katimavik group in my riding in Quebec. My community is quite homogeneous and almost entirely francophone. But this allowed me to gain some understanding of the life led by the inhabitants of Sri Lanka and to learn about its history, its geographical location next to India and the population movements between these two countries, the two realities and the historical evolution. I will not speak at length, for example, about the European conquests. We know that during the Portuguese and Dutch periods, there were almost separate administrations for the Tamils and for the other peoples of Sri Lanka. While under British rule, the two groups were united with historical consequences leading to today's situation.

In light of this, I will build on the speech by the spokesman for the official opposition, the Liberal Party. It is true that various possible models could develop. In every country in the world, the appropriate model must develop in a peaceful environment, as much as is possible. It could be a federal model or a model with two sovereign states existing side by side. However, we must first find strategies to allow us to peacefully take action. It is now an emergency situation. There is a war and it must be ended as quickly as possible. We know that the situation in Sri Lanka has become intolerable.

Fighting between government forces and the Tamil Tigers has intensified and threatens the lives of numerous civilians. They are not just threatening lives, they are currently killing many civilians. When a civilian population is held hostage in a struggle such as this, a solution must be found so that the killing can stop.

And so, the Canadian government's position today—demanding an immediate and complete ceasefire—should be applauded. We could have wished for this earlier, but it is confirmed and we must move ahead with it. We have to find a way to ensure that it is not only declared here but that the message is spread elsewhere, be it to the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, the Commonwealth, as was mentioned earlier, and creates an awareness

around the world that gets us to the point where these arguments are heard and get conclusive results.

Think about similar debates. Take South Africa, for instance. We must think about the measures proposed at that time to fight apartheid. There were international movements, the Commonwealth acted, Canada took a stance, many other countries in the world took a stance and, eventually, with peaceful determination, a solution was found.

● (1950)

And then there was the Irish situation. It was the same kind of very difficult situation, with a long, sad history. In the end, however, solutions were found.

In this case, the situation is still in a crisis period. It appears that neither side wants to put an end to the conflict. Ultimately, both sides have to want it to end. That is important.

Consider the call issued earlier to the Sri Lankan population and its diaspora. Communication must go both ways—for both groups—and it must be understood that, when all is said and done, there will be no winners unless a ceasefire is reached and new mechanisms are found to allow people to talk to each other.

In that sense, the Canadian government must pay even greater attention to the situation in Sri Lanka. We have seen this in how the many more voices have been heard over the past few days. We hope this continues and that the momentum is not lost because, otherwise, the debate will be over, people will return to their homes and there will be other pressing issues. This is a terrible situation that must absolutely be remedied.

We must demand an immediate ceasefire to ensure greater security for the civilian population. We must also ensure that international humanitarian organizations have full access to the conflict zones in order to be able to get aid to the civilian population. During a conflict, when humanitarian organizations can no longer guarantee the safety of their own members, it becomes very difficult to achieve any real humanitarian action on the ground. In that respect, both parties must absolutely be held accountable. We must find a way to make them accountable for their behaviour to the international community or the situation will not improve.

Canada must work within international organizations to find a lasting solution that works for both communities in Sri Lanka. We have no intention of blaming anyone or pointing any fingers. We simply want to find a way to restore peace temporarily and put an end to the current fighting.

This is not an easy situation to resolve. We know that Tamils represent 18% of the Sri Lankan population. They are Hindu, and they live in the northeastern part of the country. Relationships have varied depending on the occupying power—Great Britain or those that preceded it, for example. Apparently, the road to independence was a relatively peaceful one. The problem arose when the government chose to recognize only one official language and to create a centralized unitary government. That was a big mistake. Unfortunately, widespread anger erupted in violence. We are not here to judge; we are here to understand and to see what we can do to turn things around and find a more acceptable way of doing things. Over the past few years, both sides have radicalized and things are more difficult now than ever before.

In this context, military measures have proven unsuccessful. Both the government and the Tamil movement have taken major military action. Each side has its own history and reasons for the position it has taken. It will not be easy to help the two parties see eye to eye.

Unfortunately, the war between the two sides has killed 60,000 and caused 11,000 more to disappear. Is that not the most powerful argument we can present to both sides? We in Canada and Quebec must use that argument to tell the international community that the conflict must cease. We also have to address the fact that both sides have sizeable armed forces. In the past, both sides—the government and the opposition movement—have taken very violent action. Things have gotten so extreme that there is a real stalemate. That is the first thing we have to realize.

• (1955)

I want to come back to the statement the Secretary of State made earlier. It is very important that the Government of Canada make careful distinctions and explain the difference between the Tamil people, the movement and the groups that behave unacceptably. Not drawing these distinctions hinders the possibility of achieving peace once the complex web of situations has been untangled.

In 2002, the Sri Lankan government and the rebels signed a ceasefire agreement. The agreement provided for a prisoner exchange, and it was even reported at the time that the rebels had stopped calling for independence, preferring autonomy. But the two parties never managed to reach a lasting peace agreement.

In 2005, the new Sri Lankan president took a hard-line approach to the Tamil rebels. He rejected the possibility of granting autonomy to the eastern and northern regions of Sri Lanka. He stated that he was going to review the entire peace process. In 2006, the Tamil rebels pulled out of the peace talks, because the parties did not trust each other and the Tamil rebels believed the government was plotting against them. There were sporadic offensives and provocations on both sides.

Last year, the Sri Lankan government made major breakthroughs and regained control of part of the east coast. When we look at the situation on a map today, we can see that the concentration of 250,000 to 300,000 people in a very small area poses a huge problem. Today, there is heavy fighting, and because of the conflicts going on around the world, the international community may not have given this issue all the attention it deserves.

*S. O. 52*

We are getting a reminder here today, a reminder being issued by this Parliament to the government, of course, but also to the Canadian people. This is a very important issue and we hope that similar steps are being taken in other parliaments, so that the momentum we see here today can continue to grow. All available tools must be used, whether through governments or parliamentary bodies of all kinds, perhaps even some that have direct or indirect connections to the Sri Lankan government. I think all available means must be used.

The humanitarian situation is what is most desperate. Since hostilities have resumed, the vast majority of the civilian population have been trapped between the army and the rebels. They are trying to leave the areas where the fighting is taking place, but the safe zones are getting smaller every day. This could be catastrophic. This situation is already tragic and the consequences are terrible. If some sort of action is not taken, such as a ceasefire, we could be faced with a humanitarian disaster.

According to International Committee of the Red Cross estimates, only half of the population managed to find refuge in the so-called safe zone, which is far too small to accommodate the entire population. For instance, it is estimated that between 10,000 and 15,000 families have moved to the coast, in an area without potable water. One can only imagine what these human beings are going through.

The UN Secretary General has expressed concern about the humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka. He is afraid that civilians will be trapped between the army and the rebels, and this is what we are seeing. The UN Secretary General already appealed to the two parties to respect no-fire zones, safe areas and civilian infrastructure. But it takes days, weeks and sometimes even months before such appeals are heard. Unfortunately, as we have seen in conflict after conflict, the outcome is often catastrophic for civilian populations.

How do we go beyond words and get the two parties to take action? I believe that this evening's debate is one thing we must do as parliamentarians.

On January 30, the UN Secretary General asked the Sri Lankan authorities and the rebels to let civilians flee the combat zones in the north for safe zones, even though these zones are under government control.

We can see how difficult the situation can be.

• (2000)

The people are in their own part of the country, with their fellow citizens, and they are being asked to leave. Will there be an increase in the number of victims of this conflict? There is no easy solution to this problem.

*S. O. 52*

According to the spokesperson for the humanitarian aid and emergency assistance coordinator in Sri Lanka, there are approximately 250,000 displaced civilians, who, in many cases, have been displaced 10 to 15 times in the past year. We can only imagine the sort of situation that forces people to move 10 to 15 times in a year, with no security in sight.

It has been one week since humanitarian convoys managed to reach the civilians affected by the conflict. The World Food Programme is continuing negotiations with the Sri Lankan government with a view to having it authorize a break in the fighting so that humanitarian convoys can reach the civilians caught between the two sides.

It is clear that the conflict is severe. Everyone here agrees on that. One often feels powerless in Parliament; one might wonder whether one's words have the power to make things happen. As I said at the beginning of my speech, I think that things have happened in Ottawa because of what people have said. We have to keep going in that direction. It is our responsibility as parliamentarians to use every democratic tool at our disposal to bring an end to this conflict as soon as possible.

When we talk about globalization, we often speak in economic terms, but we also have to speak in humanitarian and human terms. We can assess how effective our world and our systems are by looking at how we put an end to these conflicts. When a conflict ends and peace returns, that is when we can be satisfied with the results.

I will conclude with an example. Last summer, I went to Israel. I went to a café in Jerusalem, and I asked the server what the state of Israel wanted most. He told me that the priority was achieving peace. That reality, as true as it was in that context, holds true for Sri Lanka as well. I hope that the work we have done here tonight will give the government what it needs to move forward. I hope that it will be even more proactive in the international community. We have to do our part to put a stop to the killing and fighting and to reduce civilian casualties. When it comes to civilian casualties, the situation is really intolerable.

*[English]*

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from the Bloc for so eloquently and passionately explaining what is happening in Sri Lanka.

A couple of months ago, we saw what happened in Burma. There was a cyclone that devastated the whole country and the generals were not allowing international aid to go in. Canadian teams were stuck in Bangkok and while they were trying to get visas to get into Myanmar, they were told no. The international community, including this government, condemned that. Canadians of Burmese origin were saying R2P, responsibility to protect. Certainly, this was something that was moved in the United Nations and after a lot of pressure the generals opened their borders and teams were able to go in and help the innocent people who were devastated by the hurricane.

This is the same situation. We have a country, Sri Lanka, and a government not allowing international aid, reporters or international monitors to go in. Governments throughout the world have sort of

taken a back seat, especially our government, whose members are presenting deaf ears to the problem. I think they have wax in between their ears. That is fine.

My question to my learned friend is this. Is this not something similar that would require the R2P, responsibility to protect, and especially of the Tamil nation? In Sri Lanka, there are two diasporas, two nations: the Tamil and Sinhalese. In Canada, we have a large Tamil diaspora as well as a sizable Sinhalese diaspora. Should our Prime Minister not go to the United Nations, or send our Minister of Foreign Affairs and say he has to go and introduce this, stand up on two feet, provoke and say to them, "responsibility to protect"?

Furthermore, if they are not willing to do it and are not moving, should we not do what we did with Pakistan when Pakistan exploded the nuclear bomb? We got it completely out of the Commonwealth. Should we not also exercise those means and any means possible to make sure that the government of Sri Lanka is responsible for its people?

● (2005)

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's thoughts and question are interesting. I will refer to the first response given by the Minister of Foreign Affairs during Monday's question period. I think it was the leader of the Liberal opposition who asked what he had done, what his government was doing. He began by saying that he had spoken to the Sri Lankan minister of foreign affairs. We can see that in between that response and the current demand for a ceasefire, progress has been made.

We must be realistic and realize that we are dealing with a country that, traditionally, does not respond to United Nations demands. So we must have a variety of alliances and ensure that all of the countries that can influence Sri Lanka are acting together. Then there is a way forward for the government's second action point, which aims to support the statement made by the co-chairs of the Tokyo Donor Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka (Norway, Japan, the United States and the European Union). It also includes people who contribute financially to the reconstruction.

We must move from looking as though we are tolerating the situation to sending a clear message, with the entire international community, that we want a resolution and that we will use every legal tool and every economic argument we have to get across the need for a ceasefire.



**Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, and like many others here this evening, I am so pleased we are having this debate. I also have personal reasons to be concerned about the situation in Sri Lanka. I worked at the Quebec department of cultural affairs and immigration in the early 1980s, when we saw the first Tamil refugees arrive in Quebec. I served as a liaison officer with the Tamil community and, at the time, I knew them in a context that was in no way bureaucratic; rather, it was in a context of community initiatives, celebrations and cultural events. I got to know some of them quite well and I became convinced that it was not on a whim that thousands of these of people fled their country to come and settle in ours. They had been subject to brutal repression.

Canada would be well advised to intervene to ensure that a ceasefire is declared, as so many people are calling for at this time.

I would also like to congratulate the Tamil community for its very orderly manner of demonstrating this afternoon. It impressed many people.

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher for his speech. I would also like to thank him for sharing his knowledge of this matter. Quebeckers share a special bond with Tamils who have settled in Quebec.

As the Liberal foreign affairs critic mentioned, here in Canada we have developed a certain model. Naturally, the members of the Bloc, and Quebeckers in general, are not completely satisfied, but we are conducting a democratic debate. We hope that we will finally arrive at a model where two neighbouring countries will be able to collaborate. There is that possibility. We defended ourselves and we won the opportunity to have things done through a democratic debate. We hope that, throughout the world, this same reality will take hold, especially in areas where a state of crisis or deaths result from the inability to find a *modus vivendi*. That is why the Tamils and the Sri Lankans cannot live peacefully side by side.

We must use every example, every opportunity and every argument required to find a solution to this situation that we find unacceptable.

• (2010)

[English]

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would turn the attention of my colleague from the Bloc to the humanitarian crisis. Today we have learned that the use of cluster bombs has had an absolutely devastating outcome.

Canada signed on to the cluster bomb treaty. A facet of this conflict which is so horrific and morose is the use of cluster bombs by a government against the civilian population and at a hospital. This action must be decried in the most aggressive way.

What can we do to ensure that through the cluster bomb treaty we also make our voices heard on what is happening in Sri Lanka?

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Speaker, assessing conflict from a distance is never easy. Today, in *La Presse*, there was an article entitled “Sri Lanka: the war of disinformation”. We do not necessarily have the

*S. O. 52*

tools we need to determine whether interventions are being carried out in compliance with international accords, whether, in the case of a civil war, harm is being minimized, or, most importantly, whether either side is using unacceptable weapons that cannot be justified in any case. That is an important area in which the international community can take action.

Today, we have ways of investigating things so that individuals can be brought to justice at the international level. We can also take certain actions when we witness these kinds of situations. We have all kinds of tools today, such as satellites and an on-the-ground presence. We have countless tools at our disposal. We need the international will to get an accurate picture and to enforce relevant sanctions when justified.

States must be reprimanded for unacceptable behaviour, and they must suffer diplomatic consequences, as well as economic and other consequences if necessary.

[English]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Kootenay—Columbia.

I join with my colleagues in the House of Commons to talk about the conflict in Sri Lanka. As has been stated in this House, this concerns Canadians very seriously not only because we have a large diaspora in this country, but this is a very important human rights issue.

Over a quarter of a century of armed conflict has had a profound and grim impact on Sri Lanka's civilian population. Because of this long-standing conflict, civilians have become the main casualties as indirect victims, and more sobering still, often as deliberate targets.

Let me say what this conflict is all about. This conflict has roots in the long-standing grievances of the Tamil community. These grievances, which have gone on over a long period of time after independence, have resulted in a lot of efforts by many Tamils, politicians and others. This organization was born but regretfully, this organization has taken a very serious and negative approach to solving the problem in Sri Lanka. In fact, it was listed by Canada as a terrorist organization. The minister of state has stated why Canada listed it as a terrorist organization.

Not only that, if we go back in history, this organization was responsible, according to its own statements, for the assassination of the Indian prime minister. This organization has been recruiting child soldiers. This organization has been responsible for suicide bombings. This organization has been recognized as a terrorist organization because of those things. Canada has signed on to the war on terror which naturally will compel us to look at this organization as a terrorist organization because of these activities.

What is of critical importance is that there are a lot of Sri Lankan Tamils sitting in the gallery and they will remember that this organization also assassinated those who opposed it, including Tamil politicians in Sri Lanka who were looking for a peaceful solution.

*S. O. 52*

Now is the time, with all this human suffering happening, to speak out. I agree with the opposition that it is time for Tamil Tigers to lay down their arms and stand up for the people, if they want to stand up for their people, and to engage in a dialogue. That is why Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs has called for a dialogue.

Let me be very clear and blunt. At the current time, the Tamil Tigers are calling for the breakup of Sri Lanka, and the Government of Canada cannot accept that. We are calling upon the Tamil Tigers and the Tamil people and the diaspora here to apply pressure and return to dialogue. We understand that dialogue is not one way; it must be two way. In the same context, we are calling upon the Sri Lankan government to engage and ask for a ceasefire so that they can go back to the table.

As I have stated, the root cause of this was the grievances of the minority communities. Therefore, it is up to the Sri Lankan government to start building strong measures, to start building confidence for that day the Tamils can feel they are part and parcel of the Sri Lankan community, of the Sri Lankan country, and that they are not a marginalized community. We want the Sri Lankan government to start building.

Canada strongly supports the presence of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Sri Lanka with the full mandate to report on the human rights situation. Once there is accountability and transparency on the human rights situation, and there are confidence building measures, the Tamil community will feel confident and a dialogue can start to take place. This is the key thing right now, because if the Sri Lankan government does not extend the hand of friendship and confidence building, the conflict will carry on.

● (2015)

From all the reports that have been coming in, we all know of the humanitarian crisis that is taking place because of the ongoing conflict. That humanitarian crisis has been stated by every member in the House as to what is happening there. Nobody is happy about it. The international community is extremely concerned. The Government of Canada is extremely concerned. In that respect, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has made a phone call stating our position very clearly and putting strong pressure on the government of Sri Lanka to take responsibility and do what it needs to do. There is a higher degree of responsibility on the government of Sri Lanka, because it is a democratically elected government which is supposed to represent everyone. The government should be taking a lead role there.

As far as we are concerned, the Tamil Tigers should lay down their arms and start talking, but the Sri Lankan government must ensure that the Tamil community feels that they have a voice they can trust and can have a dialogue carry on to ensure that they are inclusive members of the democratic process in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka is a democratic country. It has had democratic elections. I have been to Sri Lanka and have met Tamil politicians who are all working to ensure a peaceful and prosperous Sri Lanka. They can be included. I am sure the Tamil diaspora in Canada would be the first to support peace returning to their country, one country, Sri Lanka, working with everyone so that their relatives and everyone there can participate in the democratic process.

It is critically important that both sides start talking now. That is the position of the Government of Canada. That is the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Minister of State of Foreign Affairs for the Americas also elaborated on that. Of course we understand a humanitarian crisis is taking place and as the Minister of International Cooperation has stated, we have responded to this with the announcement of \$3 million in assistance.

Yes, there is a problem. Yes, the Minister of International Cooperation has asked, does aid get into the region? There is no point in giving aid if it does not get into the region. We are working with our partners to ensure that aid gets into the region, but at the same time, we cannot overlook the other factors, such as the bombing of hospitals and the attacks on civilians, which cause serious concern.

Canada at this time is calling on the Tamil Tigers and the government of Sri Lanka to engage in a dialogue.

The issue of Canada listing Tamil Tigers as terrorists is something of the past. What is currently important is to get to the table and talk and stop the humanitarian crisis, stop the killing of civilians that is taking place so that aid can get into the area.

Canada supported the Norway process. We are very disappointed that the peace talks have collapsed and they have not moved forward.

We will continue working with the regional partners, with our international partners, with everyone here to put pressure on both sides to come to the table. Ultimately, if they do not come to the table, if they do not come to a peaceful resolution—and they already signed a peace agreement in Norway which was not kept by both parties—this time the international community must be very strong on both sides to ensure that they adhere to peace, and not just sign a piece of paper and then have these crises take place, as is what happened with the Norway process.

Once more, I must very clearly emphasize the Government of Canada's position. As the minister said today, we call on the Tamil Tigers to lay down their arms and engage in dialogue with the government of Sri Lanka. We call on the government of Sri Lanka to get on to the human rights issue and to get on to the peace process. We need to have the peace process so the humanitarian crisis is stopped.

● (2020)

**Mr. Andrew Kania (Brampton West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my friend spent at least half of his time attacking one side of the conflict. I do not think that is constructive. We are here tonight on an emergency basis to discuss a tragedy. What are we going to do about it?

The piece of paper that was released by the government today with its plan is something that should have been released months ago, not today. The \$3 million is a pittance. The government is talking about a \$100 billion deficit over five years. Three million dollars will do very little, even if it reaches where it needs to go.

My question to my friend is, I hear the words, but what is the government actually going to do now to see that this is implemented? Who is going for a meeting with the Sri Lankan government? Who is actually going to do something to try to get a ceasefire and to end this 300,000 person humanitarian tragedy?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Speaker, I know the member is a new to the House of Commons, and I congratulate him on his election.

I allude to that because if he were here in the last Parliament, I made many statements as parliamentary secretary on the conflict in Sri Lanka, calling for peace and for both sides to come to the table. This is not something, as he alluded to, that we got up one morning and started to do this. The government has been engaged in this issue for a long time. We have been talking to the Sri Lankan government on this issue. We have our ambassador actively engaged in that issue. In fact, I was part of the Sri Lanka-Canada Friendship Society to ensure that we were engaged with Sri Lanka.

The second part of his question was what would we do now that we had made the announcement. The Government of Canada is, as the Minister of International Cooperation has stated, working with agencies that have assured us that the aid will reach the people whom it is supposed to reach. That is why she listed the organizations. We will keep an eye on this.

We are engaged also with the government of Sri Lanka and with the other international partners to ensure pressure is put on to get to the table for a dialogue.

• (2025)

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I take the hon. member at his word then when he says that the Government of Canada is extremely concerned about the situation.

Like my friend, the previous questioner, it would have been a little more believable had this expression of concern come a bit earlier. Nevertheless, I take him at his word that the government is extremely concerned. Therefore, the Government of Canada should be interacting with the government of Sri Lanka.

Could he detail for the House the interactions that he has had, or the minister has had, with the High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in Canada in the past 10 days or 2 weeks?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Speaker, as I have stated, we have been consumed with this issue for a while.

We have been engaged, as the government has stated. The Minister of Foreign Affairs even talked to the minister of foreign affairs for Sri Lanka as well.

We are also constantly engaged with the government and with the High Commissioner. At any given time, we have stated to them that there is a necessary need for them to get down to a dialogue. We were very unhappy when the peace process broke down and fighting was resumed.

There are two parties. One party is calling for the break-up. With the other party, we have a concern about human rights. We are calling on both parties to get to the table and to work for the betterment of Sri Lanka.

*S. O. 52*

**Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the minister of state and the Minister of International Cooperation have already stated, Canada is deeply concerned. Like all Canadians I, too, am disheartened by the violence that has been sweeping through Sri Lanka and the impact this has had on the people of Sri Lanka.

Here in Canada we are lucky to have such a safe and secure country, but so many countries around the world face persistent challenges to the security of their country and the well-being of their citizens. We have a history, as a people, of listening to the needs of people around the world and answering their calls for help.

It is important to recognize that the last few years have been particularly challenging for the Sri Lankans, which is why Canada has been part of providing the support to those in need.

Last November, tropical storm Nisha hit Sri Lanka, causing citizens to leave their homes, which created a great need for humanitarian relief. The Government of Canada has been able to play an important role in helping those in need.

Today, international aid workers continue to do the necessary work in the region with the support of the Canadian government, however, the ongoing conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam has intensified. Canada is monitoring the situation in Sri Lanka closely. As we have in the past, we are offering much needed support.

In 2008 Canada supported the people of Sri Lanka with almost \$3 million in humanitarian assistance, including \$1.5 million for food aid through the World Food Programme. The crucial funding we provided helped to support Sri Lankans with emergency medical supplies, food, water and other necessities.

Canada remains a proud partner with organizations such as Care Canada, Doctors Without Borders, World Vision and the World Food Programme, which are working hard to alleviate the suffering of those affected in the region.

I have heard this question tonight: how do we know the aid will get to where it should go? If the members do not have confidence in the government, that is fine, that is their perspective, but I have confidence in the government. More than that, I have confidence in the NGOs like World Vision, the World Food Programme, Care Canada, Doctors Without Borders. Their lives and their organizations are dedicated to getting the job done, which is why the partnership of CIDA with those organizations is so important. We know that the access to basic needs of food, water and shelter and medical care will continue to be a challenge. We have all sorts of faith in the ability of those organizations to get the job done.

In the face of this armed conflict, Canada along with the international community is supporting efforts to reach a peaceful solution. Canada is also giving its ongoing support to humanitarian efforts, as I have said. It is important that we express our concern for the health and well-being of the great number of Sri Lankans affected by the insecurity. We understand the needs of those who have fled their homes are great. With the onslaught of the monsoon rains, food, assistance, clean water, as well as shelter are also important priorities.

*S. O. 52*

Canada is working to ensure that our aid reaches the people who need it most and that those self-sacrificing aid workers are safe to return home when the necessary help they are providing has been delivered.

The citizens and international aid workers who end up in the crossfire in this conflict are of great concern to us. In their name, we have continued to support those in need and hope for a peaceful resolution to this political crisis.

As we have said repeatedly, and I know other members in this debate have said, we call on the parties in the conflict in Sri Lanka to respect international law and for the government of Sri Lanka to ensure the safety of its citizens. Once an end to this conflict is achieved, we can help the citizens of Sri Lanka return to their normal lives and begin a process of reconciliation and building. We will continue to monitor the situation closely, as I have stated.

• (2030)

The \$3 million announced by the minister is assistance that builds on Canada's \$3 million contribution made last year to support key efforts in Sri Lanka. As I have stated, through trusted humanitarian partners, including the Red Cross and World Vision, the Government of Canada has helped to provide emergency medical support, emergency food assistance, shelter, water and sanitation services, protection, health and hygiene education, as well as emergency preparedness training.

Canada is committed to working with our partners to help coordinate global emergency efforts.

Canadian development experts work with other humanitarian agencies already in Sri Lanka to ensure an effective and coordinated overall response.

Our government believes that the UN's central emergency response fund, or CERF, is essential in providing immediate support for people affected by crises. The CERF distributes money quickly to humanitarian organizations to help save lives. As a major contributor to the CERF, Canada is pleased to be a leader in responding to humanitarian emergencies abroad.

Restoring stability in Sri Lanka is vital to our humanitarian efforts throughout Asia and for the future of Sri Lanka and its neighbours. We know that the ongoing crisis has disrupted the lives of hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankans. We understand that many families have been displaced, homes have been destroyed, and people have had to flee.

As has been stated many times, it is essential to ensure that an end is put to this conflict that has pervaded Sri Lanka for so long. We must ensure that as soon as possible the lives of those impacted can be rebuilt and stable support measures put in place.

Canada stands ready to do its part. Support for the sick, wounded and those in need is necessary. With our support, those caught in the middle of the conflict can be evacuated and emergency assistance can be provided.

Canadians understand that development and security go hand in hand. Without security, there can be no reconstruction, no humanitarian aid, no democratic development.

It is my sincere hope that peace will come to Sri Lanka and the people of that country have a resolution to this crisis. We must make every effort to ensure that Sri Lankans get the immediate help they need. We must do everything in our power to ensure that the situation does not deteriorate further.

In the face of this humanitarian crisis, Canada stands ready to do its part. Simply put, it is the right thing to do.

As in the past, we will offer the support necessary for those in need to deliver humanitarian aid and with our partners on the ground we will work to put Sri Lanka on a strong and stable path.

• (2035)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member with interest because he is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation.

When the minister spoke, she alluded to the fact that the present government had better partners on the ground than previous governments. The parliamentary secretary mentioned CARE, World Vision and the Red Cross. I sat here and wondered what had changed and what was different than when the Liberal government was in office and the tsunami struck. They are the same names, the same people.

Could the member clarify for me the comments by the minister? Was the minister aware of what she was saying, or was this a speech that was written? Have CARE, the Red Cross, World Vision become better and they misled previous governments, or were the previous governments stupid when they did business with the same people? Are the same people on the ground delivering stuff now? I am either totally confused or these people are not the same.

Have these people changed or are you just blowing smoke?

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would just remind the hon. member to address his comments through the chair.

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** Mr. Speaker, it has been very interesting to listen to this debate tonight. By and large, there have been tremendously constructive comments, some differences of opinion, some concerns about timing, all of which are absolutely valid.

The question the member has put to me is one born of a very partisan perspective. I do not know the purpose of the question.

Since our government has taken over, we have done a tremendous amount of work in terms of accountability, which is not to say that we have had any serious questions about those agencies, as he seems to be alluding. The fact is we are putting in place an accountability for the people of Canada that the money, the assets, will be going to the people for whom it is intended.

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to pursue that with my good friend and colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation.

In 2005 when the tsunami hit that region, and of course parts within that same area, our government response was within literally hours. We had deployed, from 8th Wing division from Trenton, a jet which contained medicines, pills to render water potable, cans that would allow them to contain or to pick up water, and tents.

Obviously, the situation is somewhat different here, significantly different in the sense that a ceasefire would have to be obtained first, and I think our colleagues here on this side of the House have provided very constructive directions as to how to engage not only with the international fora but also to provide constructive assistance to the government so that it can provide aid.

I want to ask the hon. member, has he taken up the question of access to that country with the Sri Lankan high commissioner, who today issued a letter which talked about disinformation, which in my view is not constructive? Will he undertake to speak to the high commissioner—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation.

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** Mr. Speaker, as the member will be well aware, parliamentary secretaries, ministers of state, my minister, and the foreign affairs minister, all have our own responsibilities, and within that context, his question is a perfectly valid question. Would I be the person who would be doing the speaking? Probably not. The constructive suggestions that have been coming out of this debate tonight have been very helpful on balance and I commend the vast majority of members in this House.

• (2040)

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question regarding the \$3 million. He mentioned in his comments that last year we supplied \$3 million in aid. I am wondering about the announcement, I see the minister here, that was made today. Is that extra? Is that in addition to the \$3 million that we had last year and will we therefore be supplying \$6 million this year, or will it be only \$3 million?

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** Mr. Speaker, the answer to the question is, as I stated in my speech, this is a new \$3 million for a total of \$6 million. That is exactly it and I am just confirming that number for the member.

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the members for Scarborough—Agincourt, Scarborough—Guildwood and Mississauga East—Cooksville.

I had the pleasure of visiting Sri Lanka twice. The first time was for a conference, but the second time I led an all-party parliamentary delegation to Sri Lanka as the chair of the Canada-Sri Lanka Parliamentary Association right after the tsunami, both to view the disaster of the tsunami and to ensure that moneys were actually going into reconstruction areas, but also to push for peace. In negotiations at the time there was still a ceasefire.

We met with the government representatives of all the parties involved as well as the LTTE in the one area we visited. In the landmines area we spoke to a lot of people. Unfortunately, I have to say that I came away from that visit convinced that neither side was interested in peace. That was what I drew from that visit. That is what I got from a lot of the discussions and meetings. The military

*S. O. 52*

solution, of course, which is what ensued, that lack of interest in the peace discussion, is what we have today which is the horrible humanitarian crisis which has trapped some 240,000 people in an area that they cannot get out of at the moment, but also, the many people it has injured, maimed and killed.

Canada was very active in putting forward and fighting for what is called responsibility to protect, which is a declaration of the UN now. It is something that we need to act on to protect the people. That was put in place to protect people and states that are not able to protect their own citizens. To some degree, this is happening in Sri Lanka today. I would hope that the Sri Lankan government would allow the United Nations to come in and work with it.

According to the Human Rights Watch report, on the one hand the LTTE refused the movement of civilians, but the Sri Lankan government has also contributed to the risk by detaining those who have managed to flee LTTE areas, including families in militarized detention camps, thereby denying them freedom of movement. This is wrong and it should stop. The freedom of movement of these people and the protection of the vulnerable is fundamental.

It is the government's duty to provide safety to all citizens but also to ensure journalists and human rights defenders the freedom of movement to seek out the truth. This has been denied and this is something that we must change, and it needs to happen very quickly.

Again, close to 250,000 people whose lives are at stake at the moment seem to be abandoned and they are crying out to all of us. So I call on both parties to respect the safe zones, to respect the safe areas, and to respect the non-military attack of medical facilities, schools and so on. They need to respect humanitarian and international law. It is extremely critical and we need to demand that this happen at all cost.

Humanitarian aid must reach those in need and there needs to be an immediate ceasefire with international monitors put in place to ensure that it is respected. The UN should appoint a special representative to monitor the ceasefire and also to start the peace talks immediately.

The challenges facing Sri Lanka cannot be resolved by military activities but through political action. This must include, obviously, a dialogue on the kind of government, the sharing of power, possibly a federal system as Canada has, or something similar, but certainly sharing of power needs to happen. The agreement also needs to include the recognition of plurality and minority rights.

Canada has a major role to play in this crisis. We have a large Sri Lankan diaspora in Canada, who together in partnership with the government should be and will be involved. So I, too, call on our government to take leadership in this case, to go to Sri Lanka, to start the talks, to push and to aggressively take action. It has been too long and we have waited far too long.

It is time that the Government of Canada be aggressive on this issue with the United Nations. The Security Council of the UN should also be involved. We call on both sides to a ceasefire immediately and to start talking about a political solution because without that there is no solution, and Sri Lanka violence will continue even if the government succeeds in its objective with the military at the end of the day.

*S. O. 52*

• (2045)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week I held a round table with my constituents on the issue of Sri Lanka. These are some of the actions they want the Government of Canada to undertake: condemn immediately the slaughter and genocide of innocent Tamil civilians in the northern part of Sri Lanka by the Sri Lankan army; break its silence about the genocide in Sri Lanka and call upon the United Nations to immediately invoke an internationally sponsored ceasefire, for the LTTE to lay down its arms, and for the Sri Lankan army to return to their barracks. The ceasefire should not be initiated by the Sri Lankan government nor the Indian government. They want an international ceasefire started.

To continue: establish the international community as the administrator of the northern part of Sri Lanka; broker a peace deal with all participants, LTTE and the Sri Lankan government at the table; guarantee access and safe passage of international humanitarian agencies, ICRC, into the northern part of Sri Lanka to administer emergency medical assistance and provide food and shelter to the civilians; guarantee access and safe passage of the international news media into the northern part of Sri Lanka to talk with people and to report accurately on what is going on there so the facts will come out; ensure that fighting stops in safe zones near hospitals, and we have seen what happened with the bombing of a hospital just the other day; and finally, lobby for an international inquiry into the deaths of 300 people in a single day.

They went on to say that we should immediately send peacekeepers to the northern part of Sri Lanka, send medical personnel to the northern part of Sri Lanka, and immediately sever aid and other ties to Sri Lanka until the genocide stops.

Time and time again, I have sent letters to the Minister of International Cooperation, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister saying that there is an international crisis happening in Sri Lanka. Please act. Time and time again I have asked the government to engage both the Tamil and Sinhalese diasporas in a dialogue so that we can find a peaceful solution to what is happening in Sri Lanka. Time and time again, it has unfortunately fallen on deaf ears.

It was not until the government and the Prime Minister were pushed to the nth degree. It was not until over the weekend, when literally thousands of emails, phone calls, faxes and letters went to the minister of external affairs as well as to the Prime Minister. It was not until this side of the House started pushing and pushing hard that the government decided to act. What do we have today? We have a statement that says it is too bad what is happening over there and we trust that the Sri Lankan government will certainly look after things. I still have not heard that we have called the high commissioner of Sri Lanka to the carpet to ask him or her to justify what is going on. I have not heard that should things not change, should this genocide that my constituents refer to not stop in Sri Lanka, we are going to recall our own high commissioner from Sri Lanka. I still have not heard how we would be able to make sure that humanitarian aid reaches the people it should reach.

I say this because of an experience that I had. Four years ago, right after the tsunami hit Sri Lanka, I went to Sri Lanka. I went to

Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, the Elephant Pass, as they call it, and I walked the grounds and played with the kids. I spoke to mothers who had lost their relatives. I spoke to the children and played cricket with them. They are the same children we are seeing in photographs today who have been maimed, butchered and possibly killed.

Part of me is still back there with those kids on that cricket field and I have the minister of international aid standing up in this House and saying that we can do things better and that we will deliver the aid. How can the government deliver the aid if the government of Sri Lanka does not adhere to the wishes of the international community? I still have not heard from either minister or parliamentary secretary what they are going to do to guarantee that the \$3 million aid we have will reach the people it must go to. I have heard platitudes and that we have a lot of experience. It is the same people who delivered the aid yesterday. It is the same people who delivered the aid before. And it is the same people who are going to be delivering the aid tomorrow.

However, it is those people who are saying to this House, and through you, Mr. Speaker, they are loudly speaking and saying that they cannot go because the government of Sri Lanka is not allowing them. When is the government going to go to the United Nations and push the United Nations for a debate? When is the government going to rise and say that if Sri Lanka does not change its ways, it is going to be kicked out of the Commonwealth? When is the government going to take the responsibility to meet with the Tamil diaspora in Canada and meet with them face to face? The Prime Minister has to sit down with them and say that he wants to speak to them. The government has failed so far.

• (2050)

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this conflict is a legacy of British colonialism. When the British occupied the island, when the island was then called Ceylon, they used the Tamil population, in effect, to protect British interests, in preference to the Tamil population over the Sinhalese population.

When independence came, the Sinhalese majority decided that it was time to take back what was then Ceylon, and now Sri Lanka, as its own and implemented a number of laws that were reprehensible to the minority Tamil population. The consequence of that was that the Tamil people were excluded from the civil service or it was very difficult to get into the civil service. They were unable to access higher education or they were excluded from higher education. These lists of difficulties, grievances, slights, injustices and outrages built and built until we have what we have today, which is a civil war that has raged over the last 30-plus years, the consequence of which is now that we are facing a very grave international crisis.

The conflict has been characterized by outrageous acts against humanity by both sides. Human Rights Watch has said that both sides have committed atrocities and that there are no innocents among the combatants. Meanwhile, the people of Sri Lanka suffer.

There was a window of opportunity a few years ago when I had the great honour to go to Sri Lanka with the hon. David Kilgour, the then secretary of state for Asia-Pacific. I believe we were the first official delegation from Canada to visit that country. We talked to pretty well anyone who would talk to us about the possibilities of a devolved form of federation and other political solutions. It was obvious to us after we returned that there was not a real serious interest by either side in a dialogue about a form of federation that would accommodate the most legitimate concerns about the minority population and the majority population.

We would listen to the peace monitors, we would listen to the people who were frustrated by the continuous violations of the ceasefire and we were driven to the conclusion that it would be only a matter of time before the hostilities would resume.

Then along came the tsunami which exacerbated the difficulties. One of my best friends was head of an aid agency there, well-funded, well-intentioned, well-motivated, well-staffed and they gave up after 18 months of frustration with both sides and the failure to be able to deliver their aid and their relief.

This is a small island of about 23 million people. It is about one-third minority population and two-thirds majority population in rough terms. There is no solution to this war. This conflict cannot be won militarily even if the Government of Sri Lanka is under the illusion that it can win this war militarily. As we watch this conflict unfold on our TV screens, in our newspapers and in various Sri Lankan media, it appalls us all. This is not a winnable war. No one will win the war. If the Government of Sri Lanka thinks it will win the war it will not. On the day after this conflict subsides, because it will not end, there will still be millions of Tamil people looking for peace, justice, fairness and access to their various government facilities.

What is the Government of Canada to do? There have been very good suggestions from the member for Toronto Centre and the member for Mount Royal, and I will not repeat them. I would have wished that the Government of Canada had taken a more activist role. It is regrettable that it takes events such as demonstrations on Parliament Hill and emergency debates to prod it into some action.

• (2055)

I have the great honour to represent one of the largest Tamil constituencies in the country and it has been a very personal exercise for me to listen to literally dozens and dozens of people talk about the tragedy that is in their families and in their homes.

I would urge the Government of Canada to act along the lines that the member for Mount Royal and the member for Toronto Centre have urged.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one of the things that is important to lay down here is that as recently as October there was an effort by the other side, in this case by the Tamil tigers, to enter into a truce.

We now have what is really a war of attrition. We have the government saying basically that it will wipe out the Tamil tigers. We all know the history of that. It never happens. It only makes things worse.

*S. O. 52*

What does the member think of the Sri Lankan government's notion that it can actually wipe out the rebel force and have peace in Sri Lanka?

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Speaker, the concern I have is that the Government of Sri Lanka is under some huge illusion that if it somehow or another eliminates the Tamil tigers, drives them into the sea and eliminates them as a force, somehow or another the conflict will be finished. That is utter naive nonsense. It is delusional on the part of the Government of Sri Lanka to think that somehow the injustices that the Tamil people have suffered over the years will disappear by virtue of driving the Tamil tigers into the sea.

I would urge our government to express that in the most forceful of terms to not only the high commissioner here, who is just down the road and I was rather surprised that the parliamentary secretary could tell us of no incidents in which they had talked to the high commissioner, but also to the foreign affairs minister, directly to their counterparts. This is something that needs to be expressed in the most forceful terms to the government.

**Hon. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today the world watches a human tragedy unfolding in Sri Lanka. The world should watch that conflict filled with guilt for failing to act, failing to care and failing to speak up against oppression and violence for half a century.

The history of this conflict begins and ends with a determinedly discriminatory government representing a majority ethnic group seeking to culturalize and marginalize a minority. As early as 1948, many Tamils were denied citizenship and rendered stateless. In 1956 the Sri Lankan government declared Sinhala the only state language, marginalizing the Tamil language which had been equal in the pre-colonial era. Buddhism became the exclusive state religion, again denying the Tamil identity.

In 1972, a blatantly racist quota system was imposed to limit the number of Tamils in university. The Sri Lankan government even abolished the section of its constitution that protected minority rights. Tamils were discriminated against in schools, the public service and the military.

In the 1960s, arson, vandalism and anti-Tamil riots killed 500 Tamils. In 1981, police burned down the library in Jaffna, destroying 95,000 ancient texts and manuscripts. Then, the darkest moment, in July 1983, over 3,000 Tamils were killed, many burned alive. Electoral lists were used to identify Tamil homes.

From the violence of 1983, the people of Sri Lanka were to suffer 25 years of civil war and 70,000 people lost their lives.

Both the government and the Tamil tigers, rebels, engaged in actions that violated every standard of armed conflict. Suicide bombings on one side, aerial bombardments of hospitals and schools on the other.

Since 2006, I have spoken of the campaign of atrocities that have included the execution of aid workers working for a French NGO, bombing of schools, a grenade attack on a church protecting refugees and countless individual cases of summary executions and torture.

*S. O. 52*

Hundreds of Tamils have disappeared in Colombo after white vans left their homes. Sometimes their bodies are found and sometimes their bodies are dumped for effect near the Parliament. Mostly, they are never seen again.

The world community rose only once to stop the Sri Lankan government. On that rare occasion, the government was herding Tamils into crowded buses to be deported from Colombo. Such visible ethnic cleansing could not be allowed.

It is this history that should inform our view of the current military campaign. Today the Sri Lankan government remains indifferent to the Tamil civilians who lie in the wake of its military. The government makes it blatantly clear by its repeated use of cluster bombs against a civilian hospital that it is not worried about accusations of war crimes. In fact, it has refused to sign on to the Rome Statute that would make its leaders vulnerable to prosecution.

The U.S. secretary of state and the foreign secretary of the U.K. have called for a no-fire zone where civilians and refugees are now homeless, dying of snake bites and exposed to shelling and targeted bombardment by the government.

Canada can also speak up. Canada must call for international observers and peacekeepers to be deployed in towns in the north and east and that Tamil civilians be allowed to return home under international monitoring. This needs to happen now or this tragedy will continue to reach catastrophic proportions.

Canada can also demand that Sri Lanka submit fully to an international war crimes tribunal where the actions of leaders on all sides of this conflict can be investigated and judged. The suffering in Sri Lanka will continue as long as there is no legal consequence, no opportunity for justice and no international will to bring a just peace.

It was more than half a century ago that Winston Churchill hailed a Canadian airman as the saviour of Ceylon. Today, Canada should feel the same duty to help save a quarter of a million Tamil civilians whose only hope is the will of the world to protect them.

• (2100)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the rest of the world fails to act, we should look into the responsibility to protect. If Sri Lanka is not willing to listen to Canada, if it turns a blind eye to us, should we not call the High Commissioner from Sri Lanka on the carpet and tell him that Canada has spoken and it is time to listen?

**Hon. Albina Guarnieri:** Mr. Speaker, this conflict will require incredible determination on the part of all resources. I really believe the world decided in the 1940s that military objectives could no longer justify deliberate attacks on civilians. It will take an independent UN body to investigate alleged atrocities and bring some justice to the event.

I do not think, to be quite frank, that one individual will be able to bring a sustainable peace to the area. It will take the collective opinion and the collective will of all governments to ensure that a serious UN-led effort is required to reach that goal.

• (2105)

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have been trying to figure out what the next steps are for Canada. We have heard about the \$3 million and the call for a ceasefire.

Canada is a participant in the UN General Assembly. Would her party and others join in to ask the Security Council to involve itself in Sri Lanka and put its stamp of approval on enforcing a ceasefire?

**Hon. Albina Guarnieri:** Mr. Speaker, any solution has to start with respect for civilian rights and an end to atrocities and violence. Then and only then the option that really offers peace is a form of self-government, which would allow Tamil people to be free from fear of their own government.

As I stated earlier, a serious UN-led effort is required to reach that goal. The member will find that our party will co-operate to the fullest to secure that peace.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Oak Ridges—Markham.

Since the peace process was abandoned and the humanitarian and human rights situation in Sri Lanka deteriorated, Canada has made a very active and lasting commitment to that country. Today, Sri Lanka celebrates the 61st anniversary of its independence.

To all the citizens of Sri Lanka, we would like to express our wishes for a future of peace and prosperity.

[*English*]

However, today is also yet another day of an unfolding tragedy. We are witnessing another truly tragic chapter in the long-standing civil conflict that has ravaged Sri Lanka and causes great concern to Canadians.

That is why today, Canada calls upon the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to declare and to honour an immediate ceasefire to allow full, safe and unhindered access, the evacuation of the sick and wounded and the delivery of much needed humanitarian assistance to civilians.

The Minister of International Cooperation also announced today that Canada would provide up to \$3 million in humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka to help people affected by the current events. This funding will go to organizations like the Red Cross, World Vision, Médecins Sans Frontières and CARE Canada that have the capacity to deliver help on the ground. We continue to engage with Sri Lanka and to monitor the situation very closely.

For over two decades, as colleagues in the House have mentioned, a civil war has raged in Sri Lanka between the Sinhalese majority government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. This horrific conflict is responsible for an estimated 70,000 deaths to date, mostly civilians, and has induced an estimated 460,000 internally displaced people. Others have fled the country as refugees.



Canada has welcomed to our shores over 200,000 Sri Lankans, many of whom arrived as asylum seekers in the eighties and nineties, seeking refuge from this conflict.

In January of 2008, the government of Sri Lanka officially abrogated the 2002 ceasefire agreement, marking a dangerous turn in the long-running conflict. After more than a year of heavy fighting, in January of 2009, the government of Sri Lanka captured the last remaining bastions controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil. These advances by the Sri Lankan army, coupled with the LTTE's decision to restrict the movement of civilians out of the conflict area, have resulted in mounting civilian casualties. Approximately 250,000 to 300,000 internally displaced people were trapped in the conflict area.

International efforts to persuade the government of Sri Lanka to allow full humanitarian access and to persuade the LTTE to allow civilians freedom of movement in the conflict area have failed. There remains probably only a short period of time before the LTTE loses control of all territory in the north and will subsequently retreat into the jungles and outlying villages, but at what additional cost to human life?

What is the future that the government of Sri Lanka envisages coming out of this face of their conflict? What does the LTTE wish to obtain by continuing this struggle?

Canada has voiced strong concerns about the recent developments in the conflict, particularly its impact on civilians, including humanitarian workers and human rights defenders, and the increasing attacks on independent journalists. Canada has taken action at the highest levels.

● (2110)

[Translation]

On January 28, I issued a public statement expressing Canada's deep concern about the increasing number of civilian casualties and the humanitarian situation. I called on the parties to allow full, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian workers and to ensure the safe and voluntary movement of civilians from combat zones. I also indicated that Canada is concerned about the increase in attacks on journalists in Sri Lanka and urges the government of that country to conduct open and independent investigations into all these attacks.

[English]

On February 2, I called the Minister of Foreign Affairs to directly express these concerns.

[Translation]

Today, I issued another public statement:

Canada calls for the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to declare and honour an immediate ceasefire to allow full, safe and unhindered access; the evacuation of the sick and wounded; and the delivery of much-needed humanitarian assistance to civilians.

Canada endorses the statement released yesterday by the co-chairs of the Tokyo Donor Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka (Norway, Japan, the United States and the European Union). The statement proposes conditions to prevent further civilian casualties and human suffering and to achieve a just and lasting political solution.

S. O. 52

[English]

Furthermore, on February 3, my officials called in the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Canada to emphasize Canada's concerns. Our officials in Colombo have been highly engaged on these troubling developments for many months and, in particular, over these critical past five days.

Our high commissioner in Colombo has engaged the Sri Lankan leadership at the highest levels to register Canada's grave concern over the safety of civilians in both the safety zone and the LTTE-controlled area in general and urged restraint in the conduct of military operations.

As well, we have urged increased attempts to communicate with both civilians and the LTTE, encouraging the former to leave and the latter to surrender.

We have argued, further, that every effort should be made to allow the ICRC, the United Nations and international aid agencies to deliver humanitarian assistance and that they be allowed to establish relief centres beyond the lines to provide support and relief to civilians to relocate to this area. Canada has stated that the government of Sri Lanka had unilaterally established the safe zone, had directed the ICRC, UN and civilians to go there and the government was, therefore, responsible for their safety and it was unacceptable for the Sri Lankan army to be firing into the area, even for counter-bombardment purposes.

Our high commissioner has and will continue to regularly meet and consult with the heads of mission of like-minded countries, in particular, the co-chairs of the peace process, to concert our efforts for maximum effectiveness.

Our high commission has and will remain in regular contact with leaders of international organizations engaged in humanitarian relief operations in Sri Lanka to ensure we have the best possible understanding of the challenges being faced.

With respect to the humanitarian issues, Canada has repeatedly raised its concern about limitations on humanitarian access with the government of Sri Lanka. Canada has raised these concerns in concert with like-minded countries. My senior officials raised these issues, specifically, in the bilateral meeting with the Sri Lankan foreign secretary in Ottawa in September 2008.

Canada will continue to voice our concerns at the highest levels to protect and provide safe passage of the IDPs.

The humanitarian rights situation in Sri Lanka has been alarming for some time. There have been unlawful killings by government agents, politically-motivated killings by paramilitary forces and the LTTE disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detention of Tamils accused of being LTTE supporters, torture, restrictions on freedom of movement and the recruitment of child soldiers by the LTTE.

I know my hon. colleague will be able to complete these messages, but we are extremely concerned.

*S. O. 52*

• (2115)

[*Translation*]

In closing, I want to reassure my colleagues that Canada remains ready to help the various parties reach such a solution and turn the page on this tragic chapter in Sri Lankan history.

**The Speaker:** I regret interrupting the hon. minister, but time has expired.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the minister with great interest as he rhymed off figures and facts of what the government has done and what the government has not done.

I am wondering if he would answer one simple question. What has happened in Sri Lanka is a tragedy that is shared by many people, but there is a tragedy also to a particular element of our community in Canada. Canadians of Tamil descent are sponsoring their spouses from that part of the world. In any other post it would take anywhere between six to eight months. In Sri Lanka it is taking up to three years for a spousal sponsorship. They are asked to do more interviews. They are interviewed by CSIS. There are not enough personnel on the ground to ensure these interviews are done quickly.

Could the minister, in this House today, clarify for me, my constituents and the House why the Tamil population in Sri Lanka is being singled out and why it takes up to 300 times as much time to process an immigration file for a spouse of up to three years? I am wondering if the minister could be away from his wife for three years.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague indicates our grave and deep concern in terms of the tragedy that is taking place in that part of the world and we are, as I think all parliamentarians here in the House, very supportive of those comments.

As for the latter part of the member's question, I would suggest that he raise the issue with my colleague, the Minister of Immigration, who is the minister responsible for that file.

• (2120)

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister said a couple of things that are worthy of repeating. We have not heard it from the government so I am glad to hear it the acknowledgement that at this time last year it was the Sri Lankan government that broke off the truce that had been existing.

This past October, it was the tigers who asked for a suspension of violence and to enter into some form of truce and yet we have the Government of Sri Lanka which is bent on an attrition of the tigers. So we do not have someone there who is a fair-minded partner in trying to look for peace.

We are glad to hear that the government talked about a ceasefire. We are glad to see the aid but we need to do more. We talked in the House tonight about using the Commonwealth as a vehicle, pushing our voice at the Commonwealth, isolating the Government of Sri Lanka and to use our voice at the General Assembly of the United Nations to bring this to the Security Council. I would like to know

what the minister thinks about those ideas and whether the government is willing to act on them.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** Mr. Speaker, let us be perfectly clear on this government's intention. This issue is of the gravest concern to Canadians. We have indicated, in the strongest terms possible, our position, which is why we called for a ceasefire today and why we called for a durable political peace in that area.

Yes, if need be, we are working with like-minded countries. We will look at all of the options to be able to advance this file. We are very concerned by this file and we will do what we believe is right. However, we are doing it now in this sequence with those people who we are working with, of course, but we are doing it through the diplomatic channels which are the channels that are appropriate at this time.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I witnessed these tragedies with my own eyes and heard of them from my constituents, both Tamil and Sinhalese. I join with the government in condemning the conduct of the Sri Lankan government for its bombing of a hospital and firing into areas it had designated as safe.

We all know that the tigers are listed in this country but they are all but defeated. Now is the time for the Government of Sri Lanka to take responsibility for the safety of its civilian population. The minister's comments would be welcome.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague has indicated full well of course the situation that is there. The Government of Canada, through my colleague, the Minister of International Cooperation, has put forward amounts of money to help the civilian population. This is not the first time that Canada has engaged in this. We were there, we are doing it today and we certainly will be doing it tomorrow.

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House tonight and let Canadians know that this government is doing all it can to help alleviate the suffering of those in Sri Lanka. We are all concerned with the civilian loss of life in Sri Lanka and we welcome the opportunity to address this issue in tonight's emergency debate.

As the House has heard this evening, 52 civilians have lost their lives and paid the ultimate price. Our hearts go out to the families and victims in this conflict.

Over the course of the last 25 years, approximately 70,000 people have lost their lives in this terrible conflict. As a caring nation, we have worked with our partners on the international stage to do what we can. Although the light at the end of the tunnel seems distant, we know that all is not lost and we continue to hope for a lasting peace.

Others may attempt to play partisan politics but this government will do everything in its power to ensure that those in need are taken care of. This government wants to ensure our aid is directed and focused. We want to ensure we are showing compassion for the less fortunate. We will not stand idly by while those in need can be helped by our assistance.

Earlier today, the Minister of International Cooperation announced that Canada will provide \$3 million through the Canadian International Development Agency for life saving humanitarian aid to those people living in the conflict zone. This was a welcomed announcement by the international community.

The minister reinforced Canada's commitment to assist in meeting the immediate needs of the Sri Lankan people as they face this hour of need. Our aid will be delivered by the Red Cross, Oxfam Canada, Médecins sans Frontières, World Vision and CARE Canada. All of these organizations are known to Canadians and have staff on the ground in Sri Lanka.

As our nation turns its eyes on this conflict tonight, I am pleased to inform members that this assistance announced earlier today will go a long way in alleviating the pain and suffering of those on ground in Sri Lanka.

While many nations have addressed the immediate devastation, this is not the first time Canada has come to the aid of those living in Sri Lanka. In 2008, this government provided almost \$3 million in humanitarian assistance, including \$1.5 million for the food aid program through the World Food Programme. As many members of the House know, the World Food Programme has an impeccable record when it comes to helping those suffering in developing countries. The aid we sent last year provided desperately needed food rations for approximately 850,000 people.

Since 1983 and the beginning of the civil war in Sri Lanka, Canada's aid program has focused on addressing the root causes and effects of the war through projects to support good governance and human rights, gender equality and economic well-being. We have highlighted employment for youth and members of disadvantaged groups.

Following the tsunami, CIDA created the Sri Lanka tsunami reconstruction strategy to guide its assistance toward reconstruction efforts. That effort was extremely successful and had a huge impact on the lives of the people in Sri Lanka.

Humanitarian work is never easy but the devastation caused by that natural disaster destroyed roads and made the delivery of assistance even more difficult. For Canadians, it is hard to imagine but close to half the population of Sri Lanka live on less than \$2 a day. Together with the international community, this government is committed to helping to restore these communities and the livelihoods of those who live there.

The House should know that CIDA is working to address the root causes of the conflict and the circumstances that these people find on a daily basis. We continue to work with the Sri Lankan civil society and focus on the economic well-being of the individual.

Our commitment to greater aid effectiveness includes reducing administrative overhead and constantly benchmarking ourselves against international best practices. In fact, the minister's announcement last year that Canada will completely untie aid will go a long way in achieving these goals.

Canadians can be proud of the work that CIDA and this government is doing on the ground in Sri Lanka and, for that matter around, the world.

*S. O. 52*

As Sri Lanka celebrates its independence today, we as Canadians can know that we are truly making a difference. The assistance this government is providing will help feed young children displaced by the conflict. It will help provide water for those who do not have any. It will go toward the elderly and the sick providing much needed medicine.

• (2125)

I know that some of the opposition parties have been critical in the past but I would hope that tonight they would be willing to stand united with the government as we work to help those in need.

The government believes that the primary test for aid effectiveness must be striving for real outcomes, real results and making a real difference.

Canada is committed to making our international assistance focused, effective and accountable. We are monitoring the situation in Sri Lanka very closely. Both the Minister of International Cooperation and the Minister of Foreign Affairs are working to help those a half world away because that is the Canadian way.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I, like many of my colleagues, am honoured to have many Tamil constituents. Like my colleagues, I have heard many heart-wrenching accounts of the suffering of my constituents and their relatives as a consequence of this war.

For weeks and months now, we on this side of the House have implored the government to speak out and to take action. I think the lateness of the action will forgive us thinking this may be too little too late on the part of the government.

I would ask my colleague to prove me wrong. I would ask him to prove the seriousness of the government's efforts at this late hour by answering one very concrete and specific question. How is it that the government proposes to ensure that the aid it is committing to today will actually get to the people who need it? In the face of all the evidence suggesting that this has not been possible for so long, what specific measures will the government take to ensure this new aid commitment will actually reach the people who need it?

• (2130)

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Mr. Speaker, as I outlined in my speech, our aid will be distributed through agencies that have a proven record and that have people on the ground and are successful in getting aid to the people and to the areas that most need the aid.

I am extraordinarily proud of the fact that I come from a riding that has a very large Sri Lankan Tamil Canadian population. I have a riding where two Tamil Canadian business people took a failed business, turned it around and made it success through hard work and determination. Ultimately, they have become great members of this community. They came to me and said, "Paul, please, we have to do something".

I am very proud that the minister announced today that we would be providing essential aid and that the aid would be distributed through agencies, as I mentioned earlier, that have a proven track record in distributing aid. Oxfam and Médecins sans Frontières are agencies that have a record of getting the job done.

## S. O. 52

I am proud of the fact that our government has taken the step to ensure the people of Sri Lanka who are suffering will get the aid they deserve.

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on what my colleague, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt, talked about earlier but I will not get into the data, the stats, etcetera.

Given these unusual circumstances, these difficult circumstances and the great delays in terms of trying to connect loved ones, family members, children, wives, etcetera, would the member consider going to the Minister of Immigration and asking whether we can look at some of the legitimate application files that are in the process and expedite them and, if need be, send in some additional staff for the time being so we can connect these loved ones?

Some time ago, during the Yugoslavian conflict, Canada allowed immigrants to come over and stay with their loved ones, or even on their own, until the dust kind of settled. Most of them went back but some of them stayed here with their loved ones.

This is one way we could help alleviate the problem. Will the member consider doing that?

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Mr. Speaker, tonight's debate is about a very serious conflict happening in Sri Lanka. The galleries are filled with people who have family and who are suffering or are concerned. Tonight is about those people. It is about the hard-working, law-abiding Canadian Tamils who have come to this country over the last 25 years, have built a better life and who have concern with what is happening in their homeland.

I am here on behalf of the people of Oak Ridges—Markham to tell that story, to tell the story of all those people who have come to this country, created a better life and who are pillars of the community.

Since 1983, 250,000 Tamils have come to Canada and have become an incredibly important part of our community. Our community of Oak Ridges—Markham is richer for it. I welcome even more Tamil Canadians. They are an incredible part of our community. They are strong, hard-working people. I want to say to them that the Government of Canada is committed to doing everything in its power to ensure their families, friends and relatives are safe. We will not play politics with this. We will work hard to get the job done, and that is my commitment.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thāi Thi Lac (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this evening to take part in the emergency debate on the situation in Sri Lanka. The current situation there is intolerable. The Bloc Québécois believes that lasting solutions only come about through peaceful means. We feel that the only path to a lasting solution is through peace negotiations.

The Canadian government must increase its close watch on Sri Lanka. At this time, the situation in this country is out of control. Fighting has intensified and is threatening the lives of many civilians. Neither side wants to end the conflict. The United Nations is demanding an immediate ceasefire in order to evacuate civilians who are in danger. The ceasefire must happen immediately, and Canada has responsibilities. This ceasefire would allow the civilian population to be safer within Sri Lanka's borders.

A number of international organizations would be available to help these people, but currently, the situation and the danger in Sri Lanka do not allow these organizations to enter the zones that are so dangerous for so many. We know that these zones have been affected and that there have been thousands of deaths. More than 60,000 people have died and 11,000 have disappeared, all victims of the war that is raging in Sri Lanka right now. It is a human tragedy.

We also know that there are organizations that recruit child soldiers. Political assassinations also occur in Sri Lanka, as do numerous kidnappings. The Conservative government announced in 2006 that it was including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on Canada's list of terrorist organizations, and a large portion of their funds and assets were frozen and seized.

As I was saying a little earlier, since hostilities have resumed, it is estimated that thousands of Tamils have been killed, a large majority of whom were civilians. The UN and the Red Cross estimate that over 250,000 civilians are stuck between the two parties in Tamil territory. Tens of thousands of civilians have been left homeless and have been displaced within Sri Lanka's borders. The vast majority of these civilians are stuck between the Sri Lankan army and the Tamil rebels. They are trying to reach much safer zones, but it is very difficult for them to do so.

According to International Committee of the Red Cross estimates, only half of the population have managed to find refuge in the so-called safe zones. Those secure zones are not nearly big enough to accommodate everyone who needs them. At present, between 10,000 and 15,000 families have moved to an area with no potable water. This is a horrible situation that must be condemned.

The UN Secretary General has expressed his concerns regarding the humanitarian crisis that persists in Sri Lanka. Many civilians are trapped in the combat zones. First and foremost, Canada must add its voice to that of the UN and it must give priority to the humanitarian aid that needs to reach the Sri Lankan civilian population.

● (2135)

The Secretary General is calling on both parties to respect the safe zones, in order to allow aid to reach affected civilians.

According to spokespersons for the coordinators of humanitarian and emergency aid, there are still 250,000 displaced civilians and many of them have been moved 10 to 15 times during the past year. This is absurd; it undermines the security of civilians and it is a situation that must not continue.

Because of these numerous moves, the health conditions of these people are deteriorating as we speak. There are currently no epidemics, but the risk is great. We must combat the epidemics that could arise in the situation we are discussing today.

It is also unusual for humanitarian convoys to take more than one week to reach civilians. This situation is absurd and undermines the security of the people of Sri Lanka.

I will conclude my speech with these words. I join with the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, who earlier explained the situation in Sri Lanka. I will not repeat what he spoke of earlier but I too will say that the situation is very dangerous.

From a humanitarian perspective, Canada absolutely must join with the UN in exerting pressure. We know that the only way for Sri Lankans to be safe is for peace to return. And a ceasefire is the best way for Sri Lankans to live in safe zones and to experience societal peace.

• (2140)

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her comments.

[*English*]

When I was in Sri Lanka some years ago, I travelled to the south in Galle and then later to the north in Jaffna and I did notice a dramatic distinction in the distribution of aid. It was clear to me that Tamil regions were receiving less aid than were Sinhalese. It appeared to me that the government was doing its best to favour one group over another in the post-tsunami period.

It was unfortunate that the previous government in this country did not do more to scrutinize the dollars that went to Sri Lanka during and after the tsunami period. I did implore the government at the time to do so, but there was not the political will in that Liberal government to act. The point I make in all of this is that it is incumbent upon us to ensure that the \$3 million actually reach the people in need, the Tamils who are suffering in those regions.

I wonder if my hon. colleague would have suggestions on how we could better scrutinize the use of those dollars to ensure they reach their recipients and relieve the pain and suffering of these victimized people rather than those dollars being wasted, not being spent at all, or being diverted to unworthy causes.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thאי Thi Lac:** I would like to thank my colleague opposite for his question. The member began by saying that he visited Sri Lanka a number of years ago. The situation has deteriorated dramatically over the past few months, indeed, over the past year. Compared to previous years, things are very different now in Sri Lanka.

To answer the member's question directly, humanitarian aid must be delivered by international organizations with solid reputations. These organizations act in good faith, and they are responsible for on-the-ground supply delivery, even to areas where civilians are safe.

This is not just about getting aid in. The country needs a ceasefire so that these organizations can get to places safely and distribute the international aid that needs to be distributed.

• (2145)

[*English*]

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to address something that was said not by my colleague from the Bloc but by my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier.

*S. O. 52*

He said that he visited Sri Lanka and he noticed that the Tamil area was getting more aid than the Sinhalese area. Either I was not there at the same time he was there, or he was there, probably having smoked some bad dope or probably drunk, but on January 9, 2005, after the tsunami, when I arrived at Point Pedro, the most northern part of Sri Lanka, I saw—and my colleague can visit my website—the army gathering up whatever they could of the remnants of the houses that had been broken up and they were making shacks so they could stay overnight. I have seen a part of the country that the Sinhalese government certainly did not care about.

I am not sure if we visited the same country or if my colleague was there in virtual reality having probably smoked some bad dope.

I would tell him to check his figures again.

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, my colleague from Scarborough—Agincourt has referred to one of our members as smoking dope. I want an apology from him right now.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Speaker, if that is unparliamentary, I certainly apologize, but that is for you to rule.

However, the member for Nepean—Carleton, having made those comments that the south was getting less aid than the north, must have been on the verge of really being drunk.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Mr. Speaker, the member has mistaken me for the member for Ottawa—Vanier, who is a colleague who sits near him, and I do not know if he was disoriented when he did that.

He also mistakenly claims that he heard me say that the Sinhalese population had not received its fair share. In fact, what I said in my comments was exactly the opposite. I said that the Tamil community was clearly not receiving a fair distribution of aid.

I hope that will help clarify this for the hon. member and allow him to compose himself so that we can get on with the debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The member for Scarborough—Agincourt was initially recognized to ask a question of the member who had been speaking previously, so I would like to give the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot the opportunity to comment if she wishes to.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thאי Thi Lac:** Mr. Speaker, I did notice that discussion between two of my colleagues here in the House.

To get back to the question, I would say that I do not want to discuss what things were like in Sri Lanka three or four years ago. Today, we are debating the current situation, and we will not help the Sri Lankan people, their families or their friends who are listening tonight if we debate things that happened more than four years ago.

Tonight, we are here to debate what kind of immediate assistance we should provide, and I would like the debate to stay focused on that. The important thing is figuring out what the government can do now to help the people get out of the terrible and dangerous situation they are in.

I agree that what was done four years ago was awful. But for now, the government must not hide or abdicate its responsibilities because of something that happened over three years ago.

*S. O. 52*

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the Bloc member was able to bring us back to the debate.

My colleague's experience is a unique one and knows what it is like coming from and having a connection with a country that was unstable and at war. I appreciate her perspective.

The \$3 million is fine and we are glad that the government has talked about a ceasefire, but it is how we get there. We have been talking tonight about ways to push for a ceasefire through the Commonwealth and also through the United Nations. I would like to hear her comments.

We heard today about an instance where cluster bombs were being used, something that we abhor. Canada has signed a treaty against their use. It is time the world community did something.

I am wondering what she thinks about our using the United Nations, through the General Assembly, as a forum to push the Security Council to take action for a ceasefire.

• (2150)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thāi Thi Lac:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

What is equally important is that when the government across the way makes a commitment, it must keep that commitment. We know that on a number of occasions since the Conservatives have come to power, Canada has made commitments that were not satisfactory internationally.

In this situation, it is not about demanding things or saying that we will send \$3 million in aid. We must take a firm stance. In addition to demanding a ceasefire, Canada must also be pro-active, not only in terms of monetary aid, but also in the demands that will be made to come to a real ceasefire or improvement for the Sri Lankan people. This measure will be taken seriously by the entire global community if, as I said earlier, we see that when the Conservative government makes commitments, it respects them and stands firm. And so, Canada will have more international credibility. When a commitment is made, we will know that it will be kept. We do not currently have that guarantee with the Conservative government.

[*English*]

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the very important debate that we are engaged in this evening is more than just a remote situation for many of us around this House because we have friends, people that we know well, individuals that we have come to appreciate over the course of the last number of years in the Tamil community and the Sinhalese community as well.

One of my good friends, an individual in the community of Ottawa, has a Tamil father and a Sinhalese mother. He is an individual I have come to appreciate. He has related to me some of the turmoil and some of the difficulties in that situation in Sri Lanka, and so one's heart goes out to that. I think in some sense that matrimonial situation, a Tamil father and a Sinhalese mother, is almost a microcosm of what we would hope to have for that country

in terms of bringing together people and groups of people with different backgrounds.

Canada has clearly stated its view. The minister is on the record tonight stating his view on the way forward with respect to peace in Sri Lanka. We believe that conflict will not be ended on the battlefield but through political accommodation.

This government has repeatedly called on the government of Sri Lanka to show leadership, to create those necessary conditions for peace, and to move forward with the tabling of further details for meaningful power-sharing agreements that will be acceptable to all communities, to all concerned.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs stated, on January 28, "Recent developments underline the urgent need for progress toward a meaningful and durable political solution".

Given Canada's longstanding experience in dealing with pluralism and federal governance, we believe that Canada is well positioned to assist the people of Sri Lanka to arrive at a political solution when the fighting stops. Canada has that experience across a vast stretch of country and our federal system, with provinces, with a certain degree of autonomy. Pluralism is one of Canada's foundational values. It is based on the recognition that our diversity is actually a source of strength and that every individual and community has an equal voice, and can and should use that voice to participate as a full member of society.

Our Prime Minister has noted that throughout our history the accommodation of minorities, be they regional, ethnic, linguistic and religious, has been in fact very critical to Canada's overall health as a country.

Our government considers diversity to be actually one of Canada's greatest strengths. It is our gift to the world, in some sense. We can share that example, that model that we have here can be followed elsewhere in the world. Playing an active role in a political settlement would indeed build on past Canadian initiatives in Sri Lanka.

Indeed, the hon. member for Toronto Centre, in his past work as the chairman of the forum of federations, when he was out of politics for a while, was a key part of Canada's contribution to facilitating power-sharing discussions between the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE in 2002 and 2003.

More recently, in March 2008, some here might be aware, Canada organized a regional conference in Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka, on pluralism in south Asia with a specific focus on minority integration and participation in government and civil society, and that event included participation from the government of Sri Lanka.

So, it is very clear, I think people from all sides of the House would agree, that the only path to a durable and a peaceful solution in Sri Lanka is a political settlement that respects the equality of all Sri Lankans and is acceptable to all communities.

So Canada stands ready to assist, ready to help in any way it can, the parties to arrive at that kind of a solution and to turn the page on this very tragic chapter in Sri Lankan history.

*S. O. 52*

• (2155)

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has finally come to the conclusion that political accommodation or political dialogue is what is needed. This is not something that we have heard before, not for a long time anyway, and I am glad to hear that.

Given the fact that we are at that stage now, I would like to know from the hon. member what the government is doing to get its message through to the government of Sri Lanka, and to the LTTE for that matter, to get that resolved, to have a ceasefire, and then to have a discussion about a different solution.

Has someone consulted with our high commissioner in Sri Lanka? What is she advising Canadians and what is she advising the government in terms of the plan that she might be suggesting, given her knowledge of the area and first-hand knowledge of the situation?

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for instance, intend to visit or travel to Sri Lanka anytime soon? That would be helpful and I would think, given the situation there, that should have happened already. I would hope that would be happening sometime soon. Finally, will the government be consulting Canadians of Sri Lankan origin to involve Canada's diaspora in the discussion in terms of what their role might be in this, and also to seek advice and consult them on their ideas?

I wonder if any or all of these are in the works and if the government intends to act on any of them.

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott:** Mr. Speaker, I am probably starting at the last and working my way up in response to the good questions that the hon. member has put forward, but I do know that the minister and the parliamentary secretary have listened to and heard differing submissions over the course of the last several years, but in particular over the last number of weeks. We have had contacts probably from members across the way, possibly the member herself as well, and I am sure that those conversations will continue on. That input will be more than welcome as it comes to the diaspora in our own country here, as that is fed through members of Parliament back to the foreign affairs minister and the department.

I do know and the minister is on the record this evening already as having stated that at the very highest of levels, through our high commissioner there, especially in these last number of days, our government, as I understand it, is more than ready to continue that process of engagement and doing what we can to offer our assistance and the unique perspective we bring. I believe that those high level discussions at all levels, through the international forums as well, will take place in the days ahead, hopefully to get the kind of result that members on all sides of the House and all parties desire for that very tragic situation in Sri Lanka.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with everything the government is putting forward, everything it is saying it is going to do and the aid it is going to send, if the government of Sri Lanka does not cooperate and move in a positive fashion, would my colleague ask his colleague, the parliamentary secretary who is sitting beside him, or even the minister and the caucus, to consider setting a precedent by recalling our high commissioner so that other countries can follow suit?

That would be a clear message to Sri Lanka, as it was to South Africa under a Conservative government back in 1992. The world is certainly not going to take this anymore. When we started doing this, the government of South Africa, at that time, moved. I am just wondering if the government would find it in its heart that we should also move in the same fashion, or are these just words of platitude that we are using?

• (2200)

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott:** Mr. Speaker, the minister has been very clear on the record this evening, as have other speeches been that were given, indicating very clearly, and from my personal conversations I would know that they are carrying on those discussions, that our foreign affairs minister and our parliamentary secretary want to keep all those channels open with both parties in order to be most helpful and constructive in this particular serious stage of things. It is rather crucial that they be talking to all the players over there and be engaging with them, particularly in this terrible conflict that has gone on far too long.

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the members for Etobicoke North, Don Valley West and Etobicoke Centre.

I have the opportunity to participate in this emergency debate on the unfortunate circumstances in Sri Lanka.

Earlier today I welcomed here in Ottawa a group of students from Precious Blood school in my riding. They arrived while the people were out there demonstrating, and I use that word in a positive way, to express their concern and their message.

The students asked me what was going on outside. I explained to them that a group from across Canada was here to demonstrate with respect to what is happening in their former homeland of Sri Lanka, and I explained a bit of the circumstances.

They were surprisingly attentive. They wanted to know and hear. In the mosaic, the representation of students before me, I think there had to be some students from that community as well. I think they were pleased that I was leaving the reception to go and add my voice to the voices of the many colleagues who were out there earlier today.

Throughout this debate, we have heard a historical perspective of what has happened in decades past, the thousands of innocent lives that have been lost, from parliamentarians to young boys and girls, young men and women, seniors and so on. We have heard about a society that is not able to progress.

The humanitarian tragedy that is unfolding today is unfortunate. I think we could go so far as to use the word that is not permitted to be used: genocide, or ethnic cleansing.

We are all aware that organizations and groups such as the European community, the U.K., Norway, Switzerland, the United States and Canada have expressed their concern for what is happening. It is odd that although all these prominent, powerful nations have made these statements, they are going nowhere.

*S. O. 52*

It prompted me to go back to a quote of what was said. Earlier they talked about UN declarations. I am going to quote, for the record, what Javier Solana said here in this honourable House, when we had a joint session with the House of Commons and the Senate. He was then the NATO Secretary-General. He said, "The solution to the problem is not in signing papers; it is in compliance".

The frustration is that bodies such as the UN, whose credibility I believe is on the line today, can sit around those wonderful chambers and bring forth resolutions. Then, regarding these conflicts, wherever they are unfolding—today it is Sri Lanka—people say that there was a resolution, but why is it not being complied with and not being carried out? As a result, the conflict escalates.

We need a way to enforce these resolutions and have these nations comply with the resolutions through measures mentioned earlier by several colleagues, as was done by the Mulroney government and as was mentioned earlier by the member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

I have had the Canadian Tamil Congress visit me in my office. We talked about how we could approach this issue. We talked about petitions. Petitions have been presented and are waiting for accreditation so that we can present them to express their views.

However, an interesting thing came up earlier, and I ask the member for Oak Ridges—Markham to take this to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism or even their whole caucus. At a time of great difficulty like this, when loved ones are being killed, when they are being thrown out of their homes, villages and towns and have nowhere to go, maybe there could be an application for them to come and move over with their loved ones.

I remember that during the Yugoslavian conflict, we here in Canada opened our doors and allowed many thousands of people to come over temporarily to get out of that conflict. They stayed with their relatives. Some of them stayed in Canada and some of them went back.

• (2205)

We talk about resolutions, but what a unique opportunity it would be if the government side today could ask our immigration officers over there to look at all the applications so that we could reunite them, or unite them, with their families here in Canada. It is one suggestion for a unique opportunity to alleviate some of the pain.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about reunification of families and moving families faster.

I want to ask my colleague a question. After the tsunami, a protocol was set by the Liberal government so that that family-class applications, those who had passed medical and police clearance, were to be fast-tracked and brought to Canada. I remember being in Colombo at the time when the Prime Minister visited, and there were 13 extra officers there to expedite the cases of the families. Right now it is quite the opposite: if a person is a Tamil, it takes three years.

I wonder if my colleague would agree me and if he would say a little more about how we could put more personnel there in order to move these files and get the people out of the war zone to be with their loved ones in Canada.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and neighbour, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

I think it is very important and, as I said, it did not come to me just in listening to the debate. We are dealing with a multi-faceted problem. Yes, it is ceasefire. Yes, it is human rights. Yes, it is getting medical supplies to people, as well as food and clean water. It is everything.

Along with that, for a moment we have a unique opportunity for the government and the country. I do not know how much staff would be required, but let us assume it is 10. Let us send 10 people over right now from our department, people who can look at these files, advance them as quickly as possible and get these family members here if there is already an application. I am referring to applications that are already in the pipeline. That would be a very positive signal to the communities here in our country.

I have had the opportunity and the honour, over the past 15 years that I have been elected, to meet a good number of members in the community. I have seen the young ones grow from 10-year-old cubs to university students today. One example is my friend Logan Kanapathi, who is a city councillor today in Markham. He came here as a refugee. Today he is a very successful businessman and a city councillor. His wife is a doctor, offering services to all Canadians.

This community has added to the wonderful mosaic that we call Canada. Maybe we could do that by bringing their loved ones over here as quickly as we can.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, over 50 years ago, an outstanding and remarkable Canadian, Lester Pearson, was honoured with the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize for his perseverance, success, vision and wisdom in creating a peacekeeping mission and the blueprint for the United Nation's now well recognized role in peacekeeping and peace building. Pearson was a tough advocate and firmly believed that Canada had a responsibility to actively participate in any international activity to end ongoing conflict.

Throughout his career, Pearson demonstrated two characteristics: undeviating stability and dynamic responsiveness. Because of these two characteristics, Pearson was an effective supporter for peaceful resolutions to several major international crises, from the Korean War to the Cyprus crisis, and Canada emerged with distinction.

Civil war has raged in Sri Lanka for 37 years and throughout the period both sides have been accused of serious human rights violation. I absolutely and strongly believe that terrorism is unacceptable no matter who commits it, no matter what the reason.

However, now is the time for dynamic responsiveness. A major humanitarian crisis is unfolding in northern Sri Lanka, with 250,000 unprotected civilians trapped in the crossfire between government troops and rebel forces.



The United Nations reports that several hundred civilians have been killed since the beginning of the year and last week more than 300 patients and staff were forced to flee a hospital in the Tamil area after it came under shelling. For over a week, my constituency office and my riding office have been inundated by members of the Canadian Tamil community. I have held grown men in my arms while they sobbed, listened to young women recount tales of rape and prayed with families.

My community writes:

“My aunt's uncle is trapped inside the war zone; we haven't heard from them for months...we are devastated; please stop this genocide....I cry every night at the thought of the number of children that die, and get raped...why won't the international community listen to our children...I cannot go home because I am unable to handle how my mother cries every night because she hasn't heard from her family in weeks....I have no words to make her feel better...I have three uncles and their families in Sri Lanka and we have lost all communication with them”.

When people's lives are threatened, we have a moral obligation to alleviate their suffering. I cannot imagine the terror of not knowing where one of my family members might be, let alone 100 members as one of my community members reported, or the tragic confirmation of their deaths. I know how Canada and our whole country grieves when one person goes missing and how the international community mourns when a child goes missing. Where is the mourning when a hospital is bombed and children killed?

Parliamentarians must take, as Pearson did through history, a leadership role in the intensifying crisis. We must push for a humanitarian ceasefire and for independent monitors to ensure it is respected. We must send more humanitarian aid and ensure that it reaches those who need it most. We must ensure the protection of life.

• (2210)

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and an honour to be here tonight. I come with a heavy heart. I am very aware of the gallery being filled tonight. I am aware that people have come here with hopes and dreams, with pain and with challenges, and I am very pleased to see them.

I am also very keenly aware there are members from my riding of Don Valley West. I thank them for their fierce patience and their persistence and the honour that they have brought to this place today.

They have brought their stories with them as well, stories of brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, cousins, relatives who have become displaced, become lost or have been killed. They are asking for us, as parliamentarians in Canada, to do the right thing, to tell their stories again and again so they may be heard so the world may change.

This conflict has gone on for over three decades and over 70,000 people, mostly Tamils, have been killed. And so we take this time in remembrance of them and also with the commitment to do something different about life.

As Canadians, we pride ourselves on standing for justice in the world. We pride ourselves on speaking when others stay silent. Most

of all, we pride ourselves for fighting for the ability to right the wrongs that we see in the worldwide community.

We have a noble tradition, as the member for Etobicoke North said, in our world to bring about peace and to talk about peace. That reputation is sorely at risk if the Conservative government fails to stand up for our sisters and brothers half a globe away.

The Canadian government has an obligation to the global community, to the Tamil citizens, to all citizens of Sri Lanka and to Tamils living in Canada. They number over 200,000 and they have the right to speak up and be heard in our country, as they fully participate as Canadian citizens here.

While it is thousands of kilometres away from where we gather tonight, a genocide is occurring and the global community must take action. Most important, our Conservative government, which has been silent far too long, has to take further steps than even those announced today.

Up until today, there have been no calls for mediation, no calls for humanitarian assistance and, most important, no calls for a cease fire or a way out of this conflict. Every day the toll of this conflict is rising and its effect on future generations is flying out of control. Tens of thousands are dead, towns and villages have been destroyed, hundreds of thousands of people have been made homeless in this long conflict. Despite these ongoing tragedies, the crisis remains largely invisible to the western world. The press gallery is not full tonight. We will have an ongoing responsibility to take this message to the world and we on this side of the House are committed to doing that, not only tonight, not only yesterday but tomorrow and the day after and the day after.

All sides of this conflict have used violence and have experienced suffering. I will never condone the use of child soldiers or suicide bombings and I know that both forces have used these instruments. It is inexcusable, and we do not support them nor condone them. However, this growing crisis has disproportionately affected the minority Tamil population in the northern and northeastern parts of the island. Constant shelling of civilian areas, disappearance of community leaders, journalists killed and lost, long-term detentions without trials, incidents of torture and the increased deprivation of the country to the government's hindrance of food aid, water and medicine delivery happen day after day.

Our Canadian government has announced \$3 million in aid and it is simply not enough. Nor is there any possibility that we can have a guarantee that it will be delivered. The agencies listed by the ministers tonight simply are not in the area. They are not, as the ministers say, on the ground. They are not able to deliver the aid.

*S. O. 52*

The government needs to call for a UN envoy to be a witness for peace, a witness for justice and a witness for ongoing settlement to the solution. It is a half measure at best that the government has done. We are glad that it is acting. It needs to act further. We on this side of the House will have a concerted effort, we will stand with our friends, we will continually remind them of our responsibility and we will continue to keep them in our prayers.

• (2215)

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I address not only our fellow parliamentarians in the House of Commons. I wish to address our fellow Canadians of Tamil descent, who gathered on the Hill here today, and in fact, Tamil Canadians from across our great country who are watching this historic emergency debate.

I feel tremendous empathy for our Tamil Canadian brothers and sisters. Like many of them, I am the child of political refugees to this country. Many of my parents' and grandparents' family members and loved ones were killed, often in the most brutal of ways, in their struggle for a free and independent Ukraine.

Freedom and independence are sought when continuing injustices take place. This has been the historic struggle of many peoples, many nations. In the past century, tens of millions of lives have been lost to ethnic intolerances, ethnic hatreds, ethnic cleansings and genocides, yet humanity seems not to learn from these tragic lessons.

For decades now, Tamils in Sri Lanka have struggled with intolerance and injustice. In the resulting frustrating and horrific violence, tens of thousands of innocent Tamils, as well as Sinhalese and Muslims, have been killed. How many of the anguished Tamil-Canadians who gathered here today before the Peace Tower have lost loved ones and friends?

Just over a year ago, along with many Tamil Canadians, we mourned the assassination and loss of Thamilselvan. Thamilselvan embodied Tamil aspirations. He was a soldier who became a peace negotiator. Despite having borne witness to decades of horror, he laid down his gun in the search for peace. The targeted assassination of a peace negotiator by the Sri Lankan government began a well planned out descent into the horrors of war.

At the time, I condemned the assassination and stated the following at the November 5, 2007, memorial for Thamilselvan:

Sri Lanka stands at the edge of a precipice, with a potential to descend into a new hell. How many thousands more to be victimized to satiate the hatred in people's souls? How many more women and men, brothers and sisters, children, are to be sacrificed on the altar of war?

These were the words of warning I spoke over a year ago, yet the Conservative government was deaf to these warnings, deaf to the pleadings and anguish of thousands of Tamil Canadians. A year ago, Tamil Sri Lankan infants, children, men and women were on the precipice. In these last weeks they have been pushed off the ledge and find themselves in the midst of the horror, in the midst of the hell of war.

Meanwhile, our Prime Minister has been silent for over a year, and I note he has not been here for the debates this evening. Has he even taken the time to look at the—

• (2220)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please. The member is an experienced parliamentarian and he knows that it is inappropriate to refer to members who are or are not here.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij:** Mr. Speaker, has he even taken the time to look at the pictures of the dead and dying civilians?

Thousands of our Canadian brothers and sisters of Tamil ancestry, as well as all Canadians who believe in Canada's legacy of peacekeeping and patient diplomacy, call on our Prime Minister to help re-establish an international ceasefire, to actively engage our diplomats in Sri Lanka, the Commonwealth and the UN to restart peace negotiations, to dedicate substantive resources and not a symbolic \$3 million, or the equivalent of \$10 for each of the 300,000 herded, internally displaced refugees, so as to provide desperately needed medical and humanitarian aid.

I once again turn to our fellow Tamil Canadian brothers and sisters. Many of them have lost family members and loved ones. In their honour, let us commit ourselves to putting an end to the anguished cries that have emanated from the island of Sri Lanka for decades and imagine instead what today seems impossible, an island paradise of smiling peoples, of smiling children.

Canada can, Canada must play a role in bringing an end to the horrors of this war. Canada can, Canada must be at the forefront in bringing about peace.

*[Member spoke in Tamil]*

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have talked among ourselves, we have heard from our constituents all this week and more people want voice their concerns and speak to us.

I, for one, would love to hear from them. They can call the lobby phone at 613-996-7441. I would love to hear from them and make them part of this debate for the next hour and a half.

I am sure my colleague will want me to repeat this number, which is 613-996-7441. They can call us and tell us what they think. The can speak to the ministers, speak to the members of Parliament and tell us what they think we should do.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member not just for his intervention, but for his continuous work for many years on this file.

I, once again, would like to encourage all our colleagues on the government benches to take the time to speak with their constituents, to speak with the thousands of Tamil Canadians who they represent so they can understand the anguish, the horror of what is taking place in Sri Lanka.

I am sure once they speak with Tamil Canadians about the current situation, they will find it within their hearts to speak with the Prime Minister, with their colleagues, to convince him that we must do more, that we must engage our diplomats and have them engage their colleagues in the Commonwealth, at the UN and that we must do more than the \$3 million announced today.

• (2225)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker,

*[Member spoke in Tamil]*

[English]

I wanted to say that to all those Tamil Canadians, the largest diaspora in the world. They are watching us tonight on television. They are watching CPAC and they are present here in the gallery.

For those Tamil Canadians, this is not some sort of academic debate. This is not a place where words are going to heal the wounds that exist. For Tamil Canadians, who have relatives, family and friends who are currently in a situation that is deplorable in its magnitude and frightening in the intensity of its impact on individuals, this is not part of an academic debate but part of a real tragedy that is unfolding right now as we speak.

As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to do everything in our power to help change that situation so that those loved ones, those people living in northern Sri Lanka are given the relief that they so richly deserve and warrant.

It is for those reasons that the member for Toronto—Danforth, the leader of the New Democratic Party, stood in the House a few hours ago to request that the Speaker of the House of Commons hold this emergency debate. It is for that reason that the New Democratic Party caucus has been pressing the government to take action.

Today there was an announcement, a first step, perhaps a down payment, of \$3 million in humanitarian relief, but it is a long way from what is needed now. For Canada to play an important role to bring relief to those who are suffering in northern Sri Lanka, Canada must act strongly and must act with real resources to bring about the ceasefire and peace in northern Sri Lanka, a respect for human rights. And also to bring about a much larger infusion of much-needed resources from Canada to immediately help those who are starving, those who are hungry, and those who are suffering in northern Sri Lanka.

Last week the NDP brought forward Motion No. 273 in the House, which we believe provided important instruction to the government, so that the government could take immediate action. For the record, the motion states:

*[Translation]*

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should immediately use all diplomatic means to put pressure on the government of Sri Lanka and its military to respect the human rights of the civilian Tamil population, by: (a) ceasing all violence against Tamil civilians, including any detention of civilians in military-camps, extrajudicial killings, and disappearances; (b) immediately lifting the September 2008 ban on United Nations (UN) and international humanitarian organizations from operating in the northern region of the country, in addition to ensuring that these organizations are free from government interference so they may independently supervise both parties of the conflict and respond to the humanitarian crisis; (c) halting all government policies and actions aimed against the Tamil minority of Sri Lanka; and (d) supporting the peace process and efforts of the UN that will invest in infrastructure, education and provide significant support for the Tamil population of Sri Lanka.

We put forward this motion because we felt it was important that the government take action. This is not an academic debate we are holding this evening, but an emergency debate. In fact, if further

*S. O. 52*

measures are not taken in the near future, the situation will not change for the Tamil people in northern Sri Lanka, who are suffering enormously.

• (2230)

That is why we put forward the motion. That is why we requested an emergency debate today, to change things. Canada is home to the largest Tamil diaspora in the world. There are 300,000 Canadians of Tamil origin. They make an enormous contribution to our country. Given this role Canada plays, it is important that our government take strong, decisive action.

*[English]*

The Tamil population has enriched all of Canada from coast to coast to coast. As a representative for Burnaby—New Westminster, I speak for the incredible enrichment we have received from new Canadians of Tamil origin who have come to live in my riding. It is one of the most diverse populations in the entire country. The Tamil population, the presence of Tamil centres of faith, and the dynamic businesses that have been founded by Tamil Canadians in my riding have enriched the cities of Burnaby and New Westminster enormously. I see the contribution that Tamil Canadians make to our country every day.

We have a responsibility to ensure that our fellow Canadians of Tamil origin feel that our country is responding to this humanitarian crisis with the decisiveness and force that it merits. I would like to read into the record for those who may feel that this crisis is taking place on the other side of the planet and is therefore something that Canadians should not be concerned about. Canadians watching tonight may feel that somehow it does not touch them, but I believe that as more Canadians become aware of the suffering we are seeing in northern Sri Lanka, they will be pressing this Parliament and this government to take decisive action.

I would like to begin by reading from an article by Stephanie Nolan that talks about the situation. This was only a few days ago in northern Sri Lanka. Stephanie Nolan wrote the article under the headline, "How can people say this is peace? Eastern Sri Lanka chafes under the oppressive rule of a government that says it is committed to democracy". She wrote:

In the local office of Sri Lanka's national Human Rights Commission here in this eastern seaside town, they have statistics: Ninety-eight people were abducted in this area last year, snatched off the streets by the infamous white vans with no licence plates that are used by government security agencies. Eighty-five other Tamils simply disappeared. At the commission they have case files and police reports.

But none of the staff will talk about them. "We are helpless," one staff member said apologetically, ushering a visiting journalist out of the office. "We would like to help the people but we have to be afraid for our lives, too".

And who do they fear at this government office? The government.

Eastern Sri Lanka offers insight into what the north of the country - the area that until weeks ago was held by the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam - will soon look like. The Tigers have lost all but a tiny portion of their territory to a punishing air and ground assault by government forces, launched by a president determined to end the country's 25-year-old civil war to win elections in April.

This article speaks to what has been a systematic approach by the government, referred to in Stephanie Nolan's following article, where she says:

Tamils and other opponents of the government who look around the country today will probably take little comfort in the promise of a just peace.

## S. O. 52

The east—which came under government control in 2006, after the No. 2 Tiger leader split off with several thousand fighters and allied with Colombo—remains heavily militarized and is actively being “Sinhalized”, with areas losing their Tamil names and Hindu shrines being converted to Buddhist worship sites.

Meanwhile, two weeks ago in the capital, the country's leading anti-corruption journalist was assassinated by gunmen on motorbikes, a crime the government limply condemned. International observers put the blame squarely on state intelligence agencies.

From Stephanie Nolan's articles, we have seen what it is like in the so-called peaceful areas of Sri Lanka, where there is active assimilation being attempted against the Tamil minority.

I would like to continue by referring to a *New York Times* article from yesterday that talks about what the situation is like in the war zone. The headline is “Wounded Flee Shelling Of a Hospital In Sri Lanka”, and it was written by Somini Sengupta.

• (2235)

The article begins:

The wounded had poured into the hospital over the last several weeks, some ferried on tractors, others on the backs of motorcycles, international aid workers said, as the war between the Sri Lankan military and the ethnic Tamil rebels moved farther and farther into a small corner of Sri Lanka's northeastern coast.

Then the hospital, in the rebel-held village of Puthukkudiyiruppu, became a target. Artillery attacks, which began on Sunday and hit the pediatric ward and other parts of the hospital, continued through Tuesday. One shell landed in the surgery ward on Tuesday afternoon, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which helps run the hospital. Another shell came 70 minutes later.

When it was clear that even the hospital was not safe, the wounded began to flee. It was not known where they went. Before Tuesday's attack, at least 12 had been killed inside the hospital, the Red Cross said. Final casualty figures were not available.

Just from these three articles, we can see not only the tragedy of the war zone, the indiscriminate shelling. We can see and we have heard many reports of abductions and disappearances in the non-war zones held by the Sri Lankan military. We have heard and we have seen from human rights organizations, even though they are reporting from abroad because essentially they have been forced out of areas where they should be monitoring human rights violations, that essentially for much of the ethnic Tamil population, their population of women and children have been locked up in prison.

What we see from these articles and from other human rights reports is a systematic campaign. In areas where there is military action, we see indiscriminate shelling of hospitals. In areas that have been essentially brought to peace, we see what Stephanie Nolan referred to as forced assimilation.

Now I would like to move to Human Rights Watch and its report: “Besieged, Displaced, and Detained” which talks more about the situation in areas of Sri Lanka. It states:

Tamil civilians seeking to flee fighting in Sri Lanka's north during the 25-year-long civil war have long been subject to arbitrary detention in camps and other restrictions on their freedom of movement. Still, most could hope to stay with relatives or host families in other parts of Sri Lanka. The government's March 2008 decision to establish new camps seems intended to eliminate that possibility entirely. Since then, all Tamils—including whole families—fleeing the Vanni have been detained on the apparent assumption that they are a security threat. No attempt is made by Sri Lankan security forces to distinguish between persons with suspected LTTE links and ordinary civilians. The only exceptions appear to be for some local humanitarian workers and clergy, who have been able to enter and exit the Vanni.

We could literally spend hours reading into the record Amnesty International reports, Red Cross reports, Human Rights Watch reports. Systematically, we are building a body of evidence that undeniably points to the fact that we are looking at forced assimilation and human rights violations on a widespread basis against Tamil civilians in northern Sri Lanka and in eastern Sri Lanka. That is why it is incumbent on the government to act. The report continues:

Despite repeated assurances from Sri Lankan authorities since April 2008 that many of the displaced persons detained in the two camps, particularly those originally from Trincomalee and Vavuniya districts, would be permitted to leave, as of December 15, 2008, only 65 persons had been released. On October 23, two persons from Kilinochchi district detained in Kalimodдай were allowed to move out of the camp to a host family in Vavuniya; on October 24, 25 persons, including three families who had been detained after returning from India, were released from Kalimodдай and Sirunkandal camps and returned to their home area of Trincomalee.

The civilians in the two camps are being held against their will. The camps are completely fenced, and are closely guarded by Sri Lankan navy and army personnel, and the police. The security forces have refused to allow the civilians to leave the camps—except under tight restrictions described below—and integrate into local communities or live with host families.

• (2240)

The report continues:

Available information indicates that the restrictions on movement for displaced persons in the camps are increasingly becoming stricter, particularly for single men. After security incidents such as escape or suicide attempts, the security forces have prohibited young men from leaving the camp altogether for extended periods.

After a young man went missing from Kalimodдай in October—it remains unclear whether he escaped or was abducted—virtually no single detainees were allowed to leave the camp under any circumstances, a restriction still in place at the time of finalization of this report...

The Sri Lankan security forces claim that 13 camp residents have “escaped,” but detainees told humanitarian workers the men may have been abducted or “disappeared.”

It continues:

Government hostility toward the humanitarian community

The almost immediate withdrawal of the UN and NGOs from the Vanni following the order of the defense secretary remains controversial. One factor that likely weighed heavily on the humanitarian organizations was the August 2006 execution-style slayings of 17 Sri Lankan aid workers working for Action Contre la Faim (ACF), a Paris-based humanitarian organization, in the eastern town of Mutur following the withdrawal of LTTE forces.

There are strong indications, Human Rights Watch indicates, of the involvement of government security forces in the killing. An inquiry by the attorney general and in a slow moving investigation into the killings, established soon after the killings, to examine this and other serious cases, have faced government interference and obstruction. To date no one has been held accountable for the killings.

The reports, the articles, the eye witnesses, all of these point to a systematic campaign. That is why Canada must speak up and why Canada needs to provide a lot more than the \$3 million, basically at \$10 a head for the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons in northern Sri Lanka; \$3 million to deal with a humanitarian crisis of that magnitude, to deal with the human rights abuses of that order and to deal with a systematic campaign against the whole population. Three million dollars is simply not sufficient.

One may consider it insulting. I consider it a very small down payment on what is a humanitarian crisis to which Canada must respond.

The recommendations the Human Rights Watch brought forward were also contained, as I mentioned earlier, in the NDP motion brought forward last week, but also in our letters and correspondence to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The recommendations from Human Rights Watch are very explicit. To the government of Sri Lanka it has recommended and pushed that the order banning humanitarian agencies must be stopped, that the arbitrary and indefinite detention of civilians must be stopped, that security forces must respect human rights, that NGOs must be able to perform their work without government interference, that independent observers must be permitted in this zone and that donor governments must work together to monitor human rights in northern Sri Lanka.

We are not talking about an academic debate. We are talking about a crisis. Real people are dying and real people are suffering. Canada must respond in a very strong and forceful way to ensure the government respects human rights and to ensure that our resources go in a meaningful way to address the suffering in northern Sri Lanka.

• (2245)

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the members for Brampton West and Scarborough—Rouge River.

I rise in this chamber a little reluctantly because I know there are expectant eyes on us today. What I wanted to stay here for and hear the debate was mainly to respond to them and to some of the faces I saw campaigning and knocking on doors in my riding and what happened from time to time when someone would say that I had to do something about what was going on in Sri Lanka. Someone would explain some part of something that was very difficult to comprehend in terms of what was happening to a member of an immediate family.

We stand in this chamber saying that we are having an emergency debate and I cannot imagine what the people who have experienced what has been going on Sri Lanka for months or years in terms of the most recent conflict but for years in terms of the turmoil must be thinking it takes to define an emergency for the hon. members of the House and how sincere this debate is tonight in that respect.

The test for us certainly has to be that an emergency debate covers an emergency that touches Canadian principles of when we should start to be very concerned. I do not have the knowledge that some of the other people do of the situation on the ground but I can tell the House that Canadian principles would say that we should have had an emergency debate long before tonight.

What I say to that is not to celebrate some kind of superiority in contrast to that of the government but to reflect to the people whose eyes are on us tonight how much work we need to do to be better as Canadians.

We used to have a reflex to be among the first people to understand when there was a meaningful intervention to be made. It was made by people in this chamber, some of whom still have seats here, with much more urgency and much more effectiveness, working with bands of nations and not for show, not to make people feel comfortable that their voices were finally reflected here, but actually to get something done.

*S. O. 52*

I say to people tonight that we need to do better. We need to have some sense of the good fortune that we have here. I say to some of the eyes that are upon us, it is not reasonable to expect that this chamber, the parties in it and the members in it, can take sides per se. Nor can we say to the considerable Tamil community in Canada that we want anyone here to take sides in the sense of being part of conflicts. Conflicts cannot come to Canada.

However, what can come here and what every citizen is entitled to with the same respect as any other, no matter when they joined our population, is a sharpened sense on the part of Canada of understanding where those needs are.

We have the population to inform us, to make us sophisticated, to make us capable of intervening and understanding far ahead of most of the nations on earth and we failed that test. It is right for the members of that community, on that basis as Canadian citizens, to come here looking for redress, looking for some real answers in what is going forward, looking for, yes, as people have said, more by way of aid but hopefully something different than that.

For those people who might be observing this debate and wondering what this has to do with conditions in Canada, I can assure them that we would not be having this debate here tonight if things did not happen in terms of 9/11, in terms of the reactions of our country to the threat and real fear that people started to feel. What that did was change some of the terms under which we injected ourselves into international dialogue and debate. It made us, without judgment of the people opposite, more conservative.

We made a mistake. We lost touch with our Canadian citizenry. We had a character test and we did not do well because we took a gross generality that somehow every liberation group, everybody rising up, we should stand back and watch them be attacked with military force.

A previous generation of Canadians thought differently. Lester Pearson thought differently. Other Canadians increasingly found ways to be imaginative, to be creative and to find solutions. Some Canadians with seats in this House have tried that. We need to try more. We need to be in dialogue with Canadians. They need to understand our principles of peace, of intervention, of creativity and of working multilaterally that can be put to work to find solutions.

• (2250)

The people whose eyes are on us tonight should expect us not just to finish this debate but to move forward with some kind of new purpose and intention, with some of the horror and some of the difficulty people have experienced translated into something better in terms of the exercise of Canadian principles. They have a right to expect that. I look forward to contributing.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it seems incomprehensible that up until this point the Prime Minister has, as of yet, not called in the high commissioner for Sri Lanka to explain to him, in the sternest language, that what is taking place is unacceptable. It seems incomprehensible that the Minister of Foreign Affairs has not called his counterparts in the Commonwealth. It is incomprehensible that the Prime Minister has not instructed his diplomats at the UN to raise this issue.

*S. O. 52*

Does the hon. member have any explanation as to why the government continues to be silent on this file?

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy:** Mr. Speaker, the easy answer is that there is no real good explanation.

However, I think we should all reflect a little bit. If we want a better standard for the House, why was it easy for the government not to respond on April 23 of last year when the member for Toronto Centre stood up in the House and said that we had an incipient emergency. How is that possible?

It is possible to arm's-length ourselves, not just that government and that Prime Minister but ourselves from a humanitarian crisis by some of the excuses we have been using. We just need to invoke the word "terrorism" and it gives us a shield, and it is wrong. It is a failure on our part.

I invite members opposite, as we have invited them on economic conditions and other things, to adopt a Canadian standard. It is not an exercise in our personal ideologies. It is an exercise in developing where Canada is going to go. By putting that shield around it we make it harder to actually reckon with those realities and we have become less Canadian as a result.

**Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have had a good debate tonight in this emergency debate. I have a couple of things that I want to add to it.

I think there has been a kind of a victory here today in Ottawa. A lot of Canadians over the last few days have been demonstrating publicly in Canada to bring attention to this issue of civilians at risk in Sri Lanka. They have done it peacefully. Today they have come to Ottawa in large numbers and brought that issue to their Parliament and I would have to say they have successfully done that. Thanks to the Speaker and the seven members of Parliament who asked for the emergency debate today, that issue was actually put on the floor of the House.

I think we will succeed here as Canadians in shining a light on this very serious situation in Sri Lanka. The government of Sri Lanka may not like it. It may think that we are meddling, but this is a very serious human rights issue and I think we have every right, representing Canadians, to shine a light on the death, destruction and displacement now taking place in Sri Lanka as the government of Sri Lanka pursues its, arguably, legitimate military objectives, but not in a way that is consistent with our view of human rights.

I myself have had the opportunity to visit Sri Lanka, as have other members in the House. We are grateful for that. It is a beautiful place, scarred by this war.

I sent a letter on this issue to the high commissioner for Sri Lanka last November. I have not had a reply yet. I am sure in the fullness of time, he will grace us with a reply.

I held a forum in my riding less than a year ago involving Sri Lankan Canadians, those of Tamil origin, Sinhalese origin and the other minorities. It was a successful forum in which all those Canadians participated and discussed frankly these issues in Sri Lanka.

The second thing I want to say is regarding the battle that is going on there now, the military conflict. It might end the current phase of

whatever is happening now, and it might even end the war, but it will not end the struggle in Sri Lanka for fairness, for equal rights and for respect for the minorities there. This struggle will always be there until it is achieved by the people together. Whether or not the violence ends now, sooner or later that sad but beautiful island must address the pressing issues of reconstruction, reconciliation and political accommodation. These are things that must happen in Sri Lanka. Whether one more drop of blood is shed there or not, or if more or less blood is shed, those goals and objectives, that reconciliation, must happen. It is not worth more bloodshed and suffering. Right now we look at the civilians there and we see the suffering. More bloodshed will not change any of that. It will not get us to those goals.

The debate in this House tonight has clearly shone a light on this very dire humanitarian situation. We have successfully done it as Canadians. We here in the House, if I take the sense of all of the speeches and sentiments expressed here tonight, are calling upon the government of Sri Lanka to accept and agree to engineer a ceasefire to protect innocent civilians and to begin the work of building an equitable peace in Sri Lanka.

• (2255)

**Mr. Andrew Kania (Brampton West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment all of my hon. colleagues from all parties who took the time to be here to show their commitment to this issue.

What really matters is finding a permanent solution. To get there, we have to understand the history of this conflict. It started principally because the minority in that country were not being treated fairly. They were not allowed to attend universities on the same basis. Their language was being restricted. They were told what religion was the official religion of the country. These are things that obviously were unacceptable, that Canadians would not accept, and that they should not have to accept.

Political solutions were tried, but they failed and eventually violence came to be. That was wrong. That was the practical result of grievances not being addressed. Once again, that was wrong.

If the grievances are not addressed on a permanent basis now, history could repeat itself. Even if this conflict ends and the Tamils of the north are defeated, it does not mean the conflict will end. It could be extended. There could be another 37 years of another type of conflict, even on a more limited basis. We need a permanent solution. How do we get there?

I am happy that the government brought forward its position today. It should have happened a long time ago. It could have anticipated this problem back in 2008 when the government essentially said that the ceasefire was over. Something should have been done at that point. We should have sent somebody in, negotiated and stopped it when it first started. We should have done something at that stage. It did not happen. It is better late than never, but it is very late.

In terms of helping the people now, we have to ensure that the \$3 million that is being committed actually reaches the people. Everybody on all sides of the House has heard the stories about aid that has been stopped either by the government or by the Tamil Tigers. It does not matter who did it. All that matters at this stage is that the money gets through to help the people.

Essentially there is a group of people, roughly the same size as the population of Hamilton, who are in a war zone and are being fired on. We need to help them. Money is only part of it. We need to get a Canadian representative, perhaps the Canadian high commissioner, but it does not even matter who, to stop it, to help negotiate and try to achieve something constructive.

If that does not happen, the next step is to put increased pressure on them. Why not, even for a short period of time, recall the Canadian high commissioner? We must make a statement that does something to pressure other countries of the world and show that Canada has taken a stand. There could be trade sanctions. We must do something to let them know that it is not just words. Respectfully, this statement today unto itself is just words. We need to do more.

The point behind all of this is that we must look for a constructive permanent solution. I would like the government to develop immediately a policy of financial assistance and to do more to try to end the conflict, but thereafter there should be a leadership role, as we used to have as peacekeepers, in order to build a permanent solution there, such as a political structure that treats the minority fairly so that we end the conflict finally, not just on a short-term temporary measure.

• (2300)

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member might comment on what specific concerns he might have with the agencies that we have selected to carry out the aid to the people of Sri Lanka in the hardest

*S. O. 52*

hit areas, specifically the International Committee of the Red Cross, Oxfam Canada, Médecins Sans Frontières, Care Canada and World Vision.

Can the member shine some light on any specific issues that he has with these organizations? Are there any specific concerns? Why does the member not have confidence in these organizations to actually get the aid to the people who need it in the areas that are affected?

**Mr. Andrew Kania:** Mr. Speaker, the point is not whether one supports or does not support other organizations. They are all worthwhile organizations. The point is to help the 300,000 people who are trapped, as fast as possible and in the best possible manner, and to construct a permanent solution.

When Lester Pearson won the Nobel Peace Prize, he did not say to look to other organizations and maybe they can do it. He did it. I want Canada to take a lead role right now to help these people, without excuses that other people could not get the job done.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** There being no further members rising for debate, I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(Motion agreed to)

(The House adjourned at 11:05 p.m.)





# CONTENTS

Wednesday, February 4, 2009

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

<b>Spirit Catcher Award</b>	
Mr. Brown (Barrie).....	331
<b>Senior Citizens</b>	
Mr. Dosanjh.....	331
<b>Quebec Teachers' Week</b>	
Ms. Bourgeois.....	331
<b>World Cancer Day</b>	
Ms. Black.....	332
<b>Cancer</b>	
Mr. Dykstra.....	332
<b>Saint-Léonard Economic and Community Development Corporation Awards Gala</b>	
Mr. Pacetti.....	332
<b>Donald Jasper Sproule</b>	
Mr. Tilson.....	332
<b>Quebec Sovereignty</b>	
Mr. Dorion.....	332
<b>Member for Calgary East</b>	
Mr. Sorenson.....	333
<b>World Cancer Day</b>	
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca).....	333
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	
Mr. Obhrai.....	333
<b>Gaétan Roberge</b>	
Mr. Thibeault.....	333
<b>Thérèse Lavoie-Roux</b>	
Mr. Gourde.....	333
<b>Forestry Industry</b>	
Mr. Bouchard.....	334
<b>Black History Month</b>	
Mrs. Jennings.....	334
<b>Agriculture</b>	
Mr. Bezan.....	334

## ORAL QUESTIONS

<b>Automotive Industry</b>	
Mr. Ignatieff.....	334
Mr. Harper.....	334
Mr. Ignatieff.....	335
Mr. Harper.....	335
Mr. Ignatieff.....	335
Mr. Harper.....	335
Mr. Valeriote.....	335
Mr. Clement.....	335

<b>Child Care</b>	
Ms. Sgro.....	335
Ms. Finley.....	335
<b>Forestry Industry</b>	
Mr. Duceppe.....	335
Mr. Harper.....	335
Mr. Duceppe.....	335
Mr. Harper.....	336
<b>The Environment</b>	
Mr. Bigras.....	336
Mr. Prentice.....	336
<b>Natural Resources</b>	
Ms. Brunelle.....	336
Ms. Raitt.....	336
<b>Child Care</b>	
Mr. Layton.....	336
Ms. Finley.....	336
Mr. Layton.....	336
Ms. Finley.....	336
Mr. Layton.....	336
Ms. Finley.....	337
<b>Chalk River Nuclear Facilities</b>	
Mr. McGuinty.....	337
Ms. Raitt.....	337
Mr. McGuinty.....	337
Ms. Raitt.....	337
Mr. Regan.....	337
Ms. Raitt.....	337
Mr. Regan.....	337
Ms. Raitt.....	337
<b>Culture</b>	
Mrs. Lavallée.....	338
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam).....	338
Mrs. Lavallée.....	338
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam).....	338
<b>National Battlefields Commission</b>	
Ms. Gagnon.....	338
Ms. Verner.....	338
Ms. Gagnon.....	338
Ms. Verner.....	338
<b>Aerospace Industry</b>	
Mr. Garneau.....	338
Mr. Clement.....	338
Mr. Garneau.....	339
Mr. Clement.....	339
Ms. Folco.....	339
Mr. Clement.....	339
Ms. Folco.....	339
Mr. Clement.....	339

**Canada-U.S. Relations**

Mr. Dechert .....	339
Mr. Harper .....	339

**RCMP**

Mr. Harris (St. John's East) .....	339
Mr. Toews .....	339

**Public Service of Canada**

Ms. Charlton .....	340
Mr. Toews .....	340

**Executive Pay**

Mr. Laforest .....	340
Mr. Flaherty .....	340

**Seniors**

Mrs. Freeman .....	340
Ms. Finley .....	340

**Child Care**

Mr. Dryden .....	340
Ms. Finley .....	340
Mr. Dryden .....	341
Ms. Finley .....	341

**The Budget**

Mr. Dewar .....	341
Mr. Flaherty .....	341
Mr. Dewar .....	341
Mr. Flaherty .....	341

**Public Safety**

Mr. Blaney .....	341
Mr. Van Loan .....	341

**Freedom of Speech**

Mr. Holland .....	341
Mr. Van Loan .....	342

**Foreign Affairs**

Mr. Crête .....	342
Mr. Cannon .....	342

**Official Languages**

Mr. Godin .....	342
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam) .....	342

**Agriculture**

Mr. Casson .....	342
Mr. Ritz .....	342
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North) .....	342
Mr. Ritz .....	342

**Points of Order**

<b>Correction to Official Record</b>	
Ms. Finley .....	343

**Oral Questions**

Mr. McGuinty .....	343
Mr. Hill .....	343
Mr. Goodale .....	343
Mr. Blaney .....	343
Mr. Duceppe .....	343

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS****Ways and Means****Notice of Motion**

Mr. Flaherty .....	343
--------------------	-----

**Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime**

Mr. Nicholson .....	343
---------------------	-----

**Interparliamentary Delegations**

Mr. Hiebert .....	344
Mr. Del Mastro .....	344

**Pay Equity Task Force Recommendations Act**

Ms. Mathysen .....	344
Bill C-284. Introduction and first reading .....	344
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) .....	344

**Modernization of Investigative Techniques Act**

Mrs. Jennings .....	344
Bill C-285. Introduction and first reading .....	344
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) .....	344

**Oil and Gas Ombudsman Act**

Ms. Charlton .....	344
Bill C-286. Introduction and first reading .....	344
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) .....	345

**Holidays Act (Remembrance Day)**

Ms. Charlton .....	345
Bill C-287. Introduction and first reading .....	345
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) .....	345

**Petitions**

<b>Interprovincial Bridge</b>	
Mr. Bélanger .....	345

**Citizenship and Immigration Canada**

Ms. Gagnon .....	345
------------------	-----

**Consumer Price Index**

Ms. Charlton .....	345
--------------------	-----

**Textile Labelling Act**

Mrs. Jennings .....	345
---------------------	-----

**Employment Insurance Program**

Mr. Asselin .....	345
-------------------	-----

**Sri Lanka**

Mr. Oliphant .....	346
--------------------	-----

**Questions on the Order Paper**

Mr. Lukiwski .....	346
--------------------	-----

**Motions for Papers**

Mr. Lukiwski .....	346
--------------------	-----

**Request for Emergency Debate**

<b>Sri Lanka</b>	
Mr. Layton .....	346
The Speaker .....	346
Mr. Goodale .....	346

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### Canada-EFTA Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act

Bill C-2. Second reading .....	347
Mr. Masse .....	347
Mr. Gravelle .....	348
Ms. Leslie .....	349
Mr. Allen (Welland) .....	349
Mr. Savage .....	350
Ms. Leslie .....	351
Mr. McKay .....	352
Mr. Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country) .....	352
Mrs. Hughes .....	352

### Privilege

#### Alleged Misuse of Intraparliamentary Internet

Mrs. Jennings .....	353
Mr. Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord) .....	354

### Canada-EFTA Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act

Bill C-2. Second reading .....	354
Ms. Leslie .....	354
Mr. Calandra .....	357
Mr. Savage .....	357
Mr. Martin (Sault Ste. Marie) .....	357
Mr. Gravelle .....	358
Mrs. Hughes .....	358

### Business of the House

Mrs. Jennings .....	359
Motion .....	359
(Motion agreed to) .....	360

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### Canada-EFTA Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act

Bill C-2. Second reading .....	360
Mr. Gravelle .....	360
Mr. Allen (Welland) .....	360
Ms. Mathysen .....	360
Mr. Davies (Vancouver Kingsway) .....	361

### Business of the House

Mr. Hill .....	363
Motion .....	363
(Motion agreed to) .....	364

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### Committees of the House

#### Justice and Human Rights

Mr. Hill .....	364
(Motion agreed to) .....	364

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### Canada-EFTA Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act

Bill C-2. Second reading .....	364
Mr. Gravelle .....	364
Mr. Allen (Welland) .....	364
Mr. Angus .....	365
Mr. Gravelle .....	366
Mr. Allen (Welland) .....	367
Ms. Ashton .....	367
Mrs. Jennings .....	368
Mr. Angus .....	369
Division on motion deferred .....	369

### Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act

Mrs. Ablonczy .....	369
Bill C-4. Second reading .....	369
Mr. Bouchard .....	371

## EMERGENCY DEBATE

### Situation in Sri Lanka

Mr. Layton .....	372
Motion .....	372
Mr. Marston .....	373
Mr. Dewar .....	374
Ms. Chow .....	374
Ms. Oda .....	374
Mr. Karygiannis .....	375
Mr. Oliphant .....	375
Mr. Kent .....	376
Mr. McTeague .....	377
Mr. Crête .....	378
Mr. Rae .....	378
Mr. Dewar .....	379
Mr. McKay .....	380
Mr. Cotler .....	380
Ms. Sgro .....	381
Mr. Dewar .....	381
Mr. Crête .....	382
Mr. Karygiannis .....	384
Mr. Dorion .....	385
Mr. Dewar .....	385
Mr. Obhrai .....	385
Mr. Kania .....	386
Mr. McKay .....	387
Mr. Abbott .....	387
Mr. Karygiannis .....	388
Mr. McTeague .....	388
Mr. Dewar .....	389
Ms. Minna .....	389
Mr. Karygiannis .....	390
Mr. McKay .....	390
Mr. Dewar .....	391
Ms. Guarnieri .....	391
Mr. Karygiannis .....	392
Mr. Dewar .....	392
Mr. Cannon .....	392

Mr. Karygiannis .....	394	Mr. Cannis .....	399
Mr. Dewar .....	394	Mr. Karygiannis .....	400
Mr. Poilievre .....	394	Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North) .....	400
Mr. Calandra .....	394	Mr. Oliphant .....	401
Mr. McCallum .....	395	Mr. Wrzesnewskyj .....	402
Mr. Cannis .....	396	Mr. Karygiannis .....	402
Mrs. Thi Lac .....	396	Mr. Julian .....	403
Mr. Poilievre .....	397	Mr. Kennedy .....	405
Mr. Karygiannis .....	397	Mr. Wrzesnewskyj .....	405
Mr. Dewar .....	398	Mr. Lee .....	406
Mr. Vellacott .....	398	Mr. Kania .....	406
Ms. Minna .....	399	Mr. Calandra .....	407
Mr. Karygiannis .....	399	(Motion agreed to) .....	407



**MAIL  POSTE**

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

**Lettermail**

**Poste-lettre**

**1782711  
Ottawa**

*If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:*  
Publishing and Depository Services  
Public Works and Government Services Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

*En case de non-livraison,  
retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :*  
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt  
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada  
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

**Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons**

**Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes**

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:  
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :**  
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

---

**The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.**

**Additional copies may be obtained from Publishing and Depository Services  
Public Works and Government Services Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5  
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943  
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757  
[publications@pwgsc.gc.ca](mailto:publications@pwgsc.gc.ca)  
<http://publications.gc.ca>**

**Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.**

**On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires ou la version française de cette publication en écrivant à : Les Éditions et Services de dépôt  
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada  
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5  
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943  
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757  
[publications@tpsgc.gc.ca](mailto:publications@tpsgc.gc.ca)  
<http://publications.gc.ca>**