



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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VOLUME 144 • NUMBER 034 • 2nd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, March 26, 2009**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 26, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)

[*English*]

### PLANS AND PRIORITIES

**Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the ongoing, relentless efforts of our government to continue the movement of matters through this House, I have the honour to table, on behalf of my colleagues, part III of the estimates, consisting of 93 reports on plans and priorities.

These documents will be distributed to members of the standing committees to assist in their consideration of the spending authorities and sought in part II of the estimates.

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### CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY STRATEGY

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table in the House the government's "Building the Canadian Advantage: A Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy for the Canadian International Extractive Sector".

Pursuant to commitments made in the government's response in the 38th Parliament to the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, I have the honour to lay upon the table, in both official languages, on behalf of the Minister of International Trade, the government's corporate social responsibility strategy entitled, "Building the Canadian Advantage: A Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy for the Canadian International Extractive Sector".

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### CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) of the House of Commons, I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, a treaty entitled, "Convention Between Canada and the Republic of Colombia for the Avoidance of Double Taxation

and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income and on Capital".

An explanatory memorandum is included with the treaty.

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) of the House of Commons, I also have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, treaties entitled, "The Free Trade Agreement Between Canada and the Republic of Colombia", an "Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Colombia", and an "Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Colombia".

An explanatory memorandum is included with each treaty.

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### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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### CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

**Hon. Jay Hill (for the Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-23, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Colombia and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Colombia.

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

\* \* \*

### CANADA-PERU FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

**Hon. Jay Hill (for the Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-24, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Peru, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Peru and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Peru.

*Routine Proceedings*

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

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**TOBACCO ACT**

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-348, An Act to amend the Tobacco Act (cigarillos, cigars and pipe tobacco).

She said: Mr. Speaker, the bill is about the health and well-being of Canada's youth.

Parliaments of Canada have worked hard over the years to reduce smoking addiction and to curb marketing of cigarettes but big tobacco keeps finding loopholes to the Tobacco Act, trying to lure our children and youth into a lifelong addiction to cigarettes.

The latest is flavoured cigarillos sold individually or in kiddie packs in colourful and hip packages, priced at just a buck or two. The results are devastating. Cigarillo sales have skyrocketed and smoking rates among youth are going up.

The bill would change all of that. It would ban flavoured tobacco products, require cigarillos to be sold in packages of 20 instead of individually and demands tough warning labels.

Colleagues on all sides of the House support the bill. When I introduced this bill in the last Parliament, the Prime Minister made an election promise to do just that. I would say to the Conservatives that they should take this bill and make it their own.

I want to thank the Action on Tobacco Coalition and all the young people who have worked on this bill, including the Manitoba Youth for Clean Air, the Sister Teens against Nicotine and Drugs, the Northwestern Youth Action Alliance and the Eastern Ontario Youth Coalition. The bill is for them. Together we can make a difference.

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

\* \* \*

●(1010)

**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-349, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (body armour).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill to amend the Criminal Code in relation to body armour.

The bill would make it an additional offence to use body armour during the commission or attempted commission of an indictable offence. It would also ban those convicted of violent crimes from possessing body armour.

The recent spate of gang violence in the Lower Mainland of B.C., with at least 31 shootings and 15 deaths in the past two months alone, has revealed chilling examples of notorious criminals decked out in body armour, wielding guns and ready to do battle. These are not petty thugs. They are armed and dangerous gangsters who have no regard for their own lives, the lives of police or of innocent bystanders.

I have two sons who are police officers and they have told me of the disturbing situation in which beat cops are put, facing gangsters equipped with body armour that makes them almost invulnerable to patrol officers and with armour piercing weapons that can penetrate regular issue police armour.

The bill is modest in scope and only addresses one but one important small component of the problem. Our communities are crying out for a comprehensive, anti-gang strategy. The government has promised a comprehensive strategy but so far it has failed to deliver.

I call on everyone in the House to support the bill to protect the lives of police officers and the lives of innocent bystanders.

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

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**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP)** Mr. Speaker, I move that the second report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, presented on Wednesday, February 25, be concurred in.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I was in my riding last night and there was an emergency meeting where supporters of a war resisters movement gathered in solidarity for Kimberly Rivera. These important meetings happen regularly, but last night's emergency meeting was particularly important because Kimberly, a 26-year-old mother of three and a former soldier in the United States army, was scheduled to be deported back to the United States this morning where she faces harsh punishment.

Kimberly is a veteran of the Iraq invasion. She escaped to Canada after witnessing the horrors there as a soldier. Her time spent in Iraq sobered her to the realities of life for the people of Iraq and the immorality of the whole operation. Life for her and her family here has been very difficult because her status has been in constant limbo. She is basically living out of a box. Recently, she received a deportation order and faces the prospect of being separated from her four-month-old baby and the rest of her family, including her husband, Mario, and two other children.

She faces being thrown into a military prison in the United States simply for conscientiously objecting to an illegal and immoral invasion of a sovereign country. As I mentioned before, her deportation was scheduled for this morning but at the 11th hour yesterday she received an emergency stay as the federal court re-evaluates her condition for deportation. The small victory was bittersweet as the stay only allows her to stay for a few weeks. The deportation could be reordered, at which point she will face the trauma of being separated from her family and being thrown in prison.

This kind of insecurity takes its toll on an individual and even more on a family that is simply trying to live a very peaceful life in Canada. However, even taking into account the stress and insecurity, Kimberly, for the time being, is one of the luckier ones.

*Routine Proceedings*

Similar to Kimberly, there are many war resisters who sought refuge in Canada. Canada is known for its history of welcoming those who seek a peaceful life. Some are still fighting to stay but one has been deported by the Conservative government even though the majority of Parliament expressed its real view that war resisters stay on June 3 of last year by adopting the motion that I am reintroducing today.

Last June, the Conservative government refused the will of Parliament but it cannot continue to ignore the lives being destroyed by deporting those like Kimberly to face harsh prosecution due to their peaceful convictions.

Robin Long was not as lucky as Kimberly. He was deported last year, a month after Parliament approved a motion to not deport war resisters. He is now sitting in prison because he refused to fight in an illegal war. Last weekend I had the experience of visiting Robin in the military prison. Robin has a one-year-old son who is in Canada and he desperately misses his son.

I thought I would read into the record of the House some of the notes that he has made and explain why he decided to come into this country. Before I read his notes, I want to say that there are other war resisters in Canada, including Chuck, who has been in Canada for a few years. He was in the army for 18 years, fought in many wars and was a decorated soldier. However, when he went to Iraq, he said that he could not continue to fight there.

● (1015)

As I mentioned earlier, Kimberly was in Iraq but she saw how homes were being destroyed and, as a good Christian, she said that she could not do to her neighbours what she would not do to herself. She said she would not want to see her family's home being destroyed, and that morally she could not continue to fight in Iraq. She also saw children and families separated and their lives being put in harm's way. She would not want to do that to her children. She faced a moral dilemma. At the end of it, because she had a two-month break, she said she decided to keep driving north, and she came to Canada.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Respectfully, the concurrence motion is on the second report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, which ostensibly deals with the issue of war resisters. Perhaps the hon. member could clarify this. It would appear that the hon. member is carrying on a discussion of a specific case totally unrelated to the subject matter of the second report. On the basis of relevance, I raise this concern.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will allow the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina to continue and ask that she be mindful of the motion before the House for the rest of her remarks.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the lives of young men and women such as Kimberly Rivera, Jeremy Hinzman, Patrick Hart, Joshua Key, all brave young soldiers. Patrick Hart, for example, had been in the army for eight years. He was in the first Iraq war and then he went back. We are talking about their lives and I cannot help but talk about their lives because what we do here and what the government chooses to do makes a big difference to their lives. They could either go to jail for months or years, or they could live peacefully in this country.

The reason why I choose to talk about their lives is because often in this House we debate points, we debate theories, we very seldom talk about what we do that has a direct impact on the lives of people who are in Canada. I have to talk about their lives, especially the life of Robin Long, who is now in jail even though he has a Canadian born son.

I have to talk about Patrick Hart because he lives in my riding. He has been in Iraq. He described in graphic detail what was happening in Iraq. He has a son who attends a school in my riding whose friends and classmates are my constituents' children. Patrick volunteered to fundraise for the Epilepsy Association of Canada and his wife works in the Lula Lounge which is a very famous Queen Street pub in my area where a lot of my constituents go.

Their lives are very much connected to the lives of ordinary Canadians. A poll showed at least 65% of ordinary Canadians said that we must let the war resisters stay, they are our neighbours. If we then asked other Canadians, some of them will tell us that they came to Canada during the Vietnam War and made Canada their home.

Last night I was at another meeting talking about waterfront revitalization. One middle-aged man, very well dressed and doing very well, probably a lawyer from the way he was talking at the meeting, came to me privately afterwards and thanked me for the work that I was doing for the war resisters. He came to Canada from the U.S. when he was asked to go to Vietnam and he did not go to that war. He told me he was so happy that he is a Canadian and he has been in Canada since the early seventies.

Yes, I am talking about the lives of quite a few of these war resisters. I have to because what we do here has an impact on their lives.

Kimberly Rivera and her four month-old daughter came to Parliament Hill. She drove five hours each way, so 10 hours yesterday, to tell us what kind of life she is having in Canada, how she loves this country. I was very pleased to see that my colleagues from both the Liberal Party and the Bloc Québécois were with us at the press conference yesterday morning. Imagine a young baby, four months old, being torn away from her mother and not being able to continue living with her mother because her mother is cruelly thrown in jail and can no longer continue to breastfeed her baby. Make no mistake about it, once a mother is in jail she cannot take care of her children and Kimberly Rivera has three children.

● (1020)

Many war resisters work in Canada. Corey Glass, for example, has a very good job in Canada. If we were to have a program that allowed them to stay, it would have a dramatic impact on their lives.

I want to remind members of Parliament that in the early 1970s, after a great debate that lasted for over a year, the government, finally made the wise decision to allow at least 50,000 Americans to stay in Canada. They were the ones who would not fight in Vietnam.

It is an identical parallel situation right now because what is happening in Iraq is very similar. Canada chose not to fight the war in Iraq. It chose not to fight the war in Vietnam. We really should allow war resisters to remain in Canada.

*Routine Proceedings*

Also, I want to remind members that this was debated in the immigration committee in the last Parliament. It was debated again during this session and the discussions were very similar. We need to remember that it is not a very difficult decision, even on humanitarian grounds, to allow war resisters to stay.

I want to put the words of Robin Long on the record in the few minutes I have left. He stated:

In 2004, when Jeremy Hinzman applied for refugee status in Canada, the federal government stepped in at his refugee hearing and said that evidence challenging the legality of the war in Iraq cannot be used in his case.

The U.N. Handbook for Refugees and the Nuremberg Principals say: "a soldier of an army that is involved in an illegal war of aggression has a higher international duty to refuse service. They also have the right to seek refugee protection in any country that is signatory to the Geneva Convention".

By refusing to allow him, and by precedent all other claimants, the right to use the argument that the war was illegal, the decision closed the door on that legal avenue for refugee protection.

The invasion of Iraq was clearly an illegal act of aggression. The U.S. was not under attack or the imminent threat of attack from the nation of Iraq. The action was also not approved by the U.N. Security Council.

By taking this stance, the Conservative government is condoning the invasion and continuing occupation of Iraq.

Is this what Canadians want? A majority of Americans want it to end and have also realized it to be a mistake. Canadians have long known it to be wrong. Why is the minority Conservative government still holding onto the idea and still deporting war resisters?

Why are they separating families and being complicit in the incarceration of morally strong young men and women? What message is this sending?

Parliament voted to let war resisters remain. In June of 2008 Canada's Parliament voted on a non-binding resolution to allow war resisters and their families permanent resident status. The vote passed. In agreement with the vote, a poll of Canadian opinion showed overwhelming support for the resolution.

But in defiance of Parliament and the will of the people, the Conservative minority government led by [the] Prime Minister and Immigration Minister ignored the bill. The government stated that all refugee claimants are give a fair chance to plead their case at the Refugee Board, and special treatment to these Iraq resisters wasn't fair to the other claimants. The government has also stated in the past that we are not legitimate claimants because we are from the U.S. which they say has a fair and transparent justice system and we wouldn't be singled out for being political.

● (1025)

That is not the case. Robin Long went on to state:

On July 14th, 2008 in my final attempt to stay in Canada, where my son and community are, [the] Federal Judge...stated that I didn't prove I would be treated harshly by the U.S. military for being a political outspoken opponent to the war in Iraq and the Bush administration policy.

Robin Long continued to tell us, even in jail, that the trial he received was not fair in his mind. He said that the only evidence used against him was the newspaper clippings and a CBC tape in Canada where he talked about his experience and why he would not go to Iraq. In these newspaper clippings he talked about his inability or his colleagues' inability to find any weapons of mass destruction. That was the only evidence that was used against Robin Long in his trial.

He also said that he was given 15 months, which is much harsher than a lot of the other soldiers. He gave the example of a person called Belmor Ramos who was sentenced to only seven months after being convicted of conspiracy to commit murder in the case of four Iraqi men. In 2007 he stood guard while others blindfolded and shot in the head four unidentified Iraqi men and afterwards dumped the bodies in a Baghdad canal. During his court martial Belmor Ramos admitted his guilt, stating, "I wanted them dead. I had no legal justification to do this". That man got seven months, whereas Mr.

Robin Long, who refused to participate in the killing, got 15 months. Where is the justice? The system is just not fair and impartial. Robin Long asked, "Can it really be transparent when you don't know why you are being sentenced for speaking out?"

What we have are some very brave young men and women who want to make Canada their home. Parliament has debated this issue several times. I hope for the lives of people like Joshua Key, Jeremy Hinzman and Kimberly Rivera that we allow these war resisters to stay in Canada. We are not talking of a great number. There are some who have been in Canada for four to five years. Even on humanitarian grounds there is no reason to deport them. Many have Canadian born children. I hope that the government will open its heart for a change and listen to the stories of these young men and women and allow them to stay in Canada. I believe they make excellent Canadian citizens.

● (1030)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member said that Vietnam and Iraq are identical. They are not identical at all. In Vietnam it was a conscripted army and in Iraq it is a volunteer army.

The member talked about Iraq. She should maybe look at what Iraq is like today. Iraq is actually in pretty good shape.

What is really outrageous is that we are taking three hours away from discussing the criminal justice agenda, justice issues that would make life safer for Canadians. The NDP is taking three hours out of that to talk about criminals from another country.

First of all, we are very pleased to welcome to Canada those who seek a peaceful life, but not criminals avoiding a lawful process in another country; another country, by the way, that shares the same values as Canada, shares the same sense of responsibility to people around the world. Why is the member presupposing judgment in the United States for these criminals if they were to return to the United States?

The member has put a lot of faith in President Obama. The NDP members seem to be enthused about the arrival of President Obama on the scene. Why is she not putting faith in President Obama to deal with these people in a humane and reasonable manner?

*Routine Proceedings*

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Mr. Speaker, I want to correct a statement. The hon. member said that during the Vietnam war the people who came to Canada were all conscripted. That is not true. Some of them were, but there is a good number who fought in Vietnam voluntarily and then refused to continue fighting. Some volunteered and then decided, after seeing what other soldiers were going through, not to go at all. Of the 50,000 people who came to Canada, a good percentage of them were in fact not conscripted.

Also, we cannot presuppose that these young men and women are criminals. I talked about Sergeant Patrick Hart, who has been in the army for eight years. He is a decorated soldier. To say that these people are criminals is presupposing that they have committed a crime. Can we say to a person who has refused to kill another human being that he or she has committed a crime? I do not consider that to be a crime, especially in a war that is not sanctioned by the United Nations and a war in which Canada refused to participate. I am quite proud that Canada did not send soldiers to Iraq, and as such, they did not have to go through the kind of experiences that many of these war resisters have had to experience.

We need to listen to their words. Joshua Key, for example, said that he saw a young girl being shot in the back of the head. After that experience, even though he had been there for over a year, he could not continue that kind of tour of duty and he left.

I hope that my colleague takes the time to read the account of these soldiers who are in the Iraq war and understand that some of them have been subject to a stop-loss extension, which means that they had to go back for a second, third or fourth tour of duty and they did not want to do so. There is nothing voluntary about that. They are conscripted to go back many times against their will. That is why they are here.

• (1035)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is an issue which is important for the House to consider. More important, when matters such as this one come before the House and we have the conclusion and the recommendation of the committee but none of the substantive argument, it makes it very difficult for the House to understand the compelling reasons that a particular position ought to be taken.

I would ask the member, rather than her interpretation, to give the House an indication of the substantive arguments that were made by witnesses before the committee as to why we ought not to move forward as recommended by the committee.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Mr. Speaker, the committee heard from Phil McDowell, who is a soldier. The committee also heard from lawyers and people who have been involved in assisting the war resisters. We heard that their refugee claims were turned down because the refugee board refused to hear the case of whether the invasion of Iraq was legal or illegal. Subsequently, the Federal Court overturned the refugee board's decision in the case of Joshua Key. His case was sent back to the refugee board. The refugee board has yet to re-examine his case.

In these cases, one refugee board member has said that they do not qualify. They are now in front of the Federal Court. In some of these cases, the Federal Court has said they should be re-examined.

In other cases, the Federal Court has said the board might have made the right decision. It has gone on back and forth.

If we look back historically, former minister Allan MacEachen said that we should consider establishing a program that would allow all war resisters or draft dodgers from Vietnam to stay in Canada.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague asked what I thought was a very good question. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence asked a very specific question about President Obama and whether or not the member for Trinity—Spadina actually agreed that President Obama has the ability to have those who have deserted their country treated fairly in a court of law and treated fairly as citizens of the United States.

I want to give the member for Trinity—Spadina a chance to respond to that question specifically because she chose not to respond to that question. Her party continues to mention how important the new administration is in the United States. If she does not have faith in that administration, let her say it today here in the House of Commons.

• (1040)

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Mr. Speaker, the new Obama administration has a different point of view on the war in Iraq and will be pulling the soldiers out in a few years' time.

The soldiers who are in Canada came to Canada when there was a different administration in the United States. They are here. What has occurred is that what they said in Canada is now being used against them. It is now being entered as evidence. Because the army had already ruled in that way prior to President Obama taking office, most likely many of these young men and women will be put in jail.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there seems to be some suggestion that the American war resisters who are in Canada are somehow unpatriotic Americans. That could not be further from the truth. They are patriotic Americans who chose to serve their country because they believed that their country was under threat from the Iraqi regime. In fact, like us, they were lied to. The American administration told us that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq that threatened the United States and the rest of the world.

These people volunteered to do their patriotic duty and then they discovered the lie of the administration, the lie that took them into the armed forces.

I wonder if the member for Trinity—Spadina could comment on how she has understood these people to be patriotic Americans, and how they have tried to exercise their conscience as patriotic Americans and that is indeed exactly what brought them here to Canada.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Mr. Speaker, Chuck Wiley has been a soldier in the U.S. army for 18 years, and he has risen up in the ranks. One could not find a more patriotic American than Chuck Wiley. Phil McDowell finished college and then he heard that his country, America, was under attack after 9/11. He said, "I need to defend my country," and he immediately volunteered. Then when he got to Iraq he could not find any weapons of mass destruction. That is why he said he could not continue.

*Routine Proceedings*

They volunteered. They did not find what they were sent to—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Resuming debate. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of things I want to talk about this morning with respect to the motion for concurrence.

First, the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina and her party have spoken for months about President Obama and the new administration. While the election was happening, they spoke about the change the man would bring to the country, how much his administration would mean to a change leadership in the United States and how important it was for him to be elected. Once he was elected, on a daily basis, the NDP quoted, spoke and referred to him. Yet the hon. member had two opportunities to respond to a question from me and from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Today we have heard that the NDP and the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina have no faith whatsoever in the justice system of the United States, in the administration of the new President and the President himself. It is unacceptable that the NDP would use that. In fact, the hon. member did not say anything to support him. That needs to be put on the record.

I speak passionately about this for a number of reasons. The hon. member for Trinity—Spadina mentioned Patrick Hart and what he had faced when he saw a young girl get shot in Iraq.

I want to read from a story about a young girl in Toronto on Boxing Day, who was also shot and killed:

The Boxing Day shooting took place December 26, 2005 on Toronto's Yonge Street when a shootout between two youth gangs resulted in the death of a 15-year-old student. Six other bystanders—four men and two women—were wounded. The incident took place on one of Toronto's most crowded streets on the very busy shopping day, just a few blocks north of the Toronto Eaton Centre.

The story generated coverage across not only our country, but around the world. The story goes on:

Jane Creba...a student in Grade 10 at Riverdale Collegiate Institute, was killed in the incident. While shopping with her sister, she crossed the road to go to find a public washroom on the west side of the street, when the gunfight erupted. One bullet passed through her upper torso, lodging in her clothing; it was later recovered in hospital. She was rushed to hospital and died during emergency surgery.

What does that have to do with the hon. member's comments this morning? I can tell the House exactly what it has to do with them. Prior to this motion for concurrence, the Minister of Justice introduced two specific pieces of legislation that would deal with issues of gun and gang violence. These would specifically deal with a young girl who was murdered on the streets of downtown Toronto.

I know the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina has a compassionate commitment and an ideological perspective on American war deserters, but I and the Conservative Party disagree with it fundamentally. However, that is her perspective and she has a right to hold that view.

At the same time, why does she take away from the very justice legislation that would deal with issues she and her party believe are important and very close to her riding in downtown Toronto?

The member for Windsor—Tecumseh sits on the justice committee and is the justice critic for the NDP. He stated clearly that he believed, on behalf of his party, that we should fast track the legislation that would be before the House today.

At the very same time, we are now delaying what I believe is some of the most important legislation we will deal with in the 40th Parliament. If passed by Parliament, the proposed act to amend the Criminal Code will automatically impose a first degree murder charge on murders connected to organized crime activity. First degree murder is subject to a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment without eligibility for parole for 25 years.

The proposed bill will also create a new offence to address drive-by and other reckless shootings. This offence will carry a mandatory minimum sentence of four years imprisonment with a maximum of fourteen years. The minimum sentence will increase if the offence is committed for a criminal organization and with a prohibited or restricted firearm such as a hand gun. It will also create two new offences of aggravated assault against a peace or public officer and assault with a weapon on a peace or public officer. This will be punishable by maximum penalties of 14 and 10 years respectively.

• (1045)

The Minister of Justice is passionate about these issues. He cares about them as does this government. In fact, we have an opposition party that believes in this, and while we may criticize at times its belief in the need for stronger justice legislation, it is committed to this legislation.

Apparently the NDP is committed to moving this legislation forward, but if it is 100% committed to this, why do we stand here today to deal with an issue that has been dealt with already and has been voted on in the House? We have a democratically elected new President in the United States who, according to the very party that she represents, will treat those who are sent back to their country in a fair and democratic way under its justice system, which we all agree is a fair justice system.

We can continue this debate on another day, there is no question. Right now two important justice bills are before the House, which aim to deal with gang violence.

Therefore, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

• (1050)

**The Deputy 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.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.



*Routine Proceedings*

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

● (1130)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 42*)

**YEAS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Ashfield
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Bloch	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrie	Casey
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Cummins	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoepfner
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Payne	Petit
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Sweet	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
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Yelich — 125	

**NAYS**

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Beaudin
Bélanger	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Bonsant	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brison
Brunelle	Byrne
Cannis	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Coderre
Comartin	Cotler
Crombie	Cullen
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Dhalla
Dion	Dorion
Duceppe	Dufour
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter	Eyking
Faillie	Folco
Foote	Gagnon
Garneau	Gaudet
Godin	Goodale
Guarnieri	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	Harris (St. John's East)
Holland	Hyer
Jennings	Julian
Kania	Kennedy
Laforest	Laframboise
Lavallée	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemay	Leslie
Malhi	Malo
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse	Mathysen
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Mendes
Minna	Mulcair
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau	Oliphant
Ouellet	Pacetti
Paillé	Paquette
Patry	Pearson
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Proulx	Rae
Rafferty	Regan
Rodriguez	Roy
Russell	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Sgro
Siksay	Silva
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**PAIRED**

Nil

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

Order, please. The hon. Minister of Justice on a point of order.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

**Hon. Rob Nicholson:** Mr. Speaker, maybe there was a little bit of confusion in the minds of the opposition. We are supposed to be debating Bill C-14, which is the government's anti-crime and anti-gang bill. That was supposed to be on the order paper today. All these people here purport to be supporting the government's anti-crime agenda. When they had the opportunity today, they got together and went back to their old habits. They all got together—

**The Speaker:** I do not think the minister is really raising a point of order. It sounds like a matter of debate. He may want to participate in the debate that is before the House now, because we are about to resume debate on a motion to concur in a committee report.

There is no point of order. There was a motion to adjourn the debate. The motion was defeated, so we resume the debate.

I cannot imagine how there could be a point of order. We had a vote and the vote result has been announced. We have not heard one so far, and I can see that other members are getting up to argue about something that in my view is not a point of order.

Is there a different point of order from the House Leader of the Official Opposition?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice may not have been aware of discussions among House leaders. Pursuant to those discussions among House leaders earlier this week, I wonder if there would be unanimous consent in the House that we would agree that by the end of the day today we will send Bill C-14 to committee.

• (1135)

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, could you put the question again, please?

*[English]*

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent that Bill C-14 be referred to committee after second reading at the end of today's sitting?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. When the House voted on the motion, the time for the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration had expired, so we will now move on to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Mississauga South.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech by the hon. member and I have a couple of questions.

As the member knows, the House has just been presented with a concurrence motion on the second report, which only gives the conclusion. I had asked the mover of the motion earlier and I would ask the parliamentary secretary now to confirm that it is the committee's view that the persons referenced in the cases in the

United States would be charged with the criminal offence of desertion, notwithstanding that they volunteered for the original service but the complication or grey area has to do with being asked to or ordered to serve a second tour or more.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary if he could clarify for the House the concerns that were raised on their status and whether there are any other substantive reasons the House may not be aware of that argue in favour of or opposed to the motion.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** Mr. Speaker, it is certainly our position that, as a general rule, military deserters from the United States are not genuine refugees under the internationally accepted meaning of the term. This position has been upheld, as the member may know, by three independent tribunals: the IRB, the Federal Court, and the Federal Court of Appeal.

As the member knows, the committee is certainly of its own volition in terms of the position it may take. I also know the member is fully aware of the fact that a majority of the members who sit on that committee are in opposition. I can inform the member that the report certainly was reviewed and delivered to the House. It was also delivered with a minority report from the government, which opposed the recommendations held by the committee.

I think he is fairly aware of the government's position on this issue. The committee is of its own will, but that does not necessarily make the votes of the opposition within that committee the correct interpretation of this government.

• (1140)

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Canada decided not to take part in the war in Iraq because it considered that war illegal and unjust. At least that is the opinion of most Quebecers, Canadians and members of this House.

We know that the Prime Minister and the current Leader of the Opposition were in favour of the war in Iraq at the time, but that no longer seems to be the case.

Does the parliamentary secretary believe this war is just or unjust? Does he, like most Canadians, believe it is an illegal war because it is not sanctioned by the UN?

Does he feel it is right that Kimberly Rivera is facing several months in prison and is separated from her family and her children, including a four-month-old who was born in Canada and is therefore a Canadian citizen?

Does he feel it is fair that this person faces a prison term because she refuses to take part in a war that everyone in Canada considers illegal?

*[English]*

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate that whenever situations of this nature arise there are going to be impacts, not just on the individual, but impacts that may go a bit further than that with respect to family.

*Routine Proceedings*

I appreciate the question. I think it is a fair one in terms of understanding the issue and the situation we face. I would say to the hon. member that people's decision to desert, to go against their commitment to both their country and their colleagues in war, is one that they have to make on their own. They are certainly free to do that, but they have to understand also that the consequences of that decision will have an impact on them individually and will have an impact on their family or their potential family. That is a decision they make. It is not one that we make for them; it is one that they have made on their own.

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member raised the question of delay of crime bills. I want to ask him if he feels that the Prime Minister was delaying crime bills, since there has not been a government bill in front of the justice committee for over a year now. The reason has been that, first, the Conservative chair of that committee at the time refused to let the committee function. Then we had the election call by the Prime Minister, who then prorogued Parliament, and we are still waiting.

As recently as Monday, Bill C-14, the gang bill, could have been before the House.

I am wondering if he feels that, on each of those occasions, his party and the representatives of his party were delaying the advance of crime bills in this legislature.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** Mr. Speaker, I wish I had another 20 minutes to respond to that question, because it brings up a whole host of issues that I certainly would like to respond to.

The member for Windsor—Tecumseh and I both sat on the justice committee during the 39th Parliament, and I certainly understand why we had delays at that committee. It was not because this side of the House did not believe in its crime agenda and did not want to move motions forward. All we had were frivolous motions brought forward by the opposition to deal with issues that were completely unrelated to the job and requirements at hand at the committee to bring back legislation to the House so that it could be voted on third reading.

The member knows full well what those motions were and why they occurred. We had an election because this Parliament, based somewhat on the issues that were faced at the justice committee, could not move justice legislation forward. We had an election for those reasons. That is exactly why.

We are now back in the House, and today is a perfect example of how we could have moved justice legislation forward. Not one person on this side of the House wants to delay justice, wants to delay legislation, wants to delay what the people of this country have said they wanted.

Every person on that side of the House did that this morning, and hopefully we can get back to doing what is right in this country and putting justice legislation forward that means something in the House, that means something for the people in Toronto, that means something for the people in this province and for this country.

• (1145)

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to briefly comment on the comment made by the parliamentary

secretary, with whom I worked on the citizenship and immigration committee, in reference to the justice issue.

Members probably saw just a few minutes ago in this House the leadership of the member of Parliament for Wascana, who actually proposed that the bill now go straight to committee. I think that shows that on the issue of justice, we as a party understand its importance, understand that the issue needs to be studied, and we also understand that action is required on that file.

I also agree with the previous speaker from Windsor who said that in fact there has been a delay. We can now focus on the justice issue and move forward, and provide the best justice legislation we can as Canadians to a population that deserves better justice legislation.

Today we are of course debating the issue of the concurrence motion which recommends that the government immediately implement a program to allow conscientious objectors, and their immediate family members, partners and dependants, who have left military service related to a war not sanctioned by the United Nations, and do not have a criminal record, to apply for permanent residence status and remain in Canada, and that the government should immediately cease any removal or deportation actions it may have already commenced against such individuals.

I come to this issue as an individual who sat around the cabinet table during the decision not to enter the Iraq war. Back then, the former prime minister said in an address to the House of Commons that the decision on whether or not to send troops into battle must always be a decision of principle, not a decision of economics, not even a decision of friendship alone. That is what Mr. Chrétien said.

As I said, I was a member of that cabinet that decided not to participate in the Iraq war. We took a stand against military intervention in Iraq. The decision not to engage was the right decision, a decision that Canadians strongly supported. In many ways, that decision was a defining moment in Canadian history.

I believe that the decision made by members of my caucus and other members of the opposition to support war resisters is the right decision as well. It is a decision that is based on the sound values of fairness, justice, understanding, and compassion for these individuals who are in fact engaged in the Iraq war.

There is a bit of an issue here. I have paid attention of course to the debate, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration have to understand that we cannot be looking at the Iraq situation now as being the same as the past. These are different conditions.

We have a new administration in the United States of America, and of course I note that Secretary Gates has signalled a change to that provision for the future, but that is for the future. We need to look at present conditions. We need to look at individuals such as Kimberly Rivera and her Canadian-born infant who are faced with different conditions. To be revisionist as it comes to the issue of time does not really be apply to this issue.

*Routine Proceedings*

We also feel, on this side of the House, that the whole issue of compulsion of a stop loss provision in the United States is simply not consistent with values that we as Canadians hold, in the sense of fairness and justice for individuals.

For the benefit of the House and for Canadians who perhaps did not watch the press conference that was held yesterday in support of Kimberly Rivera, I want to read into the record of the House of Commons what I said, because what I said at that press conference embodies how I truly feel about this issue, this individual, and the actions that we have to take as a Parliament.

• (1150)

I said, after Kimberly Rivera spoke and as I listened to her speak and tell her story, that I was really struck by her sincerity and her honesty and integrity, as well as I think her principled position on the Iraq war. It is a position that I share. It is a position that a vast majority of Canadians share. It is a position that the ramifications of that war have been very serious on a number of fronts.

I said that I was a member of the cabinet that decided not to participate in the Iraq war. We took a stand against military intervention in Iraq. The decision not to engage was the right decision, a decision Canadians strongly support. It was a defining moment in Canadian history. A decision taken by the Liberal Party and other members of the opposition to support Kimberly Rivera is the right decision as well, a decision based on sound principles of fairness, understanding, compassion and justice. The element of compulsion and the stop loss provisions in the U.S. are not consistent with these values. We note that Secretary of State Gates has signalled change to this provision for the future. This is a critical point of distinction.

Canadians understand fairness and Canadians understand justice. What Canadians fail to understand is a Conservative government that essentially, with its action, wants to separate this mother from her Canadian born infant child and potentially send her to a military prison for having made the decision to follow her conscience. That is essentially what it is, following her conscience under the circumstances that existed at that time.

Canadians do not understand that. They do not understand why we would put Ms. Rivera through all this because she opposed the war that the Prime Minister has finally admitted was absolutely an error, and I am quoting him.

I want the government to immediately intervene and let Kimberly and her family stay in Canada, a place where she feels at home. I hope that the Prime Minister and his government will understand that deporting Kimberly Rivera, for holding views that the vast majority of Canadians believe in, is wrong.

The Prime Minister needs to understand that the critical point is the element of compulsion and the stop loss provisions in the U.S. I ask him to intervene, to act with justice and fairness, and let Kimberly stay in Canada and her Canadian born child and family. It is the right thing to do.

I felt it was important for me to put that on the record because as members of the opposition when we were holding the press conference, we could see the humanity of this issue.

Parliament and public life is not necessarily sort of a neat package where everything fits in perfectly. There are times when we as individuals need to look at ways to help people by using a different perspective to address the plight that these people face in their reality.

There have been a number, and time does not permit me to go through all the issues related to this particular matter, but I know that other members who are sharing the time with me, like the member of Parliament for Etobicoke Centre, will address some of the other issues. I just want raise a couple of points.

Some people question that when these individuals go back everything in their lives will be just fine. When we look at Robin Long, who was deported by Canada in July 2008, he received a lengthy prison sentence of 15 months in military prison and received a dishonourable discharge.

James Burmeister, who voluntarily returned to the U.S. from Canada, was sentenced to nine months in military prison and given a bad conduct discharge equivalent to a felony conviction.

• (1155)

So, this notion that they go back and everything is fine and that they go on with their lives is actually inaccurate. We as individuals here in the Parliament of Canada need to factor all these things in as we contemplate a fair response to the challenges that these individuals face.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his speech and his comments both on the issue of our justice legislation that has now been held up because of this concurrence motion and on the issue of American war deserters.

I would like to ask him a two-part question.

First, I asked the member for Trinity—Spadina whether or not she had faith in the new President Obama administration that justice would be served and fairness would be served on how deserters would be treated, in terms of not only a court of law but also in terms of fairness. I would ask him to respond as to whether he thinks that will not be the case.

I would also like to ask him, in issues that surround personal difficult decisions like these, are not the individuals who make the decision to desert not responsible for the actions that they take, and I know that this can, and has, become a very emotional issue. Despite that, when we deal directly with the impact of the decision that they have made on their own, in consultation with their family, or not, is it not incumbent upon those individuals to clearly understand, before they make that decision, the impact that decision would potentially have?

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** Mr. Speaker, I think we in this House, as elected officials, understand the responsibility of our actions and the consequences of our actions. In the same way, I think that we need to understand the consequences of our actions as parliamentarians when we are dealing with this particular issue. This is an issue that requires reflection and action at the same time.

*Routine Proceedings*

In reference to the new American administration and my faith in it, I thought I was very clear during the press conference that it was important to note that Secretary Gates has signalled a change to the stop loss provisions, as well as compulsion. I brought it to light at the press conference because I thought it was the right thing to do, to tell Canadians and the reporters present that in fact there is this change afoot in the United States. What we will need to do, and this is to the parliamentary secretary, is to look at the changes—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Questions and comments, the hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like my Liberal colleague to clarify part of his speech, even though obviously we also wholeheartedly support the motion before us today.

He talked about how things have changed now that Mr. Obama is President of the United States. But it seems to me that regardless of the administration in place, Canadians still consider this war unjust, and American deserters are still very much at risk if they have to face the U.S. justice system. In my opinion, this issue has not really changed.

For example, the Prime Minister and the leader of the member's party have changed their positions on this issue. We know that the Liberal leader was in favour of the war in Iraq. Regardless, that war was and still is unjust.

● (1200)

[*English*]

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member that I had the opportunity in the then cabinet of Mr. Jean Chrétien to address this particular issue. I think the member is aware of the decision not to participate in the war. It is the position of the Liberal Party of Canada. That is about as clear as we can get. I remember that in those days there were individuals, including the present Prime Minister, who said that was the wrong way to go and who wanted to enter into the war in Iraq.

The reason I signalled the change in administration was to bring to light to Parliament and the Canadian people that Secretary Gates has signalled that on these particular issues change is on its way—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am going to have to stop the hon. member there. I know he would like to continue, but unfortunately we are out of time for that slot.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has a history, one could call it a legacy, of providing sanctuary to those in the United States who, for reasons of principle, make that difficult decision to leave their homeland and come up north to Canada. We could go back to the era of the Loyalists, or the Underground Railroad which funnelled slaves to freedom in Canada.

In the modern era we have the example of the Vietnam war. Some 50,000 Vietnam war draft dodgers came up to Canada, found sanctuary and began new lives. We welcomed them. At the same time, approximately 5,000 active duty soldiers, many of them volunteers, after having done a tour of duty in Vietnam and having

seen the reality of that war, also made the decision to come up to Canada. They did not come up as draft dodgers. They were active duty soldiers and Vietnam war resisters.

Currently there are approximately 200 Iraq war resisters in our country. On June 3, 2008, Parliament reaffirmed the Canadian legacy of providing sanctuary. We reaffirmed it by a majority vote. The motion reads in part:

[T]he government immediately implement a program to allow conscientious objectors and their immediate family members (partners and dependents), who have refused or left military service related to war not sanctioned by the United Nations and do not have a criminal record, to apply for permanent resident status and remain in Canada—

Throughout Canada's history, there has always been a minority within the country who do not agree with providing sanctuary. There was a minority who did not agree with allowing the Loyalists and slaves in. During the Vietnam war there was a minority who did not like the idea of allowing the draft dodgers to stay. We have always allowed them to remain and have provided them with the opportunity to stay in Canada. We reaffirmed it.

Polling has shown two-thirds of Canadians would like the Iraq war resisters to be given the opportunity to stay in Canada. Unfortunately, notwithstanding the will of the majority of Canadians, Parliament and the House of Commons, in this particular case the minority Conservative government has decided it will deport the resisters.

In fact, within a month of the House of Commons expressing its will to allow them to stay, the government provided the Bush administration with a present. On July 4, an American holiday, the government began proceedings against the first Iraq war resister to be deported, Mr. Robin Long. Mr. Long applied to the Federal Court to not be deported. When his case was heard, Federal Court justice Anne Mactavish decided that irreparable harm would not be caused should the young man be deported.

Based on all the statistics she would have had in front of her, that seemed to be a correct decision. Only 10% of soldiers who go AWOL end up charged in the United States. Of those 10%, the vast majority receive very minor sentences of six to eight months.

● (1205)

I will give an example of the type of justice the U.S. military metes out in military courts. First infantry division soldier Belmor Ramos was sentenced to seven months after being convicted of conspiracy to commit the murder of four Iraqi men. In 2007 he stood guard while others blindfolded and shot in the head four unidentified men, and afterwards dumped their bodies in a Baghdad canal. During his court martial, Ramos admitted his guilt, stating, "I wanted them dead. I had no legal justification to do this". He got seven months.

Only 10% of those going AWOL end up charged. In that extremely serious case involving murder, there was a seven month sentence. Justice Mactavish quite reasonably deduced that irreparable harm would not be caused.

*Routine Proceedings*

What happened? Mr. Long was deported. During his trial only one piece of evidence was presented. It was a CBC interview. The prosecution produced a CBC interview where he spoke out against the Iraq war. He received a 15 month sentence. That was 15 months for a young man of 25, a young father with a three-year-old Canadian born child. He should be with his son during the formative years. Quite clearly, the U.S. military justice system has caused irreparable harm to Mr. Robin Long.

What is even more disturbing is that in January of this year the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration publicly stated to the media that these people are not Iraq war resisters, that they are strictly deserters.

There are two problems with that statement. The first one is, the minister is supposed to have an arm's length relationship with the Immigration and Refugee Board. Decisions before the board should not be prejudged by the very minister who appoints and reappoints the board members. All those decisions of the board are now under a cloud. Even worse, before publicly making this proclamation, I question whether or not the minister actually sat down with these Iraq war resisters to hear their stories. The minister may not have, but in December I did.

I sat down with Iraq war resister Kimberly Rivera, a young mother of three, including a four-month-old Canadian born child. Kimberly was a volunteer, a patriotic American. She believed her president when he said there were weapons of mass destruction. However, upon arriving in Iraq, she became aware of a different reality. She told me that she saw the personal destruction of civilians' property and homes, the death of civilians, the shell-shocked small Iraqi children.

When she came back on leave, she made the difficult decision for a patriotic American, to uproot her family and come to Canada seeking sanctuary. She is quite clearly a conscientious objector. She is in jeopardy of being deported, and we know what kind of justice is being meted out by the U.S. military for those who speak out against the war in Iraq in Canada.

Why would we put this young mother of three children in a situation of jeopardy of this sort? Why would we separate her from her four-month-old Canadian born infant and put this young mother in prison for having made the principled decision not to be an agent in this particular war?

Let me also give the case of Phil McDowell. He was in Ottawa yesterday and I spoke with him briefly. He was in his senior year in university majoring in information technology. After 9/11 he volunteered. He served in Iraq from March 2004 to March 2005. He did his duty. He was disillusioned in the same way that Kimberly was disillusioned, but then he was called up again because of stop-loss, what many call forced deployment, a backdoor draft.

Parliament has expressed its will by majority. Let us not undermine the will of Parliament. Let us stop these deportations.

● (1210)

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I heard the impassioned plea of the member for Etobicoke Centre. His perspective is one that he has been able to make in the House and

he has done so. However, it is an emotional plea. It is not one based on any legal foundation. It is not one based on the rules, regulations and stipulations that an individual makes when taking on the responsibility of joining the armed forces, certainly in the United States.

I have a two-part question.

First, his leader was very vocal in his support of the war in Iraq. His leader has now done a reverse on that after coming back to Canada. Does he believe his leader made the right decision to change his mind on that perspective? He was in favour of it and now he is not.

Second, could he comment on a quote from Prime Minister Trudeau on this issue? He said:

—surely a person who deserts from the armed forces of the U.S. is guilty of a criminal offense and accordingly would be inadmissible to Canada on that ground—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj:** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary began by referencing rules. We are the elected representatives chosen by the people of Canada to enact legislation and laws, to vote on motions and to reflect the will of Canadians, and that occurred. It is the minority government that has not respected the will of Canadians through their elected representatives. It is fundamentally undemocratic. Even worse, it undermines the very institution of the House of Commons.

I agree that when Parliament expresses its will, we should subscribe to the results of a majority vote. The government has chosen not to do that, which is most unfortunate.

He then said that this was an emotional issue. Sometimes, existing rules come together in a way that, in particular circumstances, requires our discretion—

● (1215)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague was completing his speech, he got to an important point about the nature of service in the U.S. military, during this period of the war in Iraq, and the whole stop-loss program. As he started to explain to us, the stop-loss program was a form of draft where individuals who signed up for what they were told would be one tour of duty have now been forced into second and sometimes third tour of duty in Iraq. Could he expand more on that?

Also, could he comment on the idea that we are somehow expecting people who sign on to the armed forces to check their conscience at the recruiting office door? Does he think that makes for a good military?

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the opportunity to expand a little on the stop-loss. Quite correctly, people call this a back door draft.

*Routine Proceedings*

Phil McDowell was graduating from university and was not aware of the jeopardy he put himself into by signing on and volunteering. First, there was the disillusionment of the president claiming that there were weapons of mass destruction and that was the reason for this war. He arrived in Iraq and realized that this was not true. When he did his tour of duty and came back, the military went after him to do another tour of duty. This is a well-educated young man. Unfortunately, many of the recruiters used by the U.S. military—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please. Before we resume debate, I would like to remind hon. members that they have about a minute to ask a question and about a minute to respond. If you ignore the Chair, I am at times forced to cut you off. Please regard the Chair and I am sure everyone will get an opportunity to put their questions and the speakers will have an opportunity to answer them.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on the motion before us, which leads us to reflect on our duty to welcome, or not welcome as the Conservatives believe, conscientious objectors from all over the world, but in this case from the United States, who seek refuge in Canada because they refuse to take part in a war they consider unjust and illegal.

It needs discussion, because this is particularly the case of the war in Iraq, which was declared under false pretences with false accusations of possession of weapons of mass destruction and is still being waged today, though it is just as illegal and illegitimate today as it was at the start.

Originally, some people were duped by George Bush into believing that there actually were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. This war was backed for a time by people who reasonably believed that those weapons did exist, or who knew very well that this was not the case but felt that we ought to participate to please the Americans.

The present Prime Minister of course heads the list of those who backed Canadian participation in the war in Iraq. He sanctioned that war. The Leader of the Opposition and leader of the Liberal Party was also among the ranks of those who sanctioned that war and wanted Canada to take part.

I am pleased to see today that the Liberal caucus has managed to convince its leader that this war is illegitimate. One might, however, wonder what lack of judgment and wisdom could have led him to support a war when the situation was clear to the most ordinary of citizens, even those perhaps lacking some of the intellectual capacity and wealth of information of the Liberal leader. How can it be that millions of people in Quebec knew the war was illegitimate, and yet it took so much time for the Liberal leader to figure out that the war in Iraq was a bad war and Canada ought not be involved in it?

The Liberal Party leader has changed his mind, and today the Liberals are supporting this motion before the House, for which I am very glad. I think I am right in stating that there is a very strong consensus on this within the Quebec nation and among Canadians.

The nation of Quebec has always stood for the values of pacifism, human compassion and respect for other peoples and our nation took an extremely firm stand during the debates on the war in Iraq. Please understand that I know that Canadians are a peaceful people too; I know and I believe that Canadians are a great people. Nevertheless, let me emphasize that opposition to Canada's participation in the war in Iraq was even stronger and more united in the nation of Quebec than it was in the rest of Canada, probably stronger even than in many countries in the west and around the world.

More than 250,000 people, in fact, braved the cold on that cold winter's day—and Heaven knows, days can be cold in Quebec—to demonstrate against the participation of Quebec and Canada in the war in Iraq.

• (1220)

There were 250,000 people in the streets, a quarter of a million people. That is the kind of large demonstration that we normally see when the government makes decisions that directly affect people's lives, when the people feel personally engaged and fear the loss of their basic rights. They might be public servants or other workers who feel that they are going to be adversely affected themselves. They might be students, also afraid of losing their basic rights.

But what was so fantastic about that demonstration is that this was not the case. The people demonstrating that day in Montreal were not military people, and the great majority of them did not come from military families. They were people who, on a personal level, had very little connection with that war.

Those 250,000 people hit the streets in protest because it was about one of their values, one of their most deeply held beliefs. By the thousands, they represented the vast majority of Quebecers who believed that the war was unjust and unjustified. I wanted to give that example since, here in the House, we are often divided because we reflect a division present in society, in both the Quebec nation and Canada, but I think that, in that instance, the consensus was very strong. Even at the time, few people other than the Prime Minister and the leader of the Liberal Party supported the American war in Iraq.

Think about it. We believe this war to be illegitimate and immoral because it is not sanctioned by the UN. If this war is immoral to Quebecers, then it must be immoral to Canadians and Americans too. In fact, most Canadians think so. How can it be immoral to Canadians but not to Americans? If that is what we truly believe, we must stand up for our beliefs and act on our convictions.

As such, we cannot send people who share the deep conviction that this war is unjust back to the United States, where they will surely be punished, imprisoned, and treated unfairly and cruelly. Unlike most of us, they have seen it up close. We cannot send these people to certain jail, to cruel and unjust punishment, if we as a nation and a people believe this war to be unjust.

*Routine Proceedings*

The whole refugee system is based on the principle that we believe our values are and should be universal. When we accept a refugee from a country where a dictator is terrorizing the people and trampling on human rights, we do so because we do not subscribe to those values.

Canadians and the Quebec nation do not support the absence of democracy and lack of respect for human rights. We therefore open our doors to refugees and tell them that they are welcome here because they are looking for a place where they can live according to the values we believe should be universal. We will not send people back to countries where we know that things we fundamentally oppose will happen. We do not have faith in the justice systems of such countries. The case of American conscientious objectors is similar.

• (1225)

Let us be serious. Clearly, the United States is a democracy, with a thoroughly respectable legal and judicial system. Everyone agrees on that. Although they are our allies, our friends even, there is nevertheless a profound discrepancy between their values and convictions regarding the war in Iraq and our beliefs here in Canada. In the same way we accept refugees from countries where human rights are violated, because our values dictate that we should welcome people who are persecuted, we should also accept refugees who refuse to participate in an unjust war. That is the only logical decision possible. Even though this may not please our American friends, even though this could have costs attached, it must be done. We must act consistently.

I also had the opportunity to attend yesterday's press conference with Kimberly Rivera. She was facing deportation from Canada back to the United States. I thought she looked somewhat lost, with her four-month-old baby in her arms, among all the MPs and parliamentarians. She simply wanted to continue living a normal life here. She was not asking for much, really. She was not asking for charity or to sponge off of Canadian society. She simply wanted to be allowed to stay, and to participate in and contribute to Canadian society. We believe this is a completely reasonable, simple and intelligent thing to do.

The government's position is to refuse to intervene and to say, "Too bad for you, but you should not have enlisted, and you should not have changed your mind." I would submit that it is not that simple.

First of all, yes, she did enlist, but then she saw for herself what was going on over there. She saw that the war was unjust and illegitimate. What is more, there is more than one person involved in this story. I would like to tell the parliamentary secretary that the four-month-old baby she had in her arms did not make the decision to sign up. He had nothing to do with it. He was born in Canada. He is a Canadian citizen, like all of us here in this place. He is at risk of separation from his mother, who could spend months—over a year—in an American prison for having refused to take part in a war which Quebecers and Canadians strenuously object to. She did what the majority of our fellow citizens would have done. How can a mother and baby be punished because the mother did what we all would have done? This strikes me as completely illegitimate.

So, the minister still continues to refuse to intervene. That is a pity. When a person is elected here as a member of Parliament and then the Prime Minister has confidence enough in that person to make him or her a minister and decision-maker, then sometimes decisions need to be made.

I am aware, of course, that the minister cannot interfere in all cases and make all the decisions. It is not a matter of replacing public servants or living in a state where politicians second-guess the public administration. However, in cases as clear and obvious as this, where we are called upon to act as individuals, the minister should act and make use of his powers.

• (1230)

But in cases as clear and obvious as this, where we are called upon to act as individuals, the minister should act and make use of his powers.

We have too often seen ministers, Conservatives now, but equally so the Liberals before them, settle for inaction and sidestep their responsibilities, saying, "I do not want to create a precedent. I do not want to interfere in the running of my department." But that is not what the Quebec nation and Canadians want from their elected representatives.

We have seen this in cases of all kinds, not only in this situation. We know our immigration system is not perfect. Everyone agrees with that, even on the government side. Everyone agrees that mistakes may be made, that bad decisions may be made, that there may be shortcomings in our legislation.

My dear colleagues, we all know that we work hard and that a great deal of work goes into passing legislation. However, sometimes we act quickly. We, too, are sometimes influenced by partisanship and emotion. I think that everyone here realizes that the laws we adopt are not perfect because they are adopted by human beings who are not perfect. Our public servants, who work passionately for us, for our government, for our country, also have the authority to make decisions. These people can also make decisions.

When such a singular case arises in our democracies, there is one person who has the authority to take action. That person is the minister. Making that decision, showing compassion, is not an admission by the minister that he is weak or has made mistakes. It means that he acknowledges that the situation is extraordinary, that there are special cases that require the intervention of someone who, we hope, can be compassionate. That person, the person in our parliamentary system, in our democratic system, who has the authority to make the decision is the minister.

This would not be the first time. Canada did the same for the American deserters who were fleeing the Vietnam war. This case is not a precedent.

I sincerely believe that this motion should be adopted by Parliament. I invite and urge the government to respect this decision, not only out of regard for democracy and the will of this House, but also out of compassion.



*Routine Proceedings*

I would ask the minister to meet Kimberly and her young baby. I believe that after this meeting he would be feel more positive about the need to intervene.

We often deal with the files in a system. We set up a process or a machine and this machine is very dehumanizing. That is normal. We have no choice because there are so many files to deal with and so many things to do. But when we come across such moving cases as this one, that speak so strongly to our humanity, I believe that we must be guided by that humanity and make the only fair and reasonable decision, that is, to accept these American conscientious objectors who seek refuge in our country.

● (1235)

[*English*]

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his intervention in this debate and ask him to continue to work hard at committee where, hopefully, we can move all the work there that is necessary to be done on behalf of the government and this House.

Throughout his speech, the member spoke with an element of emotion and compassion. I certainly am one to agree with him that all of the issues that we face here are not just hard, fast and cold issues. They are issues that also have an element of emotion involved and an element of compassion.

The opposition is saying that they will be compassionate by taking the position they have, but I do not understand something. We have thousands upon thousands of refugees who apply legitimately to come to this country based on the oppression of a dictatorship, the oppression of their choice of religion and the oppression they see on a totalitarian government that is placed on them, and they are desperately seeking to come here to this country. That is also the compassion and emotion that should be displayed and we need to see that. Why does the member not show the same emotion and compassion to those refugees that he is showing to the individuals he is speaking about today?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Chairman, I am a little surprised by that statement. I am quite anxious to have a look at Hansard and review this situation which would apply perfectly to my bill, Bill C-291, which will compel the introduction of the refugee appeal division.

I agree wholeheartedly, but the two are not mutually exclusive. In my neck of the woods, we often say that we can walk and chew gum at the same time. Frankly, I cannot see how the minister's acting to accept American conscientious objectors who come here to seek refuge would adversely affect all other refugee claimants. People who make that claim currently do so in Canada. As long as their claim has not been processed, they are not sent back to their country. Their life is not in danger. So I really cannot see what difference it would make if the minister were to intervene on behalf of conscientious objectors.

Of course, the minister and the government have to allocate more resources and process refugee claims more effectively so that these people can get answers more quickly. Moreover, to avoid

arbitrariness, the government needs to support my bill to introduce the refugee appeal division.

● (1240)

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Chairman, I thank the member for his comments on this important topic today. I would have one question.

Why does the deputy minister's attitude seem to suggest that all resisters are criminals? Parliamentarians met with Ms. Rivera yesterday. Is she a criminal? Perhaps the member knows the ideological reasons behind this government's refusal to agree with the majority of Quebeckers and other Canadians on this issue. Perhaps the member would have an ideological explanation as to why this family must grapple with this problem concerning the motion.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I feel that that question will remain forever unanswered. I may have my opinions, but I really do not know what the problem is for the government. We could always ask, but I suspect that we will not get any more of an answer.

But, at very least, we can hypothesize a little. First, there is clearly the desire not to upset the Americans, which is not a bad thing in itself when looked at objectively. I am not saying that we always have to be raising objections to what they do. But we do have to stand by our principles, our values and our convictions, even when the Americans may not be pleased about it.

The second thing I can see is a systematic desire on the part of the government and this minister to not make decisions and to not take action. I hope that that will change and that a person will be there to correct the mistakes that the machine keeps making.

[*English*]

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was very interested in the last question asking why the government is portraying war resisters in a certain light. I thank the member for his answer.

The motion is very straightforward. It is a special provision under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act for persons who are conscientious objectors to the war in Iraq. It is a war based on a lie, a war Canadians do not support and a war the government did not support. This last Parliament endorsed this motion and yet the government stands here today opposing it.

I would like the hon. member's opinion or thoughts as to why the government opposes this motion when it has passed in this House before.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed quite incomprehensible, but let me add something. The parliamentary secretary will, of course, have the opportunity to respond, as will his colleagues.

We must ask ourselves a more basic question: how do we manage these exceptional situations? Is it weakness to step in when mistakes are made—as the Conservatives seem to think—or is it the intelligent thing to do?

*Routine Proceedings*

In the specific case of conscientious objectors, I do not believe that it is an easy decision nor do I believe that these are irresponsible people. They signed a piece of paper, they changed their minds, and then they came to Canada. That is a difficult decision to make: they leave their families, their friends, their acquaintances and they head to the unknown, to risks and difficulties. They do so because they believe that this war is unjust. They do so because they have been there, and they have seen things that are unacceptable on a human level.

That is why they come here to see us, and that is how we should view this.

[*English*]

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening with some interest to the debate. I hear the member, in his remarks, referring to the Iraq war. Whether we agree or disagree, he has chosen to characterize it as an unjust war, an illegitimate war.

I would ask the member about Saddam Hussein. Maybe he is on his hero list. He was a man who used his considerable wealth to build himself multiple palaces. He kept his people impoverished. He ruled with a brutal regime. He used poison gas against the Kurds. Thousands of people died under his regime. He invaded the neighbouring sovereign state of Kuwait and set its oil fields on fire. He sent at least 39 missiles into Israel, trying to set the whole world on fire, and sent missiles into Saudi Arabia. He also provided \$25,000 to the families of suicide bombers in Israel.

When the member makes the remarks that he does, he does not understand that not everybody agrees with his remarks. When he calls these people war resisters, he should understand that there is no mandatory conscription in the United States. Those people volunteered and signed up for military service and therefore cannot be characterized as war resisters. In doing so, they took a bonus and then decided to evade their responsibilities by coming to our country—

• (1245)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, we heard insinuations of support for Saddam Hussein. Quite frankly, and out of respect for this House, I will refrain from responding to such pointless comments.

[*English*]

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, whenever we ask the government to do something, it seems to me that we should also ask the reverse question.

Is it the hon. member's opinion that, for instance, the U.S. government, with respect to a Canadian soldier, should apply the same sort of standard should a Canadian soldier, under the same circumstances, leave the Canadian army and seek refuge in the United States?

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The member for Jeanne-Le Ber has the floor for a short question.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, we can consider a war to be illegitimate or illegal because, for example, it was never sanctioned by the UN and was initiated under false pretences. That happens throughout the world. It is not a question of governance; it is a question of universal human values.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Alice Wong (Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate and to speak against the motion proposed by the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration noted earlier, Canada has a fair, internationally recognized system to provide refuge to those fleeing persecution, risk of torture or risk to life, or of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment. We are committed to protecting refugees and those in need of protection. This means that we must ensure the system is there for those who genuinely need it.

All refugee claimants have the right to due process and when they have exhausted legal avenues, we expect them to respect our laws and leave Canada.

Today I intend to address two key issues in this debate: the fair process available to refugee claimants and immigration applications and the potential problems that could arise from adopting this motion.

Canadians want a refugee system that helps to protect genuine refugees. All refugee claimants in Canada have the right to due process, a principle established by the Supreme Court in 1985 for refugee status determination in Canada. This is the basis for how Canada has maintained a fair and internationally recognized system to provide refuge to those fleeing persecution.

Refugee claims made in this country, including those made by U.S. service personnel, are heard by the Refugee Protection Division of the Immigration and Refugee Board, the IRB, of Canada. The IRB is a quasi-judicial independent body that provides a fair hearing to those who claim to be in need of protection. It assesses each claim on its own merit with regard to risk of persecution, torture, risk to life or cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

The board reports that currently fewer than 50 claims have been made by U.S. citizens on the basis of objection to military service. As has been demonstrated in the publicized cases of Jeremy Hinzman and Brandon Hughey, the refugee protection process allows ample opportunity for claimants to challenge decisions made concerning their claims. They may do so through seeking leave for judicial review by the Federal Court. In some instances, they have sought leave to appeal to the Federal Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada.

While waiting for a decision on their claims, refugee claimants who pass medical screening are entitled to a work permit, which allows them to be employed in Canada. Those who cannot find work may apply for social assistance in the province where they reside. These claimants also have access to emergency medical services funded by the Government of Canada.

Under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, failed refugee claimants may also request, prior to being removed from Canada, a pre-removal risk assessment. This assessment allows CIC officials to examine any new evidence, any change in country conditions or other circumstances that might arise concerning personalized risk to individuals. This could include evidence such as whether a person would face risk of persecution, torture, risk to life or risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment if an applicant was returned to the country of origin. These are the same elements that are assessed by the Refugee Protection Division of the IRB.

There are also other avenues available to people wishing to move to Canada should they not qualify as refugees. Normally, those seeking permanent residence do so by applying for a visa outside of Canada, but foreign nationals who wish to apply for permanent residence from within Canada may do so on humanitarian and compassionate grounds or, if eligible, as a member of an in-Canada class.

• (1250)

There has been a great deal of coverage regarding the cases of Mr. Hinzman and Mr. Hughey, the American soldiers who deserted the United States army, came to Canada and made refugee claims in this country. The Immigration and Refugee Board rejected the applicants' claims for refugee protection. The Federal Court of Canada and, subsequently, the Federal Court of Appeal, dismissed their cases. The Supreme Court of Canada dismissed their application for leave to appeal on November 15, 2007.

As others have said, claimants have access to a fair hearing in Canada with a number of opportunities for review. However, the Immigration and Refugee Board, the Federal Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada have all indicated that these U.S. military deserters have not demonstrated that they are in need of Canada's protection as refugees.

The motion to implement an in-Canada program to allow these individuals to apply to remain and work in Canada and to be eligible for permanent resident status runs counter to having an immigration policy that is both fair and consistent in its application.

As I noted earlier, this government is committed to ensuring that all immigration applicants and refugee claimants have access to the full process outlined by IRPA and that all cases are fully and equitably resolved. By supporting this motion, the House would be calling for a unique benefit for some foreign nationals proposing that they can be allowed to apply for permanent resident status outside of existing immigration channels.

For the reasons I have outlined, I urge my fellow members in the House to vote against this motion.

• (1255)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I understand that there are a number of concerns. In this case, it is not like Vietnam where there was conscription. This was a voluntary tour. The issue is that before they completed that tour they were actually ordered to serve an additional tour or more, which is quite unusual.

Notwithstanding that, it is my understanding that in the United States those persons who volunteered initially and then were ordered

### *Routine Proceedings*

subsequently would be charged and found guilty of being war deserters, which is a crime. We had one recent case like that where the person was sent to jail for some 15 months.

I ask the member whether or not Canada's policy with regard to war resisters should be reflective of Canada's views on the legitimacy of wars and the choices we have made, or rather on the policy of the United States of America.

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** Mr. Speaker, it is our opinion that, as a general rule, military deserters from the United States are not genuine refugees under the internationally accepted meaning of the term. It is on these terms that we understand that the Immigration and Refugee Board makes that decision and it considers each asylum case on a case-by-case basis.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a number of questions for the hon. member. First, I would like to know why the Conservative government blocked any discussion at refugee hearings about the legality of the Iraq War since that is a crucial factor in making these kinds of determinations.

Also, the member says that these people are not legitimate refugees and cast aspersions on their refugee claims. However, under international law, Canada must uphold several principles. One comes out of the Nuremberg tribunals which said that every soldier has a moral duty, not a choice, to refuse to carry out illegal orders. Under a number of other international agreements, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and in the UN handbook for refugees, it makes it clear that conscientious objectors to war have rights and can require protection from states. Why has Canada refused to meet its obligations under these various long-established and upheld international principles?

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** Mr. Speaker, U.S. military deserters are not refugees. They do not fall under internationally accepted definitions of people in need of protection. This position has been upheld by three independent tribunals: the IRB, the Federal Court and the Federal Court of Appeal.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary and member for Richmond for her comments. I thought she did an outstanding job explaining and expressing the position of the government.

One of the issues that has come through the House here is the issue of compassion, the issue of emotion that should be somehow interjected or intertwined into this discussion. I certainly have no problem with that. At the end of the day of course we have to base our decision on fact and law.

The member represents the riding of Richmond and I know she has many cases dealing with refugees who come to her office and ask her for help. Could she explain, in her words, the type of emotion and compassion that needs to be shown for them?

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** Mr. Speaker, there are people who come and say that they need to stay because if they go back to their own countries they will be persecuted. There are also people who come and express the need for help and assistance.

We deal with them individually, case by case, and we deal with them on compassionate grounds as well. For example, I was approached by somebody from Toronto whose wife passed away while giving birth to a child. He was in the process of applying for permanent residence to this country. We really give individual cases individual attention.

In this case, by passing this whole recommendation, we are opening up the floodgates and other genuine refugees will be deferred. This is not the way the system should be fairly treated.

• (1300)

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Federal Court recently granted Joshua Key a new hearing at the Immigration and Refugee Board and recent decisions by the Federal Court granted a stay of removal for Jeremy Hinzman and Kimberly Rivera, citing differential punishment of the Iraq war resisters. It goes to the whole point that because they have spoken out here, they have different kinds of punishment. How would she respond to that?

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** Mr. Speaker, the report presented by the committee actually covers everything. I do not understand why we have to address each individual war. Again I say, American deserters are not refugees and that is the position we are taking right now.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Mr. Speaker, I will repeat the question again. Obviously, there is something wrong with the decision of the Immigration and Refugee Board. If that is not the case, then the Federal Court, in three instances, would not have granted either a stay or a complete rejection of the IRB's decision, so there is something that is wrong with the board's decision. There is this whole claim that we should not worry because three boards, tribunal after tribunal, have rejected their claims of being refugees. How can we say they are not refugees when the Federal Court has now tossed that out and another hearing has to be granted?

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** Mr. Speaker, if we look at the record, American deserters who have applied as refugee claimants have never been granted that. Again and again, I would like to state that American deserters are not legitimate refugees.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important to understand one thing. Today, this is a test not for war resisters, but for Canadians. It is not about respecting Canadian laws but about respecting ourselves.

[*English*]

This is a character test for us in Canada. This is about respecting our neighbours in the United States but it is also about respecting ourselves. We set laws and regulations according to our values, how we see our country evolving. We are saying that our immigration system, the friends and neighbours we choose to have come here, is also based on our values.

The question today is narrowing from a character test for all Canadians to one for government members. Why do they stand outside a Canadian sensibility? Why do they hide behind facts that

are not correct, characterizations that are not accurate? Why are they threatened by a small number of people who had a crisis of conscience and at great personal cost walked away from the United States and came to Canada for refuge?

It is not correct to say that we have not accepted such people before. Out of the draft dodgers who came here for sanctuary before, 3,000 were volunteers in the American army.

This decision has been made by Canadians before. It is the government of the day that seeks to change how Canadians express themselves. Every reasonable Canadian can today ask themselves this: why does the minister in particular use his personal biases, declare at every opportunity and mis-characterize people?

We also have a precedence by the government. It passed a regulation, supported special immigration for a group of Vietnamese living in the Philippines. Quite contrary to what we hear from the members opposite, there is precedent for discussion, debate, and decision by Parliament about special needs and special cases.

That is truly what we are talking about today. We are talking about a group of people who come from the United States, our neighbour and ally, but who have found themselves in a crisis of conscience. They find themselves subject to compulsion that we do not agree with in Canada.

Some of the hon. members have already spoken to the compulsion around stop loss, and in one instance, one person served a full four-year term, tried to return and was called back. Some 13,000 American servicemen have been subject to that.

The new administration suggests it is going to phase out stop loss and get rid of it by 2011. The minister of defence of the United States has said, "This is not fair. This breaks contracts with people". Quite a large number of war resisters find themselves subject to it and other forms of compulsion.

Near to my riding, there is a 27-year veteran of the United States armed forces. I would challenge any member opposite to have a better record in terms of contribution to military service in their country. He had a crisis of conscience. He is a nuclear engineer who decided his ship was bombing civilian territory. He was not permitted to question it, as he might have been in the Canadian military, which has different rules around crisis of conscience and what one might be able to do. With three years left to his pension, he instead came to Canada.

I think it is highly objectionable and outside the boundaries of fairness on the part of Canadians that one would characterize such people who showed fidelity and devotion to their country, principles we would agree with, as criminal in their behaviour. Clearly, there is a gap in our system, and it is one that the House is meant to address.

We stand on the traditions of previous Parliaments when we say these are people who merit our attention. It behooves members opposite to say why they would stay outside of that consensus, which was represented in the House, debated and discussed at the immigration committee, and expressed by many Canadians across the country.

Again, it is becoming a character test. Why is the government tone deaf? Why would it impose its narrow view of this country on others? It bespeaks a government unprepared to govern for everyone, and that is the job. There is no other job when one sits on the government side of the House.

We heard from the United Church, the Mennonite Central Committee, and the oblates in the Catholic Church. They said this cannot stand as a moral decision of the government. They exhorted the government to find it in the values that Canadians want to see expressed.

I think this is very clear. We need to make a choice for Kimberly Rivera, my constituent who got the stay in Federal Court, and who found herself in that circumstance. She has a young daughter, Katie, who is four months old. They are contributing to society and supported by Canadians.

● (1305)

Hundreds of families came out in support of Kimberly Rivera in my riding. Mainstream Canadians heard her story and said that she needs to be among us. I have the greatest respect for the members opposite, but to try to raise the spectre that we have no room for these people and that it is at the expense of somebody else is simply not true. There is every bit the travail, loss and sacrifice that has happened to these people. Unfortunately it seems to require an overwhelming direction from the House that the government adjust to the way that Canadians view this particular group of people.

In case after case, these are people who have stood up to great jeopardy. Kimberly Rivera faces 15 months in jail and felony convictions. She faces separation from her Canadian-born daughter and her family because she had a crisis of conscience. She and her family have lost everything economically and have nothing to gain by coming here and being among us, except because of the revelation she had in Iraq. They were going to force her to serve another term and she chose to get away.

We do not judge the sets of values and consensus that form in the United States, even though they are now changing with the defence secretary and perhaps even the new president. However, we surely are free in the House to establish Canadian values when it comes to who lives here. We have done that in the past and done it effectively. To surrender our capacity to evaluate situations does not show true respect for a friend or neighbour.

There are more than 30,000 people, and their children and grandchildren, in this country who came to us from the United States in part because we stood differently. We did not stand better. We do not lord that over any other countries. However, we did stand differently, and every member of the House needs to appreciate what has come before us. It is interesting to see a Conservative Party that cannot respect traditions and does not believe in some of the hard-gained ideals that we have.

### *Routine Proceedings*

When one looks at what is happening in terms of the different people who are here, one sees not just a nuclear engineer, a young mother, or a university graduate. These are articulate people.

In my riding, we have people who are volunteering. Every single person they volunteer with at this particular agency that re-establishes computers has signed a petition for them to stay, every single one of these volunteers who give of their time. That is what they are doing while their status is in limbo.

I just want people to imagine what it was like for these people to have been ostracized in the United States when they left two or three years ago, what the feeling was, how they had to uproot themselves from their community, and how it must feel to still hear echoes of people condemning them here in this country. What they get on the streets and in the markets from people out there is that we understand.

All we are saying here is that these are potential future Canadians. They would still go through a process. They would be characterized through this motion as eligible for immigration. There is nothing automatic here, and they could not be arbitrarily deported by a biased minister or government.

● (1310)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forward the question on the motion now before the House. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** All those in favour will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The recorded division on the motion stands deferred until Monday, March 30, at the end of government orders.

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### PETITIONS

#### INCOME TRUSTS

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce yet another petition on income trusts, pursuant to Standing Order 36 and duly certified by the clerk of petitions.

*Routine Proceedings*

The petitioners have indicated that they recall that the Prime Minister made a commitment to accountability when he said that the greatest fraud is a promise not kept. The petitioners, however, do remind the Prime Minister that he promised to never tax income trusts. He broke that promise and imposed a 31.5% punitive tax, which permanently wiped out over \$25 billion of the hard-earned savings of over two million Canadians, particularly seniors.

The petitioners would like to call on the Conservative minority government, first, to admit that the decision to tax income trusts was based on flawed methodology and incorrect assumptions; second, to apologize to those who were unfairly harmed by this broken promise; and finally, to repeal the 31.5% punitive tax on income trusts.

• (1315)

## TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition on behalf of constituents where they note that CNR has arbitrarily, without dialogue with affected communities and with complete disregard of impact on local economies, put the rail line from Camrose to Alliance up for sale by tender on short notice with a closing date of February 13, 2009.

They note that the rail line was developed in the early 1900s for the sole purpose of community growth and economic progress, and they note as well that the Battle River Producer Car Group revived the usage of the rail line in 2002 after a period where the line had remained idle.

They are calling, therefore, for a committee to be formed, including members from the community and their local member of Parliament, to prevent this line from becoming abandoned.

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from constituents in my riding of Langley.

The petitioners say that there are a number of severe, potentially life-threatening conditions that do not qualify for disability programs because they are not necessarily permanent. People are losing their homes and livelihoods while trying to fight these severe medical conditions. The petitioners are therefore calling on the House of Commons to enact legislation to provide additional medical EI benefits at least equal to maternity EI benefits.

## HOUSING

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a second petition in support of Private Member's Bill C-304, An Act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians, due to come up for second reading on April 2.

A number of Nova Scotians have signed this petition, from the communities of Halifax, Dartmouth, Timberlea, Eastern Passage, Lower Sackville and other communities. They are calling for an increased federal role in housing through investments in not-for-profit housing, housing for the homeless, access to housing for those with different needs, including seniors and persons with disabilities, and sustainable and environmentally sound design standards for new housing.

If passed, Bill C-304 would tie together Canada's current patchwork of homelessness and housing initiatives and would mandate the government to create a plan that is effective and comprehensive.

I look forward to the minister's response to these petitioners.

## NUCLEAR LIABILITY ACT

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from people in Toronto. They are concerned about the Nuclear Liability Act that is before the House of Commons at this point. They are concerned that the act limits the liability of the nuclear industry without providing any insurance protection to the homes and cars of inhabitants of areas surrounding nuclear plants.

They are asking that the Nuclear Liability Act be scrapped.

## ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition this morning signed by a number of folks from greater Vancouver, including some from my riding of Burnaby—Douglas, who are concerned that Canada participate in the discussions toward the development of a universal declaration on animal welfare.

They point out that there is a scientific consensus and public acknowledgement that animals can feel pain and suffer and that all efforts should be made to prevent animal cruelty and reduce animal suffering.

They note that one billion people around the world rely on animals for their livelihood, and many others rely on animals for companionship. They also note that animals need support during natural disasters. Relief efforts do not often consider the needs of animals during those kinds of operations.

Therefore, they are calling on the Government of Canada to support a universal declaration on animal welfare.

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## QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 52 and 53 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Government Orders*

[Text]

Question No. 52—**Mr. Don Davies:**

With regards to public-private partnerships (P3s or PFIs): (a) what is the government's overall policy on their use; (b) how many government contracts since January 2006 have involved P3s, and for each project, what are the names of these projects, who are the partners, how much money did the federal government contribute, how much money did other levels of government contribute and how much money did each private partner contribute; (c) what problems in general have the government identified with the use of P3s; (d) what precautions have the government taken to ensure that P3s represent value for money for taxpayers; (e) what measures has the government taken to ensure that the terms and conditions of P3s are honoured by private sector participants; (f) were there any lessons learned exercises or evaluations conducted with respect to any particular P3 project and, if so, what were the results of these evaluations; (g) has the government conducted studies on the use of P3s in other countries and, if so, what were the results of these studies; (h) has the government invested in P3 projects in British Columbia; and (i) does the government have a minimum contribution or minimum percentage required from the private sector?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 53—**Mr. Don Davies:**

With regard to the Asia-Pacific Gateway project in British Columbia: (a) how much money has the government contributed to this project since its inception, broken down by financial quarter and department; (b) has the government conducted any studies into the impact or effectiveness of the project, including but not limited to environmental issues, congestion and traffic circulation, neighbourhood effects and housing prices and, if so, what are these studies; (c) what is the government's overall position on the Gateway project; (d) has the government identified any concerns with regard to the project and, if so, what are these concerns; and (e) which groups has the government consulted with regard to the project?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1320)

[English]

### CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from March 12 consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (organized crime and protection of justice system participants), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the House that I am splitting my time with the hon. member for Surrey North. She has already delivered her 10-minute speech, so my speech will be for 10 minutes.

I would also like to thank our Minister of Justice for having made an excellent point today that finally we have arrived at continuing the debate on Bill C-14, an anti-crime measure against organized crime.

I want to remind Canadians of what actually happened today. We are just finishing three hours of debate on a concurrence motion,

wasted time when it comes to what we are trying to talk about, which is anti-crime measures. What happened earlier today is that the opposition parties—

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With due respect, when information is incorrect before the House a member should have an opportunity to correct the record.

The concurrence motion is pursuant to the rules of the House and the rights of that member of Parliament.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** I am not sure that is a point of order.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, I am not arguing that. What I argue is when it came time to vote whether the debate on the concurrence motion should continue for three more hours, the Liberal Party, the Bloc and the NDP all voted in favour to extend it, which delayed further debate on this bill.

What happened is our Minister of Justice stood and shamed the opposition members by drawing to the attention of Canadians that they were delaying the furtherance of this crime bill. Finally, they relented and agreed that Bill C-14 would pass by the end of today. Therefore, I thank our justice minister for having taken that initiative.

[Translation]

I am happy to have the opportunity to speak in strong support of Bill C-14, which proposes changes to the Criminal Code to strengthen our responses to organized crime. Like many Canadians, I have been deeply disturbed by the rash of violence linked to organized crime, and in particular street gangs, and I am pleased that our government has taken this important step towards fortifying our Criminal Code regime in its capacity to respond to such violence.

This bill proposes changes in four areas, and I will briefly discuss each of them in turn. The first area relates to murders. The proposed amendments would make all murders committed in close connection with organized crime automatically first degree, regardless of whether the murder was planned and deliberate.

This bill proposes amendments to section 231 of the Criminal Code to specify that murder is first degree, regardless of whether it was planned and deliberate, when it is committed for the benefit of, at the direction of or in association with a criminal organization, or when it is committed while the offender commits another indictable offence for the benefit of, at the direction of or in association with a criminal organization.

Murder carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment, and those convicted of first degree murder are ineligible for parole for at least 25 years. In the case of second degree murder, they are ineligible for parole for at least 10 years. Section 231 of the Criminal Code sets out the circumstances in which murder is considered to be first degree. It also states that all murder that is not first degree murder is second degree murder.

*Government Orders*

I believe these will be very useful provisions, because they will give law enforcement two separate ways to target murders connected to organized crime. These two separate ways cover the broad range of circumstances where murders might occur in the context of organized crime activity.

Bill C-14 also addresses drive-by and other reckless shootings. It proposes to prohibit the intentional discharge of a firearm in circumstances where the shooter turned their mind to the fact that firing the gun could put the life or safety of another person at risk—say in a building, or in an open space—and consciously ran the risk. This offence would be different from the existing, and comparably serious, discharge of a firearm offence in section 244 because it does not require proof that the shooter specifically intended to cause bodily harm to a person. This is something which I understand can be difficult to prove in certain cases and may not be the case at all when the shooter is firing wildly for the purpose of general intimidation. This new offence would be punishable by a mandatory minimum penalty that would increase when the offence is committed for the benefit of a criminal organization or if a prohibited or restricted firearm is used.

I am optimistic that this new offence will assist us in responding to the increasingly brazen violence committed by gangs on the street with firearms.

• (1325)

The third focus of this bill is providing increased protection to peace officers and responding to violence committed against other justice system participants. It does this by creating two new offences to punish assaults against peace officers that cause bodily harm or involve the use of a weapon and aggravated assaults against peace officers. These offences would be punishable, on indictment, by maximum periods of imprisonment of 10 and 14 years, respectively.

To ensure that these cases are adequately punished, the bill would require courts to give primary consideration to the principles of denunciation and deterrence when sentencing an offender for any of the offences involving assaults against peace officers, as well as cases involving the intimidation of justice system participants, such as judges, prosecutors, jurors, witnesses and others. This sends the right message and will assist in ensuring that the sentences in these cases properly reflect the serious nature of this conduct.

[*English*]

The fourth area of reform in the bill relates to the strengthening of the gang peace bond provision. These proposed amendments will clarify that when issuing a preventive recognizance order, a judge can impose any conditions that he or she feels are desirable to prevent the person from committing a criminal organization offence.

The amendments would also extend the possible length of the order to up to 24 months if the defendant had been previously convicted of a criminal organization offence. These orders are intended to impose conditions where it is reasonably feared that a person will commit a criminal organization offence, a terrorism offence or the offence of intimidation of justice system participants. A breach of the conditions is a separate offence, subject to prosecution, with a maximum penalty of two years on indictment.

These are important tools because they seek to prevent the commission of organized crime offences before they take place. I understand they can be an extremely useful tool for police in controlling gang activity and these amendments will make them all the more effective.

Of course, strong laws to punish offenders are only part of the picture. We must also be focused on addressing the root causes of how and why persons, particularly young people, become involved with organized crime groups. We know people are targeted by gangs for participation in many crimes, particularly drug trafficking. They may rely upon young persons to commit crimes on their behalf because of the belief that if the young offenders are caught, the justice system will be lenient due to the age of the accused. It is also the way that young people are recruited into the gangs.

Young people, however, are drawn to criminal groups, including street gangs, for a variety of reasons, one of which is to have a sense of belonging for companionship, protection, to be treated with what they see as respect or for money. Criminal Intelligence Service Canada has noted that virtually all street gangs in Canada are comprised of both youth and adult members and associates. Youth gangs also represent distinct entities with approximately 6% of all identified street gangs being comprised of persons under the age of 18.

It is important that we provide young people, particularly vulnerable youth, with alternatives to prevent their involvement in crime. The government has allocated \$64 million as part of a national anti-drug strategy to support law enforcement in its efforts to combat the drug trade, and this will be of benefit to our youth.

We all share a commitment to making our communities and the people who live in them safe. Each and every person should feel safe to walk down our streets. This government has made the safety and security of Canadians a priority. This bill is a reflection of that and is a firm but fair response to the threat of organized crime.

• (1330)

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be uncharacteristically brief. We do not want any delay in the bill going from this place to committee. As parties, we all stood unanimously and agreed that Bill C-14 should be sent to committee. The Minister of Justice did not seem to comprehend that when he used precious time in the chamber for a diatribe that was irrelevant.

The only delay today on Bill C-14 was that speech, which consisted of reading the bill. We have done that already. Ten minutes or so has been wasted by the member. Let us get the bill out of the House. We are all for it. Does he not agree?

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is distorting the facts for Canadians. What happened today was a concurrence motion was put forward by the opposition. If the Liberals had voted against three hours of debate on a useless concurrence motion, it would never have passed.

However, what did the Liberals do? They voted for the concurrence motion. They voted for three hours of debate on anything except crime initiatives. That is my point.



*Government Orders*

The member is correct that the bill will pass out of the House today to committee for one reason. The Minister of Justice shamed the opposition members by rising on a point of order and identifying to Canadians that they were delaying anti-crime initiatives in the House.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this would be a good time for the hon. member to be speechless. It is a good time for everyone of us to be speechless. If we are speechless, we do not deal with the bill.

I would propose a unanimous motion that all hon. members be speechless.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, I agree that the legislation needs to move as quickly as possible. I am simply pointing out the unfortunate events that caused a three hour delay.

I have been waiting at least a week to give my speech. It has continually been moved by opposition delaying tactics. Today we have them on board, thanks to our justice minister and his fine work. I thank the opposition for that. I only regret the loss of three hours on a concurrence motion that the opposition supported.

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague across the way, the time to have been speechless so we could get to justice issues was two hours ago, not right now.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague was in the House today. He brings up an excellent point. The time to be speechless was two hours ago.

The time to speak was with voting. We speak loudest as MPs when we stand and vote. The opposition members stood and voted for a three hour delay on moving ahead this important legislation. Shame on them. However, I do thank them. They sided with us at the end because our justice minister pointed out their faults.

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should never mistake this. We never side with the government and its misconstruing of what should happen in our country. We side with the Canadian people.

Today it was our House leader who stood up. It was not the government members. They were all glued to their seats and bubbling over with outrage. Our member for Wascana stood and said “unanimous consent”.

Therefore, the facts for the Canadian public are that the bill is moving as quickly as it can. At the end of the day it will go to committee, thanks to the Liberal Party of Canada and not thanks to the sleepy and somewhat separated from reality government of the day.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, I have to point out the error by the member. I was in the House when he was talking, just before I stood to speak. The member will say that he supports veterans who serve their country, defending their country for liberty and freedom. Today he is saying that he supports other people who choose not to support their country, defending liberty and freedom. He feels Canada should be a safe haven. He is giving contradictory messages.

My point is he is also giving contradictory messages on crime. The opposition members will stand and say that they support crime, but when it comes time to vote, they delay and obstruct. That is exactly what happened today.

I see the Minister of Justice here, and I thank him for his support this morning.

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I must admit that the last few minutes did not make a very eloquent contribution to the current debate. The problem is settled and I would have liked the Minister of Justice to hear this. I hope that he will listen to what I am going to say. My colleagues opposite are not very knowledgeable about parliamentary procedure. That is the least I can say given these circumstances, so as not to offend them even more.

Mr. Speaker, I have not had the opportunity to greet you. I knew you as Chair of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. This is the first time that I have risen to speak in this chamber when you were presiding over the deliberations. I want to congratulate you on your appointment to the position of Assistant Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole and thank you for the work you did as Chair of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. I hope, and am in fact convinced, that the work you are doing here now will also be very productive, especially during the kind of debate we are having today.

We are debating Bill C-14. Our Conservative friends made this a top priority in the fight against organized crime, something they seem to think has only appeared in the last few years. Unfortunately, I will have to give them a history lesson. Memory is well known as that faculty which forgets, and the Conservatives probably have the shortest memory on record. We should remember that the Bloc Québécois, since 1994—not just for the past two weeks—has been informing this House of the fact that there is a serious problem with organized crime and that steps need to be taken. Several were taken thanks to our efforts.

In spite of what the Conservatives will be saying, if not for the Bloc Québécois, thousand dollar bills would still be in circulation. The Bloc Québécois forced the government to make that change. I do not want to attack the Conservatives or the Liberals, but the fact is that governments finally understood that thousand dollar bills were causing an increase in organized crime and in money laundering. I can talk about this not because I have had several thousand dollar bills in my possession, but because before my election in 2004, I was a criminal lawyer for 30 years. I practised criminal law for the defence and I am very familiar with the organized crime file.

*Government Orders*

Whether the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles likes it or not, the measures put in place are the result of repeated requests by the Bloc Québécois. The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, who sits on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights as parliamentary secretary, does not seem to have known about this before 2000. We have known about it since 1990. It seems to me that he lives in Quebec, but he did not know about it either. It took some time for them to recognize the existence of organized crime. Now everyone knows who the Hells Angels are. We know a little about how its members are recruited and how we can combat these organized gangs, whether the Bandidos or the Hells Angels. It is easier for us, and I am choosing my words carefully, to understand how these organizations work.

However, we are facing a new phenomenon. Whether my Conservative friends, including the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, admit it or not, street gangs have existed for at least five or six years now. They have never understood that. For them, street gangs are the same as the Hells Angels. That is not the case. Streets gangs are a new phenomenon, and a growing concern. Whether in Vancouver, Toronto, in the east end of Montreal, even in Halifax and many other places in Canada, idleness is a phenomenon that is triggering senseless crimes. That is what they really are: senseless crimes.

First there was the mafia—and we need not look back at the godfather—with people killing each other. We could understand, follow and watch how it worked, but street gangs are completely different.

● (1340)

Street gangs might decide that tonight, they are going to shoot at anyone wearing black. Street gangs operate differently. They are radically changing how we see and deal with crime.

I want to say right away that we will support Bill C-14, despite its flaws. We will ask that it be studied in committee. The Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, on which I also sit, has already begun looking at organized crime. We will take a very close look at the new phenomena around organized crime as we study Bill C-14.

The bill is important, because it redefines murder. I feel that part should be clarified, such as the fact that a contract killing is not an ordinary murder. I am sorry, I am weighing my words and that is not easy, but murder is murder. Murder itself is bad enough. But contract killings, gratuitous murders, murders to intimidate and murders to send a message are a new and unacceptable phenomenon, and I think it is time we took action.

These new definitions in subsection 231(6.01) will be important, because they will go further. That is the purpose of the bill: to make murder committed for the benefit of or at the direction of a criminal organization first degree murder.

Let us think back to what used to happen. It has not been so very long since I was a criminal defence lawyer. We made deals and tried to find solutions so that an individual got off. We said a killing was murder, but that it could be considered second degree murder because it was not premeditated. That will no longer be possible. We are going to close that door, which allowed a person to put a contract

out on someone, I am sorry to put it that way. I do not like that sort of language either, but I use it and we all know what it means.

We are finally going to close that door in the Criminal Code. That will put an end to the dilemma around criminal organizations and the people associated with them. We will at least close that door. The same thing will hold true for murders committed during an attempt to commit an indictable offence, and we will have a chance to look closely at that. That will target criminal gangs. We will be able to deal with criminal gangs and hit them with heavier penalties.

Now here is where I must plug my message. The Conservatives do not yet understand this. They really do not understand this and, once again, Bill C-14 must be looked at carefully, because minimum prison sentences will not solve the problem of crime. I want to repeat this, so it can be properly translated into English and so they understand clearly. Imposing minimum prison sentences will not reduce crime. That is exactly what the Americans did and crime rates skyrocketed. Convicted offenders must serve their prison sentences.

As someone I know has said, the problem is not when offenders go to prison; it is when they come out. They get out too quickly. The problem is that the Conservatives are telling themselves and everyone has said that this does not make sense. Someone can be sentenced to 18 months, but get out of prison in two months. That is unacceptable. The Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Justice need to have a chat. As far as I know, they are in the same political party. But they need to talk to each other, because something must be done about the parole system.

I know a bill is to be introduced tomorrow. We will have to wait and see what is in that bill. We think it is important to eliminate the two-for-one provision. We know what this means, but we can debate that another time.

● (1345)

For the time being, the Conservatives must realize that we need to do something about parole to ensure that an accused sentenced after a fair trial serves his sentence, does not get any goodies and does not get out earlier because of good behaviour.

I have some examples. That is the problem with Bill C-14. It calls for a minimum prison term of four years. There would still be plea bargaining to reduce the sentence and change the charges. That is not the right solution. We will examine it in committee; it is an interesting bill in that regard. We will see how we can ensure that the sentences handed down—and it is not a question of giving the judges a set of directives—are served.

There are many other amendments in the bill. There are some minor, but interesting, changes. We will definitely be targeting organized crime as well as street gangs. We will probably have to rethink the interception of communications because, with respect to organized crime, there has been no change in the past 10 to 15 years in ways of intercepting communications. Because of the Internet and all the changes in that time, police have asked for amendments.

*Government Orders*

I do not wish to speak much longer, but Bill C-14 is truly interesting. The light has gone on for the government, but it still has a long way to go before understanding that crime will not be reduced when offenders enter jail or by imposing minimum mandatory sentences, but rather by having offenders serve the sentences handed down. That is the important point. However, this will probably be the subject of another debate.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member on his speech and for his work on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I have one simple question to ask him. It seems that there is a lot of confusion on the other side. They seem to think that their actions resulted in the parties on this side deciding to proceed with Bill C-14. Does the hon. member share the opinion that it was our side, not the government, that decided together to send the bill to committee as quickly as possible?

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I am pleased to remind hon. members opposite that they are in a minority government. They have to understand that. It would at least be a step in the right direction. Second, when you are in a minority government, you try to work with the opposition parties to move matters forward. Bill C-14 is the best example.

If the government knew what common sense was, it would, at 9:00 a.m. this morning, have sat down with the opposition parties and asked them if they were in agreement. We are in agreement that the bill should be sent to committee. This is why debate in this House is being limited. The government must understand. It is a minority government and it is having a little difficulty understanding that.

• (1350)

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague not to anticipate the future too much, even if there is a dash of clairvoyance in all of this. I want to congratulate my colleague for his excellent speech and tell him how much—and I do so on behalf of all of the members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights—we appreciate his presence at the committee. Not only does he have theoretical expertise on the Criminal Code, but he also has a very practical knowledge of it, since he was himself a sought-after criminal lawyer for more than two decades.

Is it not unfair to see the Minister of Justice completely lose all personal dignity and rise to have a temper tantrum, which could put him in the same league as young offenders and cause the loss of all decorum in this House? Would we not be remiss in not reminding people that it was this government that prorogued this House? If we had had more time, we could have had analyses of the bills. It is irresponsible to attack the opposition, when it was the government that prorogued the work of this Parliament not so very long ago.

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague the member for Hochelaga, an extraordinary leader at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, gifted with a composure that will undoubtedly serve him well in his future endeavours. Personally, I would be very disappointed to lose him, should he go.

That being said, I think that there is a blatant lack of communication within the Conservative Party. If the Minister of Justice, rather than behaving in this way—my colleague is perfectly

right—had spoken to his whip, things would not have come to this pass and this little crisis, which lasted 10 or 15 minutes, would have been averted. This does not reflect well on the image of a minister of justice.

That said, it is important that we be given the proposals ahead of time, and that we also move forward with Bill C-14, which will be referred to committee within a few minutes.

[*English*]

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver East.

New Democrats are supporting this bill but we are asking the government to do more to provide a comprehensive federal anti-gang strategy. Although we are supporting this bill, we are saying very clearly that this bill alone is not a strategy and it is not enough to combat gangs.

A comprehensive strategy must include, not only tougher sentences, but more police officers on the street, improved witness protection, tougher laws to tackle the proceeds of crime, modernizing our laws that cover surveillance and evidence-gathering and a comprehensive plan for prevention to ensure that our kids are not attracted to the gang culture and that they stay away from joining gangs in the first place.

In the last two months alone, there have been at least 31 shootings in the metro Vancouver region and 15 people have been killed. These are not petty thugs. These are notorious criminals, decked out in body armour and emboldened with a sense of invincibility, who are wielding guns and ready to do battle.

We need strong and effective action from all three levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal. Stiffer penalties for those involved in gangs are certainly appropriate but it is not a sufficient response to this problem.

The metro Vancouver region has one of the lowest police to population ratios in the country, but what have the Conservatives done as an answer to this desperate need for investment in policing services? They have torn up contracts with the RCMP, have rolled back their wages and have made worse an already difficult recruitment and retention situation.

The Conservative approach to gang violence has been to latch on to the most simplistic, headline grabbing component of the action we need, which is tougher sentences.

New Democrats have already said that we support tougher sentences for gang violence but tougher sentences will not mean much if we do not get convictions. Tougher sentences will be ineffective unless they are part of a comprehensive strategy because tough sentences alone do very little to divert kids away from gangs. They need to be coupled with diversionary programs and activities, things that give young people alternatives to the gang lifestyle.

*Statements by Members*

A comprehensive anti-gang strategy requires substantial investment to bring hope to communities that are hurting. These efforts need to be well thought out, carefully implemented and monitored to see what is working and what is not. Diverting kids from gangs is far from an exact science. This is what is lacking from the Conservative government that says that it is tough on crime but is either unwilling or unable to come up with the creative kinds of ideas that are necessary to solve the problem.

One place that we can look to for an example of a program to divert youth away from gangs is in the U.S. The program is called GREAT, which stands for gang resistance education and training. This program sees police officers visit elementary and middle school classrooms, teaching life skills to help kids avoid delinquent behaviour and violence, and encouraging the building of positive relationships between law enforcement, parents, children and the whole community. It has proven to be effective. It has proven to give students a more negative view of gangs and a more positive view of law enforcement. This program operates right across the country, thanks to funding from the U.S. federal government. It sees programs like this as an investment in our children and in healthy and safe communities.

I urge the government to make a similar substantial investment in our children in programs to keep them out of gangs. Tougher sentences are meaningless when our police departments and our prosecutors do not have the resources needed to ensure that guilty gang members are brought to justice and convicted. At both the federal and provincial levels, we have seen governments that profess to be tough on crime and howl with indignation when they see criminals walk free through the gaping cracks in our criminal justice system, and yet they have systematically cut our police and our prosecutors.

Again I draw attention to the Conservative government shredding a negotiated contract with the RCMP. This is but one example. It is an absolute disgrace and particularly shameful coming from a government that claims to be tough on crime when we need to be going in exactly the opposite direction. We need greater investments in putting police officers on the ground because they are the front line in stopping gang violence.

• (1355)

In my own riding, the city of Coquitlam has one of the lowest police to population ratios in the entire country. The Conservative Party made promises in the 2004 and 2006 elections to ensure there would be 2,500 more police officers in municipal departments, a still unfulfilled promise.

A model for the integrated approach to policing and prosecution that is needed to tackle gang violence can be found in the city of Toronto's anti-guns and gangs task force. The task force has a dedicated staff of police officers, crown prosecutors, victim and witness support workers, probation and parole officers. The task force is headquartered in a state of the art operations centre, which allows for the highly coordinated investigations and prosecutions needed to combat gang violence.

If the government were really serious about tackling gang violence, it would provide funding to assist provincial governments in setting up similar task forces in major cities across the country.

Another area where the police need the support of the federal government is to pass legislation to modernize the laws around surveillance and wiretapping. These laws were written before the Internet age and wireless technology, which has changed society. Criminal organizations are operating and conducting business with all of this technology, cell phones, BlackBerries and online, and they know the police are unable to combat that. Criminals are taking advantage of the most cutting edge technology and we must give our justice system the same kinds of legislative tools to combat them.

I want to touch briefly on the proceeds of crime. I share the anger of citizens in my communities who have been terrorized by gang violence, only to see gang members profiteering freely from dangerous and violent activities. Police and prosecutors need to be able to go after the luxury cars and the million dollar homes that upper echelon gang members flaunt in our communities. Otherwise, how can we truly tell our children that crime does not pay?

We propose that the proceeds of crime recovered by government should be reinvested in communities that have been victimized by gang violence. I can think of nothing more appropriate than auctioning off the possessions of gangsters to fund school programs or community centres.

I know all members of the House want to see an end to this kind of violence. I join with my New Democrat colleagues in calling upon the Conservative government to move further and faster to put forward a comprehensive strategy to end gang violence. Every day that goes by that the government does not have a strategy to end gang violence is another day wasted. That is a shameful reality. Communities are looking to the government for hope and action but so far they have been sadly disappointed.

• (1400)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** I must interrupt at this point. The member will have two minutes remaining in her speech when we return to this matter.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the House to recognize a remarkable constituent of mine.

*Statements by Members*

Recently featured as one of southwest Saskatchewan's five most fascinating people, Lonnie Hunter is a teenager living in Waldeck, just outside Swift Current, Saskatchewan. Lonnie Hunter has a lot in common with teenagers across our nation. He is a high school student who likes sports, music and spending time with his friends. Lonnie Hunter is also far from typical. He is deeply passionate about youth involvement in the community and the political arena. He sits as the local Chamber of Commerce youth ambassador and serves on school and community boards.

In the last election Lonnie Hunter encouraged many young people to play an integral role.

This nation's potential to succeed is magnified when our youth are willing to step up to the plate.

I want to congratulate and thank Lonnie Hunter for everything he has done for southwest Saskatchewan and for his country of Canada. He believes that youth can make a difference in our community now.

\* \* \*

**POLISH CANADIAN COMMUNITY**

**Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a Polish Canadian, I rise today to ask the government to take action and deliver. As my mentor, Jesse Flis, did for many years in this very House, I intend to do the same, to stand up for Polish Canadians and deliver the goods. The Conservatives talk the talk, yet the only thing they deliver is the photo op.

It has been over a year and Polish Canadians around the country, including Wladyslaw Lizon, president of the Canadian Polish Congress, are waiting for ratification on pension portability, youth mobility and Allied veteran pension benefits.

On April 2, 2008, an agreement was signed between Poland and Canada regarding social security. Where is the ratification of this agreement and when will it be signed?

Last year there was an agreement between Poland and Canada regarding youth mobility. Where is the ratification of this agreement and when will it be signed?

During every election the Conservatives promise to extend benefits to Allied Polish veterans. What came of these promises and when will the goods be delivered?

It is time the government stopped with open-ended promises and delivered the goods—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Laval.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**PIERRE BRISEBOIS**

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Pierre Brisebois from my riding has recently finished an assignment with CESO, the Canadian Executive Service Organization. He went to Ivano-Frankivsk in Ukraine, where he prepared and trained restaurant employees in a new hotel in modern technologies and new methods of food preparation. He went on to evaluate the proposed menu and to make changes to reflect staff abilities and the restaurant themes.

He trained the staff to prepare the 15 new menu items he had created for the hotel.

The hotel was so satisfied with Mr. Brisebois' work that they then asked him to assess staff professional standards.

I and my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois congratulate Mr. Brisebois for giving his time and sharing Quebec's expertise with those who can get the most benefit from it.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**COLOMBIA**

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, just last week Amnesty International condemned the Colombia authorities for abusing the country's judicial system “to undermine the legitimate work of human rights defenders”.

More than a dozen human rights defenders and 46 trade unionists were killed by paramilitaries in 2008 alone, double the number in 2007.

According to testimony received today at the trade committee, thousands of paramilitaries with ties to the government are forcing poor peasants off the land and taking it over with the regime's complicity.

More than 1,500 peasants have been massacred so far by the Colombia military as so-called “false positives”. This is no less than the cold-blooded murder of innocent people.

Incredibly, the Conservative government is pressing ahead with a Bush-style free trade agreement with the regime.

What is more incredible is that the Leader of the Opposition is supporting this trampling of human rights in the name of powerful corporate interests.

The NDP is standing on the side of millions of Canadians who oppose murder, torture and human rights abuses. We oppose the blood that is on this agreement.

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● (1405)

**THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS**

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to an extraordinary gentleman from my riding, Mr. Alvin Grunert.

Mr. Grunert has generously donated \$1.5 million to Thompson Rivers University, allowing for the creation of an endowed scholarship for the top students in each of the faculties.

It was Mr. Grunert's desire to carry out his wife's wishes, making post-secondary education a reality for those students who might not otherwise afford it. Lydia Grunert's legacy will add to the spectrum of opportunities provided by TRU. This unique university offers not only post-graduate degrees but also professional diplomas and apprenticeship training.

*Statements by Members*

This remarkable donation is made even more special because it did not come from family wealth. Instead, Mr. and Mrs. Grunert worked tirelessly throughout their lives saving where they could and investing wisely. They believed that this act of altruism would be the best investment they ever made.

I ask all members of the House to pay tribute to these fine Canadians. They are a shining example of what our nation has to offer.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**REPUBLIC OF HAITI**

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the former premier of New Brunswick, Frank McKenna, recently visited Haiti with Bill Clinton in order to encourage more fortunate countries to come to the assistance of this country which is so in need of help. We are asking all governments and businesses to help Haiti get its economy back on track. As Mr. McKenna said:

[English]

Our trip brings attention of the international community to the plight of Haiti and I think it also reinforces a view in Haiti that the rest of the world is interested in their problems.

[Translation]

The lack of political leadership and the environmental instability in Haiti have led to the loss of Haiti's natural advantages; its land is eroded and floods occur regularly.

Canada is experiencing an economic crisis at present, but we have a duty to make every effort to also help countries such as Haiti that are worse hit than ourselves. With improved stability and an effort from the global community, there is hope for a prosperous and safe Haiti. We owe this to our Haitian friends.

\* \* \*

[English]

**DALIT FREEDOM NETWORK**

**Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege today to welcome to Parliament Hill, Dr. Joseph D'souza, president of the Dalit Freedom Network.

Dr. D'souza testified today at our House Subcommittee on International and Human Rights. Dalits are below the lowest caste in the Hindu religion and have been called "the untouchables". Traditionally relegated to menial occupations or various forms of servitude, Dalits are frequently denied equal opportunity in Indian society.

Dalit girls and women are often forced into prostitution. Dalit children are the victims of maiming and are forced into begging as so vividly portrayed in the film, *Slumdog Millionaire*.

The Dalit Freedom Network is working to provide vaccinations and basic medical care to provide Dalit children with education and to provide Dalit women with job skills and micro loans. The network is also striving to ensure equal treatment under the law for all Indians through its campaign for religious freedom.

I thank Dr. D'souza for all that he does.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**ADRIANE PROVOST**

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to salute a Terrebonne athlete, cyclist Adriane Provost.

Adriane was named "Quebec female athlete" at Sports-Québec's 36th gala and awarded a Maurice. Thanks to her tremendous determination and outstanding passion, she dominated junior women's cycling in Quebec, finishing first in both the Quebec Cup rankings and the final rankings for the Quebec cycling federation.

At 15, Adriane's incredible performance in the Canadian championships made her the country's best junior cyclist. Next season, she hopes to hold onto her Canadian road cycling championship title, improve her track performance and go to the world championships in Moscow.

This young woman is a model for everyone in our community, and I would like to congratulate her and say how proud I am to represent her in the House of Commons.

\* \* \*

[English]

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while we are all anxiously waiting to learn the details of the justice minister's bill to limit pre-sentencing credit, provincial attorneys general, particularly those from western Canada, are already overwhelmingly stating their support for this legislative change.

Saskatchewan Attorney General Don Morgan is quoted as saying that getting rid of the two for one credit will help the public's perception of the justice system.

Alberta Attorney General Alison Redford has said, "What this will do is allow us to correctly move these cases more effectively through the courts".

With this kind of support, the opposition should have no trouble in assisting us in getting the bill, which will be tabled tomorrow, quickly through this House and the Senate. However, we are concerned the NDP will not co-operate as that party's justice critic is more concerned about ensuring that inmates "get credit for suffering".

While the NDP is preoccupied with the suffering of violent and dangerous offenders, our government is standing up for the victims of crime.

*Statements by Members*

●(1410)

**JOSIP GAMULIN**

**Hon. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this month Canada bade farewell to a man who had a sense of justice and a scale of generosity that reached across the world.

Dr. Josip Gamulin came to Canada from Croatia in the 1970s to set up practice as a family doctor. Long before the Internet, he built his own worldwide web, connected by fax, shortwave and even the loudspeakers on his station wagon.

Through his Croatian Human Rights Committee and Croatian Radio Libertas carried around the world on shortwave, he sought freedom for political prisoners and sought relief for oppressed people everywhere.

In Canada he would shy away from no worthy cause, shrink from no challenge and stirred thousands to action.

Dr. Gamulin leaves a legacy of activism and integrity that continues to inspire the lives he changed with his belief, his genius and his generosity. His friendship was the greatest privilege I have known.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT**

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in its economic action plan, our government committed to stimulating the economy by investing in infrastructure in order to create jobs and get Canadians back to work. The Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec took another major step in that direction today by signing a historic agreement that will direct billions of dollars to infrastructure projects in la belle province. These plans for roads, bridges and water systems mean real projects that will create the jobs our citizens need.

Our government supports a stronger economy, creates jobs and allows communities in Quebec to be more prosperous. We are proud to deliver these concrete results for Quebec. These results will help rebuild our communities, get our citizens back to work and give Quebecers hope for a better future. This is a government that delivers the goods.

\* \* \*

[English]

**PESTICIDES**

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the New Westminster Pesticide Awareness Coalition has been working tirelessly to bring the harmful effects of pesticides to the attention of our community and to ban the use of cosmetic pesticides.

Medical and scientific research on the negative health effects of pesticides has shown that they have been explicitly linked to a number of types of cancer, along with birth defects and various neurological illnesses. These toxins are highly dangerous for our children and pose considerable harm to the environment. In fact, my

son Stuart was diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma after working on golf courses as a summer job.

It is critical that we reassess our continued use of these harmful chemicals. There are viable, less harmful alternatives. It is time for the government to follow the example of municipal governments across the country and support legislative measures to restrict the use of cosmetic pesticides for the safety of all Canadians and all Canadian children.

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Justice announced that he has drafted legislation which, if passed by Parliament, would cap the credit given to criminals for the time spent in custody before their trial, a practice that developed under 13 years of Liberal soft on crime government.

Canadians and our law enforcement communities have been speaking out loud and clear that they are fed up with a legal system that rewards convicted criminals with a credit, while victims and their families receive no credit, no consideration and no justice. Credit is something that is typically earned and it is time that we recognized that justice is deserved and expected.

Conservatives campaigned to end this practice and work toward truth in sentencing and now, suddenly, the Liberal critic for justice is attempting to take credit for this initiative. I would like to remind the hon. member that this is not an issue that magically appeared during the last few weeks. It has been around for many years.

I sincerely hope that the opposition parties will give credit where credit is due and stop giving credit to criminals.

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[Translation]

**MODEL UNITED NATIONS**

**Mr. Nicolas Dufour (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Chairman, for the second consecutive year, 11 students from the Lanaudière regional CEGEP in L'Assomption will participate in the National Model United Nations in New York, from April 7 to 11. During these five days, thousands of students from universities and colleges all over the world will get together to discuss important and timely world issues and attempt to find sustainable solutions to them, while faithfully applying the rules and procedures of international organizations. Having represented Haiti last year, our students will this year be playing the role of diplomats from Paraguay, according to the choice made by the organizers of the event.

### Oral Questions

Last year, the CEGEP was awarded the prize for most improved delegation with regard to the work done at the Pan American Health Organization. As a former student of the CEGEP and as a member of the Bloc Québécois, I wish to personally congratulate these students for their participation in this important event. I am sure that they will represent our CEGEP brilliantly.

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•(1415)

[English]

### PURPLE DAY

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize the outstanding accomplishment of nine-year-old Cassidy Megan, a constituent in my riding of Halifax West.

Last year, Cassidy founded Purple Day, an international awareness campaign about epilepsy. Cassidy lives with epilepsy and started Purple Day as a way of educating the public. She also wanted to let other kids with epilepsy know that they are not alone. Today people around the world mark this special day by wearing purple and talking and learning about epilepsy.

I know all members will want to join me in congratulating Cassidy Megan.

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### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while this Conservative government continues to focus on Canada's economic action plan, the Liberal Party continues to push its reckless, job-killing policies.

Our plan will reduce the tax burden on Canadians, while the Liberals want to increase the tax burden by raising the GST.

Our plan includes an unprecedented new investment in shovel ready projects. The Liberal plan is to delay money getting to those projects.

Our plan is to help Canadians who are hardest hit by the recession by enhancing EI benefits and broadening access to skills training. The Liberals' plan? Well, they do not actually have a plan on that front yet.

Canada needs the economic action plan this Conservative government has created, not the Liberal plan that would raise the GST and bring in a job-killing carbon tax.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### THE ECONOMY

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Parliamentary Budget Officer indicated that the Conservatives' economic projections are so far from reality that they should be tossed in the trash. Today's TD Bank projections are another blow to the Conservatives' credibility.

Why has the Prime Minister cut one-third of the PBO's budget? Did he do it because the PBO has dared to tell Canadians the truth?

[English]

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my office just confirmed moments ago that indeed the budget for this particular officer is provided by the Library of Parliament and the hon. member and his counterpart in the Senate confirmed the budget for that library.

In other words, the question should be directed to the hon. member and if he would like to check his facts and do his homework, a great place to start would be in fact the Library of Parliament.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we all know the government just caused his budget to be restored, but not only has it cut his budget, the Prime Minister is also refusing to give vital information to the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Canadians, we are told, will learn everything they need to know from a government website which, by the way, is still urging the Senate to pass the budget bill two weeks after the fact.

Why does the Prime Minister put Canadians on a forced diet of manipulated Conservative numbers rather than letting the Parliamentary Budget Officer get on with his job?

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Chief Librarian testified before a parliamentary committee and was asked specifically if the Parliamentary Budget Officer had a funding cut, and he answered, "There was no budget cut for the Parliamentary Budget Officer. He received the same increase as the rest of the library received".

He is completely independent from us and if the hon. member would like to learn more, I suggest he participate in some quiet study in the library.

•(1420)

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in terms of accountability, these Conservatives ignore the Auditor General's advice and refuse to tell Canadians, even in the broadest terms, how they propose to spend \$3 billion of taxpayers' money. Then they boycott the Parliamentary Budget Officer and tell Canadians they will only get the information that the Conservatives want them to get.

Given that this probationary Prime Minister used to dress himself up as God's gift to accountability, is there no limit to his double standard?

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, is there no limit to that member's indignity? He is standing ferociously, criticizing something for which he voted in favour. He voted in favour of the \$3 billion. Apparently, he did not know that happened already.



Now he is standing up to criticize that very expenditure. We, on this side of the House, have passed the economic action plan to help us get through these difficult times by lowering taxes, creating jobs, building roads, bridges, hockey arenas, and other important projects.

We are getting the job done. He should study those results in the library.

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#### CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since 2001 the CBC has received a \$60 million fund dedicated to Canadian programming. As of today, we still do not know if the CBC will get this funding for the next fiscal year. There is no confirmation from the government, so we should be worried.

If the answer is no, more people will lose their jobs. Will the government tell the CBC today, right now, if it will get that funding, or will it just say, “We don't care. Let more Canadians lose their jobs”?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have already communicated to the CBC that it will be receiving its full allocation, a record amount from this Conservative government.

Let us look at the Liberal record for losing jobs at the CBC. When the Liberals ran for office, they said, “Finally, a Liberal government will be committed to stable multiyear financing for...the CBC”.

Then what happened next—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The Minister of Canadian Heritage has the floor.

**Hon. James Moore:** That is what they promised, Mr. Speaker, and that is how they applauded during the campaign, but what did they do in government? They cut the CBC by \$414 million. They cut 4,000 jobs at the CBC.

So they talk a good game on the CBC. They cut them by \$400 million and cut 4,000 jobs. Shame on them.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government refused to loan money to the CBC, and now 800 people are losing their jobs. That number could increase significantly if the CBC does not sell \$125 million worth of assets. However, selling assets requires government authorization.

Will the government say yes, or will it just close that door and say, “to hell with Canadian content, to hell with the regions, to hell with francophones, and to hell with the CBC”?

[English]

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, where was this member's passion for the CBC when it was the Liberals cutting the CBC by \$400 million? Where was this Liberal member and his passion when the Liberals cut the CBC by 4,000 jobs?

We have increased funding for the CBC. They cut it.

#### Oral Questions

Not only that, here is what one person said:

I see our efforts as a struggle against the...assumption by existing public broadcasters, including CBC, that their audiences are fools who can't think for themselves.

Who said that? The leader of the Liberal Party.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday Kevin Page, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, declared that the federal deficit will be much greater than the government anticipated. He also indicated that the government's recovery plan is inadequate given the deepening of the economic crisis.

Will the Prime Minister remove his rose-coloured glasses and face the economic reality by providing financial assistance to sectors that he has completely ignored to date, such as the manufacturing and forestry industries, as well as the cultural sector, including the CBC?

● (1425)

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Don Drummond, the economist at the Toronto-Dominion Bank, said the other day that to its credit in January 2009 the government did not believe the average of private sector forecasts and revised the forecast down.

That is indeed what we did in the budget on January 27. We are going to get different views from different economists at different times about the economy. We are comfortable with the reality which the Liberals opposite supported, that we assumed growth at a lower rate than the average of the economists in January.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has aggravated the crisis with his ideologically driven decision not to help the CBC, resulting in the direct loss of 800 jobs, not to mention the fact that every job lost at the CBC represents three jobs lost in private production companies. All that our public broadcaster was asking for was a simple cash advance.

Will the Prime Minister admit that he made an ideological decision with grave economic consequences?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is untrue and Hubert Lacroix himself, the CBC president, said today in Montreal that jobs would have been lost even if the government had loaned the CBC \$125 million. That is not a solution to the problems at the CBC.

*Oral Questions*

All the public and private broadcasters have seen their advertising revenues decline. It is a real problem for them. All that the government can do is increase its investment, and that is what we have done: an unprecedented \$1.1 billion for the CBC this year.

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in addition to the current downturn in its advertising revenues, the CBC has actually seen a decline in its budget in real terms over the last 20 years, regardless of what the minister says. The refusal by the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages to be flexible will result in the loss, both directly and indirectly, of 3,200 jobs in the television industry, according to the president and CEO of the CBC, Hubert Lacroix.

Does the minister realize that in times of economic crisis, we need a government that creates jobs and not one that causes them to be lost?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, does she realize that what she is telling the House is totally false? Hubert Lacroix, the president and CEO of the CBC, said today in Montreal that even if there had been an additional grant of \$125 million, jobs still would have been lost. That is what he said in his speech.

If she is in favour of the CBC, which is an important institution to Canadians and Quebeckers, she should vote for our budget, which provides \$1.1 billion for the CBC, an amount that is totally unprecedented in Canadian history.

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the president and CEO of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation also said there would have been fewer job losses if they had received government assistance.

According to everyone involved, the cuts at the CBC will have devastating effects on the quality of its programming and will deprive the regions of an essential source of information by eliminating the local noon-hour broadcasts.

Does the minister think it is very smart to aggravate the problems the regions are already experiencing for purely ideological reasons by refusing to be more flexible toward the CBC?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, our government has increased the CBC's funding every year in every budget.

Hubert Lacroix, the CBC president and CEO, also said he was convinced that the CBC will emerge from this situation in a strong position if it adheres to its long-term strategic priorities, as already approved by its board.

We are assuming our responsibilities and making the investments we promised in our election campaign. We are keeping our promises.

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**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians who lose jobs need help, not half-truths. Yesterday the minister stated that 80% of people who lost their jobs and had contributed to EI would be eligible for benefits.

Yet Statistics Canada tells us that, in fact, only 43% of people who lose their jobs are eligible.

Given that reality, will the government heed the wishes of Parliament and the Conference Board and eliminate the two week penalty and improve access to employment insurance?

• (1430)

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member ought to use figures responsibly. He is liable to add to the public's confusion because what he said does not reflect reality.

[English]

The reality is this. According to our figures and an employment insurance coverage survey, more than 82% of Canadians, who paid into employment insurance, are able to get the benefits. For those people, we are very pleased that our economic action plan is providing an additional five weeks of benefits at the end, just as Canadians asked for.

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is playing word games when Canadian families have real needs. Instead of talking in theory about the number of people paying into EI who would be admissible, will she look at the facts as presented by Statistics Canada?

According to StatsCan, of the 300,000 people who have lost their jobs since the election, only four out of ten workers have qualified for EI. Parliament has spoken and called upon the government to reform employment insurance. Today, the Conference Board repeated that. Why is it doing nothing to help?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us not quibble about the statistics he is citing. Let us recognize that the number he is talking about includes everyone who is not working. We cannot take a look and say that people who have never worked in their lives are not getting EI fast enough. They have never worked, so they are not eligible.

The hon. gentleman should stop playing petty partisan politics with the futures of real people.

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in September, the Conservatives were saying that there was no recession and no deficit. In November, it was a technical recession and small surplus. In January, it was a recession and some deficit. In the past 24 hours, both the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the TD Bank are predicting record deficits and a long recession.

What purpose is served by continuing to misstate the facts, as she just did, on the deficit, on the recession and on unemployment? Start telling the truth to Canadians, start respecting the votes in the House and we can start implementing resolutions like the EI proposals adopted two weeks ago: start helping Canadians and stop lying.

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member I am sure is aware that the use of such language is out of order. He will want to withdraw that after question period, but we will deal with that then.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the budget that we presented only weeks ago in the House made economic assumptions that were more pessimistic than the average of the private sector forecasters. We will have a lot of opinions about the recession and about the rate of negative growth this year.

All of the economists have said that they did not see the recession coming. None of them saw the recession coming. That is why we have made assumptions below the predictions of the private sector economists.

I understand the member opposite is not familiar with that because he did not read the budget.

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**CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION**

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, CBC Cape Breton employs 25 people and it is the only outlet that really services the entire island. We got news today that half the jobs there will be cut.

We know the responsibility of the federal government is to allow CBC to deliver on its truly national mandate. These cuts will be devastating to the service. They will be devastating to my community.

I call upon the minister to please provide bridge funding so we do not lose these jobs and we do not lose this service.

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we recognize the importance of regional media in our country, certainly for the CBC. That is why we have increased funding for the CBC.

However, I would ask my good friend from Cape Breton to read the speech presented today by the president of CBC. He said that even if a bridge loan were provided to CBC, it would still be cutting these jobs. This is a business decision by the CBC.

Our responsibility as a government is to follow through on our campaign commitment. We have done that. We have delivered to the CBC record funding this year.

•(1435)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday was a dark day for public radio and television in Canada. Did the Conservatives have a score to settle with CBC? The answer is self-evident.

The Outaouais region will not escape the cuts unscathed; the excellent noon news broadcast in French with Nathalie Tremblay will be eliminated. This will not only deprive journalists of an outlet, it will also affect technicians and other workers in Canadian culture.

How can this government justify doing away with part of these services to the francophone audience?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it always saddens us when jobs are lost. Clearly, everyone in this House shares the same reaction.

But where was this hon. member, the member for Hull—Aylmer, when his Liberal government cut 4,000 jobs at CBC?

This was the Liberal Party's approach, its programming, its policies. It cut 4,000 positions at the CBC, as well as over \$400 million from its budget. We have raised its budget. It was the Liberals who cut it.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**AGRICULTURE**

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we had strange facts from the Minister of Agriculture yesterday. The facts are these: one, we had the spectacle of the government announcing a new listeria policy without being able to implement it; two, the appointment of an investigator who was required by her own guidelines to provide those she interviewed with the right to edit her report before she tabled it; and three, the unbelievable farce of the government blocking a parliamentary committee from investigating the listeriosis crisis.

Will the Prime Minister accept his responsibility and allow Canadians an open and transparent hearing on the listeriosis crisis?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we want to get to the bottom of all of this. We have put forward a schedule. The opposition parties agreed to it. At the eleventh hour, the member for Malpeque came in and wanted to change things completely. He wanted to double the meetings and double the time, and we are fine with that.

In the midst of this grandiose statement that he wanted more time and more witnesses, he had another appointment and had to leave. How seriously does he take it?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister does not seem to understand timeliness. Yesterday the government allowed, or more likely coached, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture to filibuster his way through the whole of the first subcommittee meeting on food safety. This subcommittee was struck because of the tragedy of last summer's listeriosis crisis, which warranted a transparent study on food safety.

Could the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food assure Canadians that for once he will put people ahead of politics and let the committee do its work?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we would love everyone to come there and actually go to work. However, when they come there to play silly partisan games, we will react.

The member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands rightly pointed out the legitimacy of the role of that committee. We want to get to the bottom of this. I welcome the interviews that the opposition parties will do. We have a great working relationship with the Bloc and the NDP to get to the bottom of this. If the Liberals want to play silly games and continue doing these goofy things, then they will face the wrath of the people out there.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in 2008, the federal government granted \$3 billion worth of contracts to suppliers in the federal capital region. Only \$38 million worth, or 1.4%, were granted to businesses in Gatineau, while 98.6% was granted to businesses in Ottawa. This situation is unacceptable and scandalous.

How can the Minister of Public Works and Government Services explain this preference for Ottawa businesses, at the expense of businesses in Gatineau?

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the goal of our government and our department is to do business with small and medium sized businesses from all areas of the country. At first glance, I was surprised by those numbers and I had to ask some questions. It must be understood that those figures do not tell the whole truth. For instance, certain companies may have their head office in Ottawa, but still create jobs elsewhere. Also, many Quebecers work on the Ottawa side, and vice versa. Thus, all the facts must be taken as a whole.

• (1440)

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, rather than justifying his failure to act and promising to look into the matter, will the Minister of Public Works and Government Services recognize that this injustice, as in so many other files, results from the fact that the federal government prefers to defend the interests of Canada at the expense of those of Quebec?

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is why we asked the Office of Small and Medium Enterprises to continue promoting opportunities for contracts with the federal government across the country. In fact, a service kiosk was recently opened in Gatineau to better serve businesses in that region.

\* \* \*

**LOAN GUARANTEES**

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in response to a question on the restructuring of AbitibiBowater, the Minister of International Trade stated that the company had possible options with Export Development Canada. Given AbitibiBowater's financial set-up, the options that the minister mentions clearly can only be loans and loan guarantees.

Can the minister be clear and confirm that for us?

[English]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we take the negotiations with AbitibiBowater very seriously. The loss of jobs in the forestry sector is from coast to coast. It is not about forestry jobs in Quebec, or forestry jobs in B.C., or any other independent or individual area. This is something we will work to work against. It is our hope to maintain as many jobs in the forestry sector as possible.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the options available to AbitibiBowater are clearly loan guarantees, but the Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec) is hiding behind the United States' lawsuit in order to say nothing. Instead, he should be listening to elected representatives from his region, people such as the mayor of La Doré who is demanding loan guarantees and who maintains that that kind of assistance does not contravene the Softwood Lumber Agreement.

Instead of slavishly taking the United States' position, will the minister stand up, listen to elected representatives from his region and give them the loan guarantees they are calling for?

[English]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois continues to misinform Canadians on this subject. Our government is very concerned with the forestry sector in Quebec and the challenges faced by the forestry workers there. That is why we took action to support the forest industry. Budget 2009 provides \$170 million toward a more sustainable and competitive forestry sector. Budget 2009 also provides EDC with more money and more flexibility to support business during this economic downturn.

Our government will continue to look out for the forestry interests in the province of Quebec.

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**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if there were just a few examples of people waiting beyond the stated 28-day timeframe to get an EI claim dealt with, it would be understandable. However, in my riding, Roger from Harbour Breton waited over 70 days to get a response to his claim. Seventy days is inexcusable, no matter where one lives in the country.

How does the minister respond to her constituents when they tell her that they do not have money to buy medication, pay their bills or put food on the table for their children?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is no question that a lot of people are going through some really tough times right now. We have hired several hundred extra EI specialists and will continue to hire several hundred more to ensure people get the benefits they need in a timely way.

Unfortunately, there are occasions when the process does take a little longer, often because we do not have complete information either from the applicant or the employer. We are automating our system more to help ensure we do get that data in a timely manner and we continue to work on that.

**Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has such outdated guidelines that most people are not qualifying for EI, while others are forced to appeal decisions.

*Oral Questions*

A constituent from my riding who applied for benefits on October 28 and was denied, appealed the decision. The initial decision was eventually overturned. Unfortunately, Donald had to wait 16 weeks to get a cheque. Most of these people find themselves in dire straits.

What do the Conservatives say to people like Donald when they are forced by the government to suffer through this ordeal?

• (1445)

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us face it. It was back in 1995 that the Liberals gutted the EI program. However, our economic action plan is enhancing it. We are building it. We are extending training benefits. We are extending EI by adding five weeks on top of regular benefits and extending that pilot program right across the country to help people when they need it most.

We are also providing training opportunities like they have never been provided before to help people get the skills that will get them jobs for the future so that they can look after their families over the long term.

**Mr. Andrew Kania (Brampton West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the Toronto area alone, 207,000 unemployed Canadians are not receiving EI benefits. One of those many Canadians is my constituent, Dan Trotta, a 41-year-old disabled Canadian with spinal stenosis. He has three young children, a mortgage and numerous financial obligations. He and his family are very afraid. EI approved him only for re-education funding, not benefits.

On behalf of Mr. Trotta and all unemployed Canadians, why will the Conservatives not provide the help that is needed now? Mr. Trotta is watching right now—

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

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we know these are very trying times for too many people and, unfortunately, it will continue for a while longer.

We are investing in additional programs, even programs for people like Mr. Trotta. We want them to get the skills and training they need to get the jobs that will help them take care of their families in the future so that they do not need to rely on the EI system and will be able to take care of themselves.

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, people in the city of Toronto and across the country are struggling in the worst economic situation in over 50 years and when they need help, they expect programs like EI to be there.

However, in my riding, a woman in her early forties has just been laid off. When she applied for EI, she was told that she was 80 hours short of getting benefits. Now she and her husband are both jobless and cannot receive EI.

When will the government put its money where its mouth is and help those Canadians most in need?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our economic action plan has three main thrusts to it.

The first one is to create jobs through our \$12 billion investment in stimulus infrastructure so people will have jobs.

Second, we are preserving jobs through the expansion of the work sharing program, where people can stay on the job, take a day off, not work one day a week but get EI benefits, so their jobs are preserved.

Then there are those who are unfortunate enough to lose work and we have provided not just expanded EI benefits but training for those who are not eligible for EI so they can get the jobs of the future.

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**ANTI-CRIME LEGISLATION**

**Ms. Dona Cadman (Surrey North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the born-again crime fighters in the opposition just showed their true colours. Despite all the public posturing over the last few weeks coming from those opposite, the Liberal, NDP and Bloc facade was revealed.

This morning, all opposition members voted to delay debate on measures aimed at fighting organized crime and drugs. After pressure from this government, they finally decided to pass an organized crime bill at second reading. What about our other bill aimed to crack down on drugs in this country?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that Canadians will finally see the second reading passage of our bill to crack down on organized crime and gangs in the country.

Next on our list is the drug bill that would send out the right message to anybody who wants to get into the grow op business, start selling drugs to kids or start bringing narcotics into this country. The message is that they will go to jail. I would like to see that bill get passed in one day because for once I want all the opposition to our crime agenda to be coming from gangsters and drug dealers and not from across the aisle.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION**

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, because of the Conservative government, more than 800 people are going to lose their jobs at the CBC. The Conservatives think it is okay to do away with local radio news at noon across the country, to cut the television news by half an hour in Atlantic Canada and elsewhere, to lay off two thirds of the employees at the Windsor station—they may as well close it—and to slash youth-oriented news programs such as RDI Junior.

We know that the Prime Minister dislikes the CBC so much that he does not even give interviews to the network. Is that any reason to destroy Canada's public broadcaster?

*Oral Questions*

● (1450)

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during the 2006 and 2008 election campaigns, we made a specific promise to Canadians. We said we would increase or maintain the budget for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. With each of our budgets, we have delivered the goods and kept our promise. That is what we have done. Now, though, here in this House, the NDP is making itself out to be the great defender of the CBC, even though it has voted against the CBC in our budgets year after year. It has voted against the CBC. That is terrible.

[English]

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are now seeing crippling losses at CBC in Windsor, Sudbury and Thunder Bay.

While we are talking about pink slips, he should be giving them to the Conservative MPs from Quebec who will pay for his decision to blow 260 jobs yesterday in Montreal alone. These job losses were completely avoidable. All it required was his signature so that they could get a bank loan or bridge financing, and it would not have cost the taxpayer a money.

Why did the minister put an ideological vendetta ahead of the public interest of Canada?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, frankly, does not know what he is talking about.

The president of the CBC said publicly that even if the CBC were extended a loan of \$125 million, it would still be laying off people. This is the problem with broadcasters in this country, public and private. There is a massive drop in ad revenue for all broadcasters in this country. It is not the fault of taxpayers.

Taxpayers elected our government on our campaign commitment to maintain or increase funding for the CBC. We have done our job but the NDP, of course, voted against those increases in funding.

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[Translation]

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, although the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism claims that he is reviewing the unacceptable appointment of Pharès Pierre, the latter is currently undergoing training as a board member and already has been assigned an office at the board. In reality, the minister is doing absolutely nothing. A number of board members are refusing to work with Pharès Pierre because they believe he is unworthy of the position.

Does the minister realize that his inaction is a disgrace to our immigration system?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the gentleman in question was recommended to the government for appointment to the IRB by the IRB, in accordance with a pre-selection system that we have adopted. The chair of the IRB is responsible for candidates recommended to the government. We accepted the recommendation

and he was appointed. It is up to the IRB chair to deal with IRB members.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in addition to the appointment of Pharès Pierre, we would like to point out that of John Cryer, a Conservative supporter and homophobe. The list of new board members also contains at least two other well-known Conservatives: Darcy Tkachuk and Cheryl Walker, an aspiring Conservative candidate and fundraiser.

Will the minister admit that his government is continuing the old Liberal practice of making partisan appointments?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will not. The IRB appointment system was radically changed to prevent the kinds of problems we had under the Liberal government. All candidates for consideration are recommended after a pre-selection process that is independently managed by the IRB.

Since I was appointed minister, there have been more than 40 board members appointed to the IRB and four of them may have had previous ties to the Conservative Party.

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● (1455)

[English]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since last fall, when the Prime Minister said that there would be no recession, that the stock market was a good buy and that the government would not run a deficit, 300,000 Canadians have lost their jobs and another half a million are at risk.

Employment insurance claims have shot up but still tens of thousands of jobless Canadians do not have access to EI, even though they paid the premiums. The issue is eligibility.

Will the Conservatives change the rules to make EI benefits accessible now to those thousands who are already innocent victims of this recession?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that the hon. member, given his years of experience here in the House, would understand the EI system by now. Eligibility is adjusted automatically every month, region by region, in 58 regions across the country.

As local economic conditions worsen, automatically every month the eligibility gets easier. People can claim EI benefits faster and for a longer period of time.

If we waited to do it through legislation or regulation, people would not get the benefits they are getting now.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the existing EI eligibility rules were devised for an economy enjoying the best economic growth since World War II. Those times have sadly passed. The nation has plunged into recession and the EI rules designed for boom times no longer fit.

*Oral Questions*

Is it really the Conservative position that a worsening recession, destroying more and more jobs, is actually a good thing because that means more people will eventually become eligible for EI under the now outdated formula? Does the minister now recognize how cruel and ruthless that is?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the way the system works right now is best exemplified in Oshawa, which, unfortunately, has seen a lot of job losses in the last 12 months.

People in Oshawa right now can claim EI with two weeks less work time to qualify. They will get the benefits for four weeks longer, plus the five weeks that we have just added on through our economic action plan.

That system adjusted itself automatically to the worsening conditions. That is a good system. By the way, it was the Liberals who designed that system.

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**HEALTH**

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve to know that the food they are putting on their families' table is safe.

During the deadly listeriosis outbreak last summer, the government assured Canadians that 2,000 new meat inspectors would be put on the job. They were not. Now we hear that it has suspended the listeria testing program and that it does not know how many inspectors it really has. It is no wonder Canadians do not trust the government with the safety of their food.

How can Canadians feel safe when the minister's department cannot even tell the country how many meat inspectors it has?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite yammers on and on about the food safety system. I can assure Canadians that they are well-served by CFIA and, of course, public health across this great country.

We have added a number of inspectors and we have increased budgets for CFIA in the last three years.

That party keeps voting against those initiatives. Perhaps it should get down off its high horse and start realizing that the CFIA inspectors are doing a great job. We have added another 15% to the rolls since we took power and we will continue to do that in spite of that party voting against it.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the only horse that was being ridden yesterday was by their filibuster. If the government wanted to protect Canadians, it would not have filibustered for over an hour in committee last night.

New Democrats proposed that we examine the outbreak to find real solutions and the minister stalled all the action. What is he afraid we will find out? The government is up to the same old tricks, but this time it is playing with the lives of Canadians.

Can the minister explain, and I do not mean run out the clock, why he will not allow the committee to do the work that Canadians want it to do?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if we did not want the committee working, we could have just vetoed the whole darn thing up front. We actually are looking forward to a non-partisan report from the opposition, working in conjunction with our government members.

If opposition members want to play silly games and not get to the bottom of this, that is their problem. We are more than willing to sit extra days, extra hours. I am more than willing. I already said I would go to committee. They have blown that opportunity for next week because they still do not have the structure figured out.

When they roll up their sleeves and want to get down to work, we are already there working. We are happy to help facilitate that. I look forward to working with the committee to get to the bottom of all of this.

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• (1500)

**SENIORS**

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, earlier this week in the *Edmonton Journal* the Liberal member for York West insinuated that the new horizons for seniors program was a waste of taxpayers' money and that we should cut funding to this program. She said that funding for this program was "like buying votes". She also said, "I suspect there are much higher priorities for Canadians today".

Can the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development comment on the Liberal Party's blatant dismissal of seniors and the new horizons for seniors program?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, seniors helped build this great country of ours and we believe that they deserve our respect and support.

While seniors may not be a priority for the Liberal Party and while the Liberals may dismiss the new horizons for seniors program, we support it. That includes providing over \$24,000 in funding for the Caribbean seniors program in the Liberal-held riding of York West.

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**RCMP**

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the RCMP commissioner told committee last month that taser use had been made more restrictive. We now learn that this was a deception, that the RCMP policy has in fact been weakened, that the specific prohibition from cycling tasers, an action potentially contributing to the death of Mr. Dziekanski, has now been repealed.

### Oral Questions

The government's response has been silence, a complete lack of action. While the commissioner misleads Canadians, Canadians demand clear action to stop further tragedy. Why do the Conservatives refuse to act? How many deaths, studies, inquiries does it take before they finally listen and restrict these weapons?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. I actually have in front of me copies of both the old RCMP policy and the new one, and there are significant differences.

The new RCMP policy on tasers indicates that they can only be used in response to a threat. There was no such restriction previously. It requires training annually. Previously, it was re-certification only, once every three years. It requires that they can only be used when force is necessary. There was no such restriction before. And, of course, it underlines that any use of tasers poses a risk. That was not there before.

It is a much more restrictive policy. We believe it is a step in the right direction.

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[Translation]

### TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this week, Quebec City's mayor, Régis Labeaume, criticized the federal government's reluctance to get on board with high-speed trains, saying, "We are way behind. That kind of attitude belongs in the stone age". Those in the know politically and economically recognize the advantages of this mode of transportation, but the government is way behind the times.

Will the Prime Minister move beyond studies, demonstrate some political will and support a Quebec City-based high-speed train?

[English]

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that we conducting an intensive study. There is a report we are looking forward to with regard to high speed rail. I can tell the member also and remind everyone in the House that there are \$407 million to speed up trains right across this country, specifically between Montreal and Toronto. I believe the member will be very pleased with the result of VIA Rail's announcement.

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### CAMPAIGN ADVERTISING

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question again is to the Prime Minister. Given the report today that the Conservative campaign manager in the riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands has admitted that he purchased signs from a third party organization in the 2008 campaign, does the Prime Minister agree that the Minister of State for Sport should do the right thing and step aside from his ministerial responsibilities until the matter is fully resolved?

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, the hon. member can try to frame his question any way he wants. This is really an issue between third party advertisers in that campaign and Elections

Canada. It has nothing to do with any of my colleagues or the Government of Canada. Furthermore, we have no intention of asking any member of the Conservative Party to step aside, let alone the Minister for State for Sport.

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### INDUSTRY

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are all sensitive to the job losses occurring across Canada, but I am hearing from companies in my riding that are hiring. Could the Minister of Industry please tell us if he has any examples of Canadian companies that are in fact expanding?

• (1505)

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, over the last months we have had examples of companies expanding throughout the country. Just yesterday Associated Packaging Technologies announced it is investing millions into its food packaging plant in Cambridge, which currently employs 130 Canadians, and will be considering hiring additional workers.

Earlier this month Bombardier announced Lufthansa will be purchasing 30 C-series aircraft, with a possible purchase of an additional 30. The contract is for \$1.5 billion.

Yesterday the city of Timmins confirmed that online services will build a new centre, saving 200 jobs and possibly creating 200 more.

Despite the world economic downturn, we are acting and so are—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley

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### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, I just sent the Minister of the Environment parts of three reports that predict that rising sea levels will affect Nova Scotia more than most other areas.

The first report is the United Nations report that predicts that all highway and rail links to Nova Scotia could be severed. The second is a Government of Canada study that predicts the town of Truro could suffer catastrophic damage. The third report says that changes to ocean currents will result in the eastern seaboard having the highest sea level increase on the planet.

Could the minister outline the steps his department is taking to assess the future risk and outline his action plan to deal with the rising sea levels in Nova Scotia, and specifically on the Bay of Fundy?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member is concerned about rising sea levels. I can certainly confirm that I have seen a rising level of correspondence from the hon. member on this subject.



The real challenge is to reduce emissions. That is why we are engaged with Todd Stern, who I have recently spoken to, the American negotiator on international climate change, leading up to negotiations in Copenhagen. We will pursue a binding international agreement that reduces emissions and pursues long-term transformations in technology that also applies to all major emitters. Those are the Canadian principles upon which we will proceed.

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#### PRESENCE IN GALLERY

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the recipients of the Governor General's Awards for Visual and Media Arts: Mr. John Greer, Mr. Nobuo Kubota, Mr. Kevin Lockau, Ms. Rita McKeough, Mr. Raymond Moriyama, Mr. Gordon Smith, Mr. Tony Urquhart and Ms. Kim Ondaatje.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** I believe, it being Thursday, the hon. member for Wascana has a question.

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#### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the House was pleased earlier today to deal very efficiently with Bill C-14, and by the end of government orders today, that bill will be deemed carried at second reading and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, a very good illustration of how the opposition is tangibly moving forward an agenda with respect to public safety.

I wonder if the government House leader in his remarks about the agenda for the rest of this week and next week would indicate what timing he has in mind for that other piece of legislation, Bill C-15, dealing with other portions of the government's justice plan.

I wonder if he could also tell us when we will see the details of the legislation on remand. That was expected either today or yesterday, but I do not believe it has yet been tabled or introduced, and it would be important to know when that bill will be coming forward.

One final matter. According to an opposition resolution duly adopted by the House, the government should table, by April 3, next week, a list of departments and programs, not projects, I hasten to add, which are likely to require access to Treasury Board vote 35 in the main estimates.

The government has a draft list of the programs and departments. The Auditor General says that this request from the House of Commons is perfectly reasonable, and I wonder when the government would be prepared to table that list in response to the motion which was adopted by the House of Commons.

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, the House leader for the official opposition, for his multitude of questions.

First of all, as he indicated, today we will continue debate on Bill C-14, the organized crime bill. I would point out that it is thanks to the Minister of Justice, whose leadership this morning overcame an

#### *Business of the House*

opposition tactic aimed at delaying Bill C-14 that we do have an agreement to move that bill forward. As a result of the minister's intervention, Bill C-14 will in fact be sent to committee at the end of today, pursuant to a special order of the House.

Tonight the House will consider a take note debate on the international conference on Afghanistan hosted by The Hague.

As I mentioned earlier, we adopted a special order for Bill C-14. Unfortunately that special order did not cover the second justice bill that is slated for debate today. In fact it is conceivable we would have already been into that debate had it not been for the delaying tactics of the opposition earlier this morning.

This is the bill that the hon. member referred to, Bill C-15, the drug offences bill. It is another key piece of our government legislation that will help curb gang violence, yet we do not see it moving quickly through the House. That said, I am hopeful we can complete the bill today or have it completed at the latest tomorrow, provided the NDP does not invoke another delaying tactic as it did this morning.

Following the drug offences bill, we have scheduled for debate Bill C-7, marine liability; Bill S-3, energy efficiency; and Bill C-13, the Canada Grain Act. All of these bills are at second reading.

On Monday, pursuant to a special order adopted yesterday, we will complete the third reading stage of Bill C-2, the Canada-EFTA free trade agreement bill. After considerable delay in this chamber, it will be nice to move that bill over to our colleagues down the hall in the Senate.

We will continue next week with any uncompleted business from this week, with the addition of Bill C-5 regarding the Indian Oil and Gas Act, which is at report stage and third reading stage, and Bill C-18 regarding RCMP pensions, which is at second reading. We will add to the list any bills that are reported back from the various committees.

Tuesday, March 31 shall be an allotted day.

In reference to the upcoming justice bills that the member might be referring to when he referred to the remand legislation, he is going to have to stay tuned. We will be bringing that forward very soon. I am sure he will be very pleased with the result and will want to move very quickly once it hits the floor of the chamber.

As he knows, the government is very transparent when it comes to government expenditures, including the upcoming expenditures of the accelerated economic stimulus contained in the \$3 billion under vote 35. All of that of course will be revealed to the Canadian public and to Parliament in good time as we make those investments on behalf of Canadians from coast to coast.

*Government Orders*

• (1510)

[Translation]

**POINT OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTION

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was so eager to encourage the minister to tell the truth that I used a term that we all know is unparliamentary. I would like to withdraw it. All the same, I would like to reiterate my request that the government stop telling the opposite of the truth.

**The Speaker:** I would like to thank the hon. member.

[English]

The hon. member for York West is also rising on a point of order.

## CLARIFICATION OF REMARKS

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is important to make sure that everything that is said in this House is as accurate and as honest as possible. One of my colleagues on the Conservative side made reference to an article that was in today's paper with some comments from a Conservative senator about new horizons for seniors, which is a Liberal program. I am so glad that the Conservatives are continuing to fund it because it is a great program.

However, I at no time said it was a waste of money. That was paraphrasing by the Conservative senator in a letter to the editor that I saw in this morning's paper. What I did say was that in tough economic times such as we are in now, this is the best investment when we are trying to help our seniors. It is important that those things be clarified in order not to mislead anyone in the House.

The minister also indicated that there was an increase in the new horizons grant. I would refer members to page 14-7 of the main estimates where it clearly shows there was a reduction in the new horizons grant. This leads us to the issue of making sure that every penny of taxpayers' money that we invest is put to the very best use. That includes investing in seniors' programs because the needs are immense.

• (1515)

**The Speaker:** I am sure the hon. member feels that she was making a correction. I did not hear much that involved a point of order in her remarks, but I think she has made her point.

The hon. member for St. John's East is also rising on a point of order.

## WEEKLY STATEMENT OF HOUSE BUSINESS

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my point of order refers to the response of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons to the traditional question as to what will be going on over the next few days so that parliamentarians can prepare for debates. I did not understand that this was an opportunity for the government House leader to make partisan swipes at other parties of the House or engage in debate that cannot be responded to. Is that not an abuse of the traditions of the House?

**The Speaker:** As the hon. member knows, partisan swipes are so rare the Chair has trouble recognizing them sometimes because they happen so infrequently. However, I would not say it was totally without precedent.

I would urge both the House leaders who normally ask and answer these questions to shorten the question to the usual one about what the business is going to be and then stick with an answer of a list of what those things are going to be, rather than comments about other things that do tend to lead to complaints from members who think that perhaps some of the comments are partisan.

In that sense, I urge the two House leaders who are most responsible to look at past precedents and see how wonderful it was when the question was very short and the answer quite succinct.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** That was six years ago.

**The Speaker:** It may have been, but there is nothing wrong with that.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**CRIMINAL CODE**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (organized crime and protection of justice system participants), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-14, although I will say that if the Conservative government and the Liberals had their way, I do not think I would be speaking. I find it quite outrageous that we have had one speaker from the NDP on Bill C-14, yet we have been accused of delaying the bill and of trying to drag it out.

This afternoon we heard the Conservative government accuse the opposition of trying to delay these proceedings by moving a concurrence motion on a committee report. I have an overall concern that somehow the Conservatives have this incredible belief that the world revolves around the Criminal Code, that it revolves just around their pieces of legislation, that there is no other business in the House. The debate that took place this morning on the war resisters is a very important piece of public business. It deserved to be debated in the House.

The fact that we have two or three speakers on a bill is not about trying to delay the bill. It is about doing due diligence to a very important crime bill and being able to rise in this House to speak on the record about a particular bill. I am outraged at the pressure tactics and the antics that have gone on here to prevent members from speaking in the House. This is not about delay. It is about dealing with legislation and being able to look at it and examine it in a reasonable way. That is what we are here to do. It is what we were elected to do and I intend to do just that.

*Government Orders*

I am a member from Vancouver and like so many others in our city and in metro Vancouver, I have been quite horrified by the terrifying gun violence and the shootings that have taken place. There have been something like 38 shootings and 17 deaths in recent weeks. I have certainly heard from my constituents via emails and phone calls and I have spoken to people on the street. People are deeply concerned by the level of violence, the guns that are being displayed and the gang warfare that is going on. I certainly want to add my voice that we want to work in a way that we build strong and healthy communities. To see these acts of violence in local communities, people running up and down back alleys shooting, and people being caught in the crossfire is truly terrifying for the people I have heard from. I am sure that many others who did not send an email or make a phone call nevertheless feel the terror and know what it means to worry about going outside or taking their kids to school.

I believe very strongly that no one should have to live in fear in their home and their community. The situation is very serious in the city of Vancouver and metro Vancouver generally. I would note that even the provincial attorney general and the provincial solicitor general noted in a letter that they sent to each of us that of the over 200 incidents of reported shots fired in the Vancouver region in 2008, the vast majority are a direct result of organized crime's drug trade. That came from the provincial officials.

My colleague from New Westminster—Coquitlam and our justice critic, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, have laid out very well that we support this bill and we support the very limited parameters it has to offer extended protection to officers and justice officials and the fact that the bill contains provisions that will extend the use of recognizance and allow some greater participation in treatment programs. It includes the requirement that a first degree murder charge would be laid when the conduct that results in a death is associated with a criminal gang or terrorism and the drive-by shooting aspect.

While we recognize those elements of the bill, we do see them as being very limited. As New Democrats we have called for over and over again and proposed to the government that we need an overall coordinated strategy focused on gangs and organized crime. One of the strategies that we need but we have not yet seen from the government is leadership around recognizing that more resources are required for prosecution and enforcement.

● (1520)

As my colleague, the hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam, pointed out, metro Vancouver has one of the lowest ratios of police officers to population in all of Canada. We know the government failed on its commitment to bring in 2,500 more police officers on the streets of our communities.

There is a huge credibility gap when it comes to dealing with the bill. On the one hand, the government is so caught up in the optics of calling for tougher laws. On the other, it refuses to bring in the broader strategies that will deal with crime prevention in our communities, or provide the kinds of resources needed for prosecution and enforcement.

We have also called for more and better prevention programs to divert youth at risk. Again, over the years promises were made to

this effect by the Conservative government, but we have yet to see any effective mechanism delivered and used in local communities to divert youth at risk.

While NDP members support the bill in the very limits it places, and we will look at it closely in committee, we are very disappointed and mindful of the fact that the government has failed to deliver on the broader range of strategies needed.

While we need to be mindful that we should take immediate action to prevent gun violence and shootings in our streets, we also cannot ignore the much bigger question about drug laws and prohibition and the impact those have on what goes on in metro Vancouver right now.

I will briefly reference a very good article that was written by Neil Boyd, who is a very well-known criminologist at Simon Fraser University. He recently wrote in the *Globe and Mail*:

The greatest irony of our current reality is that individuals are now being shot to death over the trade in cannabis, but it is almost impossible to die from consumption of the drug itself.

In the full article he has brought together very well the arguments to show that, yes, we can bring in tougher provisions in laws and changes to the Criminal Code, but unless we address the much bigger issue of the drug laws themselves, then we are just fooling ourselves.

This is really the agenda of the Conservative government. It is about playing the politics of fear, about fooling people and trying to appease them. By changing the Criminal Code, it will change what goes on in our local communities when it comes to gangs, shootings, violence and the use of guns.

We need some changes, but unless we tackle that larger question, we will be leaving those communities in a state of fear and chaos. That is simply very wrong.

Since being elected in 1997, I have been a very strong advocate for taking on this issue and recognizing that if we rely solely on an enforcement regime, particularly when it comes to gangs, it is not going to be a deterrent. Again, Neil Boyd points out in his article if that if one can place one's self in a gang member's shoes and try to understand what is going on, the idea that there are going to be tougher laws is not necessarily a deterrent at all.

We must recognize what is going on in terms of drug laws and how it is fuelling a huge organized crime black market. The NDP is saying that this will continue and that no changes will happen.

I believe it is time for us to look at new policies, a broader strategy for prevention and to ensure there are programs that can divert youth from gangs and that we provide realistic education to young people. We should educate the public about the question of drugs and substance use.

If we do that and tackle this question of drug law reform, let us at least have an honest debate about prohibition and its impact, similar to what we saw in the 1930s. Then maybe we will be doing something honest. We will be putting in front of people the real question. I am concerned about that in the ongoing debates.

*Government Orders*

• (1525)

I support and the other members of the NDP support the bill. However, what I find so offensive is the attitude of the Conservative government. It has displayed such a narrow-mindedness about this question. It is such a politically focused and motivated agenda that at the end of the day will not change the kind of reality we see in metro Vancouver.

Even if the Conservatives lived up to their promise of more officers, that would at least make our communities stronger and healthier.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been discussions among the parties and I hope you would find unanimous consent for the following: That in the opinion of the House each year the vernal equinox, the first day of spring, should be designated as Nowruz Day.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Richmond Hill have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will make a comment and ask a question on the comments the hon. member and the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam made with respect to police forces, in particular the RCMP.

First, I want to point out that this government brought in pay for recruits. It was this government that increased service pay for the RCMP. It was this government that set aside \$161 million to recruit 1,000 RCMP officers, which is a work in progress. We just cannot go down to Wal-Mart and pick these guys off the shelf. We also allocated money for 2,500 new municipal police officers, which again is a work in progress. We are passing laws to give the justice system more tools to help the RCMP and other police forces do their jobs.

The member for New Westminster—Coquitlam made a statement that is patently false. She said that we rolled back the RCMP wages. That is absolutely false. She knows it. She should withdraw that. What we have done is restrict their pay increase to match the pay increases for other members of the public service.

My question for the hon. member is related to the bill we are debating right now and it goes to gangs and gang members and how those people are treated. How does she anticipate the NDP responding to the bill, which will be proposed shortly, to take away the two-for-one or three-for-one credit that is currently in vogue?

**Ms. Libby Davies:** Mr. Speaker, first, the member is entirely incorrect. The fact is the government rolled back a negotiated, agreed upon collective agreement. We have laws in our country where we have free collective bargaining. The government has rolled back the time clock and labour rights that have affected the RCMP. We find that reprehensible.

The Conservatives also made a promise to put 2,500 more officers on the street. This is a promise on which they have yet to deliver.

After a while, year after year of hearing these kinds of promises, is it any wonder that people become very cynical in what they hear from the Conservative government and the fact that they do not trust the Conservatives any more?

The bill he referred to in his question has not yet come to the House. We are debating Bill C-14. We will be debating Bill C-15 next. If the member wants to know our position on a bill that has yet to come into the House, maybe he should stick around and he can hear that debate. We would be happy to participate in it.

• (1530)

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member to clarify a couple of points.

The government now needs two parliamentary secretaries for justice. However, one of them said in committee the other day that these bills would not be the be-all and the end-all, that they were not the cure, that other things were needed. Even the Conservatives see that.

First, I know the hon. member has an urban background, which would lead her to know that much more is needed in the fight against crime and gang violence. What are those items?

Second, it was this side of the House that proposed that Bill C-14 leave this place and go to committee, not the government side. Is that not true?

**Ms. Libby Davies:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party actually proposed that this bill and Bill C-15 go through all stages in the House and committee with no debate whatsoever. We found that quite incredulous. They were even trying to one-up the government on this one.

I find it quite outrageous that there is some kind of competition going on as to who can march this legislation forward more quickly, without any debate. These changes in the law are very serious. They warrant debate, both in the House and in committee.

On the question of gangs alone, there are many different perspectives out there in terms of what causes gangs, how they are manifested and whether changes in the law will be any kind of deterrent. There are real experts out there who have studied this kind of thing.

Does the Conservative government want to hear from those people? I do not believe so. Do the Liberals want to hear from those people? They wanted to rush it through committee.

We have an interest in hearing what some of those perspectives are and have genuine due diligence in dealing with this legislation. We think it is very important. We have signified our support for it. We are willing to have it go to committee. In fact, we knew all along that the bill would end today and go to committee.

All the theatrics we saw earlier today from the Minister of Justice were just that, theatrics, trying to score political points. It was going to committee anyway.

*Government Orders*

I think everybody should take it down a notch and get back to our real job, which is debating the legislation, making intelligent debate and ensuring there is a proper process at committee as well.

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**MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE**

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed certain bills.

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**CRIMINAL CODE**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (organized crime and protection of justice system participants), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to participate in the debate today.

I want to add to what my colleague from Vancouver East was just saying about all the brouhaha about getting the bill through the House today. There was absolutely no doubt that we would finish debate on Bill C-14 today and get it to committee by the end of the day. Therefore, the motion proposed by the Liberals this morning was meaningless because we were on that track already.

We New Democrats in this corner of the House had agreed to the number of speakers we were putting up and we have not expanded that list by one person for some time now. This was, as the member said, a lot of theatrics over nothing today, unfortunately. The reality is that even after all the brouhaha, that somehow there was an attempt to delay consideration of Bill C-14, the Conservatives themselves put up more speakers. It is unbelievable.

I seconded the concurrence motion this morning and I make no apology for that. That was an important piece of business. We need to hold the government accountable for its lack of respect for the decisions of the House, especially in a minority Parliament. When we had to revisit an important question of war resisters and their welcome in Canada, a motion that was passed by the last Parliament and the government refused to act on it, I make no apology for asking the House to revisit that important issue today.

With regard to the legislation before us, which is purported to be an attempt to deal with gang violence in Canada, I agree that it does take some steps that will go toward that. However, I do not want to oversell this legislation. It is important to people in my constituency and to people all over greater Vancouver where we have seen a terrible outbreak of gang violence, where 38 people have been shot and at least 17 people have died as a result of that violence in the last few months. That is unacceptable in our community.

We want to ensure that everyone in our community feels safe and feels that they can go about their daily business feeling secure. There have been times in recent weeks when that has not been the case, and that is not acceptable. We need to put our efforts, as members of Parliament and as MLAs in British Columbia, toward addressing and solving that situation.

Bill C-14 is a limited attempt to do that. I want to make it very clear that New Democrats support this legislation. I support this legislation and will be voting for it.

What exactly does Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (organized crime and protection of justice system participants) do? It has three key provisions. The first one is to add to the sentencing provisions for murder so that any murder committed in connection with a criminal organization is a first degree murder, regardless of whether it is planned and deliberate.

The second key provision is to create offences of intentionally discharging a firearm while being reckless about endangering the life or safety of another person, of assaulting a peace officer with a weapon or causing bodily harm and of aggravated assault of a peace officer.

The third provision is to extend the duration of a recognizance up to two years for a person who, it is suspected, will commit a criminal organization offence, a terrorism offence or an intimidation offence under section 423.1 if they were previously convicted of such an offence, and to clarify that the recognizance may include conditions such as electronic monitoring, participation in treatment programs and a requirement to remain in a specific geographic area.

Those are the three provisions in the legislation but they are limited in the sense that this is not an extensive bill by any stretch of the imagination. It adds a new offence of what we commonly call a drive-by shooting, a specific offence under the Criminal Code. That is not to say that any crimes associated with that particular activity were not already illegal and already punishable by important penalties in our Criminal Code. This just nominally creates a specific crime. It does add the crime of first degree murder to any murder associated with gang activity, and that is a significant one.

● (1535)

The reality is that those are measures that the New Democratic Party proposed in our campaign platform in the 2008 federal election where we clearly said that two of the measures to combat gang violence that were required were that first degree murder charges should be ensured for gang related homicides, which is exactly what this legislation does. We also called to make drive-by shootings and firing at a building indictable offences. These measures are ones that New Democrats promoted during the last federal election and we are glad to have the opportunity to debate them and support these proposals from the government today in the House of Commons.

My colleagues from metro Vancouver who have already spoken in this debate, the members for Vancouver East, Burnaby—New Westminster, Vancouver Kingsway and the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam, all agree that these are important measures to take at this time. We hope they will make a contribution to dealing with the problems that the greater Vancouver area has been seeing in recent weeks.

*Government Orders*

On the one hand, where we agree that these changes to the Criminal Code with regard to drive-by shootings and a first degree term for murder committed as part of a gang activity are important provisions, I doubt that these measures will strike terror in the hearts of gang members. I doubt that there have been any memos circulating among the gangs to say that they had better back off now because these new provisions are coming.

We know that these kinds of things do not act as a deterrent but that does not mean that we should not be doing them. We should be ensuring that these crimes are punishable for the serious crimes that they are. However, we should not kid ourselves that these will act as a deterrent to involvement in criminal gangs or in gang violence.

The other specific piece of this legislation that we think is important is the change to the recognizance provisions. We need to protect the people who work in our justice system. We need to protect our police officers. This extension of recognizance provisions from one to two years is an important step to take.

We are glad as well that this bill would improve judicial discretion. It is not often that we see the Conservatives taking a measure that allows judges to undertake discretion in the important work that they do. This legislation would do that by allowing things, such as treatment, to be added to the provisions of a recognizance. We think that is an important step to be taking.

We know that a judge who has followed the case, worked the case thoroughly and has paid attention to what has gone on in that proceeding is often in a very good position to understand what steps need to be taken. We applaud the improvement of judicial discretion in that case.

We want to be careful, however, because the imposition of treatment is often not the best way to accomplish the goals of treatment. Even though this is allowed in the legislation, we flag that it may be problematic. I am sure most judges who are considering that will be well aware of the problems associated with requiring treatment programs.

These are important improvements. They are limited. I do not think we should oversell their effect or their importance but they are important steps to take. As I say, we are pleased to be supporting them.

We need to be doing a whole bunch of other things. With regard to the situation in Vancouver, there is no doubt that we should have more police working in our communities. We believe that the promise of 2,500 extra police officers across the country should have been delivered on. We are looking forward to that day when those men and women are available to do that important work.

We also know that in metro Vancouver there is an important issue of the coordination of police efforts. We do not have a regional police force in Vancouver. We have a number of municipal forces. We have the RCMP serving some communities. The need for better communication and coordination among these different forces working on this important issue is an issue that has been flagged by many of those same people working on these matters. We want to ensure the government pays attention to providing those kinds of resources.

We are also very concerned that the government has chosen to roll back the negotiated wage increase for RCMP officers in the last budget. We do not believe that is an appropriate action given the important work that these men and women do in our communities. We also do not believe that it is appropriate to roll back a negotiated contract in that fashion. This is a backward step. It does not help our efforts to combat crime and it does not recognize the important services that those men and women of the RCMP provide in our communities and in communities like Burnaby.

● (1540)

It is also clear that we need increased support for prosecution services. Unbelievably, in the British Columbia budget, the provincial government cut back on its prosecution services. We know that successful prosecution will improve our criminal justice system and that if prosecutors have a smaller caseload they will do a better job and not make last minute decisions. They will be able to do the kind of research they need to do to be more successful and make appropriate decisions on all the processes around successfully prosecuting a criminal case. We hope the government will address the whole issue of support for prosecution at some point.

The need to strengthen the witness protection program is another area that has come up time and again in greater Vancouver. People who have witnessed gang crimes have told us about their fears of coming forward in a public way to help the police find and prosecute those criminals. They are fearful of what might be in store for them should they go public in that way. We need to ensure the flaws of our witness protection system are addressed. The New Democratic Party called for that again as part of our last election platform in the 2008 campaign.

We also believe that prevention is key to any successful criminal justice policy platform and package. We often hear this described as programs for youth at risk, which is important, but I do not want to leave the impression that we somehow believe it is youth who are responsible for the kind of crime we are seeing in metro Vancouver right now. Youth gangs are not causing these problems. Adults are causing these problems.

However, we do need to ensure our youth are given all the opportunities so that involvement in criminal activity is not seen as a viable option for them, that they have other outlets for their creativity and energy and that those are provided and well-financed by our communities. We need to pay more attention to that.

I am sorry that we never have the chance to discuss the importance of moving to restorative justice programs. As a formal part of our criminal justice system, we know that restorative justice that involves people accused of a crime, the victims of those crimes and people from the community is an effective way of building relationships and ensuring that punishment and restitution happen. However, we need to maintain relationships while that is going on in the community. We need to see more of that. We need to move in that direction because it is an effective way of ensuring that relationships are built and maintained which will go to building a community rather than people holding grudges and not having the contact with each other, which they will eventually have again anyway.

*Government Orders*

For many years in my community, I have seen groups of citizens, who are interested in establishing these kinds of programs, struggling and fighting only to be thwarted in their attempts to see the programs funded and established as a key feature of our criminal justice system. There is no excuse for that. We know it works in other jurisdictions. In fact, we have seen it work here in our own communities.

I was part of it myself in a restorative justice program with an aboriginal offender who spray-painted the side of my house. I was very impressed with the way that unfolded. I was impressed with the leadership of the elders from the community who took part in that process, the social workers and court officials who were part of that process and of the young man and his family who were involved. If I were to bump into that young man on the street, I would be able to say hello to him instead of being fearful of him and he would be able to say hello to me even though he caused damage to my property in the past. That is an incredibly successful outcome and one that we should be celebrating and ensuring happens more often in our communities.

• (1545)

We also need to address the issue of guns in our communities. We know that handguns are too readily available and are too often used in these kinds of gang-related crimes. We also know that too many guns come across the border from the United States. I hope that we are negotiating with the Americans on the porous borders with regard to handguns. This is a significant issue of border control and safety for Canadians.

We often hear Americans' concerns about our border, but it is time that we as Canadians highlighted what our concerns are with the American-Canadian border, and the trafficking of guns across that border has to be high on our list. We know that far too many of the handguns used in crime in Canada come from south of the border, and we need to make sure that is addressed in our bilateral relationship with the United States.

We also need better legislation around proceeds of crime. We need to ensure that the proceeds of crime are directed back into our communities to assist in the development of our communities.

I am glad the member for Vancouver East talked about the whole issue of drug crime and drug policy in Canada, because I also believe that is fundamental to making any significant progress on these issues. We know that the profitability of drugs is the key issue behind gang activity. If drugs were not so profitable, there would not be so many people interested in pursuing it. There would not be the kinds of violent conflicts that erupt between these organizations because so much money is at stake and being made illegally in the drug trade.

It is time we learned some lessons from the past. It is not rocket science. We have an excellent example from the days of alcohol prohibition in the United States. There were exactly these kinds of criminal activities, lack of security in communities, gang wars, drive-by shootings, shootings between gangs on the streets, family dislocation, illegal stills in basements that caused problems for neighbours and fires in homes, all of the same kinds of issues that we see as a result of the drug trade currently in our society.

I am of the opinion that drug prohibition is not doing us any favours when it comes to addressing the needs and safety of our communities. We should learn from the example of the past. The parallel is exact and direct between the time of alcohol prohibition and our current drug prohibition regimes, both here and in the United States. It is time that we listened to those advocates, some even in law enforcement, who are saying it is time we reviewed our commitment to drug prohibition and sought other directions.

Some progress has been made in that respect with the adoption of the four pillars approach. It has been very important to the city of Vancouver, to metro Vancouver and my community of Burnaby. The four pillars of harm reduction, enforcement, prevention and treatment have been part of dealing with questions of drug use, addiction and criminal activity surrounding the drug trade in our communities.

We know that protecting people's lives and health with harm reduction is a crucial component of dealing with issues that stem from the use of drugs and the drug trade.

We have already talked about the importance of having police on the streets and having coordination between police officers, police detachments and different police forces. We know the importance of that enforcement activity. We know the importance of having good laws so that we can prosecute those who engage in related crimes.

We also know, as another pillar of the program, the importance of prevention. We know that people need to understand the impact of drug use on themselves, their communities and their families. We need to dedicate resources in order to prevent people from becoming involved in the use of drugs and the problems it will cause for them, their families and their communities.

We also need to ensure that there is more treatment available for those who decide they want to deal with their addictions. I think it is a tragedy that now when people decide they want treatment, often it is not available and they cannot get it when they make that decision. We know that is the absolutely crucial moment. When people decide they are ready for treatment, they must get into treatment at that moment. If they put it off, they backslide and are into the same cycle again.

We also know that when people finish treatment, there have to be services, supports and appropriate housing for them or all the benefit of their treatment is lost.

Those are some of the directions in which we should be going. The NDP will be supporting Bill C-14, but we think there is a lot more that needs to be done to address community safety and the issue of gangs in our society.

*Government Orders*

• (1550)

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to narrow in on one issue that has come before the justice committee and was also part of the essence of the delegation we had from the Attorney General for British Columbia, and that goes to disclosure.

Increasingly, prosecutors and police forces are trying to keep up with the burden of complying with Stinchcombe, which is the law with respect to disclosure—that is, all of the items in the prosecution file must be provided to the defence. It is the law of the country. However, it has created an enormous burden. Many times there are tapes to review. It is a manpower or human resource issue that the government has not addressed. It has been the law of the country for some time now, and police forces and prosecutorial services are overburdened with the number of hours that are required to comply with that decision.

Would the member agree that it is time the government, instead of having a news conference every night, got down to directing the Department of Justice to comply with the need for stringent and streamlined disclosure requirements, and secondly, to directing the Minister of Finance to provide adequate resources for both the police services across this country and the prosecutorial services that need help to comply with the law?

• (1555)

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, I agree that disclosure is an important feature of our criminal justice system. I think those who are charged in our system have the right and need the right to know the evidence against them, and that evidence should be disclosed to them so that they can mount an appropriate defence.

However, the member is absolutely right. We have to make sure that when we have an important principle like that in our system we support it with appropriate resources, that we support it with a full commitment of the government, and that we make it possible for the people we ask to do that work to do the best possible job in meeting that principle.

As I noted in my remarks earlier, one of the places where we are falling down is in regard to support for prosecutors and the important work we ask them to take on. There is no excuse for not providing that support. I think that is an area where the federal government could be doing significantly more to support our criminal justice process, to support the people who take on this important work on our behalf, which would ultimately make the system better and more successful and would give people increased confidence that this system did support them, did protect them and their rights and did do the job that we all want it to do.

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I, too, have seen restorative justice work first-hand, and I wonder if the member could speak a bit more about it. It was part of his comments, but I just want to emphasize that I agree on how important that is.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, I have to say that even when I was talking about it a few minutes ago in my speech and remembering my own experience of a restorative justice process, I got a chill down my spine about how important that was to me to be part of that kind of process.

I have to say, the morning I woke up to walk the dog and saw that somebody had spray-painted the side of my house was not a very pleasant experience. While walking the dog, I came across a young man with spray paint cans being arrested by the police. I knew he was likely the perpetrator and talked to the police at that time. Later, a social worker from the aboriginal friendship centre in Vancouver contacted us and asked if we would support this young man going through a restorative justice program rather than into the court system. We knew that if he went into the court system at this point in his life, given his past record of contact with the legal system, he would end up in jail. The point was made that this might not be the best place for him in terms of his future and in terms of our community's future. My partner and I, and our neighbours, agreed that this would be an appropriate activity for us, because we realized that jail might not be the appropriate place for this person.

I have to say that working with the elders, the social workers, the court representatives, the young man and his family was very moving and very personal. It was a situation where I think we all benefited and won.

I bumped into the social worker a number of months later. She was extremely pleased with the results of that process for the young man in particular, who had in fact turned his life around because he felt that society had finally paid attention to him as a person and assisted and worked with him in a way that allowed him to find resources and support to turn his life around.

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas for his always very thoughtful comments.

I noticed the hon. member talked about the four-pillar approach. I am sure he is aware that one of the problems we have had is that the Conservative government changed the four-pillar approach and basically made it a one-pillar approach, that being enforcement.

The Conservative government sometimes talks about treatment, but it has certainly dropped harm reduction, which has been a very important element of that. We have seen that in things like Insite, the safe injection site in Vancouver.

Could the hon. member comment on whether he thinks things have actually become better as a result of how the government changed Canada's drug strategy by dropping these elements?

• (1600)

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, it will come as no surprise to the hon. member for Vancouver East that I am a strong supporter of Insite, as she is.

We know that the safe injection site in Vancouver has saved lives. It has improved the health of the community by ensuring that injection drug users have a clean and supervised place to deal with their addiction. It has given them direct and regular contact with health professionals who can direct them to the kind of health care they need, the options for treatment, and can advocate on their behalf when they are able to take advantage of those kinds of directions.

The lack of support from the current federal government for this important initiative has been most frustrating across the community in Vancouver. I am always impressed at what I believe is widespread support for Insite.



*Government Orders*

It was not an easy direction for our community to take and it was controversial. Those people who have taken the time to look at its work and at the experiences of those people who are users of the Insite facility will know it has been a success in saving lives and improving the health of individuals and the community.

This is clearly a direction that should be adopted in other communities across the country, because our experience in metro Vancouver has shown that it works.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments and very insightful perspective on the important issues we are dealing with today.

I certainly appreciated the hon. member's reference to some of the very worthy initiatives happening in the context of first nations justice processes. I come from northern Canada, where there is great interest in such processes, not just by first nations but also by much of the wider community.

We recognize that these are very important, but also that there is very little financial support in terms of programming. Many of these organizations that work very hard to devise a program of justice that works best for so many young people in our region are struggling.

I would like to hear more about the hon. member's thoughts on the need for support in this area.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, often in Canadian society we have assumed that our European ways and traditions were the way to go.

In many ways, we are justly proud of our criminal justice system and the way it has been established and deals with issues of crime and justice in our communities. I think that is a tradition we can be proud of.

However, I am glad we are finally looking to first nations for their lessons, learning and traditions in this area. They have shown us as well that there is much of great value.

Being part of the restorative justice program in the aboriginal community in Vancouver was a very foundational experience for me. It showed me the value of listening to the aboriginal members of my community and learning about their appreciation and understanding of criminal activity, community, and how one maintains and builds relationships when relationships have been broken.

That is a major turning point for our society. I am glad we have had the opportunity now to learn in that way and I am glad it is happening in other communities across the country.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Resuming debate.

There being no further members rising, pursuant to order made earlier today, Bill C-14 is deemed read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Motion deemed adopted, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

● (1605)

[Translation]

**CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT**

**Mr. Daniel Petit (for the Minister of Justice)** moved that Bill C-15, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to speak to Bill C-15 today.

Members will recall that, in November 2007, the Minister of Justice introduced Bill C-26, which proposed a number of mandatory minimum penalties to ensure that appropriately high sentences are imposed on those who commit serious drug offences. This bill reintroduces those same provisions.

As we all know, the Prime Minister unveiled Canada's new national anti-drug strategy in October 2007. The national anti-drug strategy provides funding to prevent the consumption of illegal drugs, particularly among young people, to treat addictions and to fight drug-related crime.

This strategy has a two-pronged approach: the first focuses on a tougher response to drug-related crime and the second on victims.

The national anti-drug strategy includes three action plans: preventing the consumption of illegal drugs, treating addictions, and tackling the production and distribution of illegal drugs.

The action plan to fight the production and distribution of illegal drugs contains a number of elements, including sufficiently severe penalties for serious drug-related offences.

That is part of the context in which this bill should be seen. It takes action on one of the government's major priorities, which is to attack crime, and especially organized crime.

The purpose of this bill is not to provide minimum obligatory penalties for all drug-related offences. The Controlled Drugs and Substances Act is quite complex when it comes to various offences and punishments. The punishment depends on both the kind of crime committed and the substance involved. The most dangerous substances that cause the greatest problems, such as heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and morphine, are included in schedule I of the act, and crimes related to them attract the most severe penalties, up to life imprisonment.

Cannabis and related substances are included in schedule II. Crimes involving them attract less severe penalties. In the case of trafficking or possession for the purpose of trafficking, sentences of up to life imprisonment are only imposed in regard to quantities of at least three kilograms. Production of cannabis is punishable by up to seven years in prison.

### *Government Orders*

The least severe penalties of a maximum of 12 months in prison upon summary conviction are reserved for crimes involving substances listed in schedules IV and V. It should be noted, however, that most of the activities forbidden by the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act are legal if the person involved has the necessary licence, permit or exemption.

For example, the marijuana medical access regulations, which took effect on July 30, 2001, provide a complete procedure for people who suffer from certain health problems to apply for a permit to possess or cultivate marijuana for medicinal reasons with the approval of their physician or, in some cases, of a specialist. The number of plants that an authorized person is entitled to cultivate is based on a formula related to the amount of dried marijuana the person needs every day.

Some hon. members might think it is unnecessary to provide for minimum penalties like those in the bill in order to punish serious drug-related offences. However, these crimes are a growing problem in Canadian cities and stricter legislation is absolutely necessary.

We should remember as well that the security of Canadians is one of our government's highest priorities. Their security is threatened by organized crime groups involved in the production and trafficking of drugs. These activities lead to increased crime, violence and danger to law enforcement officers.

Drug trafficking and production are also the largest sources of illicit money for organized crime groups.

● (1610)

Profits from the sale of drugs, estimated to be in the billions of dollars per year in Canada, are used to finance a host of other criminal activities.

According to the Statistics Canada Juristat bulletin entitled "Crime Statistics in Canada, 2004", offences related to the cultivation of marijuana more than doubled during the last decade, going from approximately 3,400 in 1994 to 8,000 in 2004. According to a study on marijuana grow operations in British Columbia, approximately 39% of all reported marijuana cultivation cases were located in B.C. Between 1997 and 2000, the total number of these cases increased by over 220%. Even though the number of marijuana grow operations in British Columbia stabilized between 2000 and 2003, the estimated quantity of marijuana produced went from 19,720 kilograms in 1997 to 79,817 kilograms in 2003—a seven-year record—because of the size and proficiency of the operations.

Investigations by British Columbia Hydro revealed that at a certain point there may have been up to 17,000 marijuana grow operations. The increase in illegal marijuana production activities did not occur only in British Columbia, but everywhere in Canada. Even though we have no national data on the production of synthetic drugs, RCMP data indicate a constant increase in production operations. The RCMP carried out seizures in 25 synthetic drug production operations in 2002, in 51 operations in 2003, 60 in 2004, and 53 in 2005. Of these 60 seizures in 2004, 17 involved ecstasy production and 40, methamphetamine production. Of the 53 seizures in 2005, 60% involved methamphetamine production operations and 30% involved ecstasy production operations. The seizures of ecstasy

and its components went from 1.5 million tablets in 2001 to more than 70 million tablets in 2006.

Illegal drug use can hurt us all. We are seeing that when it comes to methamphetamine producers and users. Unlike better-known drugs—heroin, cocaine, and marijuana—methamphetamine presents unique challenges. Methamphetamine is a synthetic drug. Its production does not involve crop cultivation. In fact, one needs no special knowledge or training to produce it, and the chemical ingredients are relatively cheap and easy to obtain. As a result, the production of this drug is attractive to both pushers and addicts.

Methamphetamine also poses a threat to enforcement authorities, which have to fight both small, secret labs and huge labs controlled by drug-trafficking organizations.

The small labs produce relatively small amounts of methamphetamine and are generally not affiliated with major drug trafficking organizations. A number of factors have served as catalysts for the spread of small labs, including easy access to recipes on the Internet. Indeed, widespread Internet usage has facilitated the dissemination of technology used to manufacture methamphetamine in small labs. This form of information sharing allows wide dissemination of these techniques to anyone with computer access.

Aside from marijuana, methamphetamine is the only widely used illegal drug that users can make themselves. Given the relative ease with which manufacturers or cooks can acquire recipes and ingredients, and the unsophisticated nature of the production process, it is easy to see why this highly addictive drug is spreading.

● (1615)

Methamphetamine production operations also pose serious public safety and health hazards to those in and around them. These operations can result in serious physical injury from explosions, fires, chemical burns and toxic fumes. They produce environmental hazards, pose cleanup problems and endanger the lives and health of community residents.

The collateral damage caused by methamphetamine includes impacts on families, school staff, students, law enforcers, fire fighters, paramedics, health care practitioners, businesses and property owners. These individuals suffer indirectly from meth use.

First responders may be exposed to production byproducts—the danger of fire or explosion—and may be the target of violence and aggression from addicts.

*Government Orders*

Communities in general may be exposed to violence, property damage, identity theft, decreased public safety, contamination of public areas from the disposal of cooking byproducts, and an unreliable or decreased workforce that impedes the safety of co-workers.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, the use and production of illicit drugs can have serious adverse consequences for users, producers, families, law enforcement agencies, first responders and the community.

It is our responsibility as parliamentarians to make the laws in Canada, and we must ensure that those laws provide for appropriate measures to address serious problems. And make no mistake, drug use in Canada is a very serious problem. Some aspects of the situation have grown worse in recent years, and it is our duty to act in the face of this growing threat.

In response to the dangers posed by increased production and the worsening drug problem, the government introduced this bill, which proposes mandatory minimum penalties for those who produce and sell this drug.

The proposed amendments to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act do more than just impose minimum penalties. The bill contains a provision that would enable certain offenders who ordinarily would be subject to mandatory minimum penalties to take part in a program given by what is called a drug treatment court.

A drug treatment court is a substance abuse intervention model that operates within the criminal justice system. Drug treatment courts provide judicially supervised treatment in lieu of incarcerating individuals who have a substance use problem that is related to their criminal activities, for example, drug related offences such as drug possession, use or non-commercial trafficking and/or property offences committed to support their drug use, such as theft or shoplifting.

Individuals may need to meet other requirements specific to individual courts or court systems to be deemed eligible for admission. Eligible accused persons must choose between the drug treatment court program and traditional criminal justice process, which can result in various dispositions ranging from fines to incarceration.

Typically, formal admission into a drug treatment court program requires the individual to plead guilty to his or her charges. If an individual fails to comply or participate in all aspects of the drug treatment court program, consequences range from an official reprimand or revocation of bail to termination of the program and the handing down of custodial or community supervision sentences.

Although a drug treatment court program is applicable only when eligible offenders choose it and give their consent, drug treatment courts constitute a form of coercive treatment. A well designed and properly implemented drug treatment court model has a number of key facets. The first is early identification of those who meet the program eligibility criteria and early treatment. Second, it includes access to several types of programs that treat the offender's problems with substance abuse, such as alcohol or drugs, and mental health issues.

● (1620)

Third, there is extensive ongoing judicial contact with each participant. Fourth, there must be intensive supervision and drug testing to monitor and ensure abstinence from all intoxicants, coupled with positive reinforcement for compliance and sanctions for non-compliance. Fifth, a partnership is needed between drug treatment courts and community based organizations in order to improve program effectiveness. Sixth, there must be continuing education for those involved in the field, in order to improve the program's effectiveness. Seventh, a non-adversarial approach must be used in the court system to ensure both public safety and the rights of program participants. Eighth and last, comprehensive evaluation will monitor program objectives and measure effectiveness.

Compared to traditional criminal justice approaches, the intent of a drug treatment court is to permit motivated clients to avoid incarceration and other sanctions and to allow them access to treatment services more quickly due to dedicated resources. It is also to encourage clients to remain in treatment until completed, through intensive and frequent monitoring and supervision by the court.

Participating in a drug treatment court program is intensive and demanding. It includes court attendance up to twice a week, random urine testing, and attendance and treatment from daily to weekly as clients progress through the program. Although some participants start treatment in a facility, they all attend outpatient programs.

At some sites there is a primary treatment provider, whereas at other sites various community agencies deliver treatments. The drug treatment court team follows the client's progress closely. There are preliminary meetings set up to detect problems and find possible solutions to difficulties, to client relapse and to non-compliance. Coming before the court enables the client to inform it of his progress, and for it to reinforce compliance and progress made, and to sanction non-compliance or set new conditions or interventions with a view to helping the client break out of the crime-dependence cycle.

The drug treatment court programs show great promise and their results will be monitored. This important bill has been drafted in such a way as to not have any impact on treatment programs.

Canadians are calling for the criminal law system to set proper penalties for the commission of drug-related crimes. This bill responds to that desire and will provide for severe but fair minimum sentences.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the speech by the hon. member. I also appreciate the fact that he has a great deal of experience as a member of the Bar and that he works very hard on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I have no doubt that he believes in the Conservatives' program. However, I would like to ask him a few questions.

In his 20-minute speech, the member made no mention of the other cause of drug-related crime and that worries me somewhat. He did talk about the components of Bill C-15. However, I would like to know, as would Canadians, if the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice believes that the government could or should do other things to deal with these threats, apart from Bill C-15. Will the government take other action to deal with this important issue?

**Mr. Daniel Petit:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He has been a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for two or three years. I am new to the government.

From the outset, our government has continued to look for solutions to fighting crime that will satisfy Canadians.

There are different ways of approaching the problem. As parliamentarians, we can amend the Criminal Code and its schedules. We can also create drug treatment courts, also a form of rehabilitation, which is part of the fight against crime. Our government is taking a two-pronged approach: first, we want to penalize criminals so they realize, once and for all, that committing drug-related, violent and other such crimes is a serious matter and they will be punished. Second, we want to help the victims, even those who take drugs, who have been drawn in by the thugs of organized crime.

Therefore, we will continue with this two-pronged approach. We are constantly working on it because, at the end of the day, we have the same objective and that is to help Canadians.

• (1625)

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech, and I would like to know whether he has shared his disagreement with the Barreau du Québec, which opposes minimum penalties.

**Mr. Daniel Petit:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that question. In fact, I am still a member of the Barreau, which is a corporation that represents its members and must allow them to think for themselves. So I cannot answer her question, as I have freedom of thought.

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question similar to the one asked by the member for Laval. In 2002 the Department of Justice issued a report stating that mandatory minimum sentences were least effective when it came to drug offences. I want to quote from that report. It said:

Mandatory minimum sentences do not appear to influence drug consumption or drug-related crime in any measurable way. A variety of research methods concludes that treatment-based approaches are more cost effective than lengthy prison terms. MMS are blunt instruments that fail to distinguish between low and high-level, as well as hardcore versus transient drug dealers.

I wonder if the member could comment on that report from the Department of Justice, which calls into question the approach that the government is taking.

[Translation]

**Mr. Daniel Petit:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my NDP colleague for those questions. I have a question for him.

There is currently a gang war going on in his province. There have been 38 deaths, 18 caused by firearms. The war is over the drug trade and has been going on for 25 or 30 years.

People from British Columbia, from the chamber of commerce, came to beg us to make strict laws. They are the ones who came, not the police. It was not the member from British Columbia who came, it was representatives of the Vancouver chamber of commerce. They made the trip and came to see us. For an hour, they told us they had had enough, that things were not working anymore and that we had to help them. That is what we are going to do. We are going to help them, and we are going to help the people in Vancouver and all the big cities.

I ask my colleague to support us as this bill goes through the various stages. His constituents' lives depend on it. We are entitled to one thing, and that is to have our lives respected and protected.

[English]

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the member did not answer the question. I always have trouble in my own mind in deciding whether or not the Conservatives are simply ignorant on this question of drug crimes in their approach or whether or not they actually do understand what is going on and are blindly following their ideological mantra on this question.

My colleague pointed out that the Department of Justice put forward its report in 2002 and the member refused to answer the question. However, even in the United States, which the Conservatives are now proposing to follow, many of the states are repealing the mandatory minimum sentences because they have been such an utter failure. Not only has it cost billions of dollars and incarcerated millions of people in prison to no effect, but drug use has gone up. Even in the United States, which the government is proposing to follow, there is a great move afoot to move away from mandatory minimum sentencing on drug crimes.

I would like to ask the member again. Is it because they are ignorant, or do they just refuse to understand the reality of what is going on in terms of these drug laws?

• (1630)

[Translation]

**Mr. Daniel Petit:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, through you, for her question. I want to point out that she said something that is very important, actually, and that is that drug consumption has increased in the United States.

*Government Orders*

We are the Americans' largest neighbour and we know that they like to blame us for having a porous border that allows lots of drugs to flow in from the United States for our young people to consume. Street gangs, the mafia—whatever people call it in any of our big cities—control the trade and make billions of dollars. They are expanding their activities and attacking our families and children with all they have.

We are here today because the people of Vancouver came to see us and asked us to act, and that is what we are going to do.

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to provide a little history lesson for the previous speaker.

I am old enough that I had never heard of marijuana when I started practising law in 1966. I heard of it when I became a crown prosecutor. At the time, the marijuana grown here was not very strong at all. It did not have any THC, the active ingredient.

I saw the marijuana phenomenon begin around 1966 and continually increase in the 1970s. All the marijuana consumed in Canada came from elsewhere.

And what was the minimum sentence for importing marijuana? Seven years in prison. I saw people sent up for seven years. The time came when that just did not make any sense and they stopped doing it. But I saw people sent up.

Do the members not think that seven years was enough to be dissuasive? And if seven years was not enough, does this not prove that prison is not dissuasive. People do not even know what they are risking.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. parliamentary secretary, a brief reply please.

**Mr. Daniel Petit:** Mr. Speaker, first I want to thank my colleague, who was my old justice minister in Quebec. He did a lot to fight organized crime. I want to tell all of Canada: of all our ministers, he was the one who did the most to fight organized crime. He always told us the law must be enforced. He enforced it in the province of Quebec, and he got results too.

That is why I am following in his footsteps and we are actually going to enforce the law. That is what Canadians want of us, including in Quebec.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today on Bill C-15.

[*English*]

It is my great pleasure to rise on this topic and on the topic of justice in general. The preface would be in that old common law saying, "Justice delayed is justice denied". Usually that goes to the rights of an accused, but what I would say for the Canadian public, on the floor of the House, is justice is being delayed. The government has been in power three years and we still have problems with crime.

I have been in the bowels of the government's justice machine. Two things we do not want to see, but need, are the making of laws and the making of sausages. I was also on the floor of meat packing plants in Moncton in the old days. I do not think members really want to see sausages being made. I am not sure members would want

to see the laws being made by the government over the past three years either.

The Conservatives really have not been effective. If we want to get at the root causes of crime and if we want to do what we all want as parliamentarians, which is to have safer communities, we have to look at the beginning and the end. We have to look at the whole situation with respect to crime. We do not go to CTV or CBC, get on the news and say, "We're doing something about crime. Look at the bill we're introducing". We do not have successive parliaments have their work interrupted by prorogations. That is what the government has done. It has denied justice by delaying justice.

Even when the government gets around to what it sees as its fix, its panacea, which is just legislation, it does not seem to get that its legislation alone will not solve the problems we have with organized crime, drug abuse and the drug culture and drug crime industry in this community.

That is why I will take some time to not only review Bill C-15, but the whole issue of drugs in our country.

A few weeks ago we had a delegation in Ottawa from British Columbia. I know it met with members of the government as well. We would not be honest with ourselves if we did not say to the House that we are, in a bit, reacting to a very serious situation in British Columbia, but there are serious situations in North Preston and Halifax. There are serious situations in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and all across the country.

However, the people on the front line are the men and women in law enforcement, the men and women in the prosecutorial offices and the men and women who wear uniforms to enforce our laws in the province of British Columbia.

That delegation included the attorney general of British Columbia, who came with some very specific demands. The chief law officer of the province of British Columbia came here with specific demands that had not been addressed by the government. They were not gargantuan tasks. They were tasks we would expect of a reacting, competent government. As I mentioned, not only does it have a very capable Queen's Counsel, a member of Parliament for some 20 years, Attorney General, it also has two very good parliamentary secretaries, representing the best of English speaking Canada from Albert County, New Brunswick and the best of French speaking Canada from Quebec.

Notwithstanding those heavy resources and great minds that are applied to this subject, the government has not been able to respond adequately, swiftly and thoroughly to the needs of the attorney general of British Columbia. They involve relatively simple things, simple things that the laws have evolved to become obstacles to the law enforcement officials in British Columbia. The whole issue around disclosure, as I mentioned in one of my interventions, has become very cumbersome for law enforcement officials.

### *Government Orders*

There is a bit of a paper war between prosecutors and police forces with respect to having to comply to the need for disclosure as bolstered by the law in Stinchcombe. The prosecutors sometimes want paper files. They are not ready to move to electronic files, that is fine. Police officers who compile some of the initial information are tied up quite often making copies thereof. The prosecutors in many provinces have to go over the evidence themselves in order to prefer the charges. In some cases, that means watching hours of video.

• (1635)

One would think that a government responding to need would say that it has the power of legislative reform and the power to introduce amendments that might address Stinchcombe, that might address the exactitude and timeliness with respect to disclosure. However, we might also expect that it would react by giving money and resources to both prosecutorial services and police forces in order to comply with the need for disclosure. However, nothing like that was done. The response was always legislation.

Funnily, on this side we saw today that even when all the opposition parties seem willing to get this to committee quickly, the Minister of Justice seemed to be the only one in the room who did not get the song sheet. He did not seem to understand that everybody wanted it to go to committee and he had a bit of a fit, which did not advance the ball at all.

We are not against these bills going to committee to be studied. They will go through the rigour that the committee has always brought to legislation, when the House has not been prorogued and the work of committees permanently stopped, which has been the case in the three years that the Conservative government has had its hands on the wheel.

I was involved in municipal politics. At that time, we only a three-year term. If I did as little in my entire mandate for the citizens of Moncton as the government has done on the justice dossier, I would not have been acclaimed to my second term. Three years is enough time for the people on the other side to stop saying that people on this side are born again to the justice issue.

I think of the member for Mount Royal and all that he has done to contribute to the laws of our country and Conservatives say that he is born again. If Liberals are born again, that means the Conservatives were never born at all or, if they were, they are like puppies in the first few days. They have wool over their eyes and they do not see the larger issues that, after three years, should be so apparent. There are issues with respect to the root causes of crime and drug issues with respect to how we will implement issues around the four pillars that the people from British Columbia live by in the inner city.

Even proponents of the Conservative justice agenda, and I think primarily of the representatives of the board of trade from British Columbia who were here yesterday, recognize that the legislation alone is not enough. Even they would say that no one is born a criminal. One has to become a criminal and embrace a lifestyle that leads to incarceration. Unfortunately, time and time again the government has brought forward legislation that only talks about one of the pillars or, if we want to get technical, one of the principles of sentencing as found in the Criminal Code, which is the issue of incarceration.

Bill C-15 is a fairly good stab at an acute problem in our country, which is the enforcement of people who break the law with respect to the use, importation and trafficking of drugs. It is particularly important to underline, as my friend the parliamentary secretary did, the action with respect to a certain rise in the use of methamphetamine.

There has been some success, without any of these laws being enacted, that should be heralded in the House today. Not surprisingly, the story comes from New Brunswick. This kind of activity by our police forces takes place every day in Canada, and they are not heralded enough.

We are in an era when good RCMP officers have had their expected wage increases reduced, as if they were other civil servants or like other members of Parliament. In a day and age when the RCMP is having some difficulty in recruitment and some issues with respect to their municipal contracts across our country, we might want to ask ourselves, and Canadians as well, what the Minister of Public Safety is doing with respect to the RCMP. How is the esprit de corps at the RCMP?

• (1640)

Would it not be good to read stories like this all the time? In fact, the story emanates from Moncton, New Brunswick, and it goes as follows:

The number of seizures in New Brunswick of the drug methamphetamine has doubled in the past year, RCMP say....The number of meth seizures jumped to 90 in 2008 from roughly 45 in 2007.

That is a good news story. As my friend, the parliamentary secretary, said, this is a particularly pernicious and addictive drug. This is proof that the RCMP, with proper resources, and forget about all the new laws involved, can crack down on what exists now.

My initial plea is for the government to wake up on two fronts. One, it is proposing legislation that is but a small part of a resolution or improvement in the situation, which in one case we have suggested should go right to committee. Members will find with respect to Bill C-15, at least with respect to the Liberal Party's position, that we also support it going to committee for study, but I have not heard from the Conservative side anything that suggests there is anything else in the Conservative agenda with respect to fixing the situation.

There was a little crack in the armour at committee recently, when the other parliamentary secretary said that no one was suggesting that these bills were the be-all and end-all. That is a good start. The road to improvement is looking in the mirror and realizing that we are leading Canadians to believe we are fixing the crime situation with our nightly newscasts. However, it would be refreshing to hear from the Conservative side. It would be refreshing to hear those members say that there is a long road to climb, that funding adequately police forces and prosecutorial services is one of those things and investing morally and mentally in the ideas of harm reduction and prevention and early childhood intervention with respect to the root causes of crime is another. These would be refreshing thoughts for all Canadians to hear.

*Government Orders*

With respect to the bill itself, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act would be amended to include a one year mandatory prison sentence, which would be imposed for dealing drugs such as marijuana when carried out for an organized crime purpose.

Another thing the government could do is this. I happen to know that the Department of Justice, if asked, would be ready and would embrace the idea of looking at the definition of organized crime.

There were improvements to the Criminal Code, which interspersed organized crime definitions, but when we compare it to the RICO statute in the United States, it is more narrowly defined. It is not as contemporary as we need it to be when we are talking about street gangs, which in some cases might be two people. As members know, the organized crime provisions in the Criminal Code apply to three people.

The criminals have been much more sophisticated and they have grown much readier to adapt to legal situations than our Parliament has in making the laws to react.

This does not have anything to do with mandatory minimums, or conditional sentences or being tough on crime. This has to do with looking at the Criminal Code as an organic document. I do not want to get too farm-like, but if we have an organic document, it is a bit like a garden. We have to tend to that garden and understand that certain crops need to be fertilized. Some need to be covered, protected and watered. That is what the Criminal Code is like.

Certain provisions are so antiquated that the only brilliant Conservative attorney general would turn over in his grave, and that was Sir John Thompson in 1892, who wrote the Criminal Code. I know I am going back over 100 years to give a great compliment to the Conservatives. I guess that is endemic to this place. The fact is he wrote the Criminal Code and he would turn over in his grave to see how antiquated it is in some ways.

After three years, the government ought to say that it has to take ownership of its failure in making the Criminal Code a more modern document.

• (1645)

With respect to organized crime, the Criminal Code has to do be updated. With respect to the Criminal Code and all the issues around warrants, electronic or otherwise, prosecutors have to go to graduate school to figure out how many different types of warrants they might have to apply for in front of judges before they are able to use them.

These things are completely non-contentious. They are things that could have been brought to Parliament in the first year, the second year, now, or hopefully next week, if anybody listens to the sense in my speech. These are things that could improve the enforcement of our laws.

This bill will enact a two year mandatory prison sentence for dealing drugs such as cocaine, heroin and meth to youth, or for dealing those drugs near a school or an area normally frequented by youth. A two year mandatory prison sentence will also be imposed for the offence of running a large marijuana grow operation of at least 500 plants. These are very targeted sentences which, when problems are increasing exponentially particularly in certain areas of

the country, we cannot oppose. These are wonderful provisions for a very specific problem.

What is missing in this crime prevention program is a more holistic approach. Why have we not heard the Conservatives talk about bringing forward other legislation that will be more effective?

We have had the argument regarding mandatory minimum sentences in past Parliaments. The opinion is divided. I am not an expert on this, but I know that other members of the committee have sat through hours of testimony from a multitude of experts who are very divided, but by and large the experts are saying that tougher penalties for people who produce and traffic drugs will only scare the ma and pa producers. That is good. Anybody who is doing any of these crimes should be scared. I am talking about the second pillar in the Criminal Code with respect to sentencing, and that is deterrence. Let us hope it deters some of the young and inexperienced and ma and pa producers. That is a good thing. However, it will not deter organized crime.

Bill C-14 and Bill C-15 are somewhat related, and although they deal with organized crime, they do so in a fashion which, without changing the definition in the code, might not have the effect that we are all hoping for.

The Canadian public has to be aware that just because two bills came forward and just because they seem to be targeted at very specific, acute and well-known problems today, that does not mean those problems are going to be fixed tomorrow. It would be leading the Canadian public down a road of false hope if the Canadian government, represented by its Attorney General, got in front of a camera again and suggested that this is all going to be fixed. He has been saying that since I first got here, and it has not been fixed.

Another important element is that these mandatory sentences have been tried in other jurisdictions. Mandatory drug penalties have helped turn the United States into the world's leading jailer with more than 2.3 million people in prison, according to the International Centre for Prison Studies in London. The U.S. also has the highest per capita rate of incarceration, with 751 people in jail for every 100,000 in population. That is more than Russia, more than China, more than Canada.

No one on this side is against incarceration for people who do wrong. No one is against that, but to think it is a cure for the problems that ail us, to think that is the only solution is wrong. That the government, in doing this, has not committed adequate resources for the facilities that will incarcerate them is also the double end of the false hope that Canadians might have in this situation.

With that, and in conclusion, as a member of the committee I continue to hope that we will work in a very non-partisan fashion as we have in this Parliament. I compliment the two parliamentary secretaries. I look forward to reviewing the bill.

*Government Orders*

•(1650)

**Mr. Rob Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague. I always find it fascinating. The hon. member represents the riding of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe. We share the town of Riverview. I represent a portion of the town of Riverview. It is a great town with great people. Yet in representing the same town, the member is in a party that I feel is in an alternate universe to where Canadians are when it comes to the justice system. It seemed incredulous to him that after three years of our being in government there is still crime in Canada.

I have to reject the premise of part of his speech where he said that we had indicated that this would be the be all and the end all. Our Minister of Justice and Attorney General has said that when it comes to criminal justice, we are just getting started. We have passed the Tackling Violent Crime Act, which raises the age of consent, toughens up on gun crime, and deals with dangerous offenders.

When the hon. member looks around at his colleagues in the Liberal Party, does he ever ask, to quote his leader, “After 13 years on justice, why did we not get it done?”

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, frankly, I would stack the record of the member for Mount Royal and past justice ministers like Allan Rock, who was a bencher of the Law Society of Upper Canada, against the record of the current government any day.

We are faced with societal changes that are happening very quickly. The reaction time of the government is similar to that of a junior B goalie who is about to be sent down. Frankly, that is what is going to happen in the next election. The people of Canada are not going to be fooled by a five o'clock news conference that says, “Here is a solution. The troops are on their way. We have the solution”. They will realize after a while it is very empty and shallow. It does not address the root causes of crime. It does not talk about whether methadone clinics are good or bad. The Conservatives' philosophy is to get on the news and to talk tough. We have to remember that John Wayne was just an actor in the movies. He was not a real person and he was not a real conservative. They seem to be acting like John Wayne.

•(1655)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the record of the hon. gentlemen and his party was so good, why, after his party's 13 years in government, do we still have crime in Canada? For crying out loud, if the Liberals did such a great job, why do we still have crime? I guess they fixed it all and then, on January 23, 2006, it sprang out of nowhere and here we are.

I seriously believe that the hon. member wants to be tough on all aspects of crime. I think one of the problems is that there are a lot of people in his party who are quite a bit to the political left of where he is. I think a lot of them have relied on their twin pillars of touchy and feely a bit too much.

I would ask my hon. colleague, did this all just start again on January 23, 2006? Get real.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I am not going to talk about the two pillars of touchy and feely. There is nothing but propriety over

here. I might talk about the two chains of throw them away and forget about them, which is kind of what the Conservative philosophy is.

I appreciate the member's comments about us. I think I have spoken in this House enough and all of us are united in wanting safe communities. We all want safe communities. We are trying to have a legitimate debate about how to do that. I am just encouraging the Conservative government to open its eyes like that puppy and see that there are other things out there that might help to eliminate and curb criminal activity. It starts very small and it continues on after people get out of prison.

When the Vancouver Board of Trade agrees there is more to crime than just throwing legislation at it, I really do think there is a moment for non-partisan co-operation to try to fix this. Here we are agreeing with some of the Conservatives' legislation, but urging them and encouraging them to do more, to open their eyes and to just stop trying to be John Wayne.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's understanding of this complex issue and his reluctance to take on the simplistic answers that I am hearing from the other side.

Of course we on this side of the House are supporting issues that would make our communities safer. However, he is stressing the fact that these are real people who are concerned and that these are complex issues that start with families, communities, health care, education, social services and the kinds of things the Conservative government has failed to see.

I wonder whether or not the particular costs of the corrections system are something that are of concern to the member, looking at the inadequate services for mental health for inmates, for corrections and for helping people who one day will get out of jail.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I know the member comes from a background in the ministry. He cares about people and he knows that even if we are all created equal, which I think is in the Bible, we do not all have the same opportunities growing up.

It is so evident when we look at the statistics with respect to people who commit crimes and people who are recidivists. That is again something the Conservative government has ignored. The high incidence of aboriginal inmates has not been looked at thoroughly. We deal at the justice committee only with the bill du jour.

I must say this is not within the domain of the justice committee, but on the issue of public safety, there is no better case to illustrate the lack of attention to corrections issues than the case of Moncton native Ashley Smith who died cold and alone in a cell where she was with other inmates who did not have mental health issues, other inmates who were not children, teens or youth, other inmates who were not women.

For women, youth and the mentally ill, our system is inadequate, and it should be addressed by the public safety minister. It has been a couple of weeks now. There has been no response, but we will be on it. We will continue. It is our job for Canadians and we will do that.



*Government Orders*

• (1700)

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like clarification on what the Liberal position is on the mandatory minimums. I heard the member speak extensively about a broader strategy, but this bill actually focuses on mandatory minimums for drug crimes.

As we have already pointed out in the House today, there is a wealth of evidence to show there is no deterrent in bringing in mandatory minimums particularly for drug crimes.

I wonder if the Liberals are actually supportive of mandatory minimums in terms of drug crimes. Are they opposed to them in principle? Are they willing to look at the bill and move it around a bit? Really, what is their position? I have not heard that very clearly today.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, our position is that the bill will go to committee and be studied.

To say that there is a unanimous opinion that mandatory minimums do not work in some cases on drug offences or otherwise is just not true.

**Ms. Libby Davies:** I said overwhelming.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** If I could finish, Mr. Speaker, that is why we have a committee.

If the member sits there and says that she wants to be the committee, Parliament and the Governor General, that is fine with me, but that is not the way our system works. The hon. member just spoke eloquently on how we all have a right to speak and think. The committee will examine this.

A well-known criminal lawyer who teaches drug policy at the University of Ottawa has said that these tougher penalties, the mandatory minimums, might work for the ma and pa producer and the youth. It might be a deterrent and it might work, but it might not work for organized crime. That is the kind of nitty-gritty issue the committee will delve into.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in the House on Bill C-15. Once again, as I said last week about the bill of my colleague from Jeanne-Le Ber, it feels like everyone in the House is stuck inside the movie *Groundhog Day*, because we keep going over the same bills. This bill was introduced by the last Minister of Justice in the last Parliament. It has been amended a bit to give more mention to rehabilitation, but not enough to really change anything.

As my colleague has said, this government seems to want to bring in bills that are wholly punitive, rather than to think about the underlying reasons why youth and others end up involved with crime and criminals.

First and foremost, we absolutely must address the causes and effects of crime. We are well aware that our young people between the ages of 15 and 24, who account for 2.5% of drug users, find themselves very much at loose ends in the economic crisis we are experiencing at present. Often their families are unemployed but do not have access to EI benefits. Often family members have been without work for more than a year and so are no longer receiving

benefits. They are living in obvious poverty and the government is doing nothing for them.

When young people find themselves in situations like this, it is certainly harder for them to have to deal with reality and easier to take the easy way out. I do not mean to imply that I am in favour of that. Believe me, it is awful to see young people addicted to meth or crack, and not anything we want to see happen to our children.

When the matter of imposing minimum sentences comes up, however, it is very important to keep in mind that in the American states that have minimum sentences, such as California, Florida and Montana, they have opted for leaving the possibility for prosecutors and courts to set lesser sentences than the minimum imposed for certain offences.

In Canada, on the other hand, judges have no choice but to impose the minimum sentence set out for a given offence. This means that young people, who have undeniably made serious mistakes, will end up with minimum sentences from which they will learn nothing. Nothing whatsoever is learned in prison.

It is also disappointing that the bill does not contain measures to help youth and adults get off drugs. As mentioned earlier by my colleague for Vancouver East, some projects are working very well. For example, InSite, in Vancouver, was very effective and significantly reduced risks associated with injection drugs.

However, the government does not believe that these are good programs. Even though the World Health Organization, the mayor and police of Vancouver and doctors say that InSite is a good program, the Minister of Health says that the government does not want it, that it is not a good program, that we absolutely must rid ourselves of anyone who takes illicit drugs and that we should get rid of InSite. That is not how we will fix the problem.

Jailing those addicted to injection drugs, often means condemning them to becoming infected with HIV.

• (1705)

Quite often, those incarcerated who used cannabis or other so-called soft drugs, but not injection drugs, end up with very different drug habits and often end up taking injection drugs. When that happens, they may not necessarily have the tools to take the drugs safely. Thus, 30 or 40 inmates share a needle and we end up with a multitude of AIDS and HIV cases that makes the prison population increasingly dangerous. Our children leave these prisons after using drugs in those conditions without knowing that they are HIV positive. Quite often, it is possible for individuals to live with HIV for many years before testing positive for AIDS. In the meantime, they can unwittingly pass it on to many others.

*Government Orders*

I realize that the government probably had good intentions when drafting this bill. However, it has to be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in order for it to be amended and better reflect the society in which we live.

Even though the bill did not pass last year, we know that offences committed by drug users decreased by 3% last year. Since the crime rate went down without any incentives—like prison sentences that would prevent people from wanting to commit offences—why are some people in such a hurry to impose minimum sentences to ensure that young people do not use drugs? That is not how it works. Telling someone that if they are caught with 3 kg of marijuana they will go to prison for two years will not necessarily stop that person from walking around with 3 kg of marijuana in their possession, when that is their bread and butter. If that is their livelihood, that person is probably not going to stop selling marijuana.

There are other ways to teach our young people and the general public that drugs are not necessarily the solution to problems. As a woman, I know many women struggle with this phenomenon. They are forced to deal with spouses who use drugs or who unfortunately sell drugs. That is another problem. Indeed, as is usually the case, women cannot count on this government's support for things like violence against women and matters of employment insurance. If their spouse can no longer sell drugs, they will only end up on the street that much faster. I see my colleague from the Standing Committee on the Status of Women smiling. She understands very well why I say this. I will not say her name, but she knows who she is.

This bill goes much too far in the use of minimum sentences. It goes much too far in terms of Conservative ideological thinking. It does nothing to ensure that our youth and other people do not use or sell drugs. The only thing this bill does is give the Conservatives some good publicity, while they do nothing about the root causes of drug use.

That is really too bad, because for years now, we have been saying, over and over, that we need programs to make sure that our young people, victims and drug addicts—those addicted to either soft or hard drugs—can get into detox and overcome their problems without having to go to jail.

• (1710)

It is really sad to see that the government wants to send 14-, 15-, and 16-year-old kids to jail for reasons like that. Of course, nobody wants to see anyone die because of a drug addiction. That is what happens when people are addicted to heroin, morphine, cocaine and crack. We have all seen documentaries that are truly horrifying, the stuff of nightmares for mothers, but at the same time, as a mother, I absolutely do not want my child to be sent to jail for this kind of offence. I would rather my child receive the help he needs to get clean. We have seen terrifying documentaries.

When the Conservatives talk about their programs and bills, everything they say is about penalties and criminalization. They never talk about rehabilitation and ways to help people. That is a shame because it creates a really bad image.

Quebeckers heard enough about penalties for juvenile delinquents during last year's election campaign, and they let the Conservatives

know what they thought. They have not changed their minds. No matter what our Conservative colleagues tell us, Quebeckers know that rehabilitation—helping young people overcome their addictions—is always better than sentencing them to even short periods of jail time.

A couple of years ago, we sought assurance that the Minister of Health would extend the mandate of Vancouver's InSite for at least a year. When he did so, he and I spoke at length, because I really believed in his ability to recognize the importance of such programs.

In Quebec there are a number of programs that meet the needs of drug users who want to get off drugs. There are a number of places that look after young people who want to quit, and a number of free programs for them, such as Maison Jean-Lapointe, as well as many other detox centres where our youth can go. Very often these enable our young people to leave much for the better, stronger and better equipped for life, and without any criminal conviction that would very likely end up making them criminals for life.

My colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin has a long history with the justice sector in Quebec and has experience with such subjects and cases. He has even defended drug addicts and seen some of them do well when he has sent them to detox and helped them to understand the importance of getting clean and rehabilitated. It does work.

Contrary to what our Conservative colleagues tell us, minimum sentences do not work. They do not work in the U.S. where crime is on the increase. This has been observed for years, ever since minimum sentences were introduced, and the system does not work any better. Judges have to work out ways within their various jurisdictions to get prosecutors and the American justice system to deviate from the law and allow them to set the sentences themselves. They are very much aware that minimum sentences do not work and that, very often, they are far too heavy for the crime committed.

I hope that we in this House will not again make the mistake of not listening to the Department of Justice. They produced a very good document explaining all this and saying that there should not be any minimum sentences here, because judges do not have the right to set lesser sentences.

• (1715)

I hope our colleagues will think very hard before passing this bill without amendments or changes.

*Government Orders*

For our part, we certainly want to study it in the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, where my colleague from Hochelagawill take pleasure in examining it in depth and making the necessary changes. He too is very familiar with the minds of Quebeckers and with the spirit of the law. Most of all, he knows that if we want justice to be equitable, we must have the means first to make it so.

To do that, we must start by putting money where it counts. We must start by putting money into social housing and into programs to support families and fight poverty. We have to make sure that all men, women and children have enough to eat, pay the rent and find happiness.

One of the chief reasons why people take drugs, whether hard or soft, is they think drugs will make them happy, when in actual fact, they do not do anything for them, except make them dead in all too many cases.

Once again, I hope my colleagues will think twice before passing this bill too quickly. That is what the Minister of Justice apparently wanted this morning. I hope he will reconsider and be a little less strident in his demands for us to pass it quickly

We should ensure that the bill accurately reflects the needs of Canadians and not just the ideology of the governing Conservative Party.

[*English*]

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague across the way and I want to correct a false impression that has been fostered by people across the way about the allegation that this government is not doing anything on the prevention side. Three or four things pop quickly to hand.

On April 28, 2008, the Minister of Justice and the minister of health and public safety at the time announced a drug treatment fund of \$111 million to boost drug treatments that are available to young people at risk. On August 12, 2008, the Minister of Justice also announced a program in Prince Edward Island with \$300,000 to improve addiction support programs and services for youth in conflict with the law.

In the province of British Columbia, there are five programs in a number of areas. These include: the Surrey Board of Education's Wraparound Surrey: A Youth Driven Comprehensive Plan for Gang Violence Prevention; in Vancouver, Creating Health Aboriginal Role Models, otherwise called CHARM; the McCreary Centre Society's Aboriginal Next Steps II: Aboriginal Youth Getting' Busy in the Community; Urban Native Youth Association's Aboriginal Youth First: Sports and Recreation Program for Vancouver Downtown Eastside; the College of New Caledonia, Lakes District Campus' Youth Outreach Program.

There are millions of dollars in those programs and those are but a few examples. To say that we are concentrating only on the punitive end is simply untrue and that impression should not be left with the Canadian public.

This bill will go to committee where I am sure it will be studied carefully. It was mentioned that mandatory minimums can deter

mom and pop. It was agreed on the other side that that was a good idea and I support that. I also accept that mandatory minimums may not deter organized crime but maybe criminals of organized crime ought to be spending their time in jail in any event.

I am not sure if my colleague really meant this but it is what she said and I want a clarification. She implied that keeping drug dealers in business so that wives of drug dealers may not be financially disadvantaged would be a good idea or somehow fair. I would like her to clarify that.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Mr. Speaker, I certainly did not want to imply that it was good to keep drug dealers in business. What I wanted to say is that before imposing legislation like this, we should be absolutely certain that everything has been done to make sure that people are not forced to make a living this way.

That is something the government has not done. The government is not doing it and has no intention of doing it. We saw it with employment insurance, we saw it with pay equity, and we saw it with social housing. We have seen it everywhere.

Before passing legislation like this, we should ensure that people can live their lives fully, because that is something to which they are entitled.

[*English*]

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member from the Bloc for what I would call her common sense approach to this question. I am glad she focused on young people and drug use and what happens to young people when they become incarcerated as opposed to focusing on education, prevention and treatment.

Treatment is a huge issue. I must take issue with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence who just put out a bunch of information to imply that somehow the government was doing all this stuff around treatment and prevention by announcing a few projects here and there. The fact is, however, that, in terms of the drug strategy, over 70% of the federal resources are going to enforcement. Even the Auditor General, in her report a few years ago, raised the question as to why so much money was being spent on enforcement and what kind of value it had.

I am not sure if the hon. member is familiar with a group called Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy. It is a new organization that actually started in Montreal. They are saying that they do not want this bill to go ahead in their name because young people are being almost exploited by the Conservatives who are saying that this is being done to protect young people. Young people understand that this kind of bill is one where young people will end up in jail and will not get the treatment they need.

I wonder if the member would comment on the fact that the Conservative government has dropped things like harm reduction, prevention and treatment and has focused on enforcement. Does she think that anything has improved as a result of that?

*Private Members' Business*

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague. This is indeed a major problem with the Conservative government. It does nothing to ensure that children and even adults have what they need to avoid turning to drugs or some similar path. I am not familiar with the organization to which my colleague referred, but the members can rest assured that I will meet with them to make sure that people are familiarized with their position. It is true that this is not what our young people want. I do not think that any young person in Canada or Quebec wants to go to prison just to please a few Conservative ideologues.

• (1725)

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, through you, I would like to ask the hon. member a question. I understand that she has great compassion and sympathy for young people, and that is also the case for us, whatever they may think. I would like to ask the following question.

There is now a court that deals with drug addiction. The court is established in the antidrug legislation and is involved with treatment for drug addiction. There are drug courts in Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Edmonton and Vancouver. Since Bloc members always say that they represent the interests of Quebec, I would like to know why there are no such courts in Montreal or Quebec City. Can she explain that to me? From the outset, these courts have been there to protect young people, to help them get off drugs and to provide them with assistance because it is clearly not in their interests to send them to prison. Since they often say that they represent the Quebec National Assembly, why do these courts not exist in Quebec?

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Mr. Speaker, much as I would like to represent the National Assembly, I do not. We often stand up for the decisions of the National Assembly in this House because no one else does. We do not represent the National Assembly, but rather the citizens of our ridings who have given us their trust and elected us.

I would like the hon. member to tell me if he is aware of a report released in Belgium on March 10. The report looks at the drug situation around the world. It noted that, until 2006, there was a levelling-off in the growth of opium and the various drugs that can be made from opium, but that, since 2006, shockingly since the time that so much money has been poured into Afghanistan, there has been exponential growth in drugs like opium in that country. Nothing like it has ever been seen before. Can he explain how he thinks that his army is going to be able to put a stop to that growth over there rather than trying to put a stop to our children's lives here?

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the participation of the hon. member in the important debate this afternoon.

I want to ask the hon. member about the observation of a retired judge from British Columbia, Jerry Paradis, a spokesperson now for Law Enforcement Against Prohibition, when he reflected on mandatory minimum sentences, said that they were “a great motivator for trials” and “jamming up the courts. Unless a deal is struck...a charge carrying a...minimum sentence will be fought tooth and nail”.

Could the hon. member reflect on the way that mandatory minimum sentences clog the courts and if there has been any experience of that in Quebec?

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member very much for his question about minimum sentences.

The Quebec Bar has always taken a position against minimum sentences. Of course, there are penalties for criminal acts, but it is important that it be left up to judges to decide on sentences for criminals. With their great wisdom and experience, they best know the nature of the criminal behaviour, the background of the person before them, how the person became a criminal, and how they can best help that person.

Up until now, we can say that Quebec is a success story right across the board, because our rehabilitation rate is the best in the country.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1730)

[English]

### CLIMATE CHANGE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House resumed from March 4 consideration of the motion that Bill C-311, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

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

I therefore call upon the hon. member for Wetaskiwin.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to resume this debate, rise again here in this chamber, continue on with the good news that the Government of Canada has in regard to our environment, and obviously address Bill C-311. I will just be picking up where I left off last.

Through the ecoEnergy for renewable power program, the Government of Canada is investing \$1.5 billion to provide incentives to increase Canada's supply of clean electricity from renewable sources such as wind, biomass, low impact hydro, geothermal, solar and ocean energy.

Through budget 2007, we established the trust fund for clean air and climate change which provided \$1.5 billion to Canada's provinces and territories for projects that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in their respective jurisdictions.

*Private Members' Business*

The Government of Canada knows that provincial and territorial governments are committed to taking action on climate change and that they control many of the important levers for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Our government continues to believe that it is legitimate and necessary to work with our partners in this and other ways to achieve our shared and common goals.

The government has already begun to catalyze investment in critical clean technologies in Canada. We began in budget 2007 by providing \$500 million to Sustainable Development Technology Canada to enable projects that will spur the development of next generation renewable fuels.

More recently, through Canada's economic action plan, we are investing \$1 billion in the research into and development and demonstration of promising technologies including large scale carbon capture and sequestration projects. These funds, under the clean energy fund, build on the \$250 million invested to build the same technology through budget 2008.

I could not imagine resuming debate on a more profound day. Members will be delighted to know that March 26 is the day that my minister of energy in the province of Alberta, the hon. Mel Knight, is in Aspen, Colorado receiving the Aspen environment award on behalf of the Province of Alberta for the insightful and, shall I say, inspiring work that the Government of Alberta is doing through its \$2 billion commitment in its previous budgets to move ahead on carbon capture and storage. This is a tremendous opportunity for Albertans. It is a tremendous opportunity for our country and I just want to congratulate my province and my minister on that.

Also, through Canada's economic action plan, we established the green infrastructure fund through which it will invest \$1 billion in the construction of infrastructure across Canada that will both create jobs and growth in the short-term, and help us transform to a green economy through the long-term.

Canada's economic action plan also announced an investment of \$300 million in the ecoEnergy for home retrofit program, which will support an additional 200,000 energy-saving home retrofits.

Our government has a great deal to be proud of in terms of the actions it has taken to address climate change since taking office in 2006, and with President Obama's recent visit to our country, we have opened a new and exciting chapter in those efforts.

It is not at all surprising that Canada would want to work closely with our greatest allies and trading partners on our southern border. Not only do our two countries share similar objectives in addressing climate change, but we are working from similar principles. In fact, our emission targets for 2020 are very closely aligned, though Canada's proposed reductions are in fact slightly deeper.

The Prime Minister and President Obama recently agreed to begin a clean energy dialogue that will see our two countries co-operate on several critical energy, science and technology issues. First, we will work to expand clean energy research and development by expanding collaboration on energy research related to advanced biofuels, clean engine technologies, energy efficiency, and a multitude of other areas.

The clean energy dialogue will also help us to develop and deploy clean energy technology. Carbon capture and sequestration technology holds enormous potential to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions as we use our own energy resources to power our economy.

● (1735)

Canada and the United States will co-ordinate research and demonstrations of the technology at coal-fired plants, building on our experience with the North Dakota-Weyburn project. This will help accelerate private sector investment in commercial scale, near-zero-carbon coal facilities to promote climate and energy security.

Last, we will seek to build a more efficient electricity grid based on clean and renewable generation. Our countries have significant expertise to share with one another on things like smart grid technologies. By investing in new transmission options, we will make electricity delivery more reliable, help avoid blackouts, promote energy efficiency, and increase the supply of renewable power.

In conclusion, this government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Environment, understands the critical nature of the needs to address climate change. We are implementing a number of responsible domestic initiatives to help reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions, while acknowledging that climate change is a problem that does not respect national boundaries. To this end, we are working with our partners in the United States, as well as within the broader international community, on solutions that will benefit us all.

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at the outset I would like to thank the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North for bringing forward this bill.

I have had an opportunity very briefly to talk to the member. I know that he is serious, sincere, and committed in mobilizing every resource possible to deal with the serious issue of climate change. I know that he believes that in this bill, as his party does, that they are putting forward the mechanism that will challenge the government to in fact enunciate by setting targets a strategy that conforms with the Kyoto protocol, and that in fact will serve as a legacy for future generations.

In that statement of mission, I think that the member and his colleagues are to be congratulated because in that mission we should all very emphatically state that we support the objective. In fact, we can see that the science tells us irrefutably that climate change is going to be probably the most significant threat to civil society globally in the near future.

Even this morning, we were reminded of the juxtaposition of the towns and villages in Nova Scotia that would be affected with just a small temperature change. That cataclysmic effect will be felt around the globe. Therefore, the seriousness of the bill and its relevance to climate change cannot be denied.

*Private Members' Business*

However, there are other issues at this particular point we also should keep in mind. The government, through its members, has spoken very eloquently with respect to the most recent action plan statement as a stimulus menu of those areas through research, commercialization and technology and is starting to seriously confront climate change with a template for action.

I appreciate that there are those who doubt what the impact is going to be. In fact, as we look at the very near past many have said that the government de facto had said that we have withdrawn from the Kyoto commitment and others have said that we are the only country in the world to have signed on to the treaty to have unilaterally declared we will not use, for example, the 1990 baseline, or at worst, we will not even try to meet our targets.

That has been suggested and it will be for the government to have the opportunity to illustrate very clearly that it is not true. On this side, we hope it is not.

I just came from the natural resources committee where in a non-partisan way the committee is looking at part of a strategy to deal with climate change across the country from sea to sea to sea with what is called a comprehensive investment in technologies that will be integrated and that will seriously reduce the threat of climate change and contribution to the targets that Canada implicitly at least has said that it is dedicated to.

The members of the committee have been, I think, tremendously impressed with the engineering and practical implications that this has on the future economy in terms of creating jobs, in terms of creating high value added investments, and at the same time dealing with climate change. In other words, we are combining the most important ingredients of sustainable development, economic growth on the one hand, and meeting our environmental challenges together, and not one to sacrifice the other, but both together marching down and meeting our climate change targets.

● (1740)

The reason we are having a bit of difficulty with this bill is we have already been on record, through two acts that were designed as a template to deal with climate change.

Prior to Bill C-311, in its last sitting, this Parliament approved the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act and the Federal Sustainable Development Act, which are superior to this private member's bill. If they were seriously used as the template for the mission that has been the subject of Bill C-311, those two acts have within them the mechanisms to deal with the issues and to measure the accomplishments that we discussed at our natural resources committee.

The worst thing in any organization is to have a goal that is very complex in a very large country like ours, which is to achieve sustainable development in our climate change objectives, but never get the feedback and measure what we have accomplished. If we do not stand back every so often and take account of what is happening, then we have this doubting Thomas approach that nothing is being accomplished, which is not altogether true.

A careful reading of those two acts would show us that the opportunity for measurement is encompassed with them. This private member's bill has suggested that we should have periodic reports, with the baseline targets of 1990 and the target of 2050, from

either through the Auditor General or through the round table on the economy and development. In fact, those mechanisms are being used under Federal Sustainable Development Act and the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act.

I have sat on the environment committee when the Auditor General, for example, has reported department by department. She has reported on how the department has met its sustainable development objectives. The committee has an opportunity to suggest what remedial action is required.

At some point we try to separate the politics of environmental sustainability and our strategies to deal with climate change and accurately position us in a non-partisan way with respect to what our mission is and how we have been dedicated to it.

In bringing this bill forward, I know it was not the intent of the member to detract or add a political dimension to it. When we do not use the acts we have passed, which are affirmations of what we believe, then we place ourselves in the position where we may marginalize the issue because of the politics.

I know this is not what has been intended, but if the alternative course had been taken that there are shortcomings to the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act and the Federal Sustainable Development Act, they should have been the subject of the bill, not one that appears to transplant them.

At this point we will be observing very closely what is happening in Copenhagen with respect to establishing those targets and we will support those. However, this bill marginalizes the two acts that are already affirmations of the mission we have to deal with climate change.

● (1745)

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-311, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change, or as it is known, the climate change accountability act.

This issue is very important to me as a Nova Scotian, as a Canadian and as a citizen of the world. A desire to see meaningful action on climate change is one of the reasons I decided to run for election, and it is one of the reasons I decided to run for the New Democratic Party, the party that first raised this issue in the House over 20 years ago.

That spirited advocacy on behalf of our planet continues today with the bill. I am pleased to see the bill returning to the House, after the endurance test that it faced in the last Parliament.

In my work with the Halifax Ecology Action Centre, we watched from a distance as Conservative filibustering at committee kept the first version, Bill C-377, in limbo, from December 11, 2007 to April 28, 2008. When that bill finally passed, I joined with thousands of other Canadians to celebrate in this world first, a victory for climate change and for Canada.

Bill C-311 would mandate the government to live up to Canada's obligations under international climate change agreements. These agreements are not merely suggestions, and governments are expected to have policies in place to bring them into compliance.

While the failures of governments for the last 15 years to deal with climate change are well documented, it must not be used as an excuse to do the minimum when faced with a crisis of this magnitude.

At this point in our nation's history, we are past the debate about whether climate change is real. We are past the debate about what causes it. We are nearly past the point of debate about how we should address it. There is consensus among the world's leading scientists, environmentalists and ordinary Canadians. We know we need targets for reducing greenhouse gases. We know those targets need to be science based and enforced by binding caps. We also know these measures need to be organized through a national emission trading regime.

The government has failed to act on each of these areas, but I am happy to say the bill would provide some real direction on climate change policy in Canada. The reduction targets in the bill are specified for the short, medium and long term, but with built in flexibility to adjust over time. Most important, as others have pointed out during the course of this debate, the bill would introduce legal certainty, as well as government accountability, something we have heard the government aspire to on so many occasions.

With targets set into law, Canada can finally make progress on an international obligation and our already germinating green economy can flourish and bloom.

Our country is filled with great minds who have already been tackling the climate change issue with innovative solutions, many of which I have had the opportunity to see first-hand in Nova Scotia. Industry recognizes that it must adapt or it will vanish, and it is taking steps to get where it should be. All it lacks is a partner in the federal government and some certainty that emission regulations will be predictable and stable.

The climate change accountability act does just that. It sets out these regulations in five year increments until 2050. It is legislation that is the first of its kind in our country and it deserves the support of the House.

Opposition to the bill from the government side has unfortunately relied on that tired argument that we can choose either the environment or the economy, but not both. Previous governments have been trying that one for quite some time and the result is a world that is even closer to catastrophic climate change and an economy that are both in shambles.

● (1750)

Now is the time when we should be taking stock of where we have been and where we want to go. Our twin crises, economic and environmental, can both be addressed with smart public policy that measures sustainability and prosperity with the same yardstick.

Therefore, why the same rhetoric about the economic cost of a bill that would finally take on climate change? There is really no excuse. The economic costs are significantly greater if we do not act now.

### *Royal Assent*

For every moment that we waste, the greater cost will pass on to our children and our neighbours' children.

It calls to mind a novelty mug that my partner was given as a gift. It has this map of the world on it. When hot water is added, the shorelines change based on rising sea levels, thanks to a warming earth. Suddenly, Brazil is gone. It is bye-bye Bangladesh and so long Indonesia. By the time my tea is cold enough to drink, Nova Scotia has all but disappeared. This mug can get a chuckle out of our guests, but the sad fact is it is an accurate description of what we can expect to happen if emissions are allowed to grow unchecked. It is not a joke. We are only a few years away from a projected 2° temperature rise, after which we may be too late to halt some of the worst effects of the crisis.

In a column in the Halifax *ChronicleHerald*, Professor Sheila Zurbrigg describes the realities in much more compelling terms. I will quote from her article. She says:

The ultimate irony is that those least responsible for global warming will bear by far the most catastrophic consequences. Most [greenhouse gas] emissions (over 80 per cent) added to the atmosphere are ours, not theirs, and continue to come from the rich industrialized countries.

Yet the gravest outcomes the IPCC scientists warn about are to a considerable extent preventable. The necessary technology and energy-efficiency methods already exist that would allow us to make major GHG reductions right away. But only if we act immediately, intelligently, and together.

Professor Zurbrigg is a medical historian whose area of expertise is the history of famines. The last time she and I spoke, we talked about climate change. She looked me in the eye with such fear in her eyes. She said that a 2° increase would mean widespread, devastating famines unlike we had ever seen in the course of human history. She told me that we needed to act now or we would be unable the world's citizens.

Another signal that the time is right for this bill is the change of administration in the United States. The new President was elected, in part, because of his dramatically different vision for environmental policy. This shift represents a unique opportunity for Canada to act in concert with our largest trading partner.

I acknowledge my hon. colleague from Wetaskiwin who earlier commented about our partnership with the United States. Let us go further. While some states and provinces have gone forward with emission trading markets between themselves, Canada as a country has not acted to promote this sector. It is just one of the ways the bill could help steer our country in the right direction.

We must, as parliamentarians, as Canadians and as global citizens, support the bill. We need to be visionary, bold and innovative and we must act now before it is too late.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### ROYAL ASSENT

**The Speaker:** Order. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

*Private Members' Business*

Rideau Hall  
Ottawa

March 26th, 2009

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 26th day of March, 2009, at 17:05.

Yours sincerely,

Sheila-Marie Cook  
Secretary to the Governor General

• (1755)

[English]

The schedule indicates the bills assented to were Bill C-21, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2009; and Bill C-22, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2010.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### CLIMATE CHANGE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-311, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** There being no other members rising on debate, I will call upon the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North for a five-minute rebuttal.

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the climate change accountability bill is simple: to make the government accountable to Canadians on achieving real reductions in greenhouse gases. Just as important, it makes clear to the world that we in Canada are willing to do our part to prevent a catastrophic rise in average global temperatures.

This bill is based on clear science. It provides for the bare minimum required to save us from disaster. Many scientists say we need to do even more.

Let us review what other jurisdictions have done and their plans for future reductions.

Canadian cities got the ball rolling in Canada. Twenty years ago, Toronto made a commitment to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Today Toronto, unlike Canada at large, has reduced emissions despite enormous population growth. In fact, all of Canada's big-city mayors have committed to take actions even more ambitious than those in this bill.

Let us look at what some provinces have done. B.C., Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec have already joined the Western Climate Initiative, which includes most western American states as well. This initiative to control greenhouse gases will be taken up by those provinces and states because of the leadership vacuum of the Bush administration and our federal governments.

The provinces knew they had to act even if our federal governments have failed to do so. Most of the public also know that real action must be taken. Opinion polls keep saying again and again that four out of five Canadians favour strict measures to reduce emissions, so most people and governments have begun to take action in spite of more than a decade of federal government inaction.

Let us look at the role that other national governments are playing. European leadership has long been apparent, and Obama will be moving quickly in the United States.

In island nations such as the Maldives, it is a matter of survival. They have legislated carbon neutrality within a decade. It is equally important for Kiribati, which will soon disappear beneath the waves because of melting ice caps.

They are going carbon-neutral, and praying that the rest of the world fulfills its obligations too, or be the first to lose their countries.

Our government's own scientists are warning of increased frequency of extreme weather: floods, fires, drought and severe storms. Implementing the targets in this bill is not just an ecological imperative, it is also an economic necessity.

Former World Bank chief economist Nicholas Stern concluded that not adopting serious reduction targets now will, in the end, actually cost us much more, perhaps more than any of us can think of affording.

In Canada, the recent Jaccard & Associates report shows that the costs of adopting these targets here will be quite minimal. Canada's economy will still grow at 2% and create over a million net new jobs.

We do not need studies to tell us this. We just have to look at the real-life examples in Europe, in forward-looking countries such as Germany and Denmark that have transformed their economies and stimulated growth in new industries. So we can afford to adopt these targets. We cannot afford not to.

A national climate change policy is the responsibility of the federal government. It is time to assume our responsibilities. This bill gives our government a way to work toward what cities, provinces and Canadians say we are ready to do, what we are all compelled to do.

Just two weeks ago the International Scientific Congress, preparing for Copenhagen, painted a stark picture. Researchers say our worst-case climate scenarios are increasingly likely to come true: melting ice sheets, rising sea levels, acidification of entire oceans, and social and economic chaos on a global scale.

Canada's Parliament passed this bill last year. It sets orderly targets for the next 40 years. It forces the government to publish a plan to achieve those targets. Mr. Dion and the Liberals voted for this bill last year. It did not clear the Senate law when an election was called early, but the problem has not gone away. In fact, it is clear that it is getting worse, and getting worse faster and faster.



*Government Orders*

•(1800)

This December, world leaders will meet in Copenhagen to sign a new agreement to avoid dangerous climate change. Will Canada be embarrassed yet again on the world stage, or—

**The Speaker:** I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted for his remarks has expired. Of course, I caution him about mentioning members' names, which he did over the course of his speech.

**Mr. Bruce Hyer:** I apologize for that. I have a few lines to go, may I finish?

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member.

The hon. member's time has expired. I did not get up until then, I deliberately waited. I am afraid the time has expired.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Speaker:** Accordingly, pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 1, 2009, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

### INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AFGHANISTAN IN THE HAGUE

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, March 25, 2009, the House in committee of the whole will now proceed to the consideration of Motion No. 2 under Government Business.

I do now leave the Chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

(House in committee of the whole for consideration of Government Business No. 2, Mr. Peter Milliken in the chair)

•(1805)

**The Speaker:** I would like to begin this evening's debate by making a short statement on how the proceedings will unfold.

[*English*]

Tonight's debate is being held under Standing Order 53.1, and it provides for a take note debate to be held following a motion proposed by a minister, following consultation with the House leaders of the other parties.

The motion provided for tonight's debate was adopted by the House on Wednesday, March 25, 2009.

[*Translation*]

Each member speaking will be allotted 10 minutes for debate, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments. The debate will end after four hours or when no member rises to speak.

Pursuant to the special order adopted yesterday, the Chair will receive no dilatory motions, no quorum calls, and no requests for unanimous consent.

[*English*]

Pursuant to the rules used in a committee of the whole, members are permitted to speak more than once, provided that there is sufficient time. At the conclusion of tonight's debate, we will rise and the House will adjourn until tomorrow.

We will now begin tonight's take note debate. The chair will recognize the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC)** moved:

That this Committee take note of the International Conference on Afghanistan hosted by The Hague.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before anything else, I think we must take a moment to recognize those Canadians who are working to build a peaceful, democratic and self-sufficient Afghanistan and to commemorate those who have lost their lives for our country or who have been injured in service in Afghanistan.

As highlighted by the tragic events of the past week and the enormous sacrifices we have borne over the past seven years, Afghanistan is an issue that deserves our greatest attention and the solidarity of all Canadians.

Today I would like to say a few words about the context and objectives for the upcoming International Conference on Afghanistan. The event will be jointly hosted in The Hague by the UN, the Netherlands and Afghanistan. It will bring together over 70 governments and all of the key international bodies operating in Afghanistan. I will participate on behalf of Canada.

The Hague conference represents an opportunity for us to reflect on progress made, to prepare for important challenges ahead, and to reaffirm the international community's commitment to a stable and peaceful Afghanistan.

*Government Orders*

The Afghan government and the international community have a plan that is enshrined in the Afghanistan Compact, in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, and in the 2008 Paris Declaration. The Hague conference will not change this plan. Instead, it will help to renew our efforts to implement it and forge a common understanding of the key challenges ahead. For Canada, this will mean steadfast pursuit of the six priorities that have guided our engagement for nearly a year.

As you will recall, the reconstructing of our mission around these priorities was a direct response to the independent panel on Canada's future role in Afghanistan. Our work to implement the panel's recommendation has fundamentally transformed the way Canada operates in Afghanistan.

We have more than doubled the presence of diplomats, development officials, advisers and police trainers. We have appointed a senior official, known as the Representative of Canada in Kandahar, or RoCK, to manage this expanded civilian presence and to liaise as an equal with our top general in the country. We have also appointed a civilian director to work under this individual as head of the Kandahar provincial reconstruction team.

Since last June, we have moved to focus half of all Canadian development assistance in Kandahar. We have established joint civilian-military planning units to ensure that both sides of Canada's engagement are working in lockstep.

In accordance with the March 2008 parliamentary motion on Afghanistan, we continue to report quarterly to the House on progress in meeting these goals.

*[Translation]*

This approach is unique in its clarity and transparency and in the systematic monitoring and reporting on which it is based. No other country has released specific benchmarks or devoted its full resources to attaining them. No other country has achieved the same level of integration and cooperation between the civilian and military aspects of its mission. This targeted approach is working.

As stated in the latest quarterly report, Canada is making a real contribution to improving Afghans' lives and their government's ability to provide the Afghan people with basic services.

In the coming years, we will continue to focus our efforts on attaining these objectives and enabling the Afghan government to play an even larger role in managing the country.

*[English]*

Although the agenda for the conference is still being finalized, we are confident that the event will meet three broad goals.

First, it will allow the international community to reaffirm a collective commitment to Afghanistan. Seven years into our mission, we have registered very encouraging advances in areas such as health, education, vocational training and the professionalization of an Afghan army, which I witnessed first-hand when I was in Afghanistan last week. This conference will allow us to take stock of these successes, forge renewed agreement on the key areas where things have not improved and help to focus international attention on those areas where urgent action is required.

● (1810)

*[Translation]*

Second, the conference will give the Afghan government an opportunity to explain how it has respected the commitments it made in Paris last year.

Some very clear measures have been taken since then to further the implementation of the Paris program. The new interior and agriculture ministers undertook ambitious reforms. The cooperation of the Afghan government with the civilian government of Pakistan has improved markedly. Moreover, this year, for the first time since 2002, poppy cultivation decreased in Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, important challenges remain to be met. Bold measures have to be applied to fight corruption throughout the country. The Afghan government must also do more to protect freedom of expression, recognizing it as the cornerstone of democracy.

Finally, and this may be what is most urgent, President Karzai and the leaders of the opposition must continue to work together in order to find a solution to problems related to the timing of elections.

*[English]*

We cannot afford to lose ground between May, when the president's term officially ends, and August, when the next elections occur. We will use our voice at the conference to encourage a speedy resolution to this issue, as we have through our interaction with Afghan officials on the ground.

In short, the conference will help to ensure the Afghan government remains accountable to its international supporters for taking concrete action where it is most needed.

Third, the conference will provide a venue for the U.S. to announce the results of its strategic review of Afghanistan. Let me be clear, however, while Canada worked closely with the U.S. and contributed to this review just last year, as my hon. colleagues should all be aware, we already undertook a comprehensive review to better focus our efforts in Afghanistan and through this review in the summer of 2008, we set our priorities and objectives until 2011.

The U.S. will deploy 17,000 troops to southern Afghanistan this year. Many of these troops will head to Kandahar. As U.S. deployments to the regions progress, we intend to partner more closely with them to deliver on crucial governance, reconstruction and development work. This coordination will go beyond our respective military efforts. Indeed, Canada's ongoing cooperation with U.S. civilian agencies in Kandahar is set to grow as further U.S. resources arrive in the province.

This intensified U.S. focus is a welcome development. Over time our hope is that an influx of troops and resources will help to improve the security situation, particularly in the south.

In the context of these broader goals, Canada will use the international conference in The Hague to advance its own objectives. We will provide our assessment of the situation in Afghanistan and in particular, in Kandahar.

Working with our allies at this event we will help to identify the areas that are moving in the right direction. We will also not be shy to speak out about those we feel require greater attention from the Afghan government, the international community, or both.

[*Translation*]

We will also take advantage of the conference to inform our partners about the most important results achieved by Canada during the past eight months, results which have been submitted in detail to the House in three quarterly reports.

Finally, we will join the international community in reaffirming our ongoing commitment to Afghanistan and welcoming the sustained growth in international investments and military contributions.

The March 31 conference will be an opportunity to turn toward the future. It will help the international community to manage change and ensure that it produces the best possible results for Afghanis, their region and the safety of all of the planet's inhabitants.

[*English*]

There are some members across the way in this House who, for whatever reason, would like to sow dissension between us and our allies. This should not be done in times of war. This is a time for us to stand shoulder to shoulder with our brave men and women who are defending our values and interests in the most dangerous place in the world.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for being available this evening. In today's debate, there is no question of the mission's relevance. We all agree on that, and I thank him for recognizing the work done by our troops. It is important to do so. That said, he will come up against one fact at the NATO conference. While we will reaffirm our commitment to this mission, there remain some unanswered questions.

There are differences between the north and the south, as he knows. There also are differences among countries, which are not conducting the same missions as the Canadians, the British, the Danes or the Americans. If greater success is to be assured, consistency is essential.

And so I would like to ask the minister first if an effort will be made to bring greater consistency to the mission, given that, for example, the German mission is not the same as the Canadian one or the Turkish one. The minister has also spoken of the Afghan government. In fact, it looks like an accounting, an attempt to see how the Afghan government has acted over all these years.

Pakistan, in its Waziristan region, for example, is a problem as well. It is an unoccupied zone, where the Pakistani government does not interfere. It is where the Taliban go to muster. This is a fact. There is even talk of applying sharia law there now. The Taliban are pretty much left on their own there. I would like to hear what the

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minister has to say about this Pakistani Afghani situation, and in particular as concerns this tribal area.

Finally, I would like to put another question to the minister, one that is not unimportant. It is fine to have a civilian head, to have someone who is empowered to negotiate at the same level as the general. I would like him to tell us why Canada has no special envoy, given the situation. I myself was the Prime Minister's special advisor for Haiti, and know very well that a full delegation of powers at all levels brings greater strength. The solution in Afghanistan has to be political. So why is there no special envoy from Canada?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his questions which are, overall, quite relevant. Concerning the first question on coordination, I agree with him entirely: it is of primordial importance that the allies forge the necessary coordination together, in order to attain not only NATO objectives, but also the objectives of the member partners. As he knows, Canada identified a number of issues within the six priorities.

However, I also wish to reassure him and say that on a regular basis, whether at meetings in which my colleague the Minister of National Defence takes part with our NATO partners, or at meetings I have had the pleasure of attending with other ministers of foreign affairs, this highly important matter of coordination has been raised.

Since I had the opportunity of going to Afghanistan two weeks ago, I know that the most important issue there now is to increase security. No matter where you are on the planet, whether in my colleague's riding in the Montreal area, or in my riding or elsewhere, the people who live there are constantly looking for security and quality of life. There is no denying that this is a primordial objective for the citizens of Afghanistan. I know that the members of ISAF as well as those of NATO are working to achieve this.

As for Pakistan, and more particularly the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Canadian contribution is extremely important. Among other priority objectives, we are seeking, through what is commonly known as the Dubai process, to get the parties together to begin a dialogue. In fact, an important meeting is supposed to take place next weekend in Dubai. Both Pakistanis who are concerned with these border issues and representatives from Afghanistan are to meet for a third time and attempt to devise an action plan. We are following this very closely. The member is absolutely right when he states that we must make all necessary efforts in this regard.

Finally, concerning the special envoy, certain countries have chosen to designate a special envoy. Italy, France, Germany and the United States have decided to proceed in this way. The approach laid out in the report of the independent commissioners would lead us to create a cabinet committee which would determine the actions to be taken, and review our strategy and commitments, both civil and military. Negotiations are currently taking place.

According to the nature of a given meeting, we may designate either David Mulroney, the deputy minister assigned to this file, myself, or the minister responsible for international development who chairs this committee.

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Basically, we must be able to view these questions in a useful and practical way. When the specific need arises, according to the agenda that will have been set, we will act accordingly and determine—

• (1820)

**The Deputy Chair:** Mr. Minister, I would like to give other people a chance to talk.

The member for Saint-Jean.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Chair, I would like to thank the member for his presentation. I would like him to explain something he mentioned in his speech. For two years now, the Bloc Québécois has been calling for an international conference with top officials from the countries neighbouring Afghanistan. At the time, the minister and his predecessor flatly rejected our proposals. On March 5, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton suggested holding an international conference on March 31. Now, all of a sudden, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is saying that it is a great idea.

When the Bloc Québécois suggested it, it was not a good idea, but the moment the U.S. Secretary of State responsible for foreign affairs announced an international meeting on March 31, the Minister of Foreign Affairs jumped on board, calling it an excellent idea. Why?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** Madam Chair, I am sorry. It is true that the Bloc Québécois made that suggestion and that Canada cannot function without the Bloc Québécois' suggestions. But they have to understand that there might be more important people out there. I do not want to offend the members of the Bloc Québécois, but there are probably more important people than those in the Bloc Québécois who have considered this issue. I do not mean to sound arrogant. It was a suggestion. People made a lot of suggestions.

I would like everyone to bear in mind that a motion was passed in the House that clearly outlined what the Government of Canada intends to do on the ground in Afghanistan. The motion set out priorities and programs—major job-creation programs—and so on.

As I mentioned, we also had the Paris conference and the Afghanistan compact. There has been a series of measures. Every measure was decided on at the appropriate time to move this file forward. At this point, it is extremely important to coordinate regional efforts, thereby building an awareness that I hope will result in significant renewal for the country and long-term stability in the region.

• (1825)

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Madam Chair, like my colleagues, I think this debate is extremely useful, and am very pleased that we can have it before the conference at the end of March.

As I said from the start, this debate is not about the relevance of the mission. I think we must send this message of solidarity to our troops and tell them just how much we support them and their families. We grieve when these young men die in uniform, in the name of peace, liberty and democracy.

Still, today, I think it essential to have this sort of debate to prepare the future exit strategy for our soldiers. It also serves to raise relevant questions as to the progress we have made and whether our

efforts in the area of development are making a noticeable difference.

I was pleased to note that the Prime Minister said we would not win the war against the insurgents. We have known from the outset that the solution in Afghanistan was not a military one and that we had to reorganize accordingly. This was done subsequent to the Manley report. It was not done quickly enough in my opinion, because we have a 3D strategy in Canada—development, diplomacy and defence. It is time now to move on to another stage.

I must say that the article in *Spiegel* in which the Germans say “Afghanistan is on the brink of chaos” reads like a message from the local leaders.

[*English*]

It states:

—the US military and development workers in the troubled country. The elected government, they warn, can no longer compete with the Taliban.

We have a situation and the time has come to think and use that conference to make sure that we take the right decision, to make sure that we accompany the Afghan people to find a real solution for their needs.

As a country, as a citizen of the world, we have a duty to intervene when people are suffering, but at the same time it is important that we keep in mind that we are not there as a protectorate. We are there to accompany the Afghan people and we have to take some very important decisions.

I was a cabinet minister myself when we discussed that issue. The reason why we did not go to Iraq but we went to Afghanistan was exactly that, that multilateral issue. It is important that we all keep together and reaffirm that commitment, to be generous but not naive. It is important that we find a way to define if the triple Ds are properly put in place.

[*Translation*]

When I put questions to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, it was in this regard. We can have one conference to reaffirm our commitment and one to ask the Afghan government what it has done.

It is a very corrupt government. President Karzai is even known as the mayor of Kabul, since over 60% of the country is uncontrolled. The situation in southern Afghanistan is difficult, as it is even now in the area of Wardak, west of Kabul. Kabul itself is even under attack. We are faced with this reality.

I want us to be happy. I am pleased because, with Mr. Obama, it seems there has been a revival and there will obviously be more troops. It feels like a new approach is on the way. Napoleon said that geography dictated politics. There are glimpses of a new geopolitical reality on the horizon. We must have a strategy for Pakistan, and Iran must certainly be watched, because the situation there needs watching. It is fine to say that production of poppies and opium is down, but it is a huge scourge and a problem.

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Quite honestly, I would have appreciated the minister telling us, despite his eloquence, that we are not going there just to report on what is in the Canadian government's three latest reports. I would have liked him to describe his strategy. We are not going there just to reaffirm our commitment. An update on the current situation must be achieved, along with a plan for our activities in the next two years.

When the Prime Minister said that we could never beat the insurgents, if had he gone on to present our strategy, things would have gone a little better. Unfortunately the fact that he said it in the United States obviously distressed some people, but, more importantly, the fact that he did not go any further once again caused a problem with the perception of the mission. Many people sent me emails saying we had no business there. I say we do. We have things to do there.

It is a many sided situation, and if we eventually want to tackle Darfur and other countries, we have to recognize that we have a role to play as citizens of the world.

I believe that the role of those in power and officials, through the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of International Cooperation or the Prime Minister, is really to make it known that it does not stop there, and that the state of things must be taken into account.

Therefore, the exit strategy will be essential. It will make it possible to tell our soldiers that we are proud of them and that they did not fall in combat for nothing. After 2011, we will not be there in a military role, but, as in other operations, we will have a role in the humanitarian and diplomatic aspects.

I like the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but he has other fish to fry. He has more than one file to deal with. This way he can be asked to study a particular file, if we remind him that today, for example, is Afghanistan day.

● (1830)

[*English*]

We can say that also for our Minister of National Defence. He can say, "Today you take care of Afghanistan. We need you there". The reason why we need that special envoy is exactly for that purpose. That person will have the full authority of the Prime Minister and all the delegation of power from all the departments. When we will have negotiations to take care of the situation of Afghanistan to apply those triple Ds, that person, because I have been a special adviser for IET, will have the kind of political authority which provides a solution eventually.

[*Translation*]

I could have talked more about national defence. There was discussion of equipment and the need for tanks. Of the 100 tanks bought, 40 or 60 are in Europe and 40 are at the Longue-Pointe base and are not yet organized.

Perhaps if I send a message to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, he could eventually explain to us why these tanks, so vital to the mission in Afghanistan, are still not ready. I think our 20 German Leopards had a few jolts and will probably be needed from now to 2011. We could have asked another question as well. In the name of the mission in Afghanistan, billions of dollars of

equipment was bought, which is still not ready. The government was in such a hurry, that, in the name of national security, it bought equipment without bids, and it is still not in use today.

In these times of economic recession, it might be reasonable to ask ourselves how contracts were handed out. That said, I think we should talk more about the conference in The Hague. I hope that the Prime Minister and the minister will take our questions there and that, instead of adopting a wait and see attitude, they will be proactive and decide what will be done in the next two years in connection with the military.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for his most eloquent speech. I acknowledge his verve and ability, and would just like to reassure him that yes, there is a strategy. We will have the opportunity to revisit all of this not only when we are in Afghanistan, but everywhere, including the Hague.

My colleague has travelled around Afghanistan and had the opportunity to see for himself what is going on there. Was he able to see a change for the better? Did he, for instance, see the reconstruction, see new schools being built? Was he able to see that the Afghan military and police force is increasing in size, was he able to see that we are helping to rebuild the Dahla dam?

Since he has been in this House for some time, he was here at the start of the conflict. I would like to know whether he is in a position to say that things are changing for the better.

● (1835)

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Madam Chair, my approach today was neither positive nor negative, just constructive. I went to Afghanistan on my own, I would remind hon. members. Unfortunately, I did not have the backing of the Conservative government, but once I got to Islamabad, and to Kabul, the embassy took good care of me, as did our troops when I was in Kandahar.

That said, no I did not see the schools. I did, however, speak with a lot of people, some of them in the field, and they spoke to me of their concerns.

[*English*]

The Taliban have a proverb that says "you've got the watch", talking about us, and "we've got the time". That is the situation right now. Of course, we can say that there was some progress at certain levels, but the reality in the field and the reason why I read that, saying that Afghanistan is at the brink of chaos, is that it seems that there is a lot of territory that we have been winning. But because we are not necessarily there now, and there is the national army or the police force, that territory has also been recuperated by the Taliban.

[*Translation*]

At the same time, when Brigadier General Laroche was there and they made what is known as the "omelette", when the forces were put together, interesting things happened.

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Unfortunately, I am not certain about police training. There is a reality that must be taken into consideration. Many of these people are illiterate. They live under threat a great deal of the time. The Taliban are currently conducting guerrilla warfare. When people walk alone in the streets or are left on their own, they are vulnerable to Taliban attacks. For that reason, there is an increasing number of home-made bombs and attacks. Hospitals and the department of justice have been attacked. That is the reality in the field.

Progress can be made but much needs to be done. We need to know what is actually happening on the ground before going there because there is less security in Afghanistan at present.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Madam Chair, I want to start by thanking the member for his intervention and then ask a very specific question about the direction that our government is taking and indeed the direction our country should take.

On Tuesday we are going to see what many of us have called for, not just in this place but internationally, and what some people are calling Bonn 2, bringing all parties together to look at a regional approach.

I want to ask the member if he is of the belief that Canada should be part of this diplomatic surge that is being asked for by Kai Eide, the special envoy to the UN, and also by the American administration, and should we see the same diplomatic surge from our own country?

The minister did not really touch on that in his comments. I am wondering what the Liberal Party would see as a beneficial direction and what he thinks should happen on Tuesday.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Madam Chair, I thank the hon. member for that question. I have, from the outset, talked about the balance between the 3 Ds. Of course, the solution in Afghanistan is not military, it is political. We need to ensure that, of the 3 Ds, the D for diplomacy is able to do its best. So we have to re-evaluate our approach.

We had the Manley report. We are continually told that there is more to it, because now more civilians are involved. At the committee, which the hon. member attended this morning, we discussed a greater presence for CIDA and for Foreign Affairs. As Canadians, the first step that we ought to have taken was to have our own special envoy. We need that presence, that authority, and it would play a vital role. As I have said from the outset, we need to re-evaluate the situation and work towards a regional, geopolitical solution. We have to ensure that there is security, but we must emphasize diplomacy.

But it is the elections that concern me at the moment. We will have Mr. Karzai. There is a growing feeling that his government does not have the confidence of the international community. We think that there will be elections on August 20. What will happen if they are later? When we look at the opposition to Mr. Karzai, we need a code of conduct to achieve reconciliation when one wins and the other loses. But I have to confess that, if there is one area that we must emphasize, other than the matter of the special envoy, it really is how we are going to operate during the election period. There will be the

security aspect to consider. There is also the aspect of ensuring that Pakistan does not interfere. In that sense, since the solution is political, diplomacy will have to regain its former glory at this conference.

• (1840)

[*English*]

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Madam Chair, we all know that life has not improved much for women since the fall of the Taliban. While there are legal rights for women that are constitutionally embedded, they are of minimal use if there is actually no rule of law.

As far as the protection of women's rights goes, it includes ordinary citizens as well as leaders. We know that the lives of some female Afghan leaders and journalists have been threatened and some have been killed.

I am wondering if the member would agree with me that a new diplomatic approach should be developed that would actually expand the scope of engagement to include the women of Afghanistan as major stakeholders in the future economy of Afghanistan.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Madam Chair, we must be careful not to speak in absolute terms when trying to compare what was happening before with what is going on now. I agree with the hon. member that there is still a long way to go. I looked at the Transparency International index and Afghanistan fell by 59 points. Of course, so much needs to be done and not enough is being accomplished in terms of women's rights and freedom of the press. Certain cultural factors must be confronted there. We must not be ethnocentric, but certain questions definitely need to be addressed at the conference. This is not a new diplomatic approach. It is a diplomatic approach that should have been taken from the beginning.

[*English*]

That is the reality. That is why there was not enough emphasis put on the other "D", which is diplomacy.

There is a situation with women. There is a situation with children. I noticed in a report that there are abortions taking place due to rapes. It is not a pretty sight and it is bad, but I would urge caution in saying that it is the same as when the Taliban was there.

[*Translation*]

Just one instance is one too many. We must focus on women's rights and the living conditions of the Afghan people.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Chair, I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Bloc Québécois this evening, just a few days before the meeting in The Hague, which I feel will be an extremely important meeting where the participants will review what is going on in Afghanistan.

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I feel it is important to start by explaining how political positions in this House have changed since the 2001 attacks. I want to focus on the two most recent political positions, starting with the extension from 2006 to 2009. In 2006, we held a debate here in this House, and the House decided to extend the mission in Afghanistan until 2009. At that time, the Conservative Party, which had proposed the extension, naturally voted in favour of it. The Liberals were divided. Some voted for the extension, others against it. The Bloc Québécois asked for a number of guarantees in order to vote for the extension.

I want to tell the people who are watching this debate this evening that in 2006, the Bloc Québécois said no to extending the mission until 2009, because we had set certain conditions, which were not met. But we were even more disappointed when the 2008 debate was held. Throughout 2008, the Liberal Party said that the mission would end in 2009 and that we would go no further. They said that at every possible opportunity, but when the time came to decide whether or not to stay until 2011, the Liberals and the Conservatives joined forces to extend the mission until 2011.

We did not want to sign a blank cheque, which is what we were being asked to do, so we said no to a further extension. I can tell my Liberal colleagues that we were disappointed. What they did was not what they had been saying for the previous year that they would do, and it took everyone by surprise. Now, Canada is to stay in Afghanistan until July 2011. I think it is important to mention that.

For two years now, the Bloc Québécois has been asking for changes to the mission. First we wanted a better balance. The mission has never been balanced. When I made my first trip to Afghanistan, I asked for figures on the number of people—they spoke about the 3 Ds and I am going to talk about that. I asked them how many Canadian soldiers there were. They said about 2,500. When I asked how many diplomats there were from Foreign Affairs, I was told about a dozen. When I asked how many people there were from CIDA to do the development part, I was told there were about a dozen. So there was already an imbalance.

Back then people started saying—including great generals such as the British general who was the head general in southern Afghanistan—that the war could not be won with military means alone. Since then, however, all the government has talked about is adding soldiers. They are happy because the United States is going to add 17,000 soldiers.

Everyone says we cannot win by military means alone and everyone clamours for more soldiers. I hope we will be firm in this regard. I hope the House of Commons will not say again in 2011 that we will extend the mission for another two years.

Insofar as international conferences are concerned—I was just talking with the minister about them—we have been asking for two years for a more regional approach involving the local powers around Afghanistan. Everyone knows who is around Afghanistan: Iran, Pakistan, and bits of countries touching on China. These people have been silent so far. It took the American Secretary of State, Ms. Clinton, to persuade the international community of the importance of meeting again. There is going to be a meeting in The Hague on March 31, but we should also not forget the NATO summit a month later. It is important now because we are on the threshold of some

major decisions on the alignment of Afghanistan over the next few years.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** It is four days later.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** The NATO meeting is four days later, according to what the minister tells me.

The Bloc Québécois has been asking for two years for a rotation of the allies. I have gone to Afghanistan twice. I went to Faizabad in the north with the German troops delegated by NATO and I went to Kandahar in the south with the Standing Committee on National Defence. They are two different worlds. The points of the compass are of basic importance in Afghanistan.

● (1845)

In the north, I drove around with the Germans in Mercedes Jeeps. Children were playing in the streets and there were no problems. What is more, I noted that there were caveats or exceptions that applied to them. They had to be back to camp by 8 p.m. I told them that there were no such rules for the Canadians in the south, who are out on patrol day and night in a far more dangerous location.

In the parliamentary assemblies of NATO I have called for a rotation. Why do the same ones always have to bear the same economic burden, because it is extremely costly in the south, and the burden in lives lost as well? One hundred and sixteen soldiers have died since the intervention began in 2002.

We are also asking for joint financing, if possible. Where the costs of involvement are concerned, each nation foots the bill. As I have said, it costs far more to patrol in the south than in the north. If they do not want a rotation, there ought at least to be joint financing, with the bill split among everyone, so that the ones now paying the most would pay a bit less, particularly if located in a geographical area that is far more difficult than others. That has been the Bloc position for the past two years.

When we look at the situation and listen to the briefings from the generals—such as the one we had just recently in the Standing Committee on National Defence—we see that the situation has always been depicted as far too rosy. We are never given the real picture. We members need to rely on other sources of information, and we have done so. Whether at NATO or in the Asian media, there are fundamental differences between what we are told and what is actually happening on the ground. I have noted some of those.

There is talk of deteriorating security. Only 30% of Afghans feel that they are safe in their villages, regardless of what part of the country they live in. This is a dramatic drop from several years ago, when the figure was around 55% or 60%. That is no longer the case. It means that the insurrection is in the process of spreading in Afghanistan.

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This is what is happening, and there is nothing complicated about it: the troops clean up part of a region at a certain point, but they cannot stay there and have to move on to another region. As soon as they move out, the Taliban come back. So security has deteriorated a great deal. The influence of the insurrection has spread to all of the zones that have been pacified, with great difficulty, as I said. The troops pull out in the night and when they come back a month later, they are back to square one.

We are not winning. That is what people are saying. The Prime Minister said that suddenly, and perhaps not in the right place, but at least he has grasped the reality. And that is the reality: we will not win.

The number of attacks is rising; In 2008 there were 983 strikes in Afghanistan, which is 47% higher than in 2007. We are therefore unable to control the safety of not just the troops but the civilians as well.

Speaking of civilians, they are the first victims. In 2008 there were 2,118 civilian fatalities, compared to 1,523 in 2007. That is a 40% increase. How can anyone hope to win an insurrection when you have to try to convince the Afghans that we are on top of the security situation? They need to feel secure. We need to win over their hearts and minds. How can hope to win such an insurrection when the number of civilian victims is increasing rapidly?

I could speak for a long time about the humanitarian situation or about governance. People are saying that President Karzai is just the mayor of Kabul and no longer has any authority in the rest of the country.

So this brings us back to the Bloc's action plan. Yes, an international conference is necessary, and an update with all the major players in the region. It is important for this mission be rebalanced. It is also important for us to work with our friends in NATO on a kind of rotation. That is the position of the Bloc Québécois; it has been the position of the Bloc Québécois; and it will also be the position of the Bloc Québécois in the coming months.

• (1850)

[English]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Madam Chair, I listened with interest to the reasoning of my hon. colleague in his intervention. We are both on the Afghanistan committee and, as such, we quite often interface with each other's ideas on how to get this mission moving forward. Today, Mr. Mulroney gave a review of Canada's commitment in the past, what is happening now and where we are going.

The member alluded to the fact that the Bloc wanted an international conference. It is happening in the Hague. Whether the Bloc called for it is not the issue. The issue is that the American government and our NATO allies called for it.

The member alluded to two points that I need to address. He talked about the German commitment up north and our commitment in the south and how the German commitment up north was peaceful while down south there was mild insurgency.

If we look at the situation geographically, the insurgency was led by the Taliban and the Taliban's home is in the south. The Taliban in

the south are working from across the border in Pakistan. The Taliban are not working in the north because they do not have sanctuaries to cross the border into the northern state. Henceforth, it is natural that the northern state would not face the same kind of insurgency attacks, et cetera. Therefore, to compare the two regions and say that our forces in the south are not doing enough is quite misleading.

The second point he made was on how we win hearts. We have said that development is the key element and, as he knows, we are putting a lot of money into development. I hope, through his intervention, that he will recognize the achievements Canada has made in development.

• (1855)

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Madam Chair, I do not dispute my colleague's depiction of the situation; I am merely making an observation about the geography. I know the Taliban stronghold is in the south and it is only natural that things are calmer in the north. That is precisely the crux of my argument. Why is it always up to the Canadians, the British and the Dutch to be in the south, and to pay the price with our soldiers' lives as well as the financial cost of the mission? Every country pays its own way. I am simply saying that, if possible, there should be some sort of rotation. We have often asked the Prime Minister to make that request at international forums.

As for the money spent on development, I also agree with the member, but let us consider the numbers. The numbers show that the mission is unbalanced. The minister responsible for CIDA announced \$1.2 billion or \$1.3 billion over the next 10 years for development. During the same timeframe, \$18 billion will be invested on the military side. That is why the mission is said to be unbalanced. Although we do see some efforts in terms of development, they are insufficient compared to the efforts made on the military side.

[English]

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Madam Chair, I thank the hon. member for his intervention in this debate and the minister for calling the debate in response to the request of the NDP.

I appreciate the hon. member's comments and the fact that he has shown the imbalance in the government's efforts despite the recommendations of the report that it commissioned. There was a great deal of effort on the war effort but very little effort on the diplomatic measures.

I wonder if the member would support the proposal by the NDP to intervene at a much higher level diplomatically, rather than sending some political envoy who would only represent the interests of the Government of Canada. Would the member support the proposal put forward by the New Democratic Party to appoint an eminent persons panel composed of persons who have worked directly with the United Nations?



*Government Orders*

I am making this recommendation from a very personal perspective. My great uncle was the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan. I have friends and family who have worked and travelled in Afghanistan. I have helped in the effort of selling carpets and textiles to support those communities. I have had the opportunity personally to talk to Malalai Joya, who is a very important female member of the Afghan government and has been twice removed, if not more, because she has been outspoken in calling for more diplomatic interventions, the pull back of the military and support instead to the communities.

I look forward to the reply of the hon. member.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Madam Chair, although eminent persons are often important persons, we are at a point in the debate where the real decision makers, those who have been elected, those who govern nations, must take their place. That is the purpose of the conference in The Hague. The Prime Minister will probably be accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of National Defence. They will go to The Hague along with representatives of at least 50 other countries.

I understand that it is important to be represented by eminent persons who have a great deal of credibility. She referred to a woman who has such credibility. However, she is not a head of state. It is at that level that the issue must be resolved. It is up to the elected representatives, at the highest possible level, to settle this matter. I am not opposed to having an envoy, an emissary. However, given the point we have reached, it is up to heads of state and the respective cabinet ministers of these nations to decide on the new alignment.

● (1900)

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Madam Chair, I thank the government for allowing us this time, something that the NDP had asked for, to debate this issue before the important conference in The Hague.

I want to say at the outset that my colleagues and I acknowledge the profound sacrifice of those Canadians who have lost their lives and those who have been wounded since we have been engaged in Afghanistan. We will forever be indebted to them and their families.

As our military role in Afghanistan nears its end, Canada, like NATO as a whole, stands at a crossroad. Both as individual nations and collectively as an international community, we must decide the shape of our future engagement.

I believe there is unanimity in Parliament and with all parties that our combat role in Afghanistan should end in 2011. With that certainty in mind, I believe consensus is now forming in Canada that we must remain involved in the region and, furthermore, that we should choose a more robust diplomatic role. Fortunately, common sense is finally overcoming rhetoric. Gone are the hot speeches boasting about obliterating the Taliban and quickly installing a fully formed democratic state in our own image.

On a personal note, we have come a long way since my party's recommendation for a peace process in Afghanistan was met with vitriol, characterized as naive at best and pro-Taliban at worst. In fact, a recent major study on counter insurgency operations

conducted by our own Department of National Defence conceded that "Insurgency is a political problem. The mere attrition of insurgents is highly unlikely to result in their defeat".

Even our Prime Minister admitted recently, "We are never going to defeat the insurgency".

Many around the world are now looking for a way out of the quagmire and a resolution that stabilizes conditions in Afghanistan and the surrounding region. President Obama's appointment of Mr. Holbrook as his envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan speaks to the new administration's desire to find a diplomatic resolution to the conflict, even though in the interim we shall see a surge in U.S. troop presence.

Clearly, a new realism about a long term strategic approach is growing internationally. We are seeing a new will emerging among countries to turn the page and move forward with a more progressive policy on Afghanistan. We seem to be learning from our mistakes, recognizing the inherent limits of using force solely to address a situation that has its roots in complex regional politics, economics and history.

Here in Canada, we need a post-2011 plan and we need to start now. We do not have that clearly articulated, so I welcome the opportunity to debate this and share ideas.

Within the mission, the real challenge is that we lack a common strategic vision. We hear this at NATO and we hear it at the UN. Therefore, the effort to come together on an assessment and a strategy for Afghanistan is due.

That is why I am delighted with Secretary Clinton's initiative for the conference in The Hague next week. This conference is the first step for such a strategic review. I am encouraged with the fact that the conference will take place under the auspices of the United Nations, the body best suited for pursuing a diplomatic approach to Afghanistan.

We must, of course, be mindful that for any peace initiative to work, informal discussions need to take place first, as soon as possible, to prepare the ground, to identify regional partners and to discover and test new political ideas and solutions. We must engage, in other words.

However, there are many challenges to engagement. To begin with, how we identify willing participants, and then there are the regional issues, particularly the role of Pakistan. Pakistan is the key to peace in Afghanistan. As Mr. Bahini recently said, "Whether anybody likes it or not, if Pakistan says there shouldn't be peace in Afghanistan, there will be no peace in Afghanistan".

● (1905)

I believe Canada is well placed to take the lead in getting this new engagement under way. I would like the government to advocate for an eminent persons group that could take on the challenges to engagement. By expanding our diplomatic efforts in creative new ways, we can help play a leadership role in defining the strategy for a new diplomatic approach in the Afghan conflict.

*Government Orders*

To that end, Canada must and should promote the establishment of a group of eminent persons, something we could promote in The Hague next week. The group could be composed of international figures of the calibre of former UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, and former permanent observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, Mokhtar Lamani, who, I proudly note, is a Canadian. Such individuals possess credibility and respect in the region. They understand the challenges. They have the contacts and the experience necessary to open new avenues of dialogue with key constituents and affected parties.

In this initiative, personalities matter. For instance, Mokhtar Lamani has already worked with Lakhdar Brahimi. They travelled to Afghanistan and the region during the rule of the Taliban in 1998. His deep knowledge of the political landscape is invaluable. His opinion is often sought out in Washington on issues related to the Islamic world. Experts like Mokhtar Lamani could hit the ground running.

There is a real need for a balanced respected group that could plan the next steps in Afghanistan. Canada could be taking an active role in the establishment of such a group because it has experience on the ground.

An advisory group, although a Canadian initiative, could function independently of Canada's part of the UN led efforts for peace building in the region. Establishing such a group of eminent persons could be a major Canadian contribution to the UN led peace process. It would signal a new approach and play a key part in the political surge, as was called for by Mr. Eide, the UN Secretary-General's special representative to Afghanistan.

Canada could seize the opportunity to broaden the scope of diplomatic engagement with other external actors and neighbours, including Iran. The group could act to ensure that any peace process was inclusive of the government and people of Afghanistan, in particular, women and their civil society representatives, not just warring factions and regional power players. The group would take on an informal approach, preparing, in UN terms, non-papers on issues and subjects that the different countries and the alliance and beyond would have to wrap their minds around.

Another advantage of the approach is the group could speak to those whom our official envoys might find unpalatable or difficult to speak with. This would not be easy. We know it would be hard, but there are no easy paths forward.

The outstanding question is what military approach is required to complement the diplomatic overtures. A reoriented political offensive focused on diplomatic peace making would require a reoriented military force in the south focused entirely on a defensive strategy of protection. In effect, it would hold the ground not yet under Taliban control while the foundations for formal negotiations were being laid, and with a view to preparing the way for a new robust stabilization force under a new different command, ideally with more significant Muslim participation.

Participation for military reorientation has to happen at the same time as informal discussions for political solutions to take place. While Canadian Forces will not be able to participate in the military

reorientation after 2011, we can play and hope we will play a constructive role in other areas.

Frankly, we have carried more than our share of the military burden. Canadians were sent to Afghanistan with pride. They have acted with courage, strength and determination. However, there are serious concerns in Canada about their burnout, force regeneration at home, not to mention the urgent need to control the expanding military costs in favour of our other important non-military priorities both in Canada and in Afghanistan.

Canada's post-combat role in Afghanistan has to focus on cooperating and strengthening the multinational, multilateral diplomatic approach to the conflict. Only in this way can we move toward lasting peace and stability in the region.

In closing, without a focused framework and diplomatic creativity and muscle, all of the human and financial sacrifices will have been lost. Instead, we will be faced with more conflict and instability threatening the peace and security of nations around the globe, including all of those that will be at the conference on Tuesday.

Canada could help set the table for a diplomatic process led by a group of eminent persons helping lead the way to the formulation of a UN led regional contact group, making it possible to achieve substantive progress toward political stability in the region and to lasting peace further down the road.

• (1910)

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Madam Chair, the Liberals are asking for a special envoy to Afghanistan and the NDP wants endless panels to be created. Of course the Bloc, the party that wants to break up Canada, is speaking on behalf of Canada calling for, two years ago it said, an international conference.

The three opposition parties seem to have forgotten one important factor. The most important factor is that Canada is there under a UN mandate. The UN is the main important body now.

This party is a big supporter of the UN. There is a UN special envoy for Afghanistan, Mr. Galbraith, and a second one was appointed, Mr. Kai Eide.

We must not forget that this Parliament made a decision. Of course the opposition opposed it but the motion passed in this Parliament as to what would be our mission's priorities and how we would be working and reporting to the Canadians. Parliament has already spoken on how we should be doing these things. Quarterly reports are tabled in this Parliament.

Whatever the member is talking about, getting this group of eminent persons, he is going to try not to follow what Canada is doing. This group of eminent persons may not be fulfilling the mandate.

*Government Orders*

It is causing total confusion for Canadians in that the three opposition parties are going in three different directions. Let us not forget that Canada's Parliament has given direction as to what this mission should be and what it should accomplish. That is what the government follows.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Madam Chair, there is some confusion but it is in the comments of my colleague across the way. I think what he was trying to get at is he wonders where this eminent persons group would fit within the context of the Canadian policy.

I want to read into the record the following:

That Canada should assert a stronger and more disciplined diplomatic position regarding Afghanistan and the regional players, including support for the naming of a special envoy to the region who could both ensure greater coherence in all diplomatic initiatives in the region and also press for greater coordination amongst our partners in the UN in the pursuit of common diplomatic goals in the region.

That motion was passed by the House of Commons on March 13 last year.

I would ask the government to read its own motion and to understand that the next steps that we need to contemplate are to make sure that there is coherence from Canada on our diplomatic initiative.

I listened very carefully to the minister. At committee today was Mr. David Mulroney and we wanted to know where we are going. In 2011 the military mission will be done. That is around the corner. We have to prepare the steps for what Canada will do after.

Is the government saying that that is it? Are we going to try to train a couple of people and that is it? Canada can do better. Canada should do better. On this side of the House, the New Democratic Party believes Canada should be offering solutions to the UN. I suggest that we even have a Canadian do that, not as an envoy just to serve Canada's interests, but as a process that could serve the interests of the UN and the interests of the region.

I think this is a positive proposition, not just simply an opposition. I think that is what most people want to see.

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Madam Chair, during the election and during the town halls, the one question that comes up almost all the time is, what is the face that Canadians want Canada to show to the world? I very much believe we have an opportunity to show a very positive face to the world and to be a leader.

Why does the member think it is so important that Canada take a leadership role in Afghanistan?

• (1915)

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Madam Chair, I think most Canadians are proud of our country's history and our values on the international stage. They are confused about where Canada is right now. They want to see Canada take a leadership role in what the Prime Minister has admitted is a conflict that cannot be won militarily. If it cannot be won militarily, then it obviously leaves another option that needs to be more fully exercised, and that is diplomacy.

We are the country of diplomacy. We are the country of multilateral approaches. We are the country that people used to turn to for reconciliation and peace building. We do not want to lose that.

The government has an opportunity to regain that reputation, but more important, to put on the world stage a solution and some resources behind that to go to the next stage when it comes to Afghanistan.

The Americans need that support now. Canada can provide it. That is what we should be doing.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Madam Chair, the member read from the resolution last year about the special envoy. I will point out that the NDP voted against that resolution.

I do have a couple of questions for my hon. colleague and they are fairly short and simple. Does he believe in continuing training of the Afghan national army and the Afghan national police post 2011? If not, fine. If he does, how does he see that being accomplished?

When he talks about holding ground and being defensive, I just want to confirm he is talking about starting that now. If that is the case, does it really mean that he wants us to simply hold the ground where we are and let the Taliban roam freely everywhere else?

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Madam Chair, I will clarify a couple of things. What I read into the record was to remind the government of what it committed to, and that is why what we are proposing fits within that frame. Also, we amended the motion that was voted against by the government, which is its right. We did not just vote against its motion; we amended its motion and it was defeated. We were keeping that component of the government's motion in our motion, just to be clear, because we believe in that.

We believe that Canada's role and that of the envoy to help with coordination of diplomacy is important. To be very clear about the clear, hold strategy, this would be exactly what needs to happen as we look toward reconciliation and negotiations. The idea that we are letting the Taliban run loose, the news flash is that is what is happening. What is not happening is the clear, hold and then being able to develop to the extent we want.

The government acknowledges it in its own reporting. This would be in tandem. This is not the position of the NDP. Neither is the eminent persons group idea. These are ideas that have come forward and we are simply advancing them. They have come forward at the foreign affairs committee. The eminent persons group has been put forward by many other groups. It was not the NDP that came up with this on its own. We advanced the idea that was brought forward by others, as is the military strategy of clear, hold, as these very difficult and important next steps to reconciliation happen. That is where we have to go.

As long as people acknowledge, quite rightly, that this is not something we can win militarily, now we have to advance ideas that are outside of what we have been advancing before. That is why we have been listening to others and advancing those ideas. Quite frankly, that is what the debate should be about.

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Chair, I am glad we are having this debate tonight. The member for Ottawa Centre has made some very thoughtful comments.

*Government Orders*

I remember some of the debates in the House that were ferocious in terms of attacks on the NDP. We should be very proud that we have always led the debate on this issue in terms of a very clear strategy about the mission in Afghanistan that was focused on stabilization of peace.

Here we are again offering very constructive suggestions to the government. It has always bothered me that the government is so black and white in its assessment, that we either agree with it or we are against everything.

In terms of civil society in Canada, there are groups like the Rideau Institute that have done such fine work. What is their assessment in terms of where Canada should be going after 2011?

• (1920)

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Madam Chair, in civil society, many other groups have come forward and said that they would like to see Canada go this route. In fact, not just the group she mentioned but eminent persons and institutions like the Norman Paterson School have advocated that. In fact, at committee, my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, heard Mr. Hampson advocate this approach. We listen carefully to people who advocate this. They are specialists in the field. That is why this makes sense, not only to us but to other people.

We would hope the government has big ears and is listening tonight.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Madam Chair, on this side of the House, we are not confused as to where our mission in Afghanistan is, contrary to what the NDP says.

On March 13, 2008, the House voted in favour of a motion on the future of Canada's mission in Afghanistan. The motion stipulated that Canada's contribution to the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan should be revamped and increased to strike a better balance between our military efforts and civilian development efforts in Afghanistan.

On June 10, 2008, our government announced six priorities to guide Canada's engagement in Afghanistan through to 2111. In doing so, the government set a clear course toward our goal: to help Afghans rebuild their country as a stable, democratic and self-sufficient society.

After careful study and review, including extensive work undertaken by the independent panel on Canada's future role in Afghanistan, the government determined that the best way forward would be to focus Canadian efforts in key areas and to direct additional resources to Kandahar province. This focus will allow those working to accomplish the Canadian mission in Afghanistan, soldiers, diplomats, aid experts, civilian police and correctional officers, to have the greatest possible impact.

As Canadians who have mourned the loss of our soldiers, our diplomats and our humanitarian workers know all too well Afghanistan can be a dangerous place. It is the former stronghold of the Taliban and it remains one of the poorest and the most troubled region in Afghanistan, yet progress has been made.

In January of this year, almost 11,000 students, most of them female, graduated from a 10-month literacy training course in Kandahar.

In February, more than four million Afghans registered to work in the upcoming presidential and provincial council elections. Registrations were planned and executed by the Afghan Independent Election Commission, with the support from the Afghan National Security Forces.

In March, the Afghan minister of the interior accredited the Kandahar provincial reconstruction team training centre, allowing Canada to accelerate its training program to strengthen the Afghan National Police reform and development.

To maintain and build upon this progress, Canada will increase its focus on Kandahar province, with four of the six priorities aimed at improving conditions there.

The first Canadian priority in Afghanistan is to maintain a more secure environment and to establish the rule of law. To enhance security, Canada is strengthening the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces, the army and the police.

Members of the Canadian Forces are training, mentoring and equipping the Afghan National Army so Afghanistan can take on increasing responsibility for its own security. With the help of the Canadian military, Afghan soldiers are learning to better protect the Afghan people, and the Afghan National Army is becoming a viable national institution.

Canadian civilian police and the military are continuing to support the development of the Afghan National Police. This is done through training, as well funding for equipment, salaries and infrastructure projects, including outposts to increase police presence in key districts of the Kandahar province. There are currently 31 civilian police officers from the RCMP and other municipal police agencies deployed to monitor, mentor, advise and train the Afghan National Police.

Our government is supporting justice and corrections initiatives. This includes measures to improve the justice sector to facilitate a working court system in Kandahar city with competent judges, prosecutors, defence lawyers and administrative staff. This also means improving conditions in Kandahar's main prison and detention facilities, through training of corrections personnel and upgrades to prison infrastructure.

Recently the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade travelled to Afghanistan and announced additional contributions of approximately \$21 million to help strengthen rule of law in Afghanistan. This money includes \$19 million to help pay the salaries of Afghan National Police, \$1 million for corrections officers and a \$1.3 million fund for a human rights support unit within the Afghan ministry of justice.

*Government Orders*

● (1925)

Canada's second priority in Afghanistan is to strengthen Afghan institutional capacity to deliver basic services and promote economic development. The people of Kandahar have asked for schools, access to water, sanitation, electricity and job creation. Our government will invest up to \$210 million over the next three years to help the Afghan government deliver these services. These initiatives are aimed to improve the quality of life of Kandaharis and will help increase the confidence of Afghans in their government.

As part of this priority area, our government has also announced two signature projects: the rehabilitation of the Dahla Dam, Kandahar's main water source for agriculture; and the building expansion and repairing of 50 schools in Kandahar province. Canada will spend up to \$50 million to rehabilitate the Dahla Dam and its irrigation and canal system, creating jobs for Afghans and improving conditions for agriculture. Another \$12 million will be dedicated to schools, giving Afghan children a chance at a better future.

Canada's third priority is to provide humanitarian assistance to those in need, including refugees. Canada will contribute up to \$111 million to help the Afghan government provide assistance to Kandahar's most vulnerable citizens, including refugees, widows and those displaced by violence or natural disasters. This will include providing food aid to be delivered by the World Food Programme, as well as non-food aid such as blankets and kitchen utensils. Part of this funding will also be used to clear land mines and provide mine education to the local population.

As a third signature project, Canada will contribute up to \$60 million toward eliminating polio in Afghanistan. The project is expected to immunize seven million children across Afghanistan.

Canada will, as its fourth priority, help Afghanistan to enhance security at its border by facilitating dialogue between Afghan and Pakistani officials. This means making the border more secure against the movement of insurgents and weapons, while creating economic opportunities for the region from the legitimate flow of trade.

Canada will provide up to \$32 million of funding to contribute to the dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan and to facilitate discussions between the border officials. Canada will also contribute to the training of border and security officers and the provision of critical infrastructure.

In addition to these four priorities directed at Kandahar province, Canada has established as a priority, at the national level, advancing Afghanistan's capacity for democratic governance by contributing to effective, accountable public institutions and supporting Afghanistan's upcoming electoral process.

To strengthen Afghanistan's democratic development, Canada will spend up to \$355 million to help build national institutions and to provide Afghan departments with technical expertise, training and mentoring and equipment and program support.

On March 4, 2008, Canada announced a contribution of up to \$35 million over a three years to support Afghan-led elections, making Canada a leading participant within a coordinated multi-donor effort.

Canada is taking a comprehensive approach to support the Afghan elections through security, diplomatic and development efforts. Canada is working with the Afghan government and international partners to support elections that will be perceived as credible in the eyes of Afghans.

Finally, the Government of Canada will support the Afghan-led efforts toward political reconciliation. Canada recognizes that reconciliation must be central to our efforts to foster a sustainable peace.

To assist the reconciliation process in Afghanistan, Canada will contribute up to \$9 million over the next three years to develop Afghan government-led mechanisms to encourage and support dialogue and to improve the government's ability to communicate with its citizens.

The Government of Canada has made a strong commitment to Afghanistan. We are working with the government of Afghanistan and the international community to help bring security and a better life for the citizens of Afghanistan.

● (1930)

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Madam Chair, in the Bonn conference, which was critical in pulling together all the disparate groups that wanted to help out with post-Taliban Afghanistan, one thing was absolutely critical, and that was the coordination of all resources. It remains a challenge. We know there are different focuses in different parts of Afghanistan. We know this has been problematic and we know it is not just with the military mission, but also development.

One thing done at Bonn, which people are looking to happen in The Hague and which is much of the reason for the debate tonight, is there would be some ideas put forward on how the region could stabilize and therefore Afghanistan stabilize. In my comments I quoted Mr. Brahimi who was the architect of Bonn, as the parliamentary secretary would know. He said that unless Pakistan decided it did not want peace in Afghanistan, there would be no peace. There needs to be a regional approach to this reconciliation.

Does the parliamentary secretary and his government see any value in promoting a process where we have persons who are able to talk to members within the neighbourhood, to look to set up a regional table and to ensure the work is done? If we do not talk to members in the neighbourhood, then there is no stability in the region. Does he not think that is an important thing to do and that Canada should be pushing that issue? Never mind if he believes in the approach I mentioned before of an eminent persons group, but just the analysis. Bonn was to bring everyone together. In The Hague we need to not only bring people together, but also coordinate efforts in the region to set a table so we can start to look for solutions for it and stability in the region.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Madam Chair, I would tend to agree with the hon. member. I was at the Bonn conference. I saw the coordination efforts that went on. I attended also the first reconstruction conference held in New Delhi a couple of years ago. There was one going to be held this year in Pakistan as well, bringing all the regional people together.

It is no science as we have already said. The regional countries are the most affected with the instability in Afghanistan. They are the ones that should be at the forefront. Therefore, the UN mandated mission given to NATO, which we are a partner of, will work together to enhance this. Attending the conference in The Hague, as the member knows and as the Minister of Foreign Affairs alluded to, will be 60 nations including Iran.

The member is absolutely right. Ultimately the objective of everyone is to have a stable, democratic-led Afghan government, with Afghans planning their own future and running their own country. We are not there as invaders.

Therefore, that is the best approach. I would hope, as the member does, that out of The Hague conference, which the minister will attend, there would be consensus of the regions and everyone here to work together toward achieving those goals.

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Madam Chair, I have a couple of very specific questions for the parliamentary secretary, which I hope he can answer.

The NDP, as he knows, has been very clear about our position and about the need for a diplomatic solution, but more than just diplomacy, we need better aid and development. Our development dollars need to ensure that Afghans see real development progress. We need to direct our aid in ways that improve lives and help build the capacity of the Afghan government to provide for its own people effectively and responsibly. We need to build Afghan's trust in their own state, not ours, and that means supporting projects that will actually work, not just those that are visible.

What are the development projects around agriculture currently that Canada is supporting and what is Canada spending on agriculture in this mission?

● (1935)

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Madam Chair, as the motion stated in the House, the development of the key effort there is very important, to win the hearts of Afghans so that they can continue. However, to answer her questions, I just read a speech in which I stated where Canada has been contributing very heavily toward the development of these projects. Based on the independent panel that gave its original direction, we have identified that the Dahla dam for which Canada is contributing millions of dollars is a key element providing water to irrigation in the Kandahar district. Without irrigation, farmers will not succeed. That is the key signature project with which Canada is helping. As she said, we are hoping that will push the agriculture output in the region.

It is not only that. The second most important signature project for which Canada is contributing millions of dollars is the 50 schools that we have said we are going to build in the Kandahar province. We are on track to do all that.

Today in the Afghan committee, we heard from Mr. David Mulroney and the Minister of International Cooperation who were in Kandahar to visit the Dahla dam and saw the irrigation projects working.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Madam Chair, I approach this very important debate from numerous directions, including as a young Canadian. Most of the soldiers who have given the highest of sacrifices in this effort have been around my age. Certainly, as a result, my generation is very much affected. My generation of Canadians is also a generation that has grown up with the value of diplomacy and the commitment to development that we have learned in our education system and society. We have taken great pride in knowing that Canadians have been leaders in these areas.

So many people have devoted their lives to looking at conflicts and dealing with issues around our globe. They are talking about the emphasis on diplomacy and development, areas that Canada has led the way. Having heard their feedback and advice, it is disconcerting to the utmost degree that we are not seeing that commitment from the government. We are seeing a change from the way things have been done in the past. That is something that my generation of Canadians and Canadians of many generations are very concerned to see. I would be interested to hear the feedback in terms of that direction that we are pursuing.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Madam Chair, I gave a 10-minute speech here where I stated Canada's priority over there. To answer her question, she has alluded to our soldiers giving the highest sacrifice. However, I have just given a 10-minute speech alluding to the four priorities that Canada is pursuing as a result of the direction given by Parliament. It addresses the question that she has been asking.

Since I have a short period of time, I would tell her to revisit my speech in *Hansard* and she will know what direction Canada is going in. Very soon, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation will be giving their speeches, laying out where and what Canada is doing, both defence-wise and development-wise.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Good evening, Madam Chair, and good evening to my colleagues and Canadians who are watching this debate tonight.

I would like to begin by making it perfectly clear that it is a great privilege to participate in this debate. I have never personally served in our armed forces, nor had the privilege of wearing the uniform.

I would also like to remind all of my colleagues, Canadians and folks who are watching, that this is an issue that transcends all parties. It is certainly a non-partisan issue of the highest order.

The debate tonight touches obviously thousands of our troops and our civilians who are serving in Afghanistan, and thousands of our troops and their families who are stationed across this country and across the world.

*Government Orders*

In my own riding of Ottawa South, for example, Canadian Forces Base Uplands houses hundreds of families, many of whom are in active service. I have met with them on repeated occasions to thank them for their tremendous service in Canada and abroad. I would like to extend those thanks once again this evening.

I would like to extend as well a direct message to those soldiers who are serving overseas and to their families.

We are debating here tonight the approach to this mission, and to the upcoming discussions and negotiations in The Hague, which will bring to bear new approaches and improvements. In no way can this debate be interpreted as undermining our commitments and our confidence in the soldiers, and the family members of soldiers and civilians who are serving at this important time.

On the contrary, the question of debating here at home what we are fighting to facilitate in Afghanistan and around the world is of paramount importance. We are debating here at home, we are exercising here at home in this House of Commons, precisely that which we are trying to bring to bear in the Afghanistan situation: the right to vote, for example; the right to assemble and to debate, as we are doing here this evening; to challenge; and, as a member of the official opposition, to keep the government in check, the appropriate role of a good opposition.

Asking questions about the mission going forward does not constitute, in the unfortunate words of several cabinet ministers in past debates, demonstrating sympathy for the Taliban. On the contrary, this is about making sure that we are not undermining here at home through this debate process precisely the things we are fighting for in Afghanistan and around the world.

The debate this evening is also a question of sovereignty, our independence as a country, the independence of our forces, and the independence of our government and our people. Are we waiting for the United States? Are we taking instructions from Washington? Are we acting as independent actors on the international stage when it comes to the question of Afghanistan, and it is very reminiscent, for example, of the climate change debate, which is still raging in this place, where apparently we are waiting again for President Obama to make the first moves.

I am not convinced this is the way for Canada to exercise its sovereignty, nor show the highest respect for our soldiers who are indeed serving abroad.

Some time ago the Prime Minister said that our position, as indicated in the Afghanistan motion of March 2008, was that we would fight until the Taliban was effectively brought to heel, if not crushed. That has changed. Just recently, the Prime Minister, on national American television news, announced that in fact it was an unwinnable situation.

I do not fault the Prime Minister for changing his view. I may fault him for announcing it on prime time American television and not speaking to Canadians here in the House of Commons.

We were pleased, as the official opposition at the time, to effectively write the resolution, the motion that governs this mission until 2011.

● (1940)

It was not the government. It was the good work of our critic for foreign affairs and our leader who, together, worked to write a prescriptive document, a precise document, a circumscribed mission, a beginning, a middle, clarity.

We also wrote the oversight committee motion in this House of Commons to make sure that the government was following the good advice of Mr. Manley, who was asked to strike a high-level committee to review the Afghanistan situation and the mission there. That oversight committee motion was passed.

Unfortunately, in all this time, we have only had two meetings of the oversight committee, the most recent of which was this morning, to hear more about how well we are doing. This is not about undermining. Canadians have deep conviction that this is an important mission for our sovereign country.

Things have changed in other ways, as well. Not only has the Prime Minister changed his view, but this resolution was struck at the time of a Republican administration in the United States. What a difference an election has made in Washington. We have a "new" new normal now; that is, of course, the arrival of President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton, who are bringing a refreshing new start to conflict resolution and working together to bring about, ultimately, peace.

Certainly, I think that the resolution that was passed in March 2008 deserves much more than the passing reference only made several times tonight by government members. Our troops deserve better.

That motion, that resolution crafted by the official opposition and passed in March 2008, was very clear. It was also endorsed by the government. It called for a special envoy, not an eminent person's panel as the NDP would have Canadians believe but a single and experienced and influential special envoy. This individual would carry with him or her the charge of the Canadian people, the responsibility of this House of Commons, to ensure that the best outcomes could be had for Canadians, for Afghans and for people everywhere.

I do not think it is random that it took a prominent Liberal, in Mr. Manley, to bring the balance and the coherence to the mission which was lacking. I recall reading his report where he indicated clearly the government was not doing as well as it could be doing, should be doing, in informing Canadians on the status of the mission, how things were progressing, the challenges we were facing, in no way, once again, to undermine the mission, but to do precisely here in this chamber what our troops are fighting for, for the Afghanistan people there.

Other questions remain, questions like linkages to events, emerging events in parts of Pakistan where we know that in areas there are no governments, there is no rule of law. This is a tribal situation. There is a linkage between some of these areas and Taliban soldiers, Taliban supplies, Taliban foodstuffs, and so on and so forth. How do we reconcile this new and emerging challenge with the original mission mandate in our resolution of March 2008? Yet again, there are questions around new forms of conflict resolution, how might we improve so we can ultimately find peace.

*Government Orders*

Finally, I think there are many outstanding questions on our real work on the development side, particularly enhancing the rule of law, legal aid and court systems, prosecutors and defenders, the things we take for granted here that emerged over hundreds of years in Canada. How do we institutionally strengthen the government of Afghanistan, minimizing corruption, including enhancing accounting practices, and participating in the free economy and free market worldwide? These questions have to be addressed. We are looking forward to seeing more from the government as it approaches these negotiations in The Hague in a short while.

• (1945)

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Madam Chair, I was interested in the comments of the member for Ottawa South in relation to Canada's efforts in assisting the development of governmental agencies. He talked about accounting practices and various other roles in assisting in the development of an opposition.

Those are things, no doubt, that are good things, but in the manner in which he presents them, it seems as if this is a justification for a military mission or role. Surely, if that could be a justification, we would be in many countries of the world where there are no democratic rights, no opposition, no democratically elected government and very little in the way of needed development.

How is it that this is so important in Afghanistan, where we are talking about finding a solution for a military war that is going on now? Can we say that these are part of the goals that our military mission encompasses?

• (1950)

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Madam Chair, to answer my colleague directly, it was the Liberal government that dispatched our troops to Afghanistan in the first instance. When we did so, we were perfectly clear about the notion of the three Ds: defence, development and diplomacy.

In the 21st century, we have begun to understand that as we prosecute a war on Afghanistan territory, it is not to be prosecuted in isolation. It is fundamental to ensure that we have institutional strength there and that government officers understand how to run government departments, collect revenues, receive foreign aid and ensure it is coherent between bilateral and multilateral donors. We need to get some semblance of a free market up and off the ground to receive direct investment.

This is not to be taken in isolation. No one is trying to justify a war being prosecuted on Afghan soil by claiming that it is for institutional strengthening by itself. On the contrary, these three are intertwined. They are indispensable, each to the other. It is much more about helping to get that nation state on its feet.

However, I am proudest of all of the fact that while we were in government I worked very hard with our former CIDA minister, who is now a minister in the Ontario cabinet, to ensure that \$5.2 million of Canadian support from CIDA was invested in the Afghan judicial system.

I spent many years of my life building capacity in developing countries like Afghanistan to ensure that they could come up to speed in the 21st century with the rest of the world and participate

fulsomely and fully in the world. That is the process that we are trying to accomplish here.

I just do not understand, in anticipation of The Hague, where it is we are going, which is why we keep calling for a special envoy to be able to bring those three D approaches to this mission in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Madam Chair, I appreciate the chance to take part in this debate tonight on the upcoming international conference on Afghanistan. From a National Defence perspective, the attention that this conference brings to Afghanistan is most welcome because Afghanistan is such an important foreign and defence priority.

Beyond my interest as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, I have a deep personal interest in this debate as a proud Canadian, as a former member of the Canadian Forces and as someone who has been to Afghanistan several times to visit our troops, most recently last Christmas.

I want to use my time this evening to update the members of this House on the outstanding work the men and women of the Canadian Forces are doing as part of Canada's contribution to this United Nations mandated mission.

[*Translation*]

As we all know, Canada is one of 51 countries and international organizations participating in this NATO-led ISAF mission. The Canadian Forces' contribution is essential to this coordinated international effort. Our soldiers' work is a testament to our country's leadership role in the global effort to stabilize Afghanistan. This effort has not gone unnoticed. Canada has earned the esteem of the Afghan people, as well as that of its international partners and allies.

• (1955)

[*English*]

There are more than 2,800 men and women in harm's way serving with Joint Task Force Afghanistan. Task Force Kandahar, based at the airfield south of Kandahar City, is operating as part of ISAF's Regional Command South.

Task Force Kandahar includes: a headquarters; a battle group of about 1,000 soldiers who can conduct counter-insurgency and other security operations in Kandahar province; the military personnel of the provincial reconstruction team located at Camp Nathan Smith in downtown Kandahar; the soldiers and military police of the operational mentor and liaison team; tactical aviation units; and various support units.

The military personnel come from all three branches of the Canadian Forces and from across Canada.

Right now, the brave soldiers of the 3rd Battalion the Royal Canadian Regiment Battle Group are starting to return home to Petawawa, along with their comrades who are returning to Gagetown and to reserve units from across the country. They are being replaced by another battle group led by a regiment with an equally proud legacy, the 1st Battalion of the Royal 22nd Regiment, the Van Doos from Valcartier.



*Government Orders*

Not a day goes by when I do not think about these exceptional people and the fine work that they are doing, as well as those who support them day to day. It is hard work and it is work that fills them with pride and sometimes it also fills them with sorrow, but it is critical work. Because they are making such an essential contribution to Canada's whole of government approach in Afghanistan, I want to personally ensure that their achievements are put on the record as a part of this evening's debate.

Tonight, we are hearing about how the Canadian mission has evolved from one focused mainly on security, to one increasingly concentrating on governance and development.

Last spring, this government announced six priorities for Canada's efforts in Afghanistan: building and training the Afghan National Security Forces; providing humanitarian assistance; supporting the Afghan government in providing jobs, education and essential services; enhancing border security through Afghanistan-Pakistan dialogue; helping build national institutions and support democratic processes; and facilitating Afghan-led reconciliation efforts across the country.

[*Translation*]

The emphasis on governance and development does not, in any way, diminish the importance of the Canadian Forces' contribution.

The soldiers who so proudly wear the Canadian flag on their shoulders are absolutely critical to ensuring the security that is essential to reconstruction and development activities, and to carrying out more conventional security operations. But they are also working hard to help the Afghan National Security Forces.

Afghanistan's long-term stability ultimately depends on the Afghan people. That is why we have to help them acquire the tools they need, including the ability to look after their own security.

The Canadian Forces are making ongoing progress in their efforts to help improve the Afghan National Army's ability to carry out operations and maintain a strong security atmosphere.

When the Canadian Forces launched operation *Medusa* three years ago, the Afghan army had next to no members to help ensure security in the Kandahar region.

Today, however, the Afghan National Army has over 80,000 members.

[*English*]

In Kandahar, the Canadian Forces are training and mentoring five battalions, or Kandaks, and a brigade headquarters. The brigade headquarters is capable now of planning, executing and sustaining near autonomous operations with little ISAF assistance, and ANA troops are leading their own operations in the field. The Canadian Forces are working extremely well with the ANA troops to counter the insurgency.

Canadian military and civilian police officers are also mentoring the Afghan National Police, or ANP, the second element of the Afghanistan National Security Forces.

A professional police force is key to fostering stability, to making people in communities feel more secure and to enhancing the rule of

law in Afghanistan. Canada has set aside almost \$100 million to provide training, mentoring and equipment for the Afghan National Army and Police, to building up administrative and logistical support, and toward creating and maintaining the justice and correctional systems.

Our government has supported this international mission fully from the start. Since 2001, the Canadian Forces mission in Afghanistan has had to adapt to rapidly changing conditions and unexpected demands. Beyond helping provide Afghans with the tools they need, we are also committed to providing our forces with the critical tools they need to operate effectively in a dangerous environment: from C-17 strategic lift aircraft to rapidly transport military personnel and equipment to the theatre of operations, to Leopard II tanks, to new unmanned aerial vehicles to support our military's intelligence gathering capability, and Chinook helicopters to enhance our transport capabilities in theatre.

● (2000)

The Chinooks are also escorted by Canadian Air Force Griffon helicopters, another new addition to our capabilities in theatre. Our Chinooks recently provided critical support to operations, one of which saw 2,000 Canadian, U.S. and Afghan troops working together to disrupt insurgent activities in districts of the Kandahar region. Thanks to newly deployed air capability, our men and women in uniform were able to quickly extend their reach, hitting the enemy ahead of their traditional offensive season. We interfered with the insurgents' ability to plan and coordinate operations in the near term.

Weapons, ammunition and components for improvised explosive devices were seized. It is estimated that up to 50 of these explosive devices were prevented from threatening our troops, Canadian civilian personnel and Afghans. This is just one step in helping to create the security environment essential to Afghan reconstruction and development.

When I was there for Christmas, we had the opportunity to visit with hundreds of Canadian troops and I can tell the House that the morale we saw was absolutely exceptional. The determination and dedication to the mission was absolutely exceptional. We should all be extremely proud of what they have done. We had a chance to visit the new air wing and a chance to fly on the Chinooks. They are incredibly proud of that new capability and I can say that the soldiers on the ground are incredibly grateful to have that capability with them as well.

It was raised a few minutes ago by some members across the way that things are no better for women now than they were under the Taliban. That is patently untrue. Under the Taliban, there were not approximately 500,000 women starting businesses with microloans, a lot of that money coming from Canada. There were certainly no women in the Afghan parliament because there was no Afghan parliament. It has not been easy but to say that women are no better off now than they were under the Taliban is completely misleading and false.

*Government Orders*

Children are another group of citizens in Afghanistan who are much better off now. Tough as it may be, they are much better off now than they ever were under the Taliban.

[*Translation*]

As we all know, the Canadian Forces' mission in Kandahar will end in 2011. Parliament has been very clear about that. Between now and then, our soldiers will continue to work closely with the Afghan National Security Forces. Our goal is to enable the Government of Afghanistan to take increasing responsibility for its own security. Our soldiers have a tough job to do, and our government is working hard to keep them safe and to make their work as easy as possible.

[*English*]

As Canadians, we need to keep the hard work of our men and women of the Canadian Forces in mind. We need to remember that Canadians in uniform who are far from home are working on our behalf, keeping us safe, keeping Afghans safe and keeping the world safe. We especially need to remember the families and friends of these people of whom we ask so much and who do so much for us as we participate in this evening's debate.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I have watched and listened carefully to all the government speeches this evening in this important debate and one cannot help but be struck by the core of the message, which is, yes, we are making progress. I do not think we would deny that on this side of the House.

However, we are more worried about what appears to be an absence of leadership on behalf of this country. We hear that all appears to be the same and that nothing can really be improved here. I think Canadians can be forgiven for being confused. Just a year ago, the Prime Minister was using unfortunate language saying that we would never cut and run, to more recently saying that we cannot win.

The resolution was passed a year ago. Another huge change was the difference in tone, approach and, I would argue, sophistication coming from a democratic administration in Washington under President Obama.

As Canada moves to The Hague for these meetings, could the parliamentary secretary tell us what are we bringing to the table as a sovereign nation that is different from the resolution crafted by the official opposition a year and some months ago? Are we talking now more thoroughly about conflict resolution systems? What are we seeking to achieve as an outcome at The Hague? We know the 2011 timeline. Parliament has ratified the resolution. Where is the Canadian leadership as we move now to deal with changed circumstances at home, where the Prime Minister has announced that we cannot win, to the arrival of President Obama and changes there?

● (2005)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Madam Chair, I will offer perhaps a dose of reality. I think my hon. colleague will find that American foreign policy will change very little, from the realities of the previous administration to the realities of this administration, because the realities of the world have not changed.

When the hon. member talks about what Canada will bring to the meeting in The Hague, what we will bring is the leadership we have shown in Afghanistan, the leadership we have shown in being one of the members of the Afghanistan Compact, and the leadership we have shown among the Allies in ISAF. We will bring the respect of the United Nations and the respect certainly of the ISAF coalition, the 40-odd countries that are there. Canada has played a very leading role in all areas, including militarily.

My colleague was right that it was the Liberals who sent Canada there in the first place, frankly under-equipped. We have taken on that cause. They are now one of the best equipped forces over there. They have done tremendous work, not just in combat with the Taliban but in terms of development, in terms of helping the fledgling Afghan government to get more mature, to do simple things like run meetings. We have contributed tremendously to the progress so far.

We are under no illusions that there is not a lot of progress or a lot of work to be done. The simple fact is that we have never said this mission was winnable by military means alone. It has always been a transition.

We talk about the three Ds. To be honest and to be fair, diplomacy may well be the most important of those three Ds. However, we cannot do the other two Ds, diplomacy and development, without defence. It is just not possible, and I think my hon. colleague agrees with that.

We are bringing seven-odd years of a very strong track record of a lot of progress, and admittedly a lot of challenges. It has not all been straight-line progress for sure. We are bringing all that to the table. We are acknowledged as leaders in Afghanistan. We are acknowledged as leaders in that whole mission, and that is the credibility and respect that we will be bringing to the table.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Madam Chair, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his intervention. Notwithstanding his comments about some of the things that have recently happened in Afghanistan and the importance of the men and women who are there on our behalf, he would also acknowledge that the situation has deteriorated, be it for those who are serving, and we have seen the consequences of that, or in terms of the civilian toll.

The civilian toll is up again in 2008. Security is down. Corruption is up.

He knows that our Prime Minister has acknowledged publicly on American airwaves that this is not a conflict that can be won militarily, notwithstanding his suggestion that the Conservatives have always stated that. Certainly if that were the case, I do not think that was the perception of most Canadians.

I mentioned in my own comments that thankfully the rhetoric has toned down when people put forward other ideas.

I am honestly trying to get from the parliamentary secretary his own view and the government's view. In light of the fact that we are going to The Hague to engage with other partners, is he saying that it is steady as she goes, that we do not really have anything new to offer?

*Government Orders*

If that is the case, fine. That is a straightforward position. It would be a surprising one and an unfortunate one for most Canadians, but is he saying basically that we will just stick to our knitting, things are fine, Canada has done everything well, and when we go to The Hague we will just tell everyone what a great job we are doing, so do what Canada is doing and we will get out of this conflict? Is that his position, or is there something else that we will hear from Canada in The Hague on Tuesday?

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Madam Chair, that is not what I said at all. I said the mission has evolved and the mission continues to evolve. Every mission, every conflict evolves, and we will go along with that evolution.

We will be there at The Hague with our partners. We will be offering guidance. We will be offering our experience, which is considerable in all the areas we talked about, the three Ds, if we want to call them that.

We have a lot of experience to offer. We have a lot of guidance and leadership to offer. We also have ears to listen to our allies, which we have been doing all along.

This is not just Canada but 60 nations in the Afghanistan Compact. There are 40-odd countries on the ground in Afghanistan, and many more countries around the world are interested in what is going on there.

No, we will go there and we will play the role we have always played, which is to work in collaboration and cooperation with all of our allies on all fronts. We will be a strong partner in the progress and the evolution of this mission towards a successful conclusion. Successful means, in our case, leaving Afghanistan better than we found it, leaving them with a better grasp of their own security, and leaving them with a brighter future than they had under the Taliban.

• (2010)

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** Madam Chair, I am proud to have the opportunity tonight to take part and ask a question in this debate. I know the hon. parliamentary secretary well. He has served with our Canadian Forces. It is indeed a pleasure to serve in the House of Commons with him.

I am also proud to represent two great military bases in our country, Edmonton Garrison and 4 Wing Cold Lake, which have sent men and women to Afghanistan.

In representing them, I am able to discuss the mission in Afghanistan with these brave men and women on a weekly basis. One of the things I often hear from them is how they have changed lives in Afghanistan, and in doing that, have helped change the country.

This is a story that I do not think we hear enough, and I would like the parliamentary secretary to elaborate on the fact that when people talk about development and some of the development dollars, it is often our military that is doing this great work.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Madam Chair, I appreciate the question from my hon. colleague and the great work he does in the defence communities in Cold Lake and Edmonton, as well as his other duties in the House.

We hear a lot about the three Ds, and we hear a lot about the impression people have that the military is only out there tracking down the Taliban, fighting, shooting guns and killing people. It is absolutely untrue. I have been there when they delivered aid, something as simple as packages of school books, and so on, to children in Afghanistan. The look on those kids' faces is absolutely incredible. They clutch those school bags like they are the most important possessions in their lives, which in fact they are.

That is just one microcosm of the kinds of things that go on there. Canadian soldiers are out there providing aid in the Afghan villages, providing medical aid, providing clinics and inoculating Afghan children against polio.

About 85% of the people who are treated in the Role 3 hospital in Kandahar are not military at all. They are Afghan civilians who would not get that kind of treatment if Canada were not there. That is not something that people often talk about in the media and I am not sure why.

I agree with my colleague that those are the kinds of stories that need to get out. That is the rest of the story. I want Canadians to form an opinion on the mission in Afghanistan, but I want them to form it with all of the information, not just the vision of flag-covered coffins coming home to Trenton. That is a very tragic and real part of the story, but the other real part includes the women who have jobs and attend Parliament, the children who go to school and now have health care. Now 80% of Afghans have basic health care, compared to 10% about five years ago.

There are countless stories like that, and Canadians need to be aware of them.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Madam Chair, next Tuesday, March 31, the International Conference on Afghanistan will take place in The Hague, bringing together the foreign ministers of the various countries involved in the security and reconstruction operations in Afghanistan. It is expected that the discussions will focus on the future of the mission and the election scheduled for August. The Bloc Québécois is glad that this meeting is being held, but circumspect about the decisions that will come out of it.

For more than two years, the Bloc has been asking the Conservative government to hold an international conference on Afghanistan. We feel that such a conference should look at reconstruction efforts, international development assistance, the problem of poppy cultivation and the issue of security in Afghanistan. Such a conference should involve Afghanistan's neighbours, including Pakistan, Iran, Iraq and China.

The Conservative government has always refused to hold such an international conference, despite repeated requests from the Bloc Québécois. But since U. S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton suggested that such a conference be held, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has said he is very much in favour of such a meeting. It is pathetic to see how the minister jumps at suggestions from foreign countries, but dismisses suggestions from the elected members of this Parliament.

*Government Orders*

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs plan to take the lead at this conference and remember that Canada, as the fourth-largest contributor of troops, should use its political weight in the decision-making process on the future of the international mission in Afghanistan? Can we hope that Quebecers' and Canadians' foreign affairs representative will raise the issues crucial to the success of the mission: respecting human rights, directing humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable people and strengthening institutions and the democratic process?

Security in Afghanistan is vital to restoring peace, as is holding transparent, democratic elections. According to the latest UN data, the security situation has deteriorated considerably in 2009, despite the reinforcement of international and Afghan forces. In an interview with *La Presse*, Brigadier General Denis Thompson of the Canadian Forces stated:

—the sense of security has plummeted among the people of Kandahar in recent months. The surveys we have conducted show that people's sense of security dropped from 55% to 30% during my term. Clearly, that is a failure.

Furthermore, the area under Taliban control continues to grow, and the areas considered difficult in 2007 have since fallen under Taliban governance. The Bloc Québécois insists that the current Canadian mission in Afghanistan not be extended beyond 2011. The Canadian government must respect the will of Parliament and withdraw the Canadian Forces from all combat zones, particularly the Kandahar region.

However, it would be irresponsible to continue the international mission in the same way without changing it or accepting any criticism. The Manley report echoed the Bloc Québécois' argument. That report criticizes the military approach taken by the Conservatives and confirms what the Bloc has always said about rebalancing the mission. The report states:

It is essential to adjust funding and staffing imbalances between the heavy Canadian military commitment in Afghanistan and the comparatively lighter civilian commitment to reconstruction, development ...

As the Canadian Prime Minister also said during the American president's visit, Canada will continue making even greater strides in terms of economic development. The Manley report also states that the Afghan insurgency cannot be defeated by military force alone. The former foreign affairs minister repeatedly recommends using a diplomatic approach with Afghanistan's neighbours in order to include them in development.

Does the Canadian government plan to use this meeting as an opportunity to promote a diplomatic approach, knowing that the porous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan continues to be one of the main problems?

• (2015)

The Taliban controls the tribal zones in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, which borders the two countries. We must increase diplomatic pressure on the Pakistani government. That country's involvement is indispensable if we want to achieve our objectives. The truth is, we have not made much progress to date. Even American President Barack Obama said that greater emphasis must be placed on diplomacy and development in Afghanistan in order to defeat the insurrection.

The Conservative government drapes itself in the values of democracy and humanitarian action when promoting the Canadian military operation in Afghanistan. The minister himself has insisted, on many occasions, here in this House, that the Canadian mission was not just military, but that its purpose was also to strengthen political authority and the idea of democracy in that country. Unfortunately, the reality on the ground is quite different. If the Conservative government is so wrapped up in the values of democracy and security, what does it have to say to Mr. Michel Lambert, executive director and co-founder of Alternatives in Montreal, who recently stated that phase 1 of the program to develop democracy and civil society will come to an end next Tuesday, March 31; that phase 2 of the program has not yet received the nod from CIDA; and that, even worse, a number of CIDA officials have clearly admitted that the social and democratic aspects were not a priority for the Conservative government in Afghanistan?

It is also essential that we place development assistance at the top of the Government of Canada's priorities. Afghanistan is one of the main recipients of Canadian development assistance. Canada can do more by considerably increasing its development assistance envelope.

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs plan on introducing this matter at the conference in The Hague and making it a priority for his government?

In his report, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon revealed that the status of Afghan women remains one of the most deplorable in the world. Women in public life have faced an escalation of threats and discrimination. You will recall the senior female officer, the most visible in the Afghan police force, who was assassinated in Kandahar in September 2008. Women who aspire to senior positions in that country are still taking a serious risk. A large percentage of women and children continue to suffer physical and sexual violence. The proportion of girls who go to school has declined over the past two years and women's participation in the labour force decreased from 26% to 22% in 2007.

Afghans will go to the polls in August 2009. Is the Canadian government considering sending Canadian observers for this election?

In closing, since 2007, the Bloc Québécois has been asking the government to rebalance the mission because the military path alone will not lead to victory. When we made this request, the Conservative government accused us of being on the terrorists' side. Now, in 2009, the government has admitted that military operations alone will not result in victory. If the Prime Minister had listened to our suggestions to rebalance the mission from the start, perhaps we would not be at this point today.

• (2020)

[English]

**Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my hon. colleagues for their reports on the current situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank the opposition members for their concern about the future of the mission and the lives of our brave men and women.

*Government Orders*

I personally would like to convey my deep appreciation for our troops who sacrifice to help people in need half a world away. This willingness to step up to the plate and answer the call of service for Canada is something of which we can all be proud.

Unfortunately we are still facing a formidable enemy in Afghanistan. When Canadian lives are lost, we mourn them, we honour them, and we move forward in their name. The good work we are doing in Afghanistan and the results we are achieving are proof of this.

We have already heard from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and my colleagues the parliamentary secretaries for national defence and foreign affairs. As part of our whole of government approach, it is crucial that national defence, foreign affairs and the Canadian International Development Agency continue to work together. This collaboration helps enable development and reconstruction in the hope of a better future for Afghans and a safer world for Canadians.

CIDA has set out six clear priorities by which we can also assess the work that we are doing in Afghanistan. We are focused on achieving results on three signature projects. One of Canada's six priorities for moving forward on Afghanistan is to help strengthen the Afghan government's ability to provide basic services, such as jobs, education, and water services to the residents of Kandahar province.

In achieving this goal, we are moving ahead on each of our three signature projects: the rehabilitation of the Dahla dam, working toward the eradication of polio, and building or repairing 50 schools in Kandahar province.

The minister was in Afghanistan in January. I am proud to say that during her visit, she launched the implementation phase of the Dahla dam project along with our Afghan partners. Canadians can also be proud that in an international competition, two engineering firms, SNC-Lavalin and Hydrosult, won the contract to spearhead the work on the Dahla dam.

In line with our goal inevitably to leave Afghanistan to the Afghans, with this project we are also creating jobs for the Afghans. In fact, with the necessary preliminary infrastructure work, such as access roads and bridges, local Afghans are already at work with our commitment. We will create up to 10,000 new jobs in the future. Barriers to employment and other economic opportunities remain a challenge. We are addressing the root causes of such barriers.

Afghanistan has some of the lowest educational levels in the world. It is estimated that half of all Afghan children do not go to school, but we are working to change this. We are making much progress on the education signature project to build and repair 50 schools in the key districts in Kandahar. Although serious security challenges remain, 22 schools are now under construction.

Adult literacy and vocational training programs are also continuing. In fact, in January, almost 11,000 students, most of them female, graduated from a 10 month literacy training course held in Kandahar. Vocational training courses continue for 470 students, and we are also planning for the long term. Canada will train up to 3,000 teachers and that will ensure more children can go to school long into the future. Canadian efforts, by focusing on education, are changing the reality on the ground for Afghan boys and girls, giving

the future generations opportunities unimaginable only seven years ago.

All Canadians do their part. I am so proud to mention a young girl, Alaina Podmorrow, who was honoured by my minister last month for founding Little Women 4 Little Women, a not-for-profit organization here in Canada that raises money to pay for teachers' salaries in Afghanistan. This girl caught the vision of only \$750 a year paying for a woman teacher teaching girls and she acted on it.

● (2025)

The third signature project I would like to highlight is our polio eradication project. Afghanistan is one of only four countries in the world where polio remains endemic. As part of the polio eradication signature project, Canada has supported three polio vaccination campaigns. I can report that 7.1 million children have been vaccinated in the last three months, including 370,000 who reside in Kandahar. That is an amazing number.

On the economic front, we are making a difference. In Kandahar province, 126 new micro-finance loans were made in this quarter, and a new investment in a micro-finance co-operative was established. More than 1,000 small and medium size businesses are now operating in Kandahar city.

The security situation, especially as it relates to progress on development and reconstruction, is part of the reason that security has to continue and to be strengthened so that our aid workers can get the job done. That is why we are also working with the Afghan police helping to build their capacity so when our troops are no longer in Afghanistan, our important development work can continue. I note that just last week we renewed this commitment with 50 new RCMP officers who will go to Afghanistan.

The work of the international community is greatly valued by Afghanistan. The work of Canadians especially brings hope to the people of Afghanistan. On the Dahla dam, we are not only bringing Canadian expertise to Afghanistan to remove an economic bottleneck, we are also creating jobs for Afghans.

On supporting Afghan education, we are currently the lead donor to the national education program. We are supporting the government of Afghanistan in its rollout of its national education strategy in Kandahar.

On the elimination of polio, Canada is the largest single international donor in this area, and in this quarter alone, as I said, we administered over seven million vaccinations.

While serious challenges do remain, encouraging signs also persist. From the strong support at the community level for the Dahla dam rehabilitation project to the co-operation between our troops and the Afghan police, we are moving in the right direction.

As we look ahead, our work on all these priorities will continue. Our ultimate goal remains the same: to leave Afghanistan to the Afghans in a country that is better governed, more peaceful and more secure.

*Government Orders*

• (2030)

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's contribution tonight.

When we look at the case of Afghanistan, clearly the problems did not begin just in 2001. The problems were around before that. He mentioned the health concerns and the contributions of the world in the past to deal with some of those issues, like polio, where a lot of progress has been made. In fact, progress has been made in areas under Taliban control.

I want to refer to the UN reports about the success in fighting polio in the past. The 1999 report underlines various things such as the concerns for human rights, conflict, what should be done about opium and the progress of women. On the progress of fighting polio, 3.5 million children of the age of five and under have been treated, and that is good. We have made progress in these areas and we continue to do that.

I am underlining this because these attempts have been made before. The result in the end was not stability. The result was that we still had a problem in the country. When I refer to the 1999 report, all the progress that had been made was been lost because the world community did not stay engaged to ensure stability.

Therefore, notwithstanding our lauding of our projects, at the end of the day, and he intimated this at the end of his comments, it matters not that Canada can do good work right now. More important, it matters that the work remains. To do that, does the my colleague not believe that Canada should go to the next step and provide that diplomatic muscle to ensure stability?

When it goes to The Hague on Tuesday, what will Canada do to ensure that the good work done to date, the good work done in the past and the work contemplated for the future will remain so we will not find ourselves 10 years from now talking about trying to rebuild and help the people of Afghanistan yet again?

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** Mr. Chair, the hon. member is correct that there were problems and have been continuous problems since 2001. He noted the advancements we made on polio, going back six to eight years ago. He also made note of the fact that in 1999 there were human rights issues and conflicts with women.

I am encouraged about the continued progress. I was very proud two years ago to stand with seven or eight of the women who came to Canada from Afghanistan as legislators, people who would be equivalent to members of the House of Commons. I am sure he would agree that there has been some excellent forward motion on that issue.

If the member and I have a difference of opinion, it might be on the fact that I see it more as the Afghan society, as with Canadian and all societies, being a living organism. We can move forward but we have to secure our position as we do that. We have to be careful that we are feeding that forward motion. There is always a problem that, as he put it, all could be lost.

What would happen if the world were to back away from Afghanistan at this point? We only need to look at Afghanistan 10 years ago to see the answer to the question. Afghanistan became a

breeding place for terrorists and that came to our side of the Atlantic. The fact is that would happen again if we backed away.

The hon. member has asked a very valuable question. What is Canada doing now, and what can it do into the future? I believe the most important thing Canada as a nation can do, not only for the people of Afghanistan but for the world and especially the people of Canada, is to ensure we train, equip, motivate and give tools to the people of Afghanistan so they can stand on their own feet and do not continue to be subjected to the kind of demagoguery within the Taliban. We want the people of Afghanistan to have their own army and police force so they can stand on their own.

It is the reason that Canada, through CIDA and the RCMP, has equipped people in the police force in Haiti. There is a mirror image of what Canada is attempting to do in Afghanistan.

There are also the issues of jails and enforcement. We are ensuring that we will not fall back and Afghans will be fully equipped so they can live lives of their choosing.

• (2035)

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I am pleased to have an opportunity to join in this debate.

I am very glad to see that there is a debate tonight, what is called in our Parliament a "take note debate". In other words, there will not be a vote on the matter but, because it is a matter of such great importance, Parliament sees fit to debate the matter and hear the views of all members who wish to participate on a matter of great national importance.

I congratulate the member for Ottawa Centre for bringing this matter to the House and thank the government for recognizing its importance and concurring in the need for a debate of this nature.

As we all know, the war in Afghanistan has cost Canadians very dearly. One hundred and sixteen Canadians have lost their lives in this conflict. We all share in the sorrow and the searing loss that their families have endured while doing their duty on behalf of their country. We all commend them for taking on this task on our behalf and doing their duty as asked of them by the government.

That does not mean that there are not differing views on what the mission in Afghanistan should be but it should not be the occasion for demagoguery, as I heard mentioned a little while ago. It should be the occasion for mature debate about the options that are available to us.

We have reached a very significant watershed in this country in this debate over the last few months. Indeed, throughout the world there has come to be a recognition that another way has to be found to see peace and prosperity in Afghanistan. It is important that we not miss this opportunity and that, therefore, we ought to use every means that we can to support the peace process.

I do not want to get into a debate or insult one side or the other about the suggestions that we have brought forward. The notion of an envoy, for example, has been brought forward. It is in the resolution that was passed by the House of Commons in March of last year. The Americans have an envoy, Mr. Holbrooke. So, an envoy is something that could be considered.

*Government Orders*

The UN conference itself, of course, is the bringing together of nations that are interested and that have played a role in trying to support the Afghan people and bring about a resolution. That is important, too.

As has been said here, the importance of having leaders of states and delegates of the United Nations participate is extremely important. There will not be a solution to the Afghanistan problem without leaders of states being involved, and that must include countries like Pakistan. There can be no peace in Afghanistan without the participation of Pakistan but that will take an effort of diplomacy, international co-operation and international persuasion, if I may use that term.

However, we do see some change in the climate and in the attitude toward Afghanistan and a more balanced approach, and we welcome that change. As my colleague from Churchill mentioned earlier, we do want to see Canada play a role that it prides itself in and that it tells its children and young people to be proud of, that Canada can play a significant role for peace in our world. We have done so in the past and may we continue forever to do so.

The suggestions that have been made by the member for Ottawa South and by our leader in a recent article in the *National Post* are ones that try to encourage the peace process by whatever means that could be helpful.

● (2040)

We do know that, despite progress, the situation in Afghanistan is in fact getting worse. We recognize now that it is militarily unlikely, if not impossible, to defeat the insurgents. Unfortunately, this type of military activity in fact breeds more recruits to the other side. It happened in Vietnam and it is happening in Afghanistan today. This is why there is a need now for the international community, be it the surge of the United States or other efforts, to increase the number of troops before we go further down the wrong path before we can find a solution.

The suggestion of having eminent persons involved is one piece of the puzzle. None of this is all or nothing. I do not think we should stand here tonight and tear apart other people's ideas to move toward peace in Afghanistan and to develop a peace process that can have contributions not just from the diplomatic community and leaders of states but also from people who have knowledge of and respect for the multitude of people in Afghanistan itself.

It is not just helping the government of Afghanistan in a top down way to be more competent in managing the country, better accounting I think we heard it called earlier tonight. It is a laudable goal to have a better society. It was Robert Gates in the states who said that we are not going to build a democratic Valhalla in Afghanistan. It is just not realistic. We are talking about institutions that have taken our country and others hundreds and hundreds of years to develop. Let us face it, we are dealing with a country that is undeveloped by definition. It is backward, one might say, if we think that we are the pinnacle of progress.

There is an enormously high degree of illiteracy. It is a country with a population of 22 million people, 14 million of whom are under the age of 18, with a life expectancy of 43. Only 23% of the people have access to safe drinking water and 12% to sanitation.

There is a very long way to go and it may take decades and decades of development assistance, even under the most peaceful of circumstances, to bring that country forward to the level where more and more people have access to education, schools and safe water.

There is a very long way to go on the development side, but it cannot be done while fighting insurgents who are encouraged to join this force because of the nature of the war going on around them. We have to find a way.

The question is about Canada's next step. Suggestions have been made about an eminent persons group and I will not repeat them. My colleague, the member for Ottawa Centre, has spent a lot of time thinking about these things and working on ideas. We in the NDP do not invent all these ideas, as has been said. We do not claim pride of ownership, but I think we bring to the debate something very important.

What can the eminent persons that we have suggested do to help? They have the context and previous experience that could open new avenues of dialogue with the key constituents and affected parties in Afghanistan. They can establish a basis for more formal talks. This is what is important. We need formal talks. There will have to be direct negotiations.

The group would have many advantages by broadening the scope of diplomacy and including more external actors. It would ensure the scope of engagement includes the people of Afghanistan themselves, not just the international players, because at the end of the day it is the people of Afghanistan who have the biggest stake in the peace and prosperity of their country. We need to have the women of Afghanistan involved and civil society representatives, not just the warring factions or those who happen to lead the Taliban these days or the warlords or others who have a stake on the ground.

It would maximize the engagement with the moderate elements of the insurgency, including those who are fighting with Taliban not for ideological reasons but for food and money to support their families. We need targeted engagement critical to isolating the small percentage of extremist ideologues among the insurgents. These were some proposals in an article by the NDP leader in last week's *National Post*.

● (2045)

These are important elements that need to be brought into this peace process and we have promoted that idea as one that would help and would engage us down this difficult path to achieving peace in Afghanistan because that is what we need to have. We need to have it happen quickly.

I know my time is up and I hope I can add some more in the questions and comments, but it appears my 10 minute section is up right now.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I want to make sure that people understand that when the NDP keeps talking about peace it is giving the wrong impression that peace can topple the insurgents. If we look at the history of what is happening there, groups such as the Taliban have very extreme views. They were responsible for killing the former prime minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto.

*Government Orders*

Today Pakistan has a democratic government. We keep saying there is some kind of unified force of other insurgents that we can talk to, however, even yesterday those who wanted to bring peace in the northwest Pakistan regions have committed suicide bombings and are killing anyone who advocates peace because it is not in their interests to have peace.

So we must be extremely careful when we talk about peace because we do not want to give the impression that every Taliban out there is willing to come to the table and talk about peace. Yes, there have been reconciliation efforts. Yes, there are ongoing reconciliation efforts and it would be good, but we would still find hardcore Taliban who will not give on human rights. They have an extreme ideology and are not interested in peace because that is not what they want. So let us be very, very careful.

Regarding the eminent persons that the NDP keeps talking about, we have to be very careful that the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon and all these people who are working collectively, do not start creating centres where our diplomatic efforts get dissipated. That is only one of the issues. We need to be extremely careful when putting forward ideas that we do not dilute the situation there. I want to make that very clear, so that those who are listening understand that we do have a very complex situation and it is not as easy as the NDP wants to project.

● (2050)

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Mr. Chair, I do not want the parliamentary secretary to mistake our position either. We recognize that there are extremists who will never come to the table and never seek peace, just as now, although there is peace in Northern Ireland after a long struggle, there are still extremists who in the last two weeks have killed people with a bomb. That is going to happen. We are never, ever going to eliminate that.

However, there are unfortunately growing elements who are working with and fighting with the Taliban now who have no interest whatsoever in the extremist ideology that breeds the kind of violence the member is talking about. Who are the elements who can be part of the peace process? I think the eminent persons are the group who, in addition to the diplomatic efforts and under the auspices of the UN, would be able to help that process by building some support that would lead to a formal process.

We are not being naive about this at all. We know we are never going to get rid of all extremists, but we need to isolate them to the point that those who are not part of that group are able to be part of the peace process.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I want to clarify for the parliamentary secretary what was stated by my colleague regarding our position. As he said, it is not the NDP position; it is something we brought to this debate. After all, that is what our jobs are. We would have people who had already done this

work talk to people in the neighbourhood who understand and who would be looking to the better interests of Afghanistan and not to undermine peace and stability. As I mentioned in my speech, it is people like Mr. Brahimi who could do that. He knows that Bonn was coordinated by Mr. Brahimi. Is he saying that he does not think Mr. Brahimi is a good person to do the job? I do not think so. Does he think that this would not be under the auspices of the UN? I do not think so.

I want to clarify for him that our position is to advance this idea. It is an idea that has been advanced by others. He has heard it at committee. We do not have to subscribe to just having a Canadian envoy. We believe there are enough envoys in Kabul right now. What we do need is a Canadian idea to bring to the table, as my colleague from Newfoundland has said, to advance the prospect of peace and diplomacy and continue the Canadian tradition of diplomacy.

Our role here is to convince the government to make sure we have something to bring to the table in The Hague. What we are bringing to the table is the idea of more diplomacy under the auspices of the UN to advance the cause of peace in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Mr. Chair, we do have something to bring to the table. In fact there is a person who happens to be a Canadian who has a great deal of experience in this field, who can provide understanding and who has a contribution to make.

It is in furthering the tradition of Canada playing a leading role in diplomatic efforts at peace worldwide that we made this suggestion, because it is something that would bring about a greater opportunity for peace. We should not miss this chance. With the new administration in Washington, it can go two ways. We could conceivably take the wrong path by seeing the United States increase its troops which could increase the counterinsurgency to the extent that is happening now. Part of why we are going downhill is that more people are coming out, because of what are regarded as the negative aspects in Afghanistan. A force from outside the country, either an enemy force or an occupying force or just merely foreigners are not readily welcome in Afghanistan. Initially the Americans were welcomed to drive the Taliban out, but the increasing activity over the last number of years has started to turn sour with a lot of people and the Taliban are rising as a result of that.

● (2055)

**The Chair:** There being no further members rising, pursuant to order made Wednesday, March 25, under the provisions of Standing Order 53.1, the committee will rise and I will leave the chair.

(Government Business No. 2 reported)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 8:56 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24.

(The House adjourned at 8:56 p.m.)







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**Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons**

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