



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 144 • NUMBER 028 • 2nd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)
[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

UKRAINIAN SHUMKA DANCERS

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 1959 a new Edmonton dance ensemble burst forth in a cascade of wonderful colour and folkloric song celebrating their Ukrainian cultural heritage and traditions.

In Kyiv at the historic opera theatre, I proudly watched Edmonton's finest ambassadors perform “Cinderella” after they returned from a widely acclaimed tour of other Ukrainian cities. Their extensive repertoire of original, imaginative dance pieces have universal themes which are meaningful and entertaining to audiences of all backgrounds.

As member of Parliament for Edmonton East and vice-chair of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Group, I sincerely wish to congratulate all members past and present as Canada's Ukrainian Shumka Dancers of Edmonton celebrate their 50th anniversary. They have epitomized the finest of Canadian cultural heritage to Ukraine, to the world, but most of all, to Canada.

Mnohaya Lita.

* * *

ELLARD POWERS

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I stand to pay tribute to the late Ellard Powers of Beachburg, Ontario.

Ellard was a friend and mentor to me personally and to many with whom his life touched. He began farming independently with his wife, Gladys, while still a teenager. He served in many capacities, including as vice-president of the Ontario Farmers Union, the NFU, Council of Canadians, Ontario Milk Marketing Board, and Agricornp.

When dairy farmers were suffering financial hardships, he helped create supply management which brought economic stability to the industry.

In 1967, on Parliament Hill, he co-chaired a demonstration of 25,000 farm people demanding improved farm incomes, and later served as CEO of the Canadian Dairy Commission.

Ellard's accomplishments were many on the farm, in leadership roles and in positions of high responsibility. He was a kind, considerate family man, highly regarded in his home community.

His contribution to Canadians constitutes a national legacy.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN AHUNTSIC

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 1696, more than 310 years ago now, a fortress was built at Sault-au-Récollet, along with a Sulpician mission. Ever since then, men and women of succeeding generations have worked to shape the part of the country we now know as Ahuntsic. It has seen periods of prosperity and periods of difficulty, and has undergone changes, both gradual and profound.

Ten years ago, a new milestone was laid in the history of our community. The people of Ahuntsic gained access to an organization that has worked from its very first day to improve their quality of life and health. That organization was Solidarité Ahuntsic, and it was made up of citizens, groups, associations and institutions with a common desire to take part in the social and community development of their community. Solidarité Ahuntsic initiates actions, and encourages and supports citizen involvement in its community.

If a community wants to ensure the quality of life of its residents, no one can be left out. Solidarity is an absolute must.

I wish Solidarité Ahuntsic long life and success.

*Statements by Members**[English]***VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Sunday was International Women's Day, a day to celebrate women's achievements.

With the increase in women's visibility as impressive role models, one could think that women have gained true equality, but women are still not paid equally to men. Women are still not present in equal numbers in business or politics. Globally, women's education, health and the violence against them is worse than that of men.

Nowhere were those continuing challenges more poignantly a part of International Women's Day than they were in Hamilton. Just six weeks ago our city was rocked by the news that Muruwet Tuncer was murdered at home. Her former husband was charged.

We often hear about the prevalence of violence against immigrant women because they are isolated, do not speak English, or are dependent on a partner, but not Muruwet. Yes, she hailed from Turkey, but she was an active participant in our community and had strong support.

Muruwet was not susceptible to violence because she was an immigrant woman, but because she was a woman.

In Hamilton, International Women's Day was far from celebratory. Instead, it was a clarion call to recommit ourselves to the work of ending violence against women. We cannot celebrate women's equality until all women live free from oppression.

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ST. PATRICK'S DAY

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remind the House that March 17 is St. Patrick's Day. Being of Irish descent and coming from Canada's national Irish capital, this is a proud and happy celebration for me and my family. Wherever people are and whether they are Irish or not, I would invite them to wear something green on March 17 and to celebrate.

I would also like to invite everyone, a few months early no doubt, to visit us in marvellous Miramichi for our famous Irish Festival, which runs from July 16 to 19, 2009. If they do not see old friends there, they are sure to make new ones.

As we say in the Miramichi, one hundred thousand welcomes.

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● (1410)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 5 the government claimed that freezing employment insurance rates constitutes a \$4.5 billion stimulus in the coming year. The government said that when jobs are lost, EI rates should go up. However, since the government does not propose to raise EI premiums, it argues that this is a stimulus. Simply put, the government is saying that not doing something it does not intend to do is an economic stimulus. How pathetic.

If the government really wants to inspire hope and confidence, maybe it should first stop the hollow rhetoric on fictional stimulus and rosy forecasts, stop delaying the passage of the budget by loading it up with non-budgetary measures, stop delaying the investment of last year's approved infrastructure funding, stop interfering with Parliament's duty to scrutinize the budget, stop playing political games, and finally, get back to work.

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*[Translation]***OTTAWA FOOD BANK**

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week marks the 25th anniversary of the Ottawa Food Bank.

[English]

The Ottawa Food Bank has been helping people in need for 25 years and we salute them.

The "Heroes Fighting Hunger" campaign was launched this week. This campaign encourages the people of Ottawa to donate \$25 and to invite 25 of their friends to do the same.

[Translation]

Every dollar donated generates five dollars worth of groceries for people in need.

[English]

I encourage all members of the House to join leaders such as my constituent, Rick Hillier, and also our Minister of Transport, the MP for Ottawa West—Nepean, to open their hearts, show leadership and become a hero.

[Translation]

In this time of economic uncertainty, we must all help the less fortunate.

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INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION ASSEMBLY

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 2010, Vancouver will host the Olympic Games and Toronto will host the NATO summit. Quebec, meanwhile, has been left behind. Quebec City could have hosted a major convention, but the Conservatives sabotaged the city's efforts. By refusing to allow parliamentarians from certain countries to come to Canada, the Conservatives denied Quebec's capital city the opportunity to host next spring's Inter-Parliamentary Union assembly. Instead, the 2010 IPU assembly will be held in Bangkok.

Recently, the member for Lévis—Bellechasse complained about the cancellation of the re-enactment of the battle of the Plains of Abraham, arguing that cancelling the event would deprive Quebec of significant economic spin-offs. Yet a convention attended by 1,500 delegates from 150 countries around the world would have had an even greater economic impact. His government prevented that from happening.

Quebec might be a contender to host the IPU in 2011, but for that to happen, the Conservatives will have to set aside their ideological stubbornness.

Statements by Members

[English]

TIBET

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government is committed to promoting Canada's core values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law around the world.

Canada remains seriously concerned with the human rights situation in Tibet, including the treatment of Tibetans who continue to see violations of their freedom of expression, association and spiritual belief, as well as restrictions on their freedom of movement.

This government raises these concerns with the Chinese government at every appropriate opportunity, calling on it to take effective action to respect, protect and promote the human rights of the ethnic minority groups, including Tibetans.

We urge the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama and his representatives to work toward a solution of outstanding issues and establish a true and lasting peace acceptable to all parties.

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[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism tried to sweep under the rug the fact that he appointed Pharès Pierre to the Immigration and Refugee Board. How can Mr. Pierre, who is closely linked to the Aristide regime, pretend to have the impartiality required to rule on the status of his compatriots seeking asylum here? How will Mr. Pierre avoid an apparent conflict of interest if one day he refuses to grant asylum to one of his formal political rivals?

"I did not know. If I had known, I would not have done so." That is all the minister has to say. He tells us that what is done is done, and is trying to pacify us by saying that he accepts responsibility. So the minister should show us that he is taking responsibility. What is he waiting for to tell Mr. Pierre unequivocally that he must step down immediately, before he is dismissed by cabinet?

* * *

•(1415)

[English]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, top Liberal adviser, Warren Kinsella, has suggested that women politicians would prefer to bake cookies than to be in politics. He said that Chinese food contained cat. He has made threats to Ontario's public broadcaster, TVO. He has even made threats to his own Liberal MP, the member for Pickering—Scarborough East, saying he "would tell the truth" about him.

Most recently, Warren has even been threatening the Canada-Israel Committee, saying that he would use his Liberal affiliation to get the organization blacklisted from his party. Now Kinsella is even musing about suing the CIC, a non-partisan advocacy group.

Are his beliefs the beliefs of the Liberal Party? Do the Liberals believe they can threaten and bully people and make sexist comments about women politicians?

Will the Liberal leader not demonstrate leadership, do the right thing and fire him?

* * *

ISRAEL

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a group of 60 delegates, including 6 Canadians, under the auspices of CODEPINK, are on a solidarity mission in Gaza this week for International Women's Day. They are visiting refugee camps, hospitals and witnessing the devastating aftermath of 22 days of bombing by Israeli defence forces.

After 20 months of the blockade and the loss of basic necessities of life, Canada must call for an end to the siege of Gaza and help find a way forward to address the root causes of violence and the ongoing occupation of Palestinian land.

Canada must begin by following through on its promise for aid and exercise its responsibility under international law to condemn the use of force and violence and begin the process of normalized relations to attain a Palestinian state and peace for the region.

The women and men in the solidarity delegation in Gaza are showing tremendous courage and resolve in their mission. The Canadian government must do likewise and commit to the rule of law for peace and justice.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like many here, I was disturbed to hear of a 75-year-old widow in Saudi Arabia being sentenced to 40 lashes and 4 months in jail. Her crime was nothing more than being present in a room with two young men who were not her close relatives. This sentence is appalling and is contrary to the values of Canadians and all civilized peoples.

Canada calls on the Saudi government to reverse this draconian sentence. Canada will continue to stand up for universal values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The Canadian government remains deeply concerned about the unsatisfactory human rights situation in Saudi Arabia, both in general and with respect to women's rights. Canada continues to call on Saudi Arabia to live up to its international obligations, including under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

AGRICULTURAL WEEKLY

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the agricultural weekly publication *La Terre de chez nous* has witnessed nearly 80 years of major events in agriculture, from the advent of electricity to the farm to discussions on food sovereignty.

La Terre de chez nous is a real institution, and a solid reference when it comes to Quebec agriculture. It began life as part of *Le Devoir*, and on March 6, 1929 *La Terre de chez nous* became a free-standing publication of the Union catholique des cultivateurs, which later became the Union des producteurs agricoles. It started as an information organ for the fledgling farm union movement, but quickly became the weekly farm economic bulletin for the farmers of the day.

Today *La Terre de chez nous* is published 50 times a year in all regions of Quebec and has a subscriber list of 33,000 and a readership of 80,000. It also publishes some thirty supplements and special editions dealing with agricultural techniques and crops, and has a website as well.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, I wish *La Terre de chez nous* long life as the voice of the farmers of Quebec.

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[English]

TOM HANSON

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Tom Hanson, who passed away suddenly last night at the age of 41.

Tom joined the Parliamentary Press Gallery in 1992, the same year he joined The Canadian Press Ottawa bureau. Ever since, Tom has been the CP photographer with the best shot. We could always tell a Tom Hanson photograph.

Tom travelled the world with prime ministers, and he was deeply admired by politicians of all stripes.

Tom lived large. He loved hockey and his Harley-Davidson and was instantly recognizable for his ready smile.

● (1420)

[Translation]

Tom Hansen was respected, admired and loved by his colleagues at The Canadian Press and in the Parliamentary Press Gallery.

[English]

We join with them and with Tom's wife, Catherine, to mourn his passing, to celebrate his life and to acknowledge his legacy. He will be missed.

* * *

[Translation]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party would be better off if he had Rasputin as

an adviser. Senator Baker wants the province of Newfoundland and Labrador to pull out of Canada. And now, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour is trying to distance himself from his leader's promise to cancel the universal child care benefit. The famous \$100 per child per month would go up in smoke.

Fortunately, Canadians have a clear choice between a real economic action plan that helps families, workers, seniors and communities, and a Liberal leader who has been poorly advised to raise the GST and impose a carbon tax that would hurt jobs.

At this time of economic upheaval, I invite the Liberal Party leader to bring his troops, his members and his senators in line and speed up approval of the economic action plan. Instead of tossing out hare-brained ideas and threatening Canadian unity, the Liberals should work with us, the Conservatives, for our country.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government tabled its first budget report, as required by the House. What is remarkable is what is missing. There is no mention of the 190,000 jobs that the government promised to create in its budget just six weeks ago.

The finance minister says that he expects continued—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Michael Ignatieff: I fail to see what is amusing, Mr. Speaker.

Let me put this in a way the Conservatives can understand. They promised to create 190,000 jobs six weeks ago. There is no mention of that figure in the current report.

Why is the government backing down from its own projections?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the House will know, the International Monetary Fund today had things to say about Canada's economic plan. It said:

The IMF supports the strong fiscal package announced in January, which was large, timely, and well targeted, and it will buoy demand during the downturn.

The focus now is appropriately on implementing that package. I would encourage the party opposite, rather than always trying to find the negative in everything, to simply get on with passing this and doing something positive for the Canadian economy.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is no answer to the question, so let us get down to what is actually happening in the Canadian economy. Conservatives seem to be as out of touch with each other as they are with Canadians.

In my riding a generation of older women workers is facing unemployment for the first time. These women are not eligible for EI. They cannot access the skills and language training they need to find new jobs.

What is the Prime Minister doing for those older women workers who are being left behind by their government's plan?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has absolutely nothing to propose. There are measures for older workers in the budget. That is why we are so anxious to see the budget and the implementing legislation passed.

When the leader of the Liberal Party talks about out of touch, he should get in touch with some of those out of touch senators he has at the other end of the hall and get them to get on with passing the budget.

• (1425)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been in contact with the Liberal leader in the Senate. He knows that we will pass this budget and quickly.

In Fort-Coulonge, Québec, almost 400 of the 1,500 residents have seen their forestry jobs disappear.

Is that why the Prime Minister has given up on his promise to create 190,000 new jobs? Because he has realized that he is out of touch with the Canadian reality?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, there are extremely important measures in the budget for the forestry industry and for many other industries as well. That is why Parliament should act and pass this budget.

[*English*]

However, once again, when we are talking about the economy, what Canadians are looking for is this plan to be implemented. What they are certainly not looking for is a party with no plan, with no economic experience and with the only proposals and not so hidden agenda to raise taxes.

That is no plan. That is why Canadians want our plan passed and passed now.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister refused to answer the question about the 190,000 jobs that he committed to in the budget, but said nothing about in his first probationary report. Let us try the finance minister.

Does he not understand that when 129,000 jobs are lost in January alone, which is one Canadian losing his or her job every 20 seconds, Canadians care deeply about this job issue? Why did the minister totally ignore the commitment to 190,000 jobs in his first report?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic action plan was announced on January 27. We want to implement it with the stimulus that is in the first budget bill. The Leader of the Opposition says that he has told the Liberal senators to pass the bill. When? It can be passed today. It can receive royal assent. It can help the unemployed people in Canada right now.

It is very plain that this additional time for unemployed Canadians is available now. Where is the plan on the other side? Where is the courage on the other side to help unemployed Canadians?

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is disgraceful, at this time of unemployment, that the finance minister is scammed three times on the 190,000 jobs and he

does not answer. Neither he nor the Prime Minister will answer the question about this solemn budget commitment in question period.

When will they come clean with Canadians on their commitment to create jobs? Do they not care? Have they given up? Why will they not come clean?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite cared about unemployed people in Canada, the budget bill would be law by now. This is an action that is within their control.

The difference is there is a plan on this side of the House and no plan on the other side of the House. We have a bill that is ready to pass. We want it to become law. The other side wants to delay it from becoming law.

We want to help unemployed Canadians on this side of the House. The other side of the House does not care about unemployed Canadians. We have a positive plan. Those members offer nothing in terms of a plan, only a negative attitude toward those in need in Canada.

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[*Translation*]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, despite the difficulties experienced by the forestry industry, the ministers of this government continue to state that loan guarantees are illegal. Yesterday, the President of EDC stated that the government provided loan guarantees to forestry companies. Lawyers for the Government of Canada hold the same position and stated, before the LCIA tribunal, that loan guarantees are legal.

I am asking the Prime Minister to clearly tell us that loan guarantees are legal or else to provide the section of the agreement where it is stated that they are not. He should get his facts straight.

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the softwood lumber agreement with the United States prohibits direct subsidies to businesses. That is why this matter is already before the courts. Naturally, we are required to defend the actions of certain governments. However, this government is determined to help this industry without jeopardizing our agreement with the United States and our access to the American market.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is telling us that loan guarantees are subsidies. Yet, that is how EDC operates. That is what it gives to the auto industry. He is contradicting the lawyers who work for him, the Government of Canada lawyers before the LCIA tribunal.

Does he realize that he is weakening Canada's case and kowtowing to the Americans? It is shameful conduct by our Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the auto industry's situation is completely different. We are currently subsidizing this industry in cooperation with the United States government.

Oral Questions

We have an agreement that prohibits such measures, in the case of the forestry industry, to guarantee our access to the American market. Before the budget was tabled, I had discussions with this industry and it clearly asked us not to jeopardize its access to the American market.

We are helping this industry without putting it at risk. That is this government's duty.

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GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government's new website is a carbon copy of the first report submitted yesterday by the Minister of Finance. It does not provide any information about how the Conservatives plan to spend their proposed \$3 billion special fund. If the money is not spent before June 30, it will be frozen and returned to the consolidated fund. The government must therefore know exactly how it plans to spend the money.

Why not release a list right now on that same website of which departments and programs are to benefit from the special fund?

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has indicated how that money will be spent. It is set out in our economic action plan. There are clear criteria by which that expenditure will be governed. Treasury Board will be reviewing those expenditures. We hope to move that money out of the door after April 1, if the budget passes. I would urge the Liberal senators to get that budget passed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government says that the money in the special fund is to be spent on initiatives announced in the budget and on increasing other expenditures.

Rather than put his head in the sand as he did yesterday when he delivered his rose-coloured glasses speech on the economic crisis, why does the Prime Minister not use this opportunity to announce that some of the \$3 billion will be used to provide real support to the forestry sector in the form of loans and loan guarantees, as EDC's president suggested yesterday?

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the specific vote 35, \$3 billion are to be spent on the specific programs or projects that are set out in the economic action plan. It is a broad range of projects and programs on which the money can be spent.

There is also the building Canada fund and other funds to which we will have access once the Liberal senators decide to pass that budget. We would urge them to pass it because Canadians are depending upon that money to stimulate our economy.

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister tried to put rose-coloured glasses on the nation, the same rose-coloured glasses that he wanted everyone to wear during the election and the same ones he wore during the economic update in November. The Prime Minister has overseen the loss of close to 300,000 jobs since the election.

Is he now ready to take off those rose-coloured glasses?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, I clearly stated yesterday that Canada is part of the global recession. This recession will continue until the Americans can gain control of the problems in their financial sector.

At the same time, the International Monetary Fund said today that Canada is in a better position than many other countries to combat fiscal turbulence and the global recession and that Canada has solid management of its macroeconomic policies, meaning that the country was healthy as it entered the recession. We, too, have our strengths.

● (1435)

[*English*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in Brampton, the Prime Minister was accusing the opposition of holding up the estimates, but under Standing Order 81, as he should know, it is the government that brings forward the date for the vote on the estimates. What date did it choose? It chose March 24.

Either the Prime Minister does not understand the rules of the House and of his own government, or he was misleading Canadians yesterday. Which is it?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the real question is whether the NDP is interested in helping Canadian workers and families or simply in playing political games.

The leader of the NDP made it clear from the day of the election on that he had no intention of supporting the government or its budget no matter what was in it. For that reason, he did not read it and is now voting against all kinds of benefits that workers and families want. He should take off his blinders and start to be a little more positive for a change.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister really cared about the unemployed, he would put in place the four part NDP plan to fix employment insurance that passed the House with a majority of votes yesterday. However, we know he will not respect the will of the House.

Yesterday, he was using some pretty selective stats on GDP to paint his rosy picture of the economy, but the government's own finance department says that gross domestic income provides the best measure and is a more relevant indicator of change in the well-being of Canadians than GDP. Guess what? The Parliamentary Budget Officer's report today showed that when it comes to GDI, Canada is doing ten times worse than the United States.

When will the government do something about the shrinking incomes of the middle class?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP talks about employment insurance. He had demanded before the budget that the government add two extra weeks of benefits to employment insurance. In the budget, the government added five extra weeks. However, since the leader of the NDP had already decided he would vote against it no matter what, he voted against more than what he was asking for.

That just tells us how, under his leadership, the NDP has gone from a party that used to stand for something to a party that simply opposes everything.

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CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Congress is preparing to spend billions of dollars on new water and sewage projects. John Hayward runs a small pump-making firm in Halton Hills. He says that the buy American provisions will prevent him from getting U.S. contracts, forcing him to cut more than 10% of his workforce and to move jobs to the U.S.

Why is the Prime Minister claiming victory on the buy American file when U.S. protectionism threatens to kill thousands of Canadian jobs, just like these ones in Halton Hills?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we all know and as my colleague across the way knows very well, the free trade agreement between Canada and the United States has produced tens of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars worth of trade.

Even within an agreement like that, there will be times when an American company may legitimately get a contract in Canada. However, even more important for us, there are many times when Canadian companies get contracts in the United States.

We will be monitoring all of these to ensure the Americans play by the rules all the way.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small businesses are the biggest generator of jobs in this country. They are being hit hard by this economic crisis. Tourism bookings are down. Seafood prices are falling. Retail outlets are cutting back on staff. Companies viewed as success stories months ago are now cutting operations and some are even closing their doors. People are losing jobs and people are losing hope.

When will the Conservatives stop denying and deflecting and give small businesses and their employees help from this deepening crisis?

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we, on this side of the House, are proud that we have a plan of hope for small businesses. In fact, we are ensuring that small businesses have the financing they need to continue with operating lines of credit and to continue with bridge financing. We have lowered taxes for small businesses.

We are getting the job done for small business. I am sorry the members opposite do not see hope when there is hope for this economy.

* * *

● (1440)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on December 19, I wrote a letter to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development about EI claimants facing unacceptable processing delays. Last week, I received a letter from the minister apologizing for her delay in responding to my letter about delays.

I accept her apology but will the minister now apologize both to the thousands of laid-off workers who are still waiting due to her political mismanagement and to the hard-working staff at Service Canada who are bearing the brunt of Conservative incompetence?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are very challenging times for way too many people in this country. Too many of them have lost their jobs and are having to look to EI for support. We are increasing and have already increased the number of people who are handling EI and processing the claims.

We are working with companies to ensure the claims get filed faster so we can get the benefits to those who need them faster. We are bringing back retirees to ensure we have enough people to do this. We are getting the job done for those Canadians who need our help.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources has the same glib response to any question about delays in getting EI. In my riding, real people are suffering from this real crisis. One individual waited six weeks for EI. He was forced to apply for welfare while he waited. When he finally received his cheque, the province clawed it back and he still has no money on which to live.

Is the minister saying to the desperate people who fall between the cracks, "Do not worry, be happy. I am really trying"?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a number of people in Human Resources and Skills Development who are working very hard to ensure those Canadians who need and deserve employment insurance benefits receive them in a timely manner. We are seeing unprecedented demands on this system.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those of my staff who have been working extra hours and who have been working weekends for the sake of Canadians.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board rejects applications from Haitians who were complicit in, or actually committed, crimes against humanity under the Aristide regime. Yet, Pharès Pierre, who has been appointed to the IRB by the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, was part of that government which made use of torture and was complicit in atrocities. This makes absolutely no sense.

Can the minister take steps to see that he is dismissed? That is the only sensible thing to do.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, I am gravely concerned about the recommendation of this person by the IRB, which is responsible under the new system for proposing names to me after a pre-selection process. I spoke to the chairperson of the IRB yesterday and we are looking into how to address this issue. We must proceed carefully.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is defending himself by saying that this individual was recommended to him by the IRB and underwent Privy Council security checks, the Privy Council being, I might add, the Prime Minister's office. Exactly the same people who investigated the Couillard affair. That says something.

So which is it: are the investigators incompetent, or was this appointment made in order to please a Conservative crony? What is it really: incompetence or partisan politics?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the man in question is not a friend of mine. To the best of my knowledge, he is not currently an active member of the Conservative Party of Canada. He was appointed on the advice of the IRB. According to the revised process, the IRB chairperson is responsible for the selection of qualified candidates to be recommended to the minister for appointment to the IRB.

* * *

●(1445)

JUSTICE

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, lawyers are accusing the criminal conviction review group of obstruction and lack of transparency. They are saying that since the Conservatives came to power they have been refused evidence that is crucial to their clients' defence and have been referred to the Access to Information Act.

If the system is working properly, as the Minister of Justice maintained in committee, how can he explain the obstruction the Montreal lawyers are complaining about, and rightly so?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member has any evidence of that, he should please present that either here or at committee. I can say that the process works well. It is a process that

has been in place since 2002. I think Canadians can continue to have confidence in that process.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister's response is not convincing anyone.

Since coming to power, the Conservatives have increased their hostility towards anyone who does not share their views by taking away their livelihood and their resources.

Does the minister realize that by refusing to hand over crucial evidence, he is violating his legal obligations as set out by the Supreme Court?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those are ridiculous comments coming from the hon. member for which there is absolutely no basis. The only people we, as a government, have taken hostile action against are violent criminals in this country. Those are the people we stand up to and so should the hon. member.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, three days ago the finance minister said, "the construction season is about to start...and we want to make full use of the six-month construction season". However, the government's first probation report yesterday shows it will spend the construction season this spring twiddling its thumbs instead.

The green infrastructure fund and community fund will not begin until the fall. The \$2 billion infrastructure stimulus fund will not start until July, and that is after a murky application process.

Why is the government misleading Canadians, and why is it planning to waste over half the construction season?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is absolutely incorrect.

What we are doing, for example, in his own province is working constructively with the McGuinty government. Let us look at what his own former colleagues at the Ontario legislature have to say.

Liberal MPP Dave Levac said,

This is the kind of co-operative venture that produces the most effective and efficient projects any level of government could hope for.

Let us look at what Liberal MPP Jeff Leal had to say: There is no doubt that residents will notice the positive impact of these improvements almost immediately.

I could go on.

MPP Kim Craitor said,

This is a great day for all of us.

I can understand why the member was tossed out of the Liberal caucus at Queen's Park and sent packing.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thousands of unemployed workers and their families are waiting for the Conservative government to do what it has failed to do so far: provide infrastructure funding responsibly, fairly and quickly.

Why does this government refuse to use a much more effective method, along the lines of the gas tax? Would the government prefer to play political games instead of creating the jobs Canadians need, this summer when Canadians will need them most?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are working with the provincial governments. I can tell members that Premier Dalton McGuinty is not playing political games; NDP Premier Gary Doer is not playing political games; and the great Premier of British Columbia, Gordon Campbell, is not playing political games. What they are doing is working constructively with those of us on this side of the House to ensure that we can add a much-needed shot in the arm to the Canadian economy: a little bit of hope, a little bit of jobs, a little bit of opportunity.

There is one thing standing in the way of help for Canadians, and that is the Liberal Senate. We need the member to get down there and urge them to get the job done.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration continues to fail immigrants and their families.

The record speaks for itself. The Conservatives have accepted 50,000 fewer landed immigrants into Canada; Canadians who have adopted children abroad face major delays; and processing times for skilled workers in Pakistan, China, India, Syria, the Philippines and Ukraine have dramatically increased.

Does the minister not understand that by not addressing the inefficiencies in the system he is negatively affecting people's lives? Do people matter to the minister?

• (1450)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not at all. Under this government, we have reversed a shameful record of neglect of immigration by our Liberal predecessors.

We have increased the budget of the immigration department by 57%. We have increased immigrant settlement funding by \$1.4 billion. This is the first year in a generation where the backlog for federal skilled workers will be going down rather than up.

When the Liberals took office, the backlog was fewer than 50,000 applications; they drove it up to over 800,000.

This government is taking action for new Canadians and for our economy.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is an answer I would celebrate on April 1.

According to the most recent departmental performance report, under the Conservatives, the backlog of refugee claims has more than doubled. The number of finalized claims has decreased by 50%. The average processing time has increased to 14 months, and the average cost per claim has increased by almost \$2,000 to nearly \$5,000.

Why has the Conservative government failed to provide a timely and efficient refugee determination system to people who desperately need one?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am really delighted to hear the interest of the member in hopefully working together to create a more efficient refugee determination system.

According to the United Nations, we already have one of the fairest, most generous refugee determination systems in the world. However, the member is quite right, it is not efficient and the reality is that last year we received 38,000 inland refugee claimants, about 60% of whose applications were rejected by the IRB.

I would like to work with the member to find ways that we can dissuade people from making false refugee claims, seeking to jump the queue and to come to this country illegally under the cover of being refugees.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberal leader shamefully claimed that the Prime Minister was singing “happy songs” when he correctly stated that Canada's economy has remained relatively strong compared to other industrialized nations. Instead of irresponsibly talking down the Canadian economy, the Liberal leader should look at the facts, listen to the experts, and stand up for our economy.

Can the Minister of Finance tell the House what the International Monetary Fund actually said about Canada's economic position?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): I certainly can, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for Edmonton—Leduc for the question. He of course has done an excellent job shepherding the budget bill on an expeditious basis through the finance committee in his role as chair of that committee. Would that it could be said of the finance committee in the Senate, chaired by a Liberal senator.

We have a plan. The Liberals are delaying the economic plan in the Senate, all the worse because—I know the member for Wascana will want to know this—the International Monetary Fund said this today:

Canada is better placed than many countries to weather the global financial turbulence and worldwide recession. Its resilience can be attributed to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Sudbury.

*Oral Questions***FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, out of control fees and interest charges continue to drain the pockets of hard-hit consumers and businesses. Meanwhile, according to *BusinessWeek*, credit card companies are hurting their own revenues by hiking interest rates and pushing Canadians even further toward default or bankruptcy. There is no reason they cannot pass along some savings to consumers for both of their interests.

When will the government realize that reasonable limits are needed to ensure all Canadians survive this economic crisis and not just credit card companies?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, if the member has reviewed the bill, in the budget bill there are provisions that we want to have passed to give the regulatory power to deal with some of these credit card issues that are of concern to Canadians. As soon as the bill is passed we will be able to move forward with that. I hope the Liberal senators will stop delaying the bill in the other place.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in this economic meltdown, Canadians need more than just an information campaign. They need protection.

If rising interest rates were not enough, Visa and MasterCard have announced plans to enter the debit market. As a result, Interac has applied to the Competition Bureau to alter its structure from a not-for-profit to a for-profit operation. Retailers are rightly worried that the current low transaction charges of 3¢ to 7¢ will quickly skyrocket.

When will the government put the interests of small business retailers and Canadian consumers ahead of credit card companies?

• (1455)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): We will be able to move forward, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the regulatory aspect as soon as the budget bill is passed, which is being delayed by the Liberal senators in the other place and is going to be voted against by the member who just asked the question.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after UNESCO, now it is the turn of the managing director of the IMF to warn about what will happen to Africa if the volume of aid is not increased substantially. At the same time, CIDA is withdrawing from Africa and becoming the tool of the Conservatives' purely mercantile and commercial approach to Latin America.

How can the minister justify CIDA's withdrawal from Africa when there are more and more calls not for a decrease, but for an increase in aid to Africa?

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again I ask the member to have the facts. The correct facts are that this government is supporting Africa unlike any other former government. Of our total aid budget, 45% goes to Africa. In fact, 62% of our food aid goes to Africa, 55% of our agricultural

support goes to Africa, and 57% of our multilateral aid goes to Africa. This shows outstanding support for Africa, but not only that, a recognition of the realities for people in those countries.

* * *

[Translation]

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a group of Ecuadorians is suing Canadian mining company Copper Mesa and the Toronto Stock Exchange for \$1 billion in damages. Copper Mesa allegedly hired paramilitary groups to terrorize opponents of its copper mining project in the Andes.

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs finally give a favourable response to the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries report, which he has had for two years now and which would make it possible to bring delinquent companies into line?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government takes this situation and corporate social responsibility seriously. That is why I can assure my friend that soon, we will see that our strategy will give Canada's extractive industry something more to think about.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite their 2007 announcement to save the only slaughterhouse in the Maritimes, the Conservatives have yet to spend a single penny. The federal share of the investment was \$6 million, plus the three maritime provinces each contributing \$2 million.

Some provinces have even had to provide the extra money that ACOA has not delivered. We need to save jobs. When will the government provide the \$6 million it announced two years ago? Why the delay?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no delay. There was a process put in place. ACOA is forwarding the money to the provinces as they require it. I am not sure what the member opposite is talking about.

We fully stand behind our slaughter capacity in this country. In fact, we have added more in this budget. I hope the member is going to run down the hall and get his Senate to pass it later today.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the provinces have provided their money, but ACOA has not yet made its contribution.

All across the country, Canadian are losing their jobs because of the Conservative government's inaction. The Liberal Party asked the government to put in place economic recovery programs to get people working again. Yet Conservative Senator Percy Mockler cancelled the announcements of infrastructure projects in Restigouche that were to be made last Friday.

On top of letting the economy down, why do the Prime Minister and his government not want Canadians to start working again?

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is totally incorrect. As the Minister of State for ACOA, I signed off on that paperwork some weeks ago. The money will be flowing if it has not already flowed. So I would ask the member to get his information correct.

* * *

• (1500)

HOUSING

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister said that if you have a house and a wife, you would likely be doing renovations this year. Not only does this comment show that the Prime Minister is stuck in the 1950s, but he is also very out of touch with women in Canada.

In this economic crisis, women are more likely looking at affordable housing versus worrying about doing renos to their kitchens. Tax credits are fine, but when is the Prime Minister going to join us in the 21st century and bring in measures to help the real housing issues that women face?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to taking every single action we can to provide a little hope, a little opportunity, for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. One of the important things that we put in our economic action plan was a comprehensive strategy to get Canadians working again, whether it is small contractors doing renovations in social housing, whether it is medium-size firms helping in the construction of new housing for seniors, or even individual small business contractors doing work in private homes.

We are committed to providing a little hope, a little opportunity, that will come when the budget is passed. What we need the member to do is to stop putting her head in the sand and to finally support the good work that is in the budget.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for the tens of thousands of Canadians on waiting lists for affordable housing, that answer is unacceptable. We all know the government's modest aims for affordable housing are unlikely to result in any new units being

built. When it comes to the needs of families during this recession, the Prime Minister is out of touch. He does not know what to do. That explains why he would make such an outrageous comment.

Tax credits alone will not help those who really need the help. When will we see an actual plan for a national housing strategy?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are all eager to answer this question, because within our economic action plan there is \$2 billion for just the kind of work to which that member is referring. There is \$1 billion for affordable housing renovations right across the country. There is another \$1 billion for new affordable housing, specifically for seniors and for the disabled. There is money for people in the north who need it.

We are putting this out there for Canadians, but the hon. member and her entire party voted against every penny of it.

* * *

[Translation]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, industries in Canada, like those in many other countries, are working hard to make it through the financial crisis. Fortunately, this government is taking unprecedented measures to stimulate Canada's economy and fight the global recession.

[English]

This is certainly true in the aerospace sector, where we have invested significantly.

Further, last year's budget committed \$350 million for the Bombardier CSeries.

[Translation]

Can the Minister of Industry tell the House about how our investments have helped the aerospace sector?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent question. Our government is very proud of what it has done to support the aerospace sector. That is why, today, I would like to congratulate Bombardier on its first order for CSeries aircraft from Deutsche Lufthansa. The contract value for the 30 aircraft is approximately \$1.53 billion. This is a major step forward for Bombardier, and it speaks to the ingenuity of Canada's aerospace industry. This is further proof that our government is helping to strengthen the aerospace industry.

*Oral Questions***FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the three plus years of Conservative government, 20,000 jobs have vanished from the forestry industry. Small localities like Fort-Coulonge, Val-d'Or and Matagami have been hit hard. Yesterday evening, this House passed a motion to help the forestry sector in Quebec and elsewhere. Unfortunately, the Conservatives opposed it.

Why are they refusing to cooperate with this industry at last on a real plan to retain jobs and create new ones?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

As we have said, our government has put in place numerous measures, within the agreements we have, to support employment and encourage and assist workers, among other things with \$170 million to diversify the economy. My colleague must be well aware that the industries are currently having trouble selling their product. That is the main problem the industry has at this time. We will therefore continue to develop new products and new markets and will try to revitalize this industry, whose interests all members of our party take to heart.

* * *

• (1505)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, told the Standing Committee on Official Languages the following: “In Quebec, English-language teaching at the primary and secondary level is just about swept under the rug”. He also said “Quebeckers are second-language illiterate.”

I would like to know whether the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and for La Francophonie agrees with what her colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles says?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is what we have to say and what our policies on official languages in Canada are. We have a road map and this is what it is: \$1.1 billion over five years invested in the official languages of our country. These investments will go all over our country—in Quebec, outside Quebec, in the regions—for Canada's official languages. For us, there are two official languages in our country, and we are protecting them.

* * *

[English]

INDUSTRY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, whether it is Xstrata, Vale Inco or U.S. Steel, the government has legal agreements with foreign companies that bought Canadian assets with clear job protection provisions, but when these firms reneged, the government simply rolled over.

Thousands of Canadians are being thrown out of work because the government refuses to enforce its own legal agreements.

Why should working families trust the government with more foreign takeovers after it has proven it cannot handle the ones already allowed?

When does the net benefit to Canada provision start applying to working families, and not just to shareholders?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is in fact not true. This government expects every signatory to an Investment Canada Act proposal to live up to its expectations.

On that side of the House, they simply ignore the fact that we have obtained new investments to this country that have kept our businesses alive in this country, that have meant jobs and opportunities for Canadians throughout the country. That is what the Investment Canada Act is all about. That is why we are in favour of new foreign direct investments. It is so that we can have more jobs, more opportunities and more hope for Canadians, and they vote against it every single time.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canada's forest sector is facing some big challenges. This is an industry that hundreds of thousands of Canadians depend on for their livelihoods.

Canada's economic action plan contains some huge measures to provide support for the forestry industry, especially for forestry workers and their families, who have been hard hit by this global economic downturn.

Can the minister inform the House how these measures are being received by the forestry workers and the communities on the ground?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members know that the member and the member for Prince George—Peace River have worked tirelessly for their constituents on this file.

In Canada's economic action plan, their hard work paid off, as our government took several measures to help forestry workers, including extending the EI work-sharing program.

In fact, United Steelworkers official Terry Tate said, “This is great news. We were quite shocked—we didn't think they would go the full 52 weeks”.

Our economic action plan will help workers and get families through these difficult times.

The Speaker: That will conclude question period for today.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***TOM HANSON**

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the sad news that we all received this morning, the passing at a very young age of Tom Hanson. As we all know, Tom was a talented photojournalist who distinguished himself by the quality of his work and his character. He was honoured with numerous industry awards and, perhaps most telling of all, the universal respect of his colleagues.

Through his photos, Tom helped to chronicle our story as Canadians. Whether it was a defining moment on the campaign trail, the shy smile of an Afghan child, or the triumph of a Grey Cup victory, Tom had a unique ability to capture the essence of whatever he was photographing.

On a personal level, Tom's sharp wit, his passion for music, hockey and motorcycles, his casual swagger and his personal integrity will be missed by all of us. On behalf of myself, Laureen, our family and, I know, all colleagues here who knew him, I want to pass on our condolences to his wife, Catherine, and to Tom's entire family.

● (1510)

[Translation]

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Canadian Press, a national institution, lost a great photographer with the passing of Tom Hanson. Photographers are sometimes the most courageous, audacious and artistic of journalists. Tom Hanson was that: courageous, audacious and artistic.

[English]

We in this House grieve for the loss of a great journalist, a great artist of the camera. We grieve with his family at Canadian Press. We grieve for his family at home.

We will remember his contribution to our public life with respect. We send our heartfelt condolences to his wife, Catherine. We hope that she will take some comfort from the fact that Tom Hanson's memory will always be regarded with affection and respect by every member of this House.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the caucus of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to extend our most sincere condolences to Mr. Hanson's wife. His tragic and unexpected death in the prime of life—aged 41—has hit us all hard. His work as a Canadian Press photographer was appreciated by all on Parliament Hill. His memory will not fade. Once again, our sincere condolences to his wife and all the family.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think we all remember that we could always count on Tom for a courteous greeting. He always respected this place, the centre of Canadian democracy, and he was respected by everyone here.

This tragic news of a sudden death at such a young age leaves all of us shaken. He was the consummate professional. He always

looked for that best shot to tell a story to Canadians. That was a remarkable talent. He had the respect of politicians and his colleagues, which is so important on the Hill.

He lived a full life. He travelled the world. He saw places and events that were important and exciting, and he had an ability to communicate what he was seeing to all of us. Like many Canadians, he had a deep passion for hockey. He played the game. I am sure many here remember sharing words about the game with him or even playing hockey with him.

He left us far too young. Even as we celebrate his richly lived life, we share our condolences with his wife, with his family and with his dear friends and colleagues at Canadian Press. He will be remembered through the lens that he offered to all of us. He will be remembered very warmly for his gifts to our country.

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● (1515)

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three reports to present today.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation to the visit of the Economics and Security Committee and the Sub-Committee on East-West Economic Co-operation and Convergence held in Washington, D.C. and New York, U.S.A., June 23-27, 2008.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation to the visit of the Science and Technology Committee and the Sub-Committee on Energy and Environmental Security held in Romania and Bulgaria, May 12-15, 2008.

Finally, I have the privilege to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation to the visit to Belgrade and Pristina by the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security and the Sub-Committee on Future Security and Defence held in Belgrade and Pristina, April 21-24, 2008.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament with respect to the quorum and mandate of the committee.

[Translation]

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities concerning Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, three reports of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration: the fourth report on citizenship of children adopted abroad, the fifth report on deportation to Sri Lanka, and the sixth report on supplementary estimates (C) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I am pleased to report that the committee has considered the supplementary estimates (C) under justice for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009, and reports the same.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two reports to present to the House today.

I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans in relation to the report on the James Bay eelgrass beds presented to the House during the second session of the 39th Parliament.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans in relation to the European legislative actions regarding the Canadian seal harvest.

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CANADA LABOUR CODE

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-337, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers).

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure today to introduce a bill to ban replacement workers, or scabs, during strikes and lockouts.

New Democrats have always struggled for the rights of working people and this bill represents a critical piece of that struggle. It is essential for ensuring that the right to free collective bargaining cannot be undermined.

Some may say that this is the wrong time to introduce this legislation but I would suggest that the opposite is true. In this great recession, the need for labour and management to work together in a spirit of cooperation, involvement and trust is greater than perhaps at any other time in our country's history. However, nothing breaks that trust more quickly than a company's ability to hire scabs during a legal strike.

I would ask all members to support this bill at first, second and third reading so we can finally bring the Canada Labour Code into the 21st century.

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

● (1520)

TOXIC SUBSTANCES LABELLING ACT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-338, An Act to ensure that warning labels are affixed to products containing toxic substances.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill was developed with the participation of Toxic-free Canada and Option consommateurs du Québec in putting forward this right to know legislation, which is fundamentally important.

We have product labelling in the case of poisonous and some other dangerous products but we do not have consumer product labelling that would ensure that consumers know what kind of toxic content is present in the products they buy.

We firmly believe that the consumer has a right to know, which is why we offer this legislation. The consumers' right to know whether or not they are buying a product that contains a toxic substance is paramount, which is why we are supporting the consumers' right to know.

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

* * *

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-339, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (maximum—special benefits).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to extend the maximum period for which special benefits for illness, injury or quarantine may be paid from 15 weeks to 45 weeks.

We have all had people come to our riding offices who have cancer or some other disease and are eligible for only 15 weeks of benefits, with no other income after that.

It would be far more realistic to allow the duration of these benefits—the number of weeks—to be equivalent to what it is at present for someone who is unemployed, with the possibility of correcting that in future. It would then ensure a decent income for someone experiencing a very difficult situation, particularly in the case of cancer.

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

* * *

[English]

YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-340, An Act to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act (publication of information).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the bill is to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act by allowing information related to a young person who is 18 years or older who has been charged under the Criminal Code with an indictable offence or an offence punishable by summary conviction.

I hope the bill will spur debate about the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 66(2) (a), the completion of the debate on the motion to concur in the first report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women shall take place on Thursday, March 12, 2009.

* * *

POVERTY REDUCTION

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That this chamber encourages the government to do everything possible to ensure that the G8 and G20 meetings scheduled for April 2 in London, address especially the court challenge of redressing, among all member states, the increased and enduring poverty and its social and economic effects on individuals and nations, recognizing that critical income security initiatives and social infrastructure investments protect human dignity, the common good, equality of opportunity and economic prosperity, and the Senate be invited to join with this chamber in this encouragement.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

● (1525)

PETITIONS

AFRICA

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today signed by thousands of residents of New Westminster—Coquitlam and all over British Columbia.

The petition has been endorsed by a number of prominent Canadians, including Stephen Lewis, Margaret Atwood, Ted Harrison, Rev. Joseph Leclair, Stephen Owen, Patsy George, Dr. Julio Montaner and many others.

The petitioners are calling for urgent action to address the HIV-AIDS crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically, they urge the government to meet our commitment to fund foreign aid at 0.7% of GDP, to increase Canadian contributions to the global fund and to

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make the legislative changes necessary to facilitate the flow of low cost generic drugs to developing countries.

This petition was put together by an organization called the Gogos. I am a member of the Gogos and I heartily endorse their petition that I am presenting in the House today.

The Speaker: The hon. member knows that members, when presenting petitions, are not to state whether they agree or disagree with the petition. I think the idea must have slipped out of the member's head at the last minute. I am sure she will not make that mistake again, at least for a few days.

ENERGY PRICING

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the pleasure to present a petition with well over 100 signatures from across Canada, from Scarborough, Vancouver, Mississauga, Toronto, Richmond Hill, Newmarket, Amherstburg.

The petitioners are calling upon Parliament to conduct hearings into energy pricing. They are also calling upon the government to acknowledge the high price of fuel and energy to them as consumers, as well as to reinstate our national energy market monitoring agency scrapped by the government in 2006.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present hundreds of names on a petition, once again asking our government to continue its good work against the trafficking of human beings.

Today, as we know, in the *Ottawa Sun* there was yet another article about the exploitation of aboriginal girls. It was stated as being an epidemic situation. I would like to present these petitions to the House to make all parliamentarians mindful of this very horrendous crime.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition stating that the employment insurance program was established to help workers who have temporarily or permanently lost their jobs and their income; that with today's economy, losing even one day's pay is disastrous for a great many workers; that the two week waiting period is unfair to workers suffering through the loss of a job; and that the federal government and Service Canada are now forcing people to submit their claims on line.

The petitioners are therefore asking the government to eliminate the mandatory waiting period, thus allowing workers to claim lost income as of the first day of their claim, and to hire adequate staff for local Service Canada offices so that claimants can choose whether to submit their claims on paper or on line and get help from well-informed staff.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I, too, have a petition with quite a number of signatures from my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex asking for some emergency measures to EI. They are asking for some changes to be made. I would like to present the petition at this time to the House.

OMAR KHADR

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, top officials of the Obama administration met Monday to discuss how to close the Guantanamo Bay detention facility within a year. Among the detainees is Canadian Omar Khadr.

I am submitting hundreds of petitions from law students across Toronto asking the government to bring Khadr back to Canada. They are concerned that Omar Khadr, as a child soldier, has been denied his rights to a fair trial and humane treatment.

With Guantanamo Bay finally closing, it is time to immediately secure the repatriation of Omar Khadr.

● (1530)

HORSE SLAUGHTER BAN

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a petition on behalf of hundreds of residents of Dufferin County who are calling for a ban on horse slaughter in Canada and on the export of horses for the same purpose.

The petitioners take note that horses occupy a special place in our heritage and are beloved companions for many Canadians. They also note that horse slaughter is not humane euthanasia and that a majority of Canadians do not eat horse meat and do not breed horses for human consumption.

The petitioners further highlight the horse industry's significant contribution to the economy, supplying millions in revenue for local farms and stables and providing thousands of jobs in Canada.

LEIF ERICSON DAY

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today that is signed by dozens of people from both coasts, from the west coast, Sidney, West Saanich and Saanichton, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, and the eastern coast, the province of Nova Scotia.

The petitioners, these dozens of Canadians, request that October 9 be declared Leif Ericson Day in Canada.

As you well know, Mr. Speaker, the Scandinavian populations, those from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland, have contributed enormously to the growth and development of Canada. Scandinavian Canadians are present everywhere in Canada. These individuals along with the thousands of others who have signed petitions are requesting that Parliament recognize their contribution and declare October 9 Leif Ericson Day in Canada.

* * *

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.

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statements, government orders will be extended by six minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[English]***CANADA-EFTA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

The House resumed from March 6 consideration of 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, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of Motion No. 1.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has six minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks. I therefore call upon the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we continue to press the government to understand the critical nature of splitting off this one significant piece from the bill. It would do several things all at the same time. Most important, it would send a signal to Canadian industry and value-added manufacturers in this country that Parliament cares about the families and workers involved in that industry.

It seems, after hearing the government's comments in defending its practice of putting this one piece into the agreement with Europe, that it is unable to defend its position. That is unfortunate, because whether we agree or disagree on issues, all members are sent to this place with the expectation that they can defend their positions, that they can provide reasons and substance for why they consider one thing or another to be true.

To remind Canadians who have been following this debate, we are asking for a hiving off of the shipbuilding industry from this agreement. Members of Parliament have been receiving mail from constituents from coast to coast to coast, particularly the constituencies in which the few remaining shipyards still operate, expressing their concern. Over the years, this industry has been hammered by agreements that the present government and previous governments have signed, by government policies that slowly squeeze out the very oxygen this industry needs in order to survive.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

Recently, my colleague from Burnaby gave me a letter from the Lauzon ship workers' union that said, "We represent CSN-affiliated workers working at the Lévis shipyard. We stand with workers in all Canadian shipyards in supporting your efforts to exclude Canadian shipyards from the Canada-European Free Trade Association Free Trade Agreement".

This is really important, particularly to our Bloc Québécois colleague, because this speaks to the needs of workers in all provinces, of all workers connected to this industry.

The time has come to protect these workers. If we do not, we are basically saying that this Parliament and our work here are not important. The NDP believes that is unacceptable. We will continue to talk about our disagreement with the government. We have a different perspective on the economy and negotiations.

[*English*]

The Conservative government slips into an ideology far too easily. There is not a trade agreement in the world it would not sign. It negotiates looking backward instead of forward to what needs to be established.

At the very least, to most Canadians the notion that all trade agreements would have a net benefit to the Canadian economy would seem very straightforward and plausible. Yet we see time and again across the table at these negotiations representatives from other countries defend the interests of their nations, protect the industries they believe need protecting and make trade arrangements to the net benefit of their nations. Yet we have to appeal on bended knee. We have to fight tooth and nail with our own government to represent our own industries at the table.

The NDP has been a long and consistent supporter of fair trade. The NDP has been a long and consistent ally of those around the world looking to establish trade agreements that protect the environment, labour relations and standards, and enhance the capacity of our country to trade. We are a trading nation. Time and again we see governments come forward with the idea of sensible trade but present other ideas.

When the Americans negotiated with us and set up caveats for their own shipping industry and steel industry that exempted them from that agreement, Canada had no problem at all accepting that condition of trade and yet made no such considerations for Canada's own industry.

I have some vague recollection of the Conservatives having a little saying in the election, something about Canada first or stand up for

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Canada. I do not hear it much any more and we do not hear it when the government negotiates trade agreements.

This is an opportunity for Conservatives, Liberals and Bloc members to join the NDP and understand that we can protect and enhance this industry and make it a viable one for future generations. That industry helped build this country. To turn our backs on that industry at this time would only continue the economic ruin that has been put upon this country by the Conservative government. It is time for it to stop now.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley because he has reflected the concerns that our caucus has about the real problems in Bill C-2.

I am the member for the riding of Vancouver East, which includes the port of Vancouver. I can remember the days when we had a great shipbuilding industry in the greater Vancouver area along both sides of Burrard Inlet. The demise of that industry and what is going to happen now under this bill deeply concerns us, as well as the Canadians who have been involved in this important industry for generations. I was taking note of the comments of George MacPherson, the president of the Shipyard General Workers' Federation. He said that the Canadian shipbuilding industry is already operating at about a third of its capacity. He pointed out that with the passage of this trade agreement, Canadian shipbuilding jobs are in serious jeopardy. He said that the government's plan is an outrage.

Would the member comment, in terms of the impact on workers who have built up this industry and have developed those skills only now to see it be lost?

• (1540)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it is something to note how difficult those jobs were to create in the first place. If we were to look back through the records of this Parliament and other legislatures across this country when the establishment of shipyards was first debated, it took an enormous amount of effort not only on the part of industry, but also on the part of government, to establish this fine and solid industry.

The expertise that is required to work within this industry is very hard to come by. We know that these workers are in demand around the world. We know that when those talents and that experience leave an area or a country, which has been happening in Canada, it is very hard to attract them back.

If nothing else, it would be a sign of good faith on the part of the government to agree with New Democrats to assist the industry and allow it to have a fair shake, to put it on a level playing field with the industries in other countries around the world with which we compete so that there is a sense of hopefulness within the industry and for the families of the workers in it.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP critic on this issue has shared with us some of the letters that he has received, and one is particularly striking to me. I come from the labour movement originally. This letter is from a disheartened worker who has signed his letter, "Another soon-to-be unemployed shipyard worker". In his letter, he said, in part:

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One of the most surprising things to me as a shipyard worker is that all stakeholders in the industry including owners and operators and unions from coast-to-coast have emphasized the need for the support during the many committee meetings....It's a shame that the Liberal party of Canada feels that it has to remain a puppet of the Conservative government in supporting another bad free trade deal for Canada.

I would like the member's view. I am sure he has seen the same letter. It goes on further, but I do not want to make it partisan here. This letter is from a hurting worker in this country.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, this points to an extraordinary contradiction. We almost need a hypocrisy meter in this place to measure how the Liberals are going to react from one day to the next. When people come to our committees they hear the platitudes and the nice words, which are so easy for members of Parliament to say, but when the rubber hits the road and it is time to act, or to fall down, we have seen it far too many times that I am losing track. Is it 62 times? Something like that. Maybe it is 63, but the numbers are getting higher and higher every week of the Liberals supporting the Conservatives' agenda, while in question period and at committees, they are trying to convince Canadians of something different.

Here is an issue on which we clearly need the Liberals to show a bit of backbone. We have that power. This is a minority Parliament. It should conduct itself like one. Otherwise, all members supporting the government should simply stand and say so. That would be more honest and it would show more integrity than what we have seen so far.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again I rise in connection with Bill C-2, but this time at the report stage. I hardly need mention that we in the Bloc are here first and foremost to defend the interests of Quebec. We also count on the people of Quebec to keep us informed, and at times that makes us almost a substitute for the government. To date the government has never really given us any impact studies to provide an overview of the repercussions of a free trade agreement on the economy of Canada or Quebec as a whole.

But some careful analysis is required. Overall, in Quebec, we see that we will stand to benefit from the free trade agreement with the European free trade association. As hon. members know, pharmaceuticals are hugely important to Quebec. We export and import with one of the countries, Switzerland. As well, nickel is an important mineral and some 80% of trade in nickel is with Norway. Then there is aluminum with Iceland. Those three factors mean that Quebec would stand to gain from this free trade agreement, and would have huge potential opportunities in future.

As we can see from a closer analysis, the shipbuilding industry is an important component of this free trade agreement. The agreement has been in negotiations since 1998. Preparations to sign it have taken 10 years. We know there have been slowdowns, and even interruptions in the negotiations, in large part due to the shipbuilding component. This industry is an important part of the negotiations. Today we see that, whether or not there is a free trade agreement that would do away with duties applicable to ships after 15 years, after an initial 3 year period—so 18 years in all—that is not the only thing that threatens shipbuilding. What does threaten it is the lack of a policy for this industry, particularly on the part of the federal government.

The federal government, for all intents and purposes, has not given any type of subsidy to the shipbuilding industry since 1988. Norway has heavily subsidized this industry, allowing it to modernize, progress and become more productive, while Canada and Quebec were dealing with gaps in the federal government's shipbuilding policy. For one thing, measures to assist the shipbuilding industry were ill-suited. As well, the Quebec government had a refundable tax credit which for some years was considered by Ottawa to be taxable income under the Income Tax Act. That allowed it to claw back 20% to 25% of the assistance that Quebec paid to the shipbuilding industry. Not only did the federal government cut assistance to the industry but it raked in 20% to 25% of the funding and refundable tax credits that Quebec gave the industry.

So, with or without an agreement, if we want to preserve the shipbuilding industry, it is imperative that the government invest heavily in it.

• (1545)

The government appeared before the committee today to testify. It said that the help it is giving to the industry is sufficient, be it structured facility financing or accelerated capital cost allowance. That is far from sufficient.

My NDP colleague stated earlier that his party recently received the support of the union at the Davie shipyard in Lauzon. The union is supporting the NDP attempt to have the shipbuilding industry excluded from this free trade agreement. However, this agreement has been under negotiation for 10 years with countries in the European Free Trade Association. Since the shipbuilding industry is the problem, if it is excluded from this agreement, another agreement will have to be negotiated.

The Bloc Québécois is here to work in the interests of Quebec. Those interests are well served by this agreement in various ways, even in terms of the shipbuilding industry. As we can see, the agreement covers a period of over 18 years. The federal government will definitely change during that time, and a new government would see the need to invest heavily in the shipbuilding industry. If it were to receive nothing from the government one way or another, free trade agreement or not, the shipbuilding industry would probably not survive. We must give it a fighting chance of surviving through direct assistance, which could take many forms.

We often hear about loans and loan guarantees these days. This is important. The government can also provide assistance for lease agreements for boats, which would have the same effect as accelerated capital cost allowance and have an impact on the working capital of the various businesses. We could also talk about funding for the purchase of boats. A responsible government could bring all of these elements together in such a way as to establish a real policy for the shipbuilding industry. The term “responsible”, however, applies less and less to the current government. It is hard to say if it was any more applicable to the previous government. People often learn from their mistakes. Perhaps one day this country will have a truly responsible government to the great benefit of these industries, which make such an important contribution to Canada and Quebec.

In any case, 18 years is a long time. That is enough time for Quebecers to give themselves their own country, one that will take charge of its shipbuilding industry and its own trade agreements with the rest of the countries on the planet. We would then have the best of all possible worlds.

• (1550)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with a great deal of interest to every word my colleague from Sherbrooke said. As members know, there may be a preliminary vote in the next few days, but the final vote on the decision to remove shipbuilding and shipyards from this agreement will not take place for a few weeks.

Workers in Quebec are unanimously calling on the Bloc Québécois to support the NDP proposal to exclude shipyards from this agreement. Workers in Quebec are very clear. There is no nuance or difference of opinion. Shipbuilding workers in Quebec are very clear that the Bloc Québécois should vote with the NDP.

In the coming weeks, this issue will be raised repeatedly. It will not soon go away, even though that is what the Conservatives would like.

My question is simple. What do workers in Quebec have to do so that the Bloc Québécois supports the NDP's efforts to help shipyard workers in Quebec?

• (1555)

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, as soon as I can get away—I will not say from my NDP colleague's incessant questions, but as soon as I can go to my office—I will get in touch with the union. The previous NDP member informed us of the support of the union of shipyard workers in Lauzon. The time on the document indicates that we received it during question period. I spoke earlier about responsibilities, and my primary responsibility is to verify the union's position and expectations and see how we can reach an agreement.

I was an accountant in a former life, and I have worked for unions. When they gave me mandates, I always made sure they could keep their jobs, and that is my goal now.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear my hon. colleague's comments. I have before me a letter from a shipbuilding and marine union, signed by Jamie Vaslet, asking the Liberal Party to support excluding shipbuilding from this agreement.

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Why must a union ask this or that political party to protect Canadian jobs? I do not know, but I would like to hear what my colleague has to say.

Despite our political allegiances, I thought that this House would be unanimous and exclude shipbuilding from this agreement in order to protect our Canadian industry. That seems straightforward to me.

Why does my colleague think that some members of this House do not support what we are discussing?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Sherbrooke only has time for a short reply.

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is probably referring to a letter of support from a different union.

In Quebec, there are two main shipyards: the Davie Yards and the Groupe Maritime Verreault. I have to admit that we have not spoken directly with the management of these two firms, or with the union.

Furthermore, we have never received a clear indication of their position. However, as the previous member stated, there is still time. Therefore, I will ensure that I obtain the required information and study the impact this could have on the Canada-EFTA Free Trade Agreement.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I stand today to speak to Bill C-2, yet another free trade agreement, I am concerned for the workers of Hamilton and for Canadian workers as a whole.

Canada has gone through over 20 years of free trade agreements. In my riding of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, particular the Hamilton East portion, I have watched this seemingly endless parade of companies that have left Hamilton or closed as a direct result of free trade. My observation is that most Canadians do not feel free trade is free at all.

I watched Burlington Street in Hamilton go from a dynamic, bustling centre of manufacturing to a mere shadow of its former self. In fact, the very day the original draft free trade agreement was tabled, the first one between Canada and the United States, Firestone Canada in Hamilton, on the words of that draft agreement, closed its once proud plant on Burlington Street.

We, the labour movement and organizations like the then brand new Council of Canadians warned them, because most Canadian cities were within 100 miles of the American border, we warned them that with free trade and the removal tariff barriers our plants owned by American companies would move or close.

I take absolutely no satisfaction in having been right. During the first two years of that original free trade agreement, between 1988 and 1990, Ontario lost 524,000 manufacturing jobs. Canada and Hamilton, in particular, quite literally bled jobs to the United States and Mexico.

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Hamilton, long known for steel production, was once one of the leading textile manufacturing sites in all of North America. Those plants are long gone. During the past 20 to 25 years, Canada and, to a great degree, much of the free world has been on the track, a track comprised of deregulation and free trade as espoused first by Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and Brian Mulroney.

For evidence, look to today's crisis in the American market, a place where business was conducted in this wild west environment. Now we can see the outcome, the lack of proper regulation or deregulation and the requirement of enforcement. It is almost like the sheriff left town and Wall Street ran rampant with that reckless abandon, which we have become so aware of in the last few months.

Canada once had an auto pact, which protected our market and ensured employment in that important industry and the associated support industries. The Liberals, when in government, let that agreement slip away. Now we not only have cuts to auto plants, but Hamiltonian steelworkers are being laid off. In fact, we are seeing thousands upon thousands of support jobs lost along with those direct manufacturing jobs.

For Hamilton and Hamilton steel plants, this has proven to be devastating. No orders means no work which means layoffs.

As I said before, I can recall in 1988 when the labour movement and other organizations like that newly minted Council of Canadians were warning that this day would come if the Government of Canada signed on to that free trade agreement.

Similar warnings were issued in 1993, regarding NAFTA. The Liberals were at the front with those warnings. In fact, they were warning themselves. They made promises that they would not sign onto NAFTA, which they did shortly after winning that election.

Today Canadian industries are very fragile. Industries like shipbuilding, in particular, need attention from their government. Canada has been known worldwide for the quality of our shipbuilding, but other countries have worked hard to protect their shipbuilding with massive subsidies to aid their development, such as with Norway. Canada has lagged and has not had the comprehensive strategy to protect this important industry.

At committee, the New Democratic Party tried to protect this industry with no less than 16 motions, which were turned back by the chair with the aid of the Liberal Party members present. For the information of the members present today, shipbuilding is exempted from NAFTA.

At committee, the Shipbuilding Association of Canada made it clear that shipbuilding must be removed from the Canada-EU trade agreement. This agreement would reduce Canadian tariffs on ships from 25% to zero over 10 to 15 years. If we allow this to happen, we will lose our market altogether.

●(1600)

Members also need to know that the United States has always protected its shipbuilding industry ever since the Jones bill of 1920. That legislation protects the U.S. capacity to produce commercial ships. The Jones act requires commerce between U.S. ports on inland waters to be reserved for ships that are U.S. built, U.S. owned, registered under U.S. law and U.S. manned. In recent years the

United States has implemented a heavily subsidized naval reconstruction program. All of this is to the direct benefit of its shipyards and its U.S. workers.

Where has Canada been? Canada can and must do the same thing. Canada must separate shipbuilding from this free trade agreement.

Finally, the shipbuilding sector must be completely excluded from the agreement, as I have said. The government should immediately put together an enhanced, structured financing facility, along with an accelerated capital cost allowance for this industry. An important component would be a buy Canadian strategy.

We have heard this buy Canadian strategy at a number of levels. We heard it first when the United Steelworkers made representation to the Congress in the United States on the buy American plan.

Within the free trade agreements to which we are now party, there are provisions that allow for a buy Canadian strategy. They allow for municipalities and provincial governments to buy Canadian. There are some limitations to that, but the Conservative government does not seem to want to entertain this option at all. In fact, the so-called free traders of the world raise their arms in concern when it happens, but that could be the very foundation for the salvation of not only shipbuilding, but our manufacturing sector altogether.

●(1605)

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the hon. member, and I was quite intrigued. He referred to what was supposedly said and discussed in committee. The member was not in committee. I vice-chair the committee. I am surprised how he came up with this information.

He referred to Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and took us back well over 20 years. He spoke about how bad trade was with these free trade agreements. Does he think we should not have signed any agreements? We were doing hundreds of millions of dollars in trade 21 to 25 years ago. To the best of my knowledge, today we do on an average day \$1.8 billion to \$2 billion, which creates jobs.

The most important thing he talked about was shipbuilding. The stakeholders came before our committee, and he was not at committee, and gave us suggestions on how we could make this work. For example, he talked about SFF, the structured financial facility, and the ACCA, the accelerated capital cost allowance. If the government were to incorporate the two, it would become a viable situation for our shipbuilding industry.

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Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, first, as I said in my remarks, I do not think free trade has been free for Canada at all. The hon. member asked what we should have been doing in initially.

Back in the time of that original free trade agreement, we had proposals for sector by sector management, managed trade. That is what the auto pact was. People of the day, who were concerned about free trade, said that we should have looked at the individual sectors and modelled after the auto pact. I think that strategy would have served Canada better. I am sure within this place many free traders believe the entire opposite.

Simon Reisman, who negotiated on behalf of Canada, was a proponent of selling water to the United States, yet he was on our side. He was part of a compact, a group that was prepared to sell water to the United States.

From my perspective, we were sunk from the very beginning on that agreement.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the historical perspective of the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek about these trade agreements really informs the debate on Bill C-2.

One thing that strikes me is that since 1924, every free trade deal that has ever been negotiated by the Americans has excluded shipbuilding and marine services. The Americans have always understood how important shipbuilding and marine services are to their economy and to their sense of national purpose, and the industry is very important.

It is very interesting to hear these notions of what free trade is all about and that somehow it is about enhancing the economy and protecting jobs. We can see, in this case, the Americans have actually carved out shipbuilding because they want to protect it. This is very relevant to the debate today.

Would the member comment on that?

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, I certainly see the relevance between all the trade agreements from the very first one.

The member might have noticed in my remarks that I referred to the Council of Canadians. It was part of my initial activism. I was the very first president of the Hamilton chapter of the Council of Canadians, and that was where that foundation was built. That understanding came from there.

• (1610)

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to stand and talk on behalf of Canadian workers. I do so with a heavy heart. I do not understand why we have to think of making this exemption, to take the shipbuilding industry out of this agreement. It would stand to reason that members from all parties would largely support protecting Canadian industry, regardless of which political spectrum we represent.

However, I will pursue this and explain why I believe the shipbuilding industry should be taken out of this agreement. I have a letter written to my colleague, the MP for Burnaby—New Westminster, from the Shipyard General Worker's Federation of B.C., which states:

On behalf of these members, I am writing to urge that the government reconsider signing EFTA as there will be many seriously negative consequences for the shipbuilding industry.

At the very least, we request that the shipbuilding industry be exempted from EFTA...

I have a letter, which I find disturbing, that has been written to members of the Liberal Party on behalf of 700 Halifax shipyard workers, asking that party to support us in making this exemption. It states:

In every free trade agreement since 1924 United States of America has seen the importance of this strategic industry to its sovereignty yet we in Canada fail to put policies in place to even protect our shipbuilding industry, although the conservative government would like the people of Canada to believe that a 15 year phase-out of the 25% tariff on shipbuilding would put us on a level playing field with the European trade association this is pure fantasy...

This is according to Jamie Vaslet of the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of Canada.

Mr. George MacPherson, president of the Shipyard General Workers' Federation of B.C. basically has stated:

The Canadian shipbuilding industry is already operating at about a third of its capacity. Canadian demand for ships over the next 25 years is estimated to be worth \$40 billion. Under the proposed FTAs with Norway and Iceland, and the planned FTA with Korea and then Japan, these Canadian shipbuilding jobs are in serious jeopardy. In these terms, this government plan is an absolute outrage.

[*Translation*]

The only thing missing is the political will of this government. We fully support the position of Mr. Andrew McArthur, member of the board of directors of the Shipbuilding Association of Canada, and the CAW who made a strong case before the committee.

First of all, the shipbuilding sector must be excluded from this agreement. Then the federal government must immediately establish a structured financing mechanism with accelerated capital cost allowance.

[*English*]

Over the last 20 years we seem to have had a tendency in our government to forget about the workers and those Canadians who depend on various professions when we sign agreements. We are looking right now at an example, the shipbuilding industry. I believe this is a symptom of our attitude as a country towards all industries in Canada.

I would like to talk a little about agriculture. As we speak, there is a movement on the part of the World Trade Organization to put pressure on Canada to bring about the end of the Canadian Wheat Board by ending its ability to borrow at government rates and by requiring Canada to eliminate single-desk selling by 2013. The Wheat Board is supported by western farmers in Canada and has been getting good prices that enable farmers to make a living in these troubled times. Regarding that same agreement, I was told by representatives of the Canadian dairy federation that each dairy farmer stands to lose \$70,000 if modifications are made to supply management at the World Trade Organization.

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That is not acceptable. We saw it when we signed under NAFTA and the free trade agreement with the United States. We have seen over the last 20 years that cattle ranchers are making less than half of what they were making before the free trade agreement was signed in 1989. We have seen thousands of vegetable producers devastated in Ontario and British Columbia because they are no longer to compete with cheap produce coming in from the United States. Before the free trade agreement, we had in-season tariffs so that a vegetable producer on the Niagara Peninsula could make sure that he or she had a market and was able to make a living.

We do not have any more of that because of these free trade agreements we are signing. As I said earlier, shipbuilding is symptomatic of the attitude we have somehow developed in Canada, the attitude that we have to give away everything. Americans have not given away their shipbuilding industry. Americans have protected their energy under NAFTA, while we have given away our energy under NAFTA. We cannot even decrease our exports of oil and gas to the United States without proportionately decreasing domestic consumption.

We have signed a chapter in NAFTA that allows foreign corporations to sue our Canadian governments, with the result that our tax dollars go to trying to defend our governments, whether provincial, federal or local, against these suits.

It is time for us to realize and determine the direction that we want to take as a country. A very positive step in this direction would be to get this shipbuilding clause out of this agreement so that it becomes a fair trade agreement and an agreement whereby we can protect Canadian jobs.

I would like to go further. I would like to say that all of us here in the House should start encouraging the idea of giving preference to Canadian procurement when we are buying military vessels or airplanes or food for Canadian institutions. It is ludicrous that we have to bring up the topic that we have to either support our industry or support our farmers, that somehow we have slipped along this path and it does not really matter anymore.

In conclusion, as many of my colleagues here have mentioned, I think that taking this shipbuilding clause out of the agreement would signify that we are ready not only to start protecting our shipbuilding industry but also to set a precedent for the future, so that no country would be allowed to put pressure on us to get rid of our jobs as we sign these agreements.

• (1615)

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about giving away, and we do not give away. I want to remind him briefly that the member for Outremont was willing to sell Canadian water. That is just for the record. He is on the record saying that.

Last Thursday we had members of the shipbuilding industry before our committee again. They said that with certain adjustments and certain restructuring, we can be competitive. It is not something that is going to happen overnight. I am glad he mentioned that it would take over 15 years.

Does the member think that we can just walk away from any trade agreements? I will give an example. We procrastinated in signing the

Central America Free Trade Agreement. The Americans did sign, and they are benefiting. Today we are out of that picture. Is he telling us that we should just not sign agreements with anybody and stay esoteric as a nation? Is that what he is really advocating?

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, I think what we need is some backbone in this country. What we need is to stand up for our workers and sign an agreement that is fair. The American Congress does it all the time. It has done it with shipbuilding. It continually hammers us with agriculture. Other countries have supported their shipbuilding industry, to the extent that Norway, a major competitor, will be coming in and supplying ships to our country if we do not start doing something to stand up for our industry.

We can have trade, but we have to stand up for Canadians first.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say, right on to the member for British Columbia Southern Interior. I think he nailed it on the head. We are not opposed to trade agreements. Our concern is with what we give away and whether those trade agreements are fair.

I have just been reviewing some of the media reports on this story. One of the big things that happened about a month or so ago is that for the first time since 1976, Canada posted a trade deficit, meaning that we bought more from foreign suppliers than we sold to foreign customers. That deficit was \$458 million.

Here we have a trade agreement that is going to do in our shipbuilding industry when we could actually be producing things. We could be manufacturing important resources and products here in our own country and, hopefully, supplying them to others, yet we are going to be signing off on a bill that is going to go in exactly the opposite direction.

I think the member for British Columbia Southern Interior has got it exactly right: our job here is to stand up for Canadian workers, to support these industries and to make sure they do not get signed away on a slip of paper, even if it is up 15 years. The reality is that this is a rotten deal, and we are hearing this from the workers themselves.

I would like to ask the member to give us more information on these trade agreements and how bad they are for Canada.

• (1620)

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, as an answer I have a quotation from Mr. Andrew McArthur, chair of the Shipbuilding Association of Canada. At the standing committee, he said, "The position of the association from day one is that shipbuilding should be carved out, carved out from EFTA. We have been told categorically time and again by the government, 'We do not carve industries out.' "

Why do we not carve industries out? Why are we so timid that we cannot look at an agreement and say that we will take this and we won't take that, and that if one party does not like it, we will deal with somebody else? As I said, the Americans do this all the time.

We have done this in agriculture. We have done this in softwood. We have sold out our softwood industry. Now we are doing it in shipbuilding, and I think it is a shame. I think it is a shame that everybody does not stand up here to support carving this out of this agreement.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member from Scarborough Centre knows full well that every single representative from the shipbuilding industry, whether owners, manufacturers or workers, asked for this carve-out.

I want to ask the member for British Columbia Southern Interior why he thinks the Liberals would ignore every single witness, all of whom unanimously said to support the NDP and vote for the carve—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please.

The hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior. Please give a short answer.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not know the answer to that. I always believed that the Liberal Party stood up for Canadian workers and stood up for Canadian families, and I do not quite understand why he would not support keeping Canadian industry viable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Equalization Payments; the hon. member for Halifax, Housing; the hon. member for Winnipeg North, Pay Equity.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House in support of the motion by the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster to strike out clause 38 from the Canada-Europe free trade agreement.

It may come as a surprise to the House that a landlubber such as the representative from Edmonton—Strathcona would care about the shipping industry, but let me share with the House today the long historic background my family has with this industry.

Let me share with you that first of all we allowed the decimation of the fish stocks on our east coast, and now the fish stocks are disappearing on our west coast. Entire communities have lost their revenue source.

Now former fishers and fish plant workers must leave their communities and commute to the northern area of my province to toil in the tar sands to feed their communities.

Now we witness, with the support of the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party, the demise of the historic nation-building shipbuilding industry and the jobs once provided by this historic sector. We witnessed every representative of the shipping industry, whether workers or owners, coming to the parliamentary committee and begging for the support of the members of the House for the

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continuation of their industry. No support was given to them, except from the members of my party.

Shame on the official opposition members. They are supposed to stand up for Canadians. The promise of the Conservative Party to stand up for Canadians disappears when it comes to speaking for Canadians' benefit in yet another free trade agreement.

Shipping and shipbuilding, next to the *coureurs des bois*, have been the key to building the very foundations of our nation. My family's roots, beginning around 1610 in Mosquito Point and Carbonear, were based on the shipping industry. My ancestor, Gilbert Pike, was a buccaneer. Their ships attacked my ancestor's ships, and they moved to Newfoundland and became very active in the fishing industry.

My family depended on the shipping industry to bring in the supplies so that our community could survive and to ship the cod out to the European community. It was very critical to trade. If not for the shipbuilding industry, the entire community of Carbonear would not exist. The most famous person in Newfoundland, Sheila NaGeira, is my ancestor.

I say to the House at this point in time that we are talking about the demise of one of the founding industries of our country. How can the other members of the House sit by and allow this industry to disappear?

It may be unknown to other members of the House, perhaps even those from my city, that one of the most important founding industries in my own city of Edmonton was the historic shipbuilding industry on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River. It was one of the most important industries that founded our city and kept our city going. They built both sailing ships and barges that plied the rivers, developed the north, fed the fur trade industry, and supported the aboriginal and the trapping industries and the gold rush.

If it were not for that industry, the city of Edmonton would not have developed into the burgeoning municipality it is today.

The shipbuilding industry has come to the members of Parliament pleading for the support of their own elected officials. I ask my colleagues to please stand up for shipbuilders and for those who work in that industry, to please stand up for Canadians.

One of the other nations that will be party to this agreement, the Canada-European agreement on free trade, has stood up for its industry. Norway stood up for its shipbuilding industry and now has a burgeoning industry. Our southern partner, the United States of America, has stood up for its shipbuilding industry. What is wrong with our country? What is wrong with our elected officials?

We have the members of the shipbuilding union and the shipbuilders themselves taking the time away from their families and their jobs to come to Ottawa to plead with members of Parliament: "Please, we are all for free trade. We are all for selling our products overseas and entering into this very important agreement, but stand up for our side of the trade".

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Are we going to be a country only of buyers, and not sellers? We need also, though, to keep in mind, as the hon. member for the Northwest Territories regularly reminds me in the House and outside, that we have to look to the future. What about the Arctic trade?

• (1625)

The members across the floor keep talking about how they are going to build development in the Arctic. What the heck do they think we are going to use when we are protecting and developing in the Arctic? We need ships. Should those ships not be built in Canada? Do we not have the expertise and wherewithal to develop and build those specialized vessels that not only Canadians, our Coast Guard and those who ply our oceans will use, but we could sell those specialized ships to people around the world who are chomping at the bit to come into Arctic waters?

In the presentation by Dr. Vincent, renowned polar expert, last week to parliamentarians, he pointed out that Canada has an opportunity, both in the Arctic and the Antarctic, but for the Arctic by virtue of geography it is ours to claim. Why are we not claiming this piece of the industry and developing and building the very ships that will ply the Arctic so that we can ensure they are safe and do not cause environmental harm.

The member said that our opportunity for marketing was in the Antarctic. We could also be marketing specialized ships to ply the Antarctic and support the researchers.

I am standing today, as are the other members, in support of this recommendation to strike clause 38, which means that we will be speaking on behalf of Canadians when we sign onto this trade agreement.

I had the privilege of working for the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation. That organization was formed as part of one of the side agreements to NAFTA. I am very proud to say that I contributed in a positive way to free trade in North America.

However, we need to ensure we stand up for the important sides of free trade and that we remember the interests of Canadians not just the interests of major corporations or people who might want to sell Canada wares or might want to sell Canadian ships. We should be thinking in terms of the workers in Canada in this time of economic constraint. We should be thinking, first and foremost, of supporting Canadian industries and Canadian workers.

I rest my case. I think the request of the hon. member is eminently reasonable. It speaks on behalf of Canadians. It is about time the official opposition of this House spoke up on behalf of Canadians.

• (1630)

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member's colleague, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, who sits on our committee and who has done a tremendous job in terms of putting the point forward on shipbuilding, was at the meeting last Thursday when the representatives said, first, that if the industry were properly structured, and second, if the structural financial facility were combined with the accelerated capital cost allowance that would really make things happen for the industry. It would be viable, strong and it could compete.

If those two things were in place, would the New Democratic Party support this?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, as a lawyer I would have to profess that it is inappropriate for me to rely on hearsay. I cannot specifically speak to the remarks passed on to me by the hon. member as I did have not the opportunity to participate in that discussion.

However, I am well aware, from reading the written record, that every intervenor who came forward to speak as a witness spoke in favour of striking out this clause.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her presentation on this very important issue. I want to go back to some of the discussion about the future of Canadian shipbuilding and the future of developing the Arctic and the kinds of vessels that are required there.

Taking the situation where there is no protection in Canada for the development of new technology that has to be employed on these ships, what company would invest in Canada? What company would put the effort into Canada when it could be undercut by so many other countries around the world for the same type of technology, the same type of advanced work that is required to build the types of vessels that will be used in the Arctic in the future?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a very good point. Who else but Canada should put the needs of Canadians and our shipping as a top priority?

As an environmental lawyer with 35 years experience, I am extremely concerned about the plight of our Arctic and this drive to exploit it as fast as possible without ensuring we have the protections in place. We need only look back to the devastating spill on the west coast of British Columbia where shipbuilders gave little attention to environmental protection and every attention to plying their trade, with Canada suffering the effect on our wildlife, our oceans and the fishery.

It is absolutely incumbent upon Canada to ensure we are putting a priority on the development of shipping that will ply the trade either in our Great Lakes, in our Arctic or along our riverways.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, quite some time ago, the agriculture committee made a number of recommendations. I believe the member was with us when all members unanimously voted on food security recommendations. We submitted them to the government and were told that on some we had to be careful because of trade obligations.

I would submit that if every member of the House were asked whether they thought we should have a viable shipbuilding industry in Canada and would they support Canadian workers, I submit that every member would say yes. If that were the case, what pressures does my colleague feel there are to shift the focus? Why is there a policy not to take this out of this agreement but to exclude Canadian workers? What is happening?

Since we agree that we should support industry, workers and families, what pressures are there that caused the federal government to make this shift?

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•(1635)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, in all honesty, I cannot imagine what influences there could be that would have any level of credibility to the members of Parliament in the House that they would put ahead of the needs of our Canadian shipping industry and the workers who work in it.

When we are making decisions on such momentous matters as to whether we should sign on to a free trade agreement and what the terms will be, surely we must be thinking, first and foremost, of the interests of Canadians and the jobs that can be created for the future benefit of Canadians. I cannot imagine what on earth members would be thinking that they would not support the amendment proposed by the hon. member.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by quoting a couple of witnesses who came before the committee because they were referenced here when I was in the House today. I, like the hon. member, was at the committee when they were there.

In reply to a question about his belief as to whether this was a sellout of the shipbuilding industry and should it be a carve out, one witness, Mr. Andrew McArthur, said:

If it's not a sellout, it's getting close to it. It certainly doesn't enhance the survivability of the industry. It jeopardizes it. It would be pretty hard to say it's an absolute sellout, although it's getting close.

That was said by an industry representative who talks about his multiple years in the industry. In fact, the gentleman has had experience on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, originally being from my homeland of Scotland and knowinf the shipbuilding industry there as well. He goes on to say:

It's not only EFTA that concerns us. The ground rules may be set.

I repeat that, through EFTA, the ground rules could be set because we are negotiating with Singapore and South Korea. Once we set those ground rules, if we get the same with all these other countries, the industry could be in very tough conditions and could only survive on government contracts.

This side of the House and the other side of the House know what happened to those government contracts. I believe there was a sense that there would be two new supply ships built for the Canadian navy. I could ask my hon. colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore, if he were here, if he had seen those two supply ships in Halifax lately and I think the response would probably be no, since they have not been built. Part of the reason that they were not built was that the government said the bid was too expensive. That is from our yards. Of course the bid may have, in the government's estimation, been too expensive but it is because the shipyards are not producing at maximum level. By their own records, they are producing at about one-third capacity, which means they need to retrofit the yard to do a vessel of that size and they need to find workers. That multiplies the effect of what the cost will be when we bid the job because we will need to find those workers and, indeed, enhance the yard so that it can produce the product.

All those things contribute to the cost and the fact that the cost was so high. One could argue whether the cost was really that high when Canadian taxpayer money would be building Canadian ships, Canadian sailors would be on those ships and those ships would be made by Canadian workers in Canada who would be paying

Canadian taxes to the Canadian government. The government would then be able to circulate that money back into the economy through other measures and other programs. More important, inside the community where those Canadian workers live, they would now be putting money back into the economy because they would be earning a wage and not be collecting employment insurance, which comes out of the fund and which could be used for other folks.

The multiplier effect is enormous. When we look at the cost of something and think that it is a little bit higher, a little bit higher than whose, begs the question. Is it Korea? Was that the government's intention? If Canadian yards are too expensive, it will send those Canadian vessels for the navy to Korea. Is part of the master plan to get EFTA in place and then simply negotiate the next shipbuilding contract with Korea? We will see what the industry and the workers representatives have told us at committee that the industry cannot survive.

Let us take a step back and see what is inside those yards. The people who work in those yards have very specific skills. Most of those skills are only adaptable to the yards that build those vessels. This is a highly-skilled workforce and building vessels is fairly labour intensive. An investment in a yard today produces jobs today as well, and, from those jobs, we produce apprenticeships, which is retraining.

I know the government is fond of talking about its action plan, about money for retraining and about money for jobs. This is the opportunity to take that rhetoric and simply write a cheque. The government should procure those vessels from Canadian yards, put those workers back to work and allow them to take on apprentices. Today the average age of a yardworker across the country is 53.

•(1640)

Albeit for someone such as me, who is just a little north of 53 years of age, to say that is getting on, by the same token, it does not take that much longer before those workers will retire. Without replacing those workers through an apprenticeship program, we will see the demise of the yard, because the labour component will disappear across this country. That would be a shame not only for those communities and those workers but for this country, which has the largest coastline in the world.

We really are a maritime nation, albeit some of us do not want to believe that from time to time. My own riding of Welland, of course, is named after the Welland Canal, bordered by two lakes and a river. It is split in half by the Welland Canal. It is hard for us to understand that we are a maritime nation when we live in the centre of Ontario, but indeed we are surrounded by water.

In my riding, from time to time we can actually watch the ships go across the bridge. It is really a tunnel for us but a bridge for the boats. For those who have never had the experience of heading down that tunnel and seeing a boat go across the top, it is the strangest feeling when it is experienced for the very first time.

To lose that ability to build those vessels in this country would be tantamount to criminal negligence.

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We need to understand what the industry is saying to us. I would think my hon. colleagues on the other side of the House, who tend to be friends of that group, would understand that, and if they do not, certainly the Liberals would, because the Liberals were on this file before the Conservative government was.

What the industry has said from day one is that they need a viable industry in this country to build ships, and we need to help them establish that. They are willing to do their part. In fact, the industry and the workers in the marine units have done that. What they are saying to the government is, "Allow us to do what other nations around this world are doing, just like the Jones Act did for the U.S. Let us carve out shipbuilding. Let us have the same opportunities that Americans have and we will be able to compete."

Not only that, but we would have the sense of security in this country that we are actually going to build naval vessels in Canada for Canadian sailors. It seems to me that is the very least we owe the women and men in our armed services, to understand that when they get on that vessel, it is Canadians who have produced it for them, it is Canadian quality that went into it, and it is Canadian security that provided it for them.

Not only that, but Canadian taxpayers are looking to us to spend their money wisely. They entrust us with their money and they expect us to spend it wisely. I have said this in my other career as a municipal councillor: There is no wiser decision we can make as people entrusted with their money than to spend it on them, to invest it in Canadians, who give it to us. Unwaveringly they say, "Here it is," and they provide it to us.

It seems to me that what we really need to do is have a carve-out. We look at the tariff program and say we can build it over a number of years. The industry is saying that will not let it survive. The Norwegian industry, which is the one that really we are going to compete with here, is an industry that spent the last 20 years being subsidized by the Norwegian government, so indeed it could end up going to the marketplace. Why is it that we cannot do the same thing?

We are not asking for any more than that. Carve it out. Carve it out so that we have an opportunity to do the same things the Norwegians have done. It seems the fairest thing to do. If the Norwegians thought it was good enough for Norwegian citizens, the least the Canadian government can do is say it is good enough for Canadians.

Why should we be second-class world citizens when it comes to looking after ourselves? Why would we want to put an industry and our workers in jeopardy when indeed we do not have to do that?

We have this opportunity here, and I would look to my colleagues on this side of the House, especially the Liberals, and say to them that they should rethink their position on the carve-out. They should rethink the perspective of what they are doing, which is selling out shipyard workers from coast to coast to coast in this country and decimating an industry that has been here for hundreds of years.

The first folks got here by ship. Whether they happened to be the aboriginal nations or not, one can talk about a land bridge, but a lot of folks actually sailed to this country. To think that somehow we do not have that industry anymore, it make one want to weep, to be

honest, especially someone such as myself who came here as a new Canadian with my parents.

My father came here to build ships. As a legacy to my father, because he has passed on now, the least I can do is stand in this House and say that I stood for shipbuilding in this country. That is what brought my family to this place and I will not let him down.

● (1645)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the NDP member for Welland for his very fine remarks. It has been really wonderful to hear some of the historical references just within our own caucus, from the member for Edmonton—Strathcona as well, about the history of shipbuilding and how important it is to us in this country and our families through the generations.

We talk so often about being from coast to coast to coast. As the member pointed out, we are a maritime nation. One of the really important points he made was that we should be looking at new apprenticeship programs. We should be looking at upgrading our shipbuilding industry and trying new technologies.

I wonder if the member could talk about that, because I know he is from the labour movement, and what it would mean in terms of training programs for a younger generation to be part of the shipbuilding industry, to carry it on into the new green economy.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that, as I have heard over the years from young people not just in my own riding but throughout the Niagara region, what is lacking is apprenticeship programs. There are programs in the colleges where students get a minimal amount of training, but ultimately what they need to have—and the terminology might be somewhat archaic—is a master-indentured worker program where, as an apprentice, they would work for a master tradesman or tradeswoman.

They need to actually have a place to do that, because they cannot serve an apprenticeship without a place to be. One of those places would be in a shipyard. There is an immense amount of trades programs inside shipyards, whether it be in the welding area, whether it be in the steel fabricating area or the rigging area, or whether it be as an electrician. The number of skills is unparalleled in most other industries.

In fact, the shipyard workers will say quite openly that nearly all the workers who actually work inside a yard are from apprenticeship programs and skilled workers. It seems to me that the easiest thing to do is simply invest in it. We would generate not only jobs for today, but jobs for tomorrow, because those apprentices will be taken up in the system and we will be retraining the youth for those jobs of tomorrow with skills that can be taken elsewhere, can be taken into the fabrication of towers for wind turbines in the green economy, can be taken all the way across in varying degrees.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Welland talked about the Welland Canal. I remember that people used to leave New Brunswick to work there and we heard a lot about that.

In the Maritimes, we do not have to do that. We live by the water. It is the same for Newfoundland and all the Atlantic provinces.

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Would the member agree that the government does not have respect for our workers? We have jobs that we could provide here in this country. We had Saint John Shipbuilding, but it is gone. Those workers did a good job for our country, but now those jobs are gone.

When I say the government does not respect the workers of our country, right now we have people leaving the Atlantic provinces to work in Alberta on the oil rigs. They are getting laid off, but foreign workers are staying because they are cheap labour.

Does the member agree that the government does not have respect for the workers of our country?

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Acadie—Bathurst for the question and the comments. There is no question that if the government really cared about workers it would invest in them. What flabbergasts me is that the shipyard workers and the shipyard owners themselves, the Irving family of shipyards, is telling the government to invest in the yards.

I can understand the Conservatives looking at Mr. Risser, who represents the CAW marine unit, and saying, “No, I do not think so; you are a trade union.” But the shipyard owners, the business conglomerate of the east coast of this country that owns the shipyards, are saying to the government, “Carve it out.” We need to carve it out.

Not only do the Conservatives, as my colleague has said, have disdain for the workers in those yards, they seem to have disdain for the shipyard owners. That astounds me, because ultimately this is an easy investment. We need those supply vessels. We need those Coast Guard vessels. We need them now. In fact, some would say we needed them a year or two ago.

Minister Flaherty says he wants to put money out there. Write the cheque.

• (1650)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please.

I remind members that they are not to refer to their colleagues by their given names but by their titles. In any event, the member's time has expired.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today and speak to Bill C-2. I particularly want to acknowledge the tireless work of two members from the New Democrats.

The member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, of course, is a very familiar voice in this House and has called consistently over the years that I have been here for a shipbuilding policy. The reason we are speaking today in this House is because both the Conservatives and the Liberals have failed on that account.

I also want to particularly acknowledge the member for Burnaby—New Westminster. It is with his very good work that we are here today to oppose vehemently the inclusion of shipbuilding in Bill C-2.

I want to turn to some of the work that the member—

I was going to say “the minister”. That would be an improvement, if we had here a minister from Burnaby—New Westminster.

I want to refer to some of the work that the member for Burnaby—New Westminster has done in connection with identifying some of the issues around shipbuilding. When he tabled a dissenting opinion, what he said was that Canada's shipbuilding industry is not operating anywhere near its maximum capacity and lacks support from the federal government.

Canada is the only major seafaring nation without a strategic plan for its shipbuilding industry. Unlike Canada, Norway has used its period of tariff protection to invest heavily in an expanded shipbuilding industry, making it competitive and efficient. It was thus able to phase out its government subsidies by the year 2000.

Because the shipbuilding industry has been worn away for so long by a lack of interest from the federal government, by the time the tariffs are dropped in 15 years, if no aggressive policy is put in place, there will be little left in Canada other than foreign shipbuilding firms.

The major concern, of course, is that this trade bill reduces tariffs on ships from 25% to zero over a period of 10 to 15 years, depending on the type of products, and nothing happens for the first three years.

Why does it matter?

I want to draw members' attention to a news release from 2007 that was titled, “No celebrations Friday for BC shipyard workers”. It talks about the fact that BC chose to build ferries in Germany. What we see is not only the fact that we could have had the capability to do it here, but as this particular article states,

While BC Ferries holds a \$60,000 party in Germany for 3,000 people on Friday, there will be no celebrating the launch of the first of three German-built Super-C Class ferries that have cost the province 3,500 direct and indirect jobs and the loss of \$542 million in investment, says the BC Shipyard General Workers' Federation.

By investing in shipyards in this country, we not only create direct and indirect jobs, we not only generate significant amounts of dollars in new investment, but what we always fail to calculate when we are looking at costs of shipbuilding are the returns to government. Those workers pay taxes, and successful businesses pay taxes. That needs to be factored into any kind of equation when we are talking about support to our shipbuilding industry.

When the committee was hearing testimony on this, there were a couple of industry people who came forward and talked about the importance of shipbuilding and why we should exempt shipbuilding from this particular agreement.

George MacPherson, the president of the B.C. Shipyard General Workers' Federation, at the standing committee on trade, on March 3, 2009, said,

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The Canadian shipbuilding industry is already operating at about a third of its capacity. Canadian demand for ships over the next 25 years is estimated to be worth \$40 billion.

Andrew McArthur, from the Shipbuilding Association of Canada, said,

The position of the association from day one is that shipbuilding should be carved out from EFTA. We have been told categorically time and again by the government that we do not carve industries out. We raise the question of the Jones Act in the U.S., which was carved out from NAFTA. We are not allowed to build or repair for the Americans. The Americans have free access to our market. So industries do get carved out. I'm sure there are numerous other examples.

So we have industry and labour arguing for this.

I want to touch on a couple of companies on Vancouver Island.

In my very own riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, we have the Nanaimo Shipyard Group. This shipyard has been in business since 1930 and has been in the same location, in the Newcastle Channel. It has over 10,000 square feet of covered area. This company mainly carries out refit and maintenance on DND, Coast Guard, and BC Ferry Corporation vessels. It also carries out work on deep-sea cargo vessels, fishing vessels, tug and barge fleets, yachts, fish farming service vessels and other coastal vessels. We can see that it has a wide range of experience in terms of the kinds of repairs it does.

• (1655)

Point Hope shipyard in beautiful Victoria was first established in 1873. Some have said it was the first shipyard in B.C. In fact, the ways were of wooden construction. It has a very significant history. It had written a letter to a number of ministers and talked about its long history, but it also pointed out their capabilities. It said:

Point Hope's capabilities extend to the construction of complete steel and aluminum vessels up to 1,500 tons and 60 meters in length.

It went on to talk about the fact that it was ISO certified. It was also applying for additional ISO certifications so that it would meet environmental standards. It said:

We are a key participant in Canada's defence and industrial marine sector providing significant employment and revitalization in the core of the City of Victoria. Point Hope is a success story and a model for the industry and has the capabilities and resources to continue to grow and expand.

We should be standing up for our shipyards. The member for Burnaby—New Westminster says that we should stand up for Canada. The shipyards and labour have some solutions. The Nanaimo shipyard has written to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates saying that it is the owner-operator of a small to medium-sized enterprise engaged in shipbuilding and repair. It employs approximately 100 to 150 people in four locations, Halifax, Nanaimo, Port Alberni and Victoria.

The shipyard talks about the fact that so many of the small and medium-sized enterprises have either gone bankrupt or been forced out of the industry. It has asked why the Government of Canada, in the context of a larger shipbuilding strategy, does not have a policy that carves out some work for the small and medium-sized enterprises. It has pointed to the example of what happens in the United States.

The United States has something called a small business administration program. I will not go through all of the details on

this, but it is a really good example of how the U.S. government has created categories for contract opportunities reserved exclusively for small and medium-sized businesses. There is a whole procedure that small and medium-sized businesses can access.

In case members do not think there is not widespread support from shipyard workers in industry, I want to quote from some letters.

One letter is from the Shipyard General Workers' Federation of British Columbia, dated March 11, 2009. This is written to the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, but it feels so passionately about this that it wanted to ensure some of its words were said in the House. It says:

The Shipyard General Workers Federation represents approximately 2,000 skilled members who work in the shipyards, marine manufacturing and supply industries, and in the metal fabrication shops in British Columbia's coastal communities.

In its letter, it is requesting that, at the very least, the industry should be exempted from EFTA. It says:

We urge the government to recognize and act in the interest of this vital and strategic sector and develop a comprehensive industrial strategy that has as its objective the long term stability and viability of a shipbuilding and marine fabrication industry on both the East and West coasts.

In the Pacific Northwest, which includes Victoria and Nanaimo, we know that between the major retrofits that used to be available through Point Hope and some of the other shipyards, we also have a significant number of small pleasure craft. I do not have the exact numbers, but it has been rumoured that in the whole base, including Washington and Oregon, there is up to a million small pleasure craft. When we are talking about a shipbuilding industry, we are not only talking about large-vessel building. We are also talking about the smaller pleasure craft. There is a whole range of abilities there.

A national shipbuilding strategy needs to look at that range of abilities. The fact that we have the longest coastline in the entire world, that we literally do go from coast to coast to coast, could be a significant economic driver in many of our communities. It used to be.

In the words of the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, we need to remember shipbuilding. It was one of the founding industries in our country. When I talk about coast to coast to coast, I am not ignoring the inland waterways, which the member for Welland rightly brought up. However, I want to focus on the west coast for now.

We have the ability to rebuild that industry. We still have infrastructure in place. I urge the members in the House to not support this bill, carve out shipbuilding and develop that national shipbuilding strategy.

• (1700)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan because I know she believes very passionately about this issue. She is from a shipbuilding community.

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As she was speaking, I was thinking of the ferries going back and forth between Horseshoe Bay and Nanaimo and from Tsawwassen to Swartz Bay. She is right on when she talks about the travesty of B.C. ferries being built in Germany, and the celebration over there. There was no celebration in B.C., because B.C. workers, very skilled experienced workers, were out of jobs.

One of the most important elements we are debating today is the need for a shipbuilding strategy across the country that incorporates the elements of training a younger generation.

In terms of our context on the west coast, B.C. ferries is so much a critical part of our transportation system. Without it, we would not exist in our coastal community.

Could she talk about what that means in terms of her community and how it would generate economic activity if we had a national shipbuilding program, if it were carved out, and a strategy to train a new generation in this time-honoured skill of shipbuilding in the Nanaimo area?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, my riding is heavily dependent on ferries. We have ferries that go from Nanaimo over to Vancouver, but we also have ferries that go to the smaller islands, Thetis, Kuper, Gabriola. It is the heart of our community. I am very proud of the fact that Nanaimo Shipyard still continues to exist in downtown Nanaimo.

We need to ensure that Nanaimo Shipyard continues to exist. We need to ensure that, first, there is a procurement strategy, a buy Canada strategy, that would ensure shipyards, like Nanaimo Shipyard, have access. We are watching these smaller shipyards being squeezed out of the bidding game because of the way that some of these procurement contracts are being bundled. That is one aspect of it.

The second aspect is it heartbreaking to watch ferries being built overseas. We have a highly trained, highly skilled workforce in British Columbia. The other day I referred to Jim Sinclair from the B.C. Federation of Labour, when I talked about the deindustrialization of the province of B.C. I talked about this in the forestry context, but we can see this in the context of shipbuilding as well.

I would argue that there needs to be an investment in shipbuilding. There needs to be an investment in maintaining that infrastructure. There needs to be an investment in the skills and the training to ensure we can attract new workers into the industry. We need to set some goals and targets to say that we will take our place in the world as a very proud shipbuilding nation. We have the capabilities to do that.

We need to exclude shipbuilding from this bill.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, as I always do, I listened with a lot of interest to the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan. She brings good sense and practicalities to the House. It is important to her voice.

I found it particularly interesting when she talked about the B.C. marine workers. The B.C. marine workers are saying that the government should carve shipbuilding out of this agreement. They see this as a shipbuilding sellout.

We also had a softwood lumber sellout that cost thousands of jobs in British Columbia. The B.C. Conservatives voted for the softwood sellout. Now they are trying to push through the shipbuilding sellout.

My question for the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan would be this. With these B.C. Conservatives simply wanting to sell out British Columbia every chance they get, what are they really good for?

• (1705)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, I think there was a song that said “absolutely nothing”.

I appreciate the member raising the issue of the softwood sellout. Not only is my riding a forestry one, but it used to be a strong shipbuilding one. We have seen that industry eroded.

I spoke earlier about the deindustrialization of British Columbia. This is just another example of it. What we have is a failed forestry policy, as one saw mill and one pulp and paper mill after another closes or goes into curtailment. Particularly in coastal British Columbia, we are seeing that deindustrialization around forestry. Now we are going to watch the same thing happen with shipbuilding.

If we care about our industrial base in the country, we need to invest in it.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to join in the debate on Bill C-2. First, let me pay tribute to the member for Burnaby—New Westminster for carrying this debate on behalf of our party.

I come from a shipbuilding province, but I do not want to be parochial about this. We are a shipbuilding nation. My part of the country has been building ships for hundreds and hundreds of years for the fishing industry, going back 400 and 500 years.

We are building ships now. We have a modern shipyard in Marystown that is capable of terrific work. It was selected, in fact, for the joint supply ships for the Canadian navy, one of the two final bidders that were ready to roll and go to build these ships. What happened? At the last minute, or 72 hours before the election was called, the government cancelled the contract. The Canadian navy was about to issue a contract that was worth some \$2.5 billion, which would have provided work, if Marystown was the successful bidder, and lot of people in my neck of the woods had every reason to believe that it would have been, to build those ships for six, eight or ten years of work and another fifteen or twenty years to provide the maintenance of them.

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While Newfoundland and Labrador is part of the historic fishing, maritime, shipbuilding, boat building nation, we cannot forget that shipbuilding is a modern 21st century industry today. It is not part of the rust belt. Yes, ships are built of iron and steel, but they are also built with the most modern telecommunications and navigation facilities. They are built to rigorous standards. It is an industry of the future, requiring the highest degree of skill, technology and knowledge. It is a knowledge-based industry as well as part of the industrial base of our country.

It is something that requires the support of government to keep us in the game. What has happened is that other countries such as Norway have done that for their industry, for their people, for their prosperity and for their participation in the future of industry in the world, but we have not done that for ours. That is the reason why this should be out of this deal.

There are other problems with this deal too. The premier of my province has mentioned some of them. We are not using this opportunity to negotiate a free trade agreement to ensure that we remove the tariff, for example, from shrimp, which has been crippling the shrimp industry in the east coast for many years. This non-tariff barrier is being promoted now in the European Union by an attempt to ban seal products from a humane, controlled industry in the east coast.

We see no effort by the Government of the Canada to use these negotiations as an opportunity to extend our fishing jurisdiction outside the nose and tail of the Grand Banks. We still have to deal with an ineffective regime there.

Therefore, there other disappointments, but the big one, for which we are looking for support from both sides of the House, is our shipbuilding industry. We are trying to get some sense into the government, but we are also hoping that others on this side of the House will support our efforts. We are looking to the Bloc Québécois members who may be supportive, but we are also looking to the Liberals. So far I have not heard the Liberals participating in this debate and saying how they feel about this.

That was not always the case. I have in my hand a report that was produced, with the support of Brian Tobin, a former premier of Newfoundland and former industry minister. It is called "Breaking Through: The Canadian Shipbuilding Industry". This report came out with a whole series of recommendations produced through a consultation process led by a number of individuals called the National Partnership Project Committee. Part of that was the president of the Shipbuilding Association of Canada, Peter Cairns, Les Holloway, the executive director of the Marine Workers Federation, Philippe Tremblay from the Fédération de la métallurgie CSN and Peter Woodward from the Woodward Group of Companies. They made a very good presentation with a lot of recommendations for the shipbuilding industry, which would have assisted this industry. However, we have not seen those recommendations implemented.

● (1710)

I would ask the Liberals, both nationally and from my own province, to support the amendment that we put forward because it would be important, not only to our own province of Newfoundland and Labrador but to the whole country. We have heard of the

importance of shipbuilding on the west coast. We know it is important in the Thunder Bay area and in the province of Quebec. We see shipyards struggling to maintain their place in the modern world.

One important recommendation for this shipbuilding project was to ask the Government of Canada to eliminate the peaks and valleys of procurement for the navy and the Coast Guard through more effective forward planning and thereby keeping order books and employment levels more consistent over the long term.

That is extremely important because we do need to maintain a significant plan and a significant capital investment. According to an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* a couple of weeks ago on the estimated demands and needs for the navy, it stated:

One area that could provide significant employment for domestic firms in the coming decades is federal shipbuilding. With the navy's warships and Coast Guard vessels rusting out and in need of replacement, there is an estimated \$40 billion to \$60 billion worth of work over the next 20 years.

Where this work will take place is the question marine workers across the country are asking. With the cancellation of the joint supply ships project back in August, concerns were being raised that the government had plans to go overseas, to go offshore. It went through a tendering process and then it gave up on it.

Now we see the government supplying the Canadian Forces without contracts. It is buying helicopters from the United States without any contracts. There is not even an opportunity for a competitive bidding process. That is shocking. The government acquired C-17s and C-130J transport planes from the U.S. with no contracts and no competitive bidding.

There is a concern that the new search and rescue aircraft will go to a non-competitive bid. Canadian companies have no opportunity to participate because the Canadian Forces, apparently, have their eye on a particular Italian plane manufactured in the U.S. and there does not seem to be any plans to even have a competitive bid for that.

What is going on? Have we lost our way? Every country in the world, when it comes to procurement for their army, navy and air force, look to their domestic industries, except Canada. What is wrong with us? Is there something that I do not know about? Maybe members opposite could tell us what is wrong with us. What is it about us that we cannot build our own ships to ply the seas and look after our air forces, transport and so on? Maybe members opposite have the answers. Maybe there is something going on that I do not know about, but we seem to have lost our way.

For some reason, a bunch of Liberals seem to be going along with the government. I do not understand that. The shipbuilding industry is a modern, 21st century industry in which we should be participating. Why we are not doing so, is absolutely beyond me.

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In the minute I have left, I would ask members opposite to get up on their feet during questions and comments and explain to the House and to Canadians why they are not protecting, supporting and expanding the ship industry in Canada. Perhaps some of the Liberals could tell us why they do not care either.

What is the plan for the \$40 billion to \$60 billion that will be spent by the government alone on the shipbuilding industry over the next coming decade? That could make a big difference to the economy of parts of this country, mostly coastal areas that have been struggling over the past many years for all sorts of reasons, some having to do with the fishery. Why is it that we cannot ensure that this kind of work is being done in this country?

• (1715)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to support the point the member made about giving Canadian companies the right to bid on the search and rescue planes. I just want to make another point in that respect, which is that we definitely need those planes.

As members know, I have been pushing for those planes for years and the contract is finally going out, which is good, and I applaud the government for that. However, there is still no commitment to put any planes north of 60. I just came from committee a few minutes ago where the government said that it was based on the fact that there were not as many incidents. It is basing it on risk management.

There is more risk in the north. One is more likely to freeze to death. We need the high tech equipment more quickly. There is no reason those planes should be down near our southern border. Down south there are a lot of other types of people and planes and more chance of rescue. I cannot agree with the government on that point and I will continue to make that point.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his comments on the shipbuilding industry and how the Liberal Party is working hard to help that happen. I do happen to agree with him on the air search and rescue. There does need to be a level of competency and a quick response.

The same kind of commitment to building that he is talking about in the aerospace industry needs to be applied to the shipbuilding industry. That is something on which we are looking for their support and we hope we will get it.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have heard a number of comments over the last little while and I thank my colleagues for that. We have now heard from our colleague from the east coast, our colleague from the west coast, and I myself earlier who lives in the central part of this country, about shipbuilding. All of us engage with our communities and our residences around shipbuilding.

I have a question for my hon. colleague from St. John's East. What sort of impact do we see happening, especially in a place like Marystown?

I had the good pleasure to visit the yard in Marystown the last time I was in Newfoundland. I congratulate my colleague for his representation here and on the beauty of Newfoundland. What does it mean to Marystown and those workers in that community if this shipbuilding industry is carved out from EFTA? What will it mean

for them, for those workers, for the community and for Newfoundland in general?

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question and it applies to other shipyards as well, of course, but in particular in the Burin Peninsula, the shipyard in Marystown has been there. As most people, who know about that industry, know, shipyards often lurch from contract to contract with gaps in between.

We saw, for example, a fully occupied workforce in Marystown but once the contract was gone they all disappeared to find work somewhere else. They go off to Alberta or to New Brunswick, wherever there is a project, and getting a workforce back together for a contract is sometimes difficult to do.

A long term contract, such as the joint supply ships, would have given the industry a steady workforce for a long period of time, which would make a world of difference not only to those individual workers but for the whole Burin Peninsula and that whole community. That is the importance of having the kind of ongoing, planned procurement approach that we are calling for here today.

• (1720)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to take a moment to thank my colleague from Newfoundland and Labrador for a very instructive speech. I learned a great deal.

Perhaps the member could help us answer one question. At what point in Canadian history does he think we made this conscious choice to abandon the shipbuilding industry as some smokestack industry that we no longer want any part of?

In my own union alone, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, we used to have 35,000 members who worked for the Burrard Dry Dock Company in Vancouver alone and produced one ship a week in support of the convoy to keep Great Britain alive during the second world war. We were building a ship a week with 35,000 members of my union.

At what point and by what pretzel reasoning did they abandon that kind of domination of the industry and forego it to other countries?

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Speaker, maybe it has something to do with this synchronized problem that we have in the world, that all of a sudden the ideology overtook the government of free enterprise, no controls, no support of its own industry, just let it go loose and see what happens, *laissez-faire*, descended in a synchronized way—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate, the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank all my colleagues, particularly my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster for the work he has done on this trade deal, the Canada-European free trade agreement, and the many free trade agreements that the present government and previous Liberal government have inflicted on the people and communities of Canada.

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I say inflicted because I and members of my caucus have profound concerns about the CEFTA as we did with the first Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, the Canada-Colombian Free Trade Agreement, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, the Korean free trade agreement and the Security and Prosperity Partnership, which is not secure, will not create prosperity and is far from being a partnership. It is, indeed, a one-sided proposal that will compromise Canada's sovereignty with regard to water, airline safety and our independence in terms of foreign policy, culture and technological products.

The Canada-European free trade agreement, conceived by Jean Chrétien more than nine years ago, advanced by Liberal-Conservative trade minister, David Emerson, and now reintroduced by the current trade minister, presents a profound concern for Canada's agriculture and shipbuilding industries.

Evidence provided during industry committee hearings clearly demonstrated a key concern with the CEFTA related to the treatment of Canada's shipbuilding industry, which was abandoned by successive Liberal and Conservative governments.

Canada has the longest coastline in the world and yet it has no strategy for our shipbuilding industry. When the tariffs in the CEFTA come down in 15 years, Canada's industry will be unable to cope with Norwegian competition. The Canada-European free trade agreement is yet another of the Conservative government's hastily concluded bilateral trade agreements and highlights its piecemeal approach to trade that lacks a coherent, fair trade vision and policy.

Canadians are entitled to expect their government to support Canadian jobs. That point was made by Andrew McArthur, a member of the board of directors of the Shipbuilding Association of Canada, and the CAW, which made its case before the committee. It said that the shipbuilding sector must be excluded from this agreement and that the federal government should immediately help put together a structured financing facility and an accelerated capital cost allowance for the industry.

In addition to this testimony, was the concern expressed by Mary Keith, spokeswoman for the Irving shipbuilding conglomerate, about the Canada-European free trade agreement. She said:

...is a devastating blow for Canadian shipbuilders and marine service sectors.

The government of Canada is continuing its 12-year history of sacrificing Canadian shipbuilding and ship operators in the establishment of free trade agreements with other nations.

That is at the heart of the efforts made by the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster to amend Bill C-2 at report stage. The shipbuilding industry is at a critical point.

As was pointed out by Mr. Andrew McArthur and Mr. George MacPherson at the international trade committee on March 3, they said:

The Canadian shipbuilding industry is already operating at about a third of its capacity. Canadian demand for ships over the next 25 years is estimated to be worth \$40 billion. Under the proposed FTAs with Norway, Iceland and the planned FTA with Korea and then Japan, these Canadian shipbuilding jobs are in serious jeopardy. In these terms, this government plan is an absolute outrage.

Imagine that, \$40 billion and it will not benefit Canadian workers.

The position of the association from day one has been that shipbuilding should be carved out from the EFTA. We have been told categorically time and again by the

government that it does not carve industries out. We have mentioned the fact that the Jones act in the U.S. was carved out from NAFTA and now we are not allowed to build or repair for the Americans but the Americans have free access to our market. So industries do not get carved out.

Unfortunately, and apparently, that only happens in the United States.

New Democrats have proposed that Bill C-2 be redrafted by the government to exclude shipbuilding. We hope the Liberals from Atlantic Canada will see the wisdom of this amendment and support the hard-working men and women across the country who build the ships.

• (1725)

Bill C-2 simply must change. This is not, as I have already indicated, the first time that a Liberal-Conservative trade deal has left Canadian workers and industries in ashes. We have seen it over and over again in communities like mine, in London, Ontario, and the smaller centres of southwestern Ontario. Free trade agreements, be they the FTA, NAFTA, or the Korean free trade agreement, have robbed families of their livelihood and taken away their future.

NAFTA was supposed to bring prosperity to Canada. Instead, we have seen industry after industry abandon the workers who made them successful and the communities that paid for the infrastructure that allowed them to prosper. They have abandoned them in favour of jurisdictions that sacrifice environmental and safety standards and permit their employees to earn only substandard wages. They have done that despite the fact that Canadian workers are the best and most skilled in the world.

For example, a detailed study of productivity levels in North American auto assembly confirms that Canadian auto factories are the most efficient on the continent. The Harbour Report, the leading survey of auto productivity, indicates that average labour productivity is more than 11% higher in Canadian auto assembly plants than in U.S. plants and about 35% better than in Mexican plants. I dare say that is true of shipbuilders, too.

The Navistar truck plant in Chatham and the Sterling truck plant in St. Thomas are two tragic examples of the exodus of profitable and efficient plants that have completely closed down. They closed at a tremendous cost to families and communities. I have met with the workers from those plants and their families. The consequences of those job losses are devastating, because hopes, opportunities, dreams and futures are destroyed.

NAFTA is not the only trade deal that threatens our communities. The government is still in negotiations with South Korea to put in place a free trade deal that is profoundly unbalanced. It tolerates a trade deficit of over \$3 billion at a cost of thousands of jobs. Korea has been allowed to keep its domestic markets closed to Canadian vehicles, and the promises by Koreans to remove non-tariff barriers are unenforceable.

In 2005, Canada imported \$5.4 billion in goods from Korea, while it exported only \$2.8 billion. Sixty-seven per cent of that trade deficit was automotive. Canada imported 129,376 light-duty vehicles with virtually no reciprocal sales of vehicles from Canada. This is not free trade nor fair trade. It is the kind of trade deal, like the FTA, NAFTA, the Colombia trade agreement, the MAI and the SPP, that robs our families and communities of jobs.

I have a couple of letters that I want to quote from. They are from people who are very concerned about this trade deal.

The first letter is from Robert Vance, who writes that he is very concerned and disheartened. He is a shipyard worker. He writes:

It is shameful to think that although other countries including those involved in the European free trade agreement strongly support their shipbuilding industry, while we as Canadians do not.

One of the most surprising things to me as a shipyard workers is that all stakeholders in the industry including owners, operators and unions from coast-to-coast have emphasized the need for this support during the many committee meetings that were held on the use of free trade talks.

Unfortunately, the Liberal Party of Canada did not feel it necessary to support these workers and backed up the Conservatives, instead.

It is up to the government and all parliamentarians to protect Canadian jobs and industries. That includes agriculture and it includes shipbuilding, as well as those in manufacturing and the auto sector. We must protect Canadian jobs and industries for the sake of our communities, for the sake of our workers, for the sake of this country.

• (1730)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member pushed the fact that we need to carve the shipbuilding industry out of the trade agreement.

We know what it means to rush into a trade agreement. We only have to look at what happened with the softwood lumber agreement.

In my riding of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing we are in the process of retrofitting a ship, so I know what it takes. In order to retrofit that boat, we are going to need skilled labour, such as electricians, plumbers and technologists, not just people who actually build boats.

We have a shortage of skilled labour. I wonder if the member could elaborate on how Canada could lose a lot of opportunities to get new skilled labour online.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. These new industries require all kinds of talented tradespeople. Unfortunately, we are falling behind in terms of skilled tradespeople.

The current crisis with employment insurance underscores that, inasmuch as in order to qualify for employment insurance, people

must have a certain number of hours and many people cannot possibly manage to get those hours. At the same time, they are being shut out of the skills training associated with employment insurance. It is a double whammy. They do not qualify for EI and they cannot support their families. They need the skills training to get the jobs that would allow them to support their families, but they cannot get that either because they cannot access the employment insurance that should be available.

Only 40% of the people who contribute to employment insurance in this country are able to enjoy that benefit. What about the other 60%? That is 60% of Canadians who are hard-working, who simply need a government that understands that some training would help them to find those all-important jobs.

If we supported our manufacturing and shipbuilding industries, we could put those young skilled tradespeople to work.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Madam Speaker, although my hon. colleagues does not live near a lake or a river in London, nor does she have a shipyard in her riding, shipyards and shipbuilding are high tech operations. Looking at a bridge on a new ship today one would think one was in the Apollo spacecraft that went to the moon. That is how advanced they have become. It is not an old wheelhouse with a big wheel that someone has to turn four times to make the ship move. It is so advanced and high tech.

Does my colleague from London—Fanshawe see opportunities for other businesses and industries in her riding of London to outfit those ships? It is similar to the auto industry. There is an assembly plant, but feeder plants are needed to feed the materials which eventually will make up the ship. A shipyard is a place of assembly. Does the member see opportunities in a place like London to help build ships?

• (1735)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, indeed London is on the Thames River and we are very proud to have Prevost which is a naval institution. We are very happy about that connection, be it a long distance to the sea.

As I indicated in my remarks, we have very productive workers. In addition, we have the University of Western Ontario and Fanshawe College. They are able to help us with providing the research and development and the workers of the future.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): It being 5:36 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

Private Members' Business

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should introduce in the House, no later than October 15, 2009, a bill to amend the Canada Labour Code to prohibit the use of replacement workers in labour disputes falling under the jurisdiction of the federal government while at the same time ensuring that essential services are maintained.

She said: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to move Bloc Québécois motion M-294, which states the desire for the government to introduce in the House, no later than October 15, 2009, a bill to amend the Canada Labour Code to prohibit the use of replacement workers in labour disputes falling under the jurisdiction of the said code while at the same time ensuring that essential services are maintained.

More precisely, the code governs collective bargaining in federally regulated undertakings: interprovincial transportation, be it by air, land or water; telecommunications via radio, television or mail; banks; longshoring; grain handling and other sectors under federal jurisdiction.

Before addressing the fundamental issue, I would be remiss if I did not mention the tremendous efforts of my colleagues from Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert and Gatineau who, ever since their arrival in the House of Commons, have spared no effort to defend the rights of workers in Quebec and Canada.

Along with the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, I have agreed to take on the challenge of convincing as many Liberals and Conservatives as possible to support this initiative. I must also mention the contributions of several other Bloc Québécois members who are concerned about the situation of Quebec's and Canada's workers.

Quebec and British Columbia have already passed provisions totally banning the use of replacement workers. These provisions prevent employers from having employees cross their own union's picket line. Approximately 7% of Quebec workers come under the Canada Labour Code. Quebec has seen a major decrease in the number of labour conflicts since its legislation was passed in August 1977. The number of conflicts dropped considerably, from 293 in 1976 to 51 in 2007.

According to figures published by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the results are even more striking if we look at the number of days of work lost in work stoppages by workers covered by the Quebec Labour Code. It is markedly lower than the average number of days of work lost by workers covered by the Canadian code.

The practice in Quebec in the past 30 years illustrates how advantageous it would be to introduce such legislation. There are many benefits to anti-scab legislation. On the one hand, it encourages industrial peace by avoiding confrontations between strikers and replacement workers. On the other hand, it makes employers realize the advantages of settling conflicts by negotiation rather than strike or lockout. In 2005-06, 97% of collective

agreements under federal jurisdiction were signed without a work stoppage.

Hon. members need to understand that legislative changes to the Canada Labour Code in 1999 have had dissuasive effects on the use of strikebreakers. We feel, however, that as long as this is not absolutely banned by legislation, while of course ensuring the maintenance of essential services, we will continue to see more and more days lost to strikes and will never succeed in putting an end to the existence of the two categories of workers in Quebec: those who benefit from this right under the Quebec Labour Code and the rest, who work in federally regulated businesses governed by the Canada Labour Code, and are threatened by the use of scab workers.

Anti-scab legislation constitutes the foundation for establishing a fair balance of power between employer and employee. Anti-scab legislation would be good for workers everywhere, in Quebec and in the other provinces and territories.

If a majority of the House of Commons votes for this bill, this will be an opportunity for witnesses from all walks of life to express their views right here in this institution and they will all have the opportunity to contribute to a debate that can only be beneficial to labour relations.

There is a greater need than ever to prohibit the hiring of replacement workers during a labour dispute.

•(1740)

Here is why: to reduce picket-line violence; foster a fair balance in the negotiations between employers and employees; reduce the number of legal proceedings that arise during strikes and lockouts; and mitigate the bitterness felt by employees when they return to work.

There is also a very broad consensus among different unions about the importance of anti-scab legislation. It is essential in the current workplace because it provides greater transparency in case of labour disputes. This bill will not entail any expenditures for the government. When we make workers the focus of our actions, we quickly realize the negative and harmful effects of a labour dispute. I am referring to a reduction in the purchasing power of workers directly or indirectly involved in the dispute. Another problem is that households affected by the dispute tend to go into debt. In some cases, disputes can cause social problems, as well as stress-related psychological problems.

In a minority government situation, every vote counts. I urge my colleagues to support this motion. During the last session of Parliament, the Conservative government, unable to marshal any real arguments, hid behind exaggerated and unrealistic scenarios. For 30 years, Quebec has had a law prohibiting replacement workers, and nothing terrible has happened. Workers who go on strike take no pleasure in doing so and understand the impact of what they are doing.

With regard to essential services, the Canada Labour Code already includes provisions that require both the employer and unionized employees to continue the supply of services, operation of facilities or production of goods to the extent necessary to prevent an immediate and serious danger to the safety or health of the public. The Conservative government makes a point of ignoring these provisions, preferring to use scare tactics about the consequences of a bill prohibiting the use of replacement workers.

I would remind this House that the member for Jonquière—Alma, who came up with all sorts of irrational arguments to condemn the Bloc Québécois bill, had supported a bill prohibiting replacement workers on November 5, 1990. The bill in question, Bill C-201, was introduced by the member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, and he agreed with prohibiting the use of strikebreakers.

In 2007, the Liberals, who had supported the bill in principle at second reading, finally did an about-face, saying that the bill would not have maintained essential services. Yet the Canada Labour Code already includes provisions requiring the employer and unionized employees to maintain these activities.

During the last session of Parliament, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore and leader of the opposition, who, true to Liberal form, was straddling the fence, first voted for Bill C-257 at second reading, then voted against it at the report stage. I want to remind the House that the purpose of this bill was to prohibit replacement workers in disputes involving employees governed by the Canada Labour Code. But in a new twist, at a January 2009 press conference with the FTQ president Michel Arseneault, the Liberal leader came out against strikebreakers. In his statement, he said:

I am against scabs. I told Mr. Arseneault about how, when I was young, I witnessed scabs crossing the picket lines and I understood workers' anger and resentment toward them. But we have to protect essential services, such as public transit. I am not against an anti-scab law, but I want a well-written law that covers all the bases. We found that the Bloc bill was not the best way to deal with a complex situation.

Now that the legislation specifies the importance of maintaining essential services, we will see whether the new Liberal leader was being sincere. We will see whether he can resist the pressure from Bay Street this time. Until I see it happen, I will have my doubts.

I realize that progress in terms of labour relations legislation does not come without some upheaval and adaptation. But in Quebec, it did not take long for all of the parties involved to see that there was something in it for everyone.

• (1745)

We have reached a consensus, and nobody wants to go back to the way things were. When everyone knows the rules, when rights and powers are clearly identified, negotiations become far more efficient. We are talking about what is in workers' and employers' best interest. When their needs are met, everyone prospers.

I would like to thank the members of this House, and I firmly believe that we have reached a level of maturity that will allow us to present innovative amendments that respect workers and businesses in Quebec and Canada.

[English]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister

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of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a question and a comment for the hon. member.

How would she describe an essential service and is she aware that in Quebec has a labour code that sets out what might be a public service that is essential? It has a board, the Essential Services Council, that tries to deal with it. There are numerous applications that are made to the board to make that decision.

First, there are differences between provincial essential services and federal essential services. What does she see those differences to be? Second, how would she define essential services? Third, how would she expect that to be resolved? Section 87.4 is very narrow to prevent an immediate and serious danger to the safety and health of the public and it engenders a number of applications. Would she expect the number of applications now made under section 87.4 to go up and would it take a considerable period of time to resolve them?

If she could answer those questions, I would appreciate it.

[Translation]

Ms. Meili Faille: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague with whom I used to serve on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

The Canada Labour Code, which already contains some provisions, can answer in part his question on essential services. However, in Quebec, we have two laws and a mechanism for rendering a decision that come into play.

The motion moved mentions maintaining essential services. Just now, I listed the services that we would like the legislation to cover.

I did not follow the member's third question. However, at any rate, we wish to assure the House that essential services will be maintained.

• (1750)

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, when the anti-scab legislation was introduced in Quebec in 1977, I was part of the process because of my profession. I can tell you that I witnessed the evolution, the change in labour relations and negotiations during strikes and lockouts. Today, as my colleague pointed out, labour relations in Quebec continue to improve.

I have a question for my colleague. What is the Quebec business community reaction to the anti-scab legislation?

Ms. Meili Faille: Madam Speaker, in terms of how things have evolved over the past 30 years, as I said at the end of my speech, I know that employees, unions and employers have all benefited from Quebec's legislation. The Conseil du patronat du Québec supports it.

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At this point, we should look to Quebec for the level of maturity in labour relations that can be reached through innovation. Right now, all parliamentarians have an opportunity to hear from all of the stakeholders. We have to recognize that when negotiations take place between equals and the parties find that balance, we have a win-win scenario for all of the parties governed by the legislation.

[English]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to address this motion.

Part I of the Canada Labour Code contains the fundamental principles in which labour relations in Canada are governed. It is very important legislation designed to provide stability to Canada's industrial relations.

Motion No. 294 calls for amendments to specific parts of part I in isolation from the other parts of the Canada Labour Code. Given the importance and the careful balance of the code and how that balance was arrived at, to take one portion in isolation of the other and try to amend it would upset the balance.

I ask hon. members of the House not to support this motion. I believe changes made to the code in this manner will disrupt the generally positive labour relations environment in our federal jurisdiction today.

At this time of Canadian and global economic instability, one has to question the appropriateness of making changes to the code that would favour one party over another. In addition, a ban on replacement workers could be negatively perceived by potential investors to Canada and disrupt the delicate balance of bargaining power that parties in the federal jurisdiction currently have. This could also lead to a more adversarial labour relations engagement on the basis which I discussed earlier with the member.

Canadians want their government to act responsibly and help protect the economy. We are helping to ensure that Canadian businesses and families have the security they need to weather the economic storm and come out of it stronger than ever.

There is an important point at stake here that we must consider. I believe the proposals contained in the motion before us today would weaken the foundations for positive labour relations in Canada.

Industrial relations legislation seeks to balance the competing interests of employers and employees as represented by their trade unions. The issue of replacement workers remains a contentious one. It is commonly accepted by labour relations experts that the employer's, particularly in a federal context, countervailing power to the union's right to strike is not so much the right to lock-out as their right to try to continue to operate during a work stoppage. We have a third party involved, and that is members of the public, whose interests need to be looked at as well.

It should be noted that, in the majority of cases, federal jurisdiction employers do not keep their operations functioning by employing external replacement workers. More often, management, supervisory personnel and other non-unionized personnel are assigned to take the place of striking workers.

The current provisions in the Canada Labour Code were introduced in 1999 after a valuable period of stakeholder consultation and a very extensive consultation of all the players. The question of banning replacement workers was a central issue at that time as well, and it was thoroughly examined.

What the stakeholder consultations determined was that there was simply no consensus on this issue. The decision at that time was to enact a provision that allowed for the hiring of replacement workers but banned their use for the purposes of breaking a union.

More consultations were also conducted recently with labour and business stakeholders on this very same issue. Just a few weeks ago, a study on the impact of work stoppage in the federally regulated private sector was made public and again stakeholders did not reach consensus on the issue of replacement workers.

The current provision with respect to replacement workers puts clear limits on the use of replacement workers during legal strikes or lockouts. It represents a practical compromise and a middle ground between unions that seek a complete ban on the use of replacement workers and employers that want personnel so they can continue operating.

In speaking to some of the stakeholders, it was obvious that there was a give and take in not only arriving at a decision on this issue, but on other issues as well that resulted in what we see as part I. To take out only one or two portions and deal with them in isolation to the whole picture will certainly upset the balance that the parties strived so hard to achieve.

It is our role to provide employers and employees with a labour relations environment in which they can manage their own relationships within the framework of the law. That is what the government is doing. It is assisting labour and management in the constructive settlement of disputes, and the evidence is convincing. Year after year, over 90% of the disputes in the federal jurisdiction are settled without a work stoppage, often without the assistance of federal government mediators.

● (1755)

It is also important to remember it is not just the federal jurisdiction that has decided not to impose a complete ban on replacement workers. There is considerable variability among provincial jurisdictions. Again, this is a reflection that the proposed approach that is contained in the motion is not as straightforward as the hon. member may suggest.

Only two of the provinces and territories in Canada have labour legislation that restricts the rights of employers to use replacement workers during a work stoppage. They are Quebec and British Columbia. Obviously the other provinces have determined that this part of the legislation is not in the best interests of the collective bargaining process or else they would have already implemented such provisions. Many of them have already considered this issue and have decided not to legislate a ban.

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Labour program data further indicates that both Quebec and British Columbia continue to experience long work stoppages, notwithstanding any anti-replacement worker legislation. For the period 2006-08, the average duration of a work stoppage in Quebec was 52 days and in British Columbia 55.4 days, while in the federal jurisdiction, the average duration of a work stoppage was 49.2 days.

Also, a number of complaints concerning the use of replacement workers during work stoppages are filed each year in both Quebec and British Columbia. In 2007-08, 25 complaints were filed in each province respectively. Of the 25 complaints filed in Quebec, 10 were upheld by the provincial labour board. In British Columbia, five of the 25 complaints were upheld. This suggests that even if there were a legislative ban on replacement workers under the federal code, it would not resolve these controversial issues.

In addition, a number of independent university studies have concluded that prohibiting the use of replacement workers during work stoppages may be associated with more frequent and longer strikes. Other studies concluded that there is no evidence that a legislative ban had an impact either way on strike activity. Furthermore, a comparison of wage settlements in all jurisdictions, including those that do not have replacement worker legislation, indicates that there does not appear to be any link between the type of replacement worker provisions and the wage settlement for workers.

The issues are far greater than just the two that the member has raised. In order to resolve work stoppages, a different point of view must be taken. There must be a new way taken, but it is not the way that the motion would suggest.

When all of this information is taken into account, in the end there is no evidence to support that the position of prohibiting the use of replacement workers would lead to better labour relations or better economic conditions. That is just not so.

In conclusion, I believe the best approach to this issue is one that preserves a delicate balance which currently exists in part I of the Canada Labour Code. We cannot expect any benefit from this amendment. On the contrary, this motion risks creating instability in the labour relations climate at a time that the economy can least afford it and least needs it.

As legislators, we have a responsibility to consider the entire legislative spectrum in the broad interests of all Canadians. The motion does not address those responsibilities. I am asking members of the House not to support it.

• (1800)

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak to this motion.

The issue of replacement workers is a contentious one. It is something that has been going on for quite some time. I did a bit of checking and there have been 12 private members' bills on this subject since 2000. Obviously it is not going to go away very easily. It is something that we need to take seriously.

In 1999 there was a review of part I of the Canada Labour Code and the Sims report was issued. There were some negotiations that took place at the time.

I looked at Quebec and B.C. which have bans on replacement workers and take into account essential services. I specifically wanted to focus on Quebec because this motion is from a Quebec member. I specifically wanted to focus on the Quebec structure.

I looked at the legislation, and basically it prohibits the use of outside workers, contractors, other employees, for example those not on strike, employees who cross the picket line, and managers from another establishment, unless employees of that establishment belong to the unit involved in the work stoppage. These are some of the prohibitions.

Another section deals with what we are discussing tonight to some degree, and that is the exceptions to the prohibition, employees performing designated essential services. This definition is always very difficult to arrive at. It is critical because depending on how one defines it, it has different connotations. Striking workers must be reinstated at the end of the work stoppage, which if I am not mistaken is part of the current Canada Labour Code, as well. These are not all aspects but are certainly the major points of the Quebec legislation.

The Canada Labour Code was revamped in 1999 as a result of the Sims report on part I of the labour code. At that time, most things were agreed on. The replacement worker provisions were a contentious issue between labour and management, and no agreement was reached. To this day it continues to be a contentious issue. I know that labour and unions would like this to be changed, and of course the employer side has a different opinion.

Under the current labour code, there is no general ban on the use of replacement workers, as I understand it, but it is an unfair labour practice for employers to use replacement workers to attempt to undermine the union's representational capacity, for example, to attempt to break the union. There is some aspect of protection. Obviously there is protection of the workers and protection of the union in not trying to undermine the unions.

At the end of a work stoppage, striking employees must be reinstated in preference to any replacement workers. I mentioned this earlier with respect to the Quebec model. Under the labour code, retaliation upon an employee who participates in a legal strike or who refuses to perform the duties of another employee who is on a legal strike is prohibited. Services essential to protect public health and safety must be maintained.

These are key parts of the labour code.

As I said earlier, there has been absolutely no agreement with respect to the replacement worker side. This issue continues to be debated, as we are doing yet again tonight.

I also wanted to take a comparative look at the Quebec experience and the Canada Labour Code experience in the last little while. In Quebec the average duration of work stoppage from 2005 to 2007 was about 43.8 days. Under the labour code, the average duration was 41 days. They are not that far apart in terms of work stoppage.

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Again in Quebec, there was a total of 25 complaints to the labour relations board regarding the unfair use of replacement workers of which 10 were upheld. Again, it seems that replacement workers are still being used despite the amendments. I know that is causing some problems. Still under the Canada Labour Code there have been a total of 23 complaints since 1999, none of which have been upheld and one decision is pending.

• (1805)

I compared these two models, and listened to some of the arguments that we have been receiving on both sides. One that I get quite frequently from the business side is that if there was no replacement worker legislation, there would be more strikes, that is, the unions would feel more comfortable about having strikes and would hold more power over their workers and the employer. This seems not to have happened in Quebec.

When I looked at the two models, there is no comparable difference in the average duration of work stoppage under the current Canada Labour Code and in Quebec. There is no appreciable difference in the wage settlements and replacement workers are still used notwithstanding the legislative ban. It remains to be a contentious issue between the unions and management. It continues to be a contentious issue.

The issue of strikes being a way out for unions does not seem to be the experience in Quebec. That does not seem to be a contentious area or a concern. However, I suspect that this issue will never be resolved 100% one way or the other. There will continue to be discussions. Nonetheless, consultation on both sides is critical.

It is clear that the union's right to strike versus the employer's right to run a business is the discussion that we continuously have in the House. There is a need to clearly define essential services. If legislation were introduced, we would need to define essential services very clearly. That is where there are some differences of opinion. There is some discussion that even if we defined essential services, it would not necessarily solve the problem and it would still continue to create difficulties in some businesses.

One example that was given to me recently by an employer who was concerned about the essential services was if CN were to strike, the delivery of grain would be considered an essential service, that the movement of grain would have to be maintained across the country. We could order the trains to run across the country, but they would not be able to carry anything but grain and that would affect other businesses. I am not sure I buy that. I just put it out as an argument that is being made. Other concerns have to do with airports. We are not talking about government regulated bodies. It is a very broad area, ports, airports, transportation and so on, so it does have a major impact on employees.

With respect to a union's right to strike toward achieving a fair settlement, many unions feel that their power to negotiate is undermined by not having the replacement worker legislation in place. I understand their arguments very well. As I said, at the same time employers have had their issues as well.

It is important to keep in mind that the government can always legislate people back to work if that replacement legislation is introduced at some point in the future. The importance is that it is a

balance of power and it is essential to make that balance as fair as possible. That is the crux of it.

We must ensure that whatever happens in the workplace there is a balance, that it is fair for both sides. Making sure that we have a fair system in place is what is important.

We need to ensure in any legislation that is brought forward that it is clear, that there is proper consultation and that there is proper designation of essential services.

• (1810)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to support motion M-294, which has been introduced by the hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges. There is absolutely no doubt that Canada's federal Labour Code needs to be amended to include a ban on replacement workers or scabs during strikes and lockouts. In fact, it is way past due.

Let me deal with the substantive part of the motion first. The use of scabs and replacement workers breeds anger on picket lines, and that anger can lead to violence, including damage to property, injury to workers and even death. Labour disputes are prolonged by the practice, with a lingering animosity that can infect a workplace for years. The Canada Labour Code governs important elements of our economy that can ill afford the threat of prolonged labour disputes, vandalism or violence. Every extra day lost through labour disputes that disrupt or slow the flow of goods across our borders hurts us all.

The same is true when important services such as passports, employment insurance or food inspection are interrupted or when transportation is delayed. Removing the ability to use scabs and replacement workers results in smoother labour relations and shorter labour disputes, with less risk to everyone involved. Quebec and British Columbia have anti-scab laws in effect today, and the results are clear. The year after B.C. changed its labour code, the province realized a 50% drop in the amount of work time lost to strikes.

Under the Quebec labour code, the average number of work days lost each year to labour disputes is about 15, compared to an average of 31 days lost each year under the Canada Labour Code. I had the great privilege of working at Queen's Park when Ontario's first minister for labour, Bob Mackenzie, banned the use of replacement workers in 1992. Unfortunately, the ban was lifted by none other than Mike Harris, who never let good public policy stand in the way of his ideological agenda.

However, the reality was that despite the rhetoric used by opponents of the law, the period during which the law was in place was characterized by fewer work stoppages, moderate union demands and picket line peace. Furthermore, in the first year following its passage, Ontario's economic growth was the highest in the entire G7.

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Now we find ourselves in the midst of the great recession. One would think that even government MPs would agree that the need for labour and management to work together in a spirit of cooperation, involvement and trust is greater now than at any other time in our country's history. It is absolutely the right thing to do. That is why, just this afternoon, I tabled legislation in the House that will give effect to the motion that is before us here tonight.

People who are watching this debate at home tonight might well be wondering why we did not move straight to debating the legislation itself. As partisan as this place can occasionally get, let me say at the outset that it is not because the Bloc lacks commitment to this issue. It is quite the opposite. Members of the NDP and members of the BQ have consistently supported anti-scab legislation.

Shamefully, but equally consistently, the majority of Conservatives have opposed such legislation. The history of the Parliament's abysmal record has therefore been written by the flip-flopping Liberals, who say they support workers in this country but will not stand up for them when it counts. Three times now, a large number of Liberals voted with the majority of Conservative MPs to defeat bills that sought to outlaw the use of scabs at the federal level.

I was not in the House when the first two votes happened, but I was certainly here in the last Parliament when Bill C-257 passed at second reading. I remember the optimism in the labour movement and in the House about the possibility of anti-scab legislation finally passing. Of course, that was a vote that did not matter in the end. When push came to shove and it was time to stand up and be counted on the third and final vote, enough Liberals flip-flopped again to defeat the bill in the House.

I think we need to remind ourselves who some of those members were. The member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca voted yes on second reading and no on third. The member for Winnipeg South Centre voted yes on second reading and no on third. So did the members for Miramichi, Halifax West, Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Mississauga—Brampton South, Brampton West, St. Paul's, Nipissing—Timiskaming, Davenport, Eglinton—Lawrence, Etobicoke Centre, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lac-Saint-Louis, Wascana and York South—Weston. They all voted yes on second reading and no on third.

Most shamefully of all, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, now the leader of the Liberal Party, voted yes on second reading and flip-flopped on third, when it counted.

• (1815)

All of these members are still in the House today, and I would bet that all of them will support the motion that is before us here today, but what will they do when they are asked to support more than a statement of principles, when they actually have to stand up for those principles, when they have the opportunity to vote in favour of my bill on the exact same subject?

I would bet that they will once again revert to form and defeat what just weeks earlier they said they supported. I wish every Canadian voter understood how often the Liberals have betrayed their own words as they betrayed workers over and over again.

Labour rights are human rights, and human rights are sacrosanct. They must be inviolable and should never be subject to compromise based on political opportunity. Let us be clear. For us in the NDP, these rights are absolute. We understand and believe that freedom of association, collective bargaining and the right to strike are fundamental labour rights.

As a result, workers have the right to withhold their services if collective bargaining fails. Fair wages, a safe workplace, pay equity, health care and pensions are all hard-fought achievements of the labour movement and collective bargaining.

The one glaring omission is the one before us today. There is still no federal provision to ensure that the use of replacement workers or strikebreakers is banned in this country, and that makes absolutely no sense. If the right to strike is a labour right, then it cannot be allowed to be undermined by the use of replacement workers when a union has legally gone on strike. It is absolute hypocrisy to demand that unions bargain in good faith when companies can break the faith by hiring scabs.

The government members talk about fairness and balance, but there is absolutely nothing fair or balanced in that. It is quite the opposite.

I know what the argument is on the government side. It usually goes something like this: if workers can withhold their labour, then the company should have the right to bring someone else in to do the work, and somehow that would then be fair.

But there is no fairness in it. The company does not have to go home and face hungry children and mortgage payments they cannot meet.

If we want to make it fair, then we need to make sure that the economic pain is shared equally by both sides. We need to make sure that the company—or the government, for that matter—has no more ability to generate revenue than the workers. That is how we get close to a fair fight, and that is how we provide an incentive to both sides to get back to the bargaining table, where the emphasis is on negotiations and settlements.

That is why the Supreme Court of Canada reaffirmed in June 2007 that collective bargaining is a fundamental human right. The court observed three things. First, the right to bargain collectively with an employer enhances the human dignity, liberty and autonomy of workers by giving them the opportunity to influence the establishment of workplace rules and thereby gain some control over a major aspect of their lives, namely their work. Second, the court said collective bargaining is not simply an instrument for pursuing external ends; rather, it is intrinsically valuable as an experience in self-government. Third, collective bargaining permits workers to achieve a form of workplace democracy and to ensure the rule of law in the workplace. Workers gain a voice to influence the establishment of rules that control a major aspect of their lives.

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The Supreme Court has been unequivocal in its support for labour rights. It is time that all Liberal and Conservative members in the House did the same, and not just by supporting today's motion, but by committing publicly now that they will support the actual legislation when it next comes to the House.

● (1820)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on Motion M-294, tabled by my colleague from Vaudreuil-Soulanges, which reads as follows. It is important to read it:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should introduce in the House, no later than October 15, 2009, a bill to amend the Canada Labour Code to prohibit the use of replacement workers in labour disputes falling under the jurisdiction of the federal government while at the same time ensuring that essential services are maintained.

It is worth reminding hon. members that Quebec and British Columbia have legislative measures which ban the use of scabs. Work is already underway in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Manitoba to develop this type of legislation, with the hope of eventually having a similar law.

In Quebec, the adoption of anti-scab legislation in December 1977 and its implementation under the René Lévesque government in 1978, to all reports constituted an impressive leap forward in terms of the respect of workers' rights. Coming as it did on the heels of a particularly long and tumultuous strike at United Aircraft, now Pratt & Whitney, this legislation seriously hindered the possibilities open to employers to restrict the rights of unionized workers and placed Quebec in the vanguard in North America in this area.

For 30 years, in Quebec, an employer has not had the right to hire replacement workers for employees on strike or locked out. This prohibition, included in Quebec's labour code, prevents the employer from hiring, after the start of negotiations, management or workers to perform the work of an employee on strike or locked out. When a strike is called, it also prevents the use of staff of another employer. The employer is also prohibited from using the services of workers from other establishments in companies affected by the strike or lockout.

In an effort to have true respect for the rights of employees on strike, only management of the establishments on strike and workers not part of the bargaining unit on strike can continue to work during a strike or lockout on condition that they were hired prior to the start of negotiations. Only management can carry out the duties of employees on strike.

These are the provisions that the Bloc Québécois would like to see in the Canada Labour Code.

The following examples, and others, clearly demonstrate the need for urgent action.

First of all, there is the case of Vidéotron. After obtaining the approval of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission in May 2001, Quebecor acquired the cable operator Vidéotron with the help of the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec. In order to clear up some financial problems related to the acquisition, Quebecor undertook a significant downsizing process

that was supposed to produce annual savings of \$35 to \$40 million. Everyone knew that Quebecor was looking for a confrontation with the 2,200 employees and technicians of the cable company. Some thought that this was the last major step by Vidéotron in the downsizing. The 2,200 Vidéotron employees were on strike and locked out from May 8, 2002 until March 2003. Many acts of vandalism were committed during this conflict. It was a lengthy dispute.

In the case of Radio Nord Communications, the union members, who were governed by the federal code, represented the employees of three television stations—TVA, TQS and Radio-Canada—and two radio stations in northwestern Quebec. These unionized workers went on strike on October 25, 2002. Even before the strike began, Radio Nord had eliminated almost 50 positions in Abitibi.

Since the last labour contract, 10 other unionized jobs were abolished, including two journalist positions covered by the CSN. Centralization was the main objective of Radio-Nord, and to achieve that, strike action and lockouts were used. There again, it lasted a very long time. Scabs were used to ensure that the workers were tossed onto the scrap heap, since the work was being done by replacement workers, by scabs. The strike lasted more than 20 months.

These disputes have several common features. In all cases, they were long disputes in sectors where the workers come under the Canada Labour Code and where the use of strikebreakers is permitted.

● (1825)

These disputes were all marked by significant provocation, violence and vandalism. The feeling of being powerless—this is important—and of not seeing the end of the strike or lockout inevitably drives some workers to reprehensible and illegal acts, and the families end up suffering considerably.

For the Bloc Québécois, this is a worrisome situation which finds its solution in the measure proposed today. Despite the negative effects of the Canada Labour Code, which tends to exacerbate labour disputes and make them last longer, Ottawa has always refused to correct the situation through anti-scab provisions. When I say "Ottawa", of course I am referring to the Conservatives and the Liberals.

The Bloc Québécois is the party that defends the interests of those workers in Quebec who are governed by the Canada Labour Code, who live in Quebec and who are being seriously discriminated against when it comes to the application of Quebec's anti-scab legislation, which does not apply to federal employees.

The best way to acknowledge the exceptional contribution of all those who are involved every day in building our societies is to provide them with the guarantee that everything possible will be done to pass a bill that would eliminate the outmoded practice of using strikebreakers during strikes or lockouts. There are numerous advantages to anti-scab measures. For one, they foster industrial peace by avoiding confrontation between striking and replacement workers. As well, they help employers realize that there are advantages to settling disputes by negotiation rather than suffering through a strike or lockout.

Private Members' Business

These measures are the cornerstone that ensure a level playing field for employers and employees. They will make it possible to eliminate the existence of two categories of workers in Quebec, as I mentioned earlier: those under the provincial code and those under the federal code. The Canada Labour Code includes the necessary measures to prevent an immediate and serious danger to the safety or health of the public. The Canada Labour Code calls these essential services.

To finish, I would like to list the advantages of anti-scab legislation: reducing violence on the picket lines, fostering a fair balance in the negotiations between employers and employees, civilizing labour relations and the bargaining process, and mitigating the bitterness felt by all when employees return to work. There is also a very broad consensus among different unions about the importance of anti-scab legislation. It is essential in the current workplace because it provides greater transparency in case of labour disputes.

Bloc Québécois motion M-294, which would prohibit the use of strikebreakers, is one solution to the problem. Quebec passed this type of legislation more than 30 years ago and has since seen a reduction in the number and length of conflicts. As well, violence on picket lines has been drastically reduced. As well, labour relations between employers and workers have improved. Today there are no large conflicts, as happens in the federal sector. A fair balance of power is beneficial to everyone.

[*English*]

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to join in the debate this evening on Motion No. 294. We are being asked to amend the Canada Labour Code as it relates to the use of replacement workers.

Anyone who has followed this policy matter with regard to labour issues over the last few years knows that the issue of replacement workers is a very contentious issue, to which previous speakers have alluded. It has been discussed in the House on many occasions. As we are hearing today, and we have heard many times in the past, there are opposing views on this issue.

There are those, like the member opposite who presented this motion, who advocate a ban on the use of replacement workers during a legal work stoppage. I had the opportunity to own my own business and managed a unionized operation. I experienced a unionized strike in the mid-1990s and replacement workers were brought in. I understand first-hand the sensitivity of the issue of replacement workers and how it can affect family life and the employer's situation.

As I said, there are people on both sides of the situation and I understand those who believe it is imperative for an organization to keep goods and services moving during a work stoppage.

Typically, it is unions that support the ban, while usually it is employers that argue in favour of having access to replacement workers. As is often the case, in debates like this both sides can make a good case for their position. However, the motion supports only one of the two sides in this debate.

We should ask ourselves if it is appropriate for the changes to the Canada Labour Code to favour one side against the other, or should

the code work in the best interests of all stakeholders in the labour relations environment? To me the answer is very clear. The purpose of the Canada Labour Code should be to balance, and the key word is "balance", and help reconcile competing interests in labour management disputes in a way that is fair and neutral. The issue of replacement workers is a good case in point.

When part I of the code was amended 10 years ago, the House supported finding some middle ground between those who wanted a complete ban and those who wanted a free hand to use replacement workers. The code achieves this middle ground by allowing employers access to replacement workers, but prohibiting their use to undermine a union's bargaining position.

It is very important to realize the fact that, under the existing provisions of the Canada Labour Code, using replacement workers to undermine a union's bargaining position is considered an unfair labour practice, and I agree.

If a union feels an employer is engaging in an unfair labour practice, it can bring the matter to the Canada Industrial Relations Board for a decision. This approach balances the competing interests of unions and employers locked in a labour dispute. This balanced approach has been in place for some time and has worked well. Nine out of ten labour disputes in companies covered by the code are resolved without a strike or lockout. Introducing the amendment proposed in the motion would disrupt the practical compromise that has been achieved on this issue. It would be a counterproductive move, especially at a time of this economic crisis within our country when Canada needs to maximize stability in labour relations.

There is also the question of the impact of replacement workers on the duration of a work stoppage. Some say that banning replacement workers would encourage speedier resolution of industrial relations disputes. They argue that denying employers access to replacement workers would motivate them to settle more quickly. However, there is evidence to the contrary.

The member opposite has argued this point. Independent studies by experts suggest that jurisdictions like British Columbia, where I represent the Okanagan Valley, and Quebec that prohibit the use of replacement workers continue to experience lengthy strikes. This evidence does not indicate that workers and employers in these jurisdictions are better off because replacement workers are banned.

Moreover, despite having legislation that prohibits the use of replacement workers, each year Quebec and British Columbia receive a number of complaints relating to the use of replacement workers. In other words, enacting legislation in these jurisdictions has not eliminated the sensitivity of the issue.

It is also interesting to note that another province, Ontario, once had legislation banning the use of replacement workers but repealed it.

Adjournment Proceedings

This is a very complex issue. The existing provisions of the Canada Labour Code recognize its complexity by balancing the interests of employers and unions. The code includes protection for employees who exercise their right to strike. It ensures the right of striking employees to return to their employment at the end of a work stoppage. The code also prohibits an employer from disciplining or imposing a penalty on employees who refuse to perform the duties of other employees who are locked out or on strike.

The bottom line is the current law gives something to each side. It protects the rights of employees to strike and return to their jobs and allows employers to continue to operate and provide needed goods and services during work stoppages.

• (1830)

This approach represents a reasonable compromise in the best tradition of Canadian problem-solving. Introducing the kind of change proposed in Motion No. 294 would disrupt the delicate balance that has been achieved on this contentious issue. We do not need such a disruption at this difficult economic time we are experiencing in our country.

I ask the House not to support the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country will have about four minutes when this debate resumes.

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

EQUALIZATION PAYMENTS

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on February 2, I asked the Prime Minister a question about equalization transfers to Quebec. The Minister of Finance was the one who failed to answer, even though he stood up and talked for a while.

[*English*]

I had asked the Prime Minister to explain his actions with respect to his handling of changes to Quebec's equalization payments. Instead of addressing the question, the Minister of Finance decided to speak about other matters.

The issue I was addressing was the manner in which the Conservatives decided to alter the equalization program without consulting the Quebec government. It seemed as though the Quebec government was only informed of the changes as an afterthought, long after they were made and with much obfuscation of the facts.

In fact, the Quebec minister of finance, Madame Jérôme-Forget, felt so maltreated by the Conservative government that she had to resort to sending a letter to the Minister of Finance outlining the misinformation being provided to the public on this issue.

I am not at all surprised. We have seen time after time the Conservative government give out misinformation. We saw it today in the House during question period, for instance, when the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance rose and said that the opposition was holding up the stimulus package, which is patently untrue. Anyone who understands how things operate in the House knows it is not true.

It was not surprising therefore to see the Conservative government, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance attempt to obfuscate the whole issue of the changes they brought to the equalization payments.

Madame Jérôme-Forget, in her January 21 letter to the Minister of Finance, states this on page 3:

[*Translation*]

This is what she said in the letter:

In a letter sent to the Premier of Quebec on March 19, 2007, the Prime Minister of Canada stated that the 2007 federal budget marked—and she quoted the Prime Minister of Canada—"a fundamental return to fiscal balance in Canada" and that "henceforth all governments will receive resources in a way that is based on principles, predictable and defined over a long-term basis to carry out their responsibilities."

She added:

However, barely 18 months later, we are forced to conclude that the federal government has broken its word—

[*English*]

Does that not sound like income trusts?

[*Translation*]

She went on:

—regarding the equalization program. Quebec is of the view that the federal government cannot change the rules of the game as it sees fit, in particular when we face an economic downturn.

We now know that this is worse than an economic downturn; even the Prime Minister has acknowledged that this is a recession, if one can believe anything he says. He claims to be an economist, but nobody else thinks highly of his university education because he got the numbers all wrong. He was wrong about Canada's economic situation on several fronts, and now, as a result, Canadians are paying the price.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, let us be very clear. Recent changes to the equalization formula will ensure that transfers to provinces like Quebec will be predictable and long term.

Equalization costs have grown by 56% from 2003-04 to 2008-09. They were set to rise another 15% next year and even more over the near term, growth due to unprecedented resource price volatility and continued weakening in the Ontario economy. This would clearly not be sustainable.

Adjournment Proceedings

In the words of the Quebec finance minister, Monique Jérôme-Forget, “I can be sympathetic that a growth of 15% a year is unsustainable.”

Indeed, our changes are reasonable and will simply ensure equalization can grow at a sustainable rate in line with the growth in the economy.

To ensure fairness, we put a floor in at the same time so the overall size of the program will not contract, and we offered transitional protection for receiving provinces. What is more, these changes will in no way reduce transfers.

For example, Quebec's equalization and overall transfers are at an all-time high and growing. In 2009-10, Quebec will receive over \$8.3 billion from equalization, a massive 70% increase since 2005-06 under the former Liberal government, I might at. Moreover, at more than \$17.6 billion, overall federal support for Quebec is now at an all-time high.

With respect to the question of consultation, the aforementioned changes were in fact discussed at length with all provinces on November 3, 2008, at the finance ministers' meeting. The provinces were also given at that same meeting extraordinary early notice of the 2009-10 equalization amounts to provide them further certainty in terms of future budget planning.

Furthermore, a news release and backgrounder were issued and posted online that same day to outline the changes to all Canadians. Clearly, open, early and positive consultation was demonstrated.

If the member does not want to take my word for it, I ask her to listen to the words of the provincial finance minister from Prince Edward Island, Wes Sheridan.

As stated in the *Journal Pioneer* newspaper on November 3:

I was pleased that [the] federal minister...was able to share next year's equalization figures with provinces in advance of the normal release...This meeting was a positive one, with everyone agreeing to work together.

Furthermore, details on these changes were also provided to provincial officials involved at the technical level on November 13, and the November 27 economic and fiscal statement outlined the nature of the changes and explained why they were necessary.

Without a doubt, that represents an adequate flow of information to the provinces. For this reason, we are standing by the changes we have made to make equalization sustainable, and we are standing by the manner in which we introduced such changes.

• (1840)

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is another example of disinformation.

In her January 21, 2009 letter to the Conservative Minister of Finance, Quebec's finance minister, Ms. Jérôme-Forget, had this to say:

You provided this information five minutes before the end of the meeting. You did not accept any questions and it was not possible to have any discussion whatsoever despite the importance of the subject.

Accordingly, when we left the November 3 meeting, we did not know the details of the changes you wanted to impose on the equalization program as well as the impact of those changes on Quebec's equalization entitlements in subsequent years.

[English]

On the issue of equalization going up 15%, may I say that the Quebec minister also deals with that issue and says quite clearly—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I am afraid I have to interrupt the hon. member.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for her strong and continued support of this Conservative government's economic action plan outlined in budget 2009—a budget, I note, that has been met with strong enthusiasm in the Montreal area.

Listen to what the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal said:

[Budget 2009] is on target with measures designed to support companies, including easier access to credit, tax breaks, and tariff relief to stimulate investment... We also welcome the government's plan to devote \$2 billion to upgrading facilities at colleges and universities...this measure will directly benefit Montréal, one of whose primary strengths is its first-class higher education system.

I agree, and I agree with this hon. member's support of budget 2009.

• (1845)

HOUSING

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Madam Speaker, I first want to thank the parliamentary secretary for appearing to answer a follow-up question to the one I posed to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development on February 3.

Just before our country's economy was thrown into tumult because of out-of-control financial markets, there were repeated calls for the federal government to address the housing crisis in Canada.

Too many Canadians are without basic shelter and are being condemned to live a life of extreme poverty because of a lack of adequate housing.

In 1976, Canada signed on to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, declaring to the world that we believe in a right to housing.

There is no right to housing in Canada. Further, Canada's international reputation has been tarnished, as we were singled out by the United Nations for not living up to those obligations.

Now the growing numbers of unemployed, coupled with some serious holes in our employment insurance program, will put thousands more at risk of homelessness.

Adjournment Proceedings

The calls for a strong role for the federal government are louder than ever. They are being echoed by those who know that this investment is not just a social good, it is an economic one. Building new housing houses people, creates jobs, and if we build green houses, can actually help us keep our international climate change obligations.

The federal budget has presented some new money for housing. This is a welcome prospect, but it is narrowly targeted, and much of it is contingent on matching funds from the provinces.

The bulk of the money in the budget goes to those who already own their own homes, calling into question the government's understanding of the word "homelessness".

The new investments fall short of what is needed to address this urgent issue. To make matters worse, the minister herself has taken great pains to remind Canadians that this is just a one-off charity investment and not a comprehensive strategy to deal with homelessness in Canada.

Without simply reiterating what we know is in the budget, could the parliamentary secretary answer this: What is the government's long-term strategy for dealing with the national housing crisis?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her kind comments and opening remarks. Indeed there is a strong role for the federal government in the area of housing.

Canada has one of the best housing systems in the world. It has many players working together to meet the housing needs of most Canadians across this country. The Government of Canada is working with other levels of government, private sector organizations and communities in undertaking a number of important measures to address the housing needs of Canadians.

In Canada more than 80% of Canadians are able to find a safe and affordable home using their own resources, either by obtaining a mortgage and buying a home or by renting in the marketplace. We are proud of that.

For those Canadians who need assistance to meet their housing needs, the Government of Canada is making substantial public investments to create new social housing, to renovate aging existing social housing stock and to provide support to the homeless and to those living in first nations communities.

In September 2008 our government committed \$1.9 billion over the next five years to help the homeless and to improve and build new affordable housing for low-income Canadians. I can say that it was very well received by the stakeholders and those I had the opportunity to speak to.

Providing five years of funding for housing and homelessness initiatives gives us an opportunity to consider improvements, to address housing and homelessness challenges and to ensure that programs respond effectively to the needs of Canadians.

Canada's economic action plan builds on this, with a further investment of more than \$2 billion over two years. Canada's social housing is a crucial part of our national social safety net. Our

government spends \$1.7 billion, primarily to provide affordable housing to some 630,000 Canadian households.

We recognize that some housing needs to be repaired and upgraded. Canada's economic action plan will provide \$1 billion to renovate some of these older projects and upgrade them to meet modern energy efficiency and accessibility standards. This will help improve the quality of life for residents of these communities and ensure that their homes will continue to be available and affordable for future generations.

We will also be investing \$475 million in new housing for low-income seniors and people with disabilities. This funding will help Canadians on fixed incomes to continue to live independently and remain in their communities.

Our government also recognizes the special needs of first nations and first nations communities. Housing in first nations communities and in the three territories must be improved. That is why we are investing \$600 million to build new social housing and to repair and modernize existing social housing in first nations communities and in Canada's far north.

Remarkably, overall Canada's economic action plan provides \$7.8 billion to build high-quality housing, stimulate construction activity, support home ownership and enhance energy efficiency, thus providing new jobs and renovated houses for Canadians in communities across this country.

I assure my hon. colleague that the Government of Canada is taking meaningful action to address the needs of affordable housing.

Before I conclude, I must point out that I find it quite difficult to understand how it is that this member's party has voted against every single measure we have put forward, as I have just mentioned, to improve the lot of vulnerable Canadians who need our assistance in regard to housing and homelessness.

They may disagree with some parts of the plan, but there were portions in there addressed directly to some of the issues raised by this hon. member. How is it that one would oppose the budget without having read it or without understanding what was in it? I find that very difficult to accept.

● (1850)

Ms. Megan Leslie: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his answer.

It is my responsibility as an opposition member to make sure the government is acting in the best interests of Canadians. One-off investments will not get the job done when it comes to providing safe, adequate and affordable housing for those who need it. The U. N. committee has all but said so. Especially during a recession, we have to make sure that our investments are made in the right places.

Adjournment Proceedings

I hope the member would agree that basic shelter trumps repaving the driveway right now. Basic shelter trumps building backyard decks. We need a government that understands the current situation in Canada and is prepared to act in a serious way.

Can the parliamentary secretary explain exactly what provisions are made in the budget, which I have read, for those who are in precarious housing situations and not living in social housing, for aboriginal people living in cities, and for those who are currently on the street?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Madam Speaker, I have outlined the specific provisions in the budget that relate to homelessness, to those living on the street and to those who are living on and off reserve.

If the member has read the budget, why did the member and her party vote against every measure that was put toward these very issues that she raised: \$475 million in new housing for seniors and people with disabilities and \$600 million toward new social housing and repairing and modernizing existing social housing in first nations communities and in Canada's far north? They also voted against the budget implementation bill that has \$1 billion to repair and modernize existing social housing, money that will help renovate and put new roofs over the heads of thousands upon thousands of families who need it.

Our government is making historic and record investments to address the housing and homelessness needs of Canadians. The NDP member and her party voted against these measures, which is hard to understand in light of the fact that the member says that she is concerned about those who are most vulnerable in the areas she mentioned.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to address an issue I raised in the House that is actually turning out to be one of the most critical issues facing the life of this Parliament and facing the pursuit of equality in this country for many decades.

It will come as no surprise to many members that I rise again in the House on the issue of pay equity because it was on March 4, just last week, as a result of legislation presented to this chamber by the Conservatives and supported by the Liberals, that saw the death of pay equity in this country.

It is now up to the Senate to try to reverse the damage that has been done. I hope somehow that the folks in the Senate will see the wisdom of reversing the decision around pay equity and return to the women of this country their right to pursue equal pay for work of equal value through the courts.

I have the following questions today for the parliamentary secretary. Why kill something that is so important to the economic situation facing women in this country? Why cause a national embarrassment, which has been the case now with the Public Service Alliance of Canada raising a complaint with the United Nations? Why do something that will cost the government even more, because, if the Senate does not reverse the damage done, the women and the labour movement in this country will not stop? We will join them in helping them pursue a court challenge, which will cost the government incredible amounts of money.

I want to tell the House about the kind of correspondence we have received from individuals on this issue. I want to refer to Paul Durber, the former director of pay equity for the Government of Canada, who said, "I read part II of Bill C-10 with interest and great disappointment. Not only does it do away with pay equity, it even deprives people in the public service with pay equity of the right to have it maintained. The whole thing, quite frankly, is a smokescreen to mask the taking away of any obligation to compare the work of men and women".

I want to reference the good work of Ruth Walden. She was part of a group of nurses called Medical Adjudicators who took their complaint for lack of equal pay for work of equal value to the Human Rights Commission beginning in 2004 and finally won that case just last year. If that case today were put to the government on a complaint basis it is likely it would be turned down and rejected because of Bill C-10.

Finally, I want to refer to Jennifer Meunier, a young woman who wrote to me and said:

You are not alone in fighting this. I may young but I am old enough to know that women have died fighting to protect our rights as equal citizens in this country. I certainly will not stand by the wayside and watch a lifetime of many women's hard work go to waste with the stroke of a pen.

I am here to tell Jennifer and others that we will not stop fighting this battle on winning equality.

● (1855)

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for giving me the opportunity to give some background and speak in support of the public sector equitable compensation act. This act was tabled as part of the government's budget implementation act on February 6. This act replaces an adversarial complaints-based system with a collaborative one as part of the collective bargaining process.

Our current pay equity system for federal government employees is broken. Complaints are made year after year. This is because pay equity issues are raised after compensation decisions are already made. Today, public service employers and unions are not required to take pay equity issues into account when wage setting. The issues are raised only when complaints are made. Pay equity complaints can take up to 15 or more years of gruelling and divisive court proceedings to be resolved. In fact, many employees have already left the public service by the time their complaints are settled.

This is clearly a case of justice delayed being justice denied and that is no longer acceptable. The new system will address any unfairness in women's wages and will deal with it straight up instead of allowing a settlement to drag on in the courts for many years. It will also make employers and bargaining agents jointly accountable for setting fair wages. It will ensure these decisions are made at the time of the collective bargaining for unionized employees and will impose a rigorous process to ensure employers address pay equity in a timely way for non-unionized employees.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

In addition, it maintains women's right to file complaints with an independent watchdog, the Public Service Labour Relations Board, which is well equipped to act in that capacity.

[*English*]

Equitable compensation can only be ensured through a proactive, timely and fair system, a system in which employers and bargaining agents work together rather than as adversaries. That is what we are putting in place. This legislation respects the principle of equal pay for work of equal value by integrating pay equity into normal collective bargaining.

It closes the book on costly, adversarial legal contests which benefit lawyers more than women and it opens a new chapter on women's equality in the workplace.

[*Translation*]

It makes for a faster, more proactive approach and enables us to replace the current system, which is archaic, expensive and inequitable for employees.

[*English*]

Most important, it would ensure that women and men continue to benefit from quality working conditions in Canada's public service. This legislation moves us forward, not backward. It is important for women in the public service and in the wider workforce and I encourage every member of the Senate to support it.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is this legislation closes the door completely on pay equity. It is absolute nonsense for the member to stand in the House and pretend otherwise. It eliminates the right for anyone to take a complaint pertaining to pay equity to the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Why else would the pay equity commissioner say that he is absolutely disappointed and shocked that the government would actually deny women this right?

The government has made something called "equitable compensation" a negotiable right in terms of collective bargaining. Since when is a human right something that is negotiated at the bargaining table? We are talking about a basic human right that is protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The government has decided that these rights are expendable, they are negotiable, they are something that can be dismissed because the Conservatives do not believe in true equality. The government can be sure that no one on this side of the House, at least among the NDP, will stand idly by and let the government get away with that kind of disregard of human rights—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Madam Speaker, this is about doing the right thing finally for Canadian women. Our government makes no apologies for taking long-overdue steps to protect the rights of women to fair and equitable pay.

In 2004, a Liberal appointed task force concluded that proactive pay equity legislation is a more effective way of protecting the rights of women. The first proactive pay equity legislation was introduced in Manitoba in 1986, followed by Ontario and Quebec thereafter. Our new federal model will improve upon these existing models while incorporating provisions that have worked well.

The existing pay equity regime is a lengthy and costly adversarial process which does not serve employees or employers well. The last court case cost millions of dollars in legal fees and took a gruelling 15 years to settle. This is about ensuring that women receive fair pay up front, in a timely and proactive way rather than having to engage in expensive, decades long legal battles to enforce their rights.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:04 p.m.)

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