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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, April 29, 2009

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 29, 2009

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[English]

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

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

HURON—BRUCE

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to recognize one of Canada's greatest tourist destinations.

Huron—Bruce borders on Lake Huron and boasts over 100 kilometres of coastline, with world-class beaches and breathtaking sunsets. From the lighthouse tours stretching from Point Clark north, with stops in Kincardine and Saugeen Shores, and at the century-old Huron Country Playhouse barn, to the historic heritage of Goderich, Huron—Bruce is the ultimate tourist destination offering activities for all four seasons. Tourists can hike the renowned Maitland Trail, golf at the multitude of golf courses, dock at the picturesque Bayfield marina, experience a play at the Blyth Festival, or spend a night at the beautiful Benmiller Inn.

I encourage all members and their constituents to visit Huron—Bruce and experience Ontario's west coast.

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EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the country is plunging headfirst into a major recession and yet the government seems to have its head stuck in the sand with regard to those workers who are losing their jobs.

I have a constituent I shall refer to as “Sam”. Sam, unfortunately, lost his job and is informed by EI authorities that he is only entitled to 32 weeks of benefits, but if he lived in other areas outside of Toronto, he would be eligible for a much greater period of benefits.

The government says that the eligibility rules will change with regional unemployment numbers, but that answer does nothing for those caught in the middle.

When will the government take concrete measures, on top of the five-week extension, to help hard-working Canadians survive this economic turmoil? Or is it a matter of the Conservatives just do not care?

* * *

• (1405)

[Translation]

ERNEST BOURGAULT

Mr. Nicolas Dufour (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on April 9, 2009, at Rideau Hall, the Governor General presented Ernest Bourgault with an award for being the only surviving founder of one scout troop. Mr. Bourgault founded the Charlemagne scout troop in 1943.

Originally from Saskatchewan, Mr. Bourgault has been an ardent defender of French language and culture for over half a century. He has written two extensive autobiographies, one of which, *Le grand nettoyage canadien*, recounts the epic struggle he and his wife, Gilberte Châtelain, had to wage against the Government of Saskatchewan in order to have their family educated in French. A sovereignist at heart, in 1967 he participated in the founding meeting of the Mouvement souveraineté-association, the predecessor of the Parti Québécois.

As the member of Parliament for Repentigny, I would like to personally congratulate Mr. Bourgault on receiving that award. The determination he and his wife have shown serves as an excellent example for francophones outside Quebec and for all sovereignists.

* * *

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been an unacceptable struggle for many aboriginal mothers to pass status to their children. For over 20 years, Sharon McIvor has fought for the sake of all aboriginal women and their descendants.

As the daughter of a status Indian woman and a non-status Indian man, McIvor's children were not recognized as status. In 1985 the court ruled that this was discriminatory based on gender and contravened international conventions on human rights and the Canadian charter.

Statements by Members

This month Justice Groberman found Bill C-31 to be discriminatory as the status was still biased toward patrilineal lines for children born before 1985. Groberman declared section 6(1)(a) and (c) of the Indian Act to be of no force and effect.

The government has one year to address the gender discrimination in the law.

It is time for the current government to take a positive stand for aboriginal women and once and for all end discrimination against women and their children.

* * *

[Translation]

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every day across Canada, thousands of people work behind the scenes to ensure the success of many projects. They deserve our thanks not only during National Volunteer Week, but every day.

[English]

Last Wednesday, April 22, I had the honour of hosting Phyllis Mayers and 90 other deserving volunteers from Ottawa—Orléans who gave of themselves in selfless service to others.

[Translation]

They are devoted, passionate and convinced we can make our communities better.

[English]

They work in arenas, in libraries, in community centres, in churches, and on soccer fields.

[Translation]

They are coaches, music teachers and our community leaders.

[English]

They deserve our recognition, but most of all, they deserve our admiration and our thanks.

[Translation]

I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to these volunteers.

[English]

To those who make this country strong, vibrant and free, our hearts of gold.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once in a while in this job, members get to do something that is unambiguously good.

A medical team in Angola, under the direction of Dr. Michael Bentley-Taylor and Dr. Stephen Foster, determined that a little two and a half year old girl needed a heart operation. She qualified for assistance under the Herbie program at the Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto. Unfortunately, at the last minute, visa problems arose.

The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, to his great credit, along with his staff member, Kennedy Hong, were exceedingly helpful. My staff, Shawn Boyle and Layla Sharif, worked very hard to ensure that she arrived safe and sound in Toronto.

On April 13, little Royana had her life-saving operation. I am pleased to report to the House that she is making slow and steady progress to full recovery.

I thank the minister, his staff, my staff and our colleagues for their support and timely intervention.

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been hearing about the kitchen cabinet the Liberals have formed and here is what we have had a taste of:

Last fall they cooked up a carbon tax and gave Canadians a serious case of election indigestion. It turns out the coalition sandwich was not a hot item on the menu either.

Come budget day, the Liberals got themselves into a real stew when they allowed a distinctly regional flavour to prevail over other important ingredients. One would have thought an opposition could cobble together a recipe to help Canadians.

I guess that is why for dessert the next day the Liberals whipped themselves into a voting frenzy and rightly supported this government's bold economic action plan. Now we know what the main entree is: tax hike à la carte.

GST, carbon tax and personal income tax are available at the Liberals' tax and spend buffet. Frankly, it sounds to me like the only thing being prepared in the Liberal kitchen cabinet is a bunch of baloney sandwiches.

Canadians have placed their order with this government and have asked for a fair slice of the economic action plan. That is what we are delivering.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

EDUCATION

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, March 23 marked the opening of the Maison Familiale Rurale du Bas-Saint-Laurent, the fifth of its kind in North America, and the first in our area. It is located in Saint-Clément in the les Basques RCM.

The opening of this rural family centre represents a major turning point in the region and will have a positive impact on the education of young people aged 15 to 18. There are three areas of specialization available; dairy, beef and maple syrup production, as well as A general course for any student with an interest in this novel way of learning.

This new alternative education approach will allow about twenty students to alternate work and school and will most certainly have a positive effect on the drop-out rate.

This developmental project in the les Basques RCM was a joint effort of three school boards: Fleuve-et-des-Lacs, les Phares and Kamouraska-Rivière-du-Loup. My congratulations to the hardworking team that has worked for many years toward the culmination of this project.

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY LEADER

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cat is out of the bag. Despite his desperate efforts, the Liberal member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore can hide his intentions no longer. He wants to increase the taxation of Canadians during a full-blown economic crisis. He admits to being a free-spending Liberal ready to wring the last drop out of Canadian families' pocketbooks in order to achieve his goals. He has also stated "We will have to raise taxes."

What taxes does he want to raise? A carbon tax? A crushing tax on businesses? We have no details on this new Liberal policy. What is the truth? What taxes would be raised? Who would be affected? How would he go about raising these taxes?

Fortunately, in these times of economic upheaval, with an economic action plan that has the backing of the Desjardins Movement and the International Monetary Fund, our Conservative government has the best economic team to help Canadian families and to protect them from the Liberals' spending vagaries.

* * *

[English]

CULHAM TRAIL

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 18 I was delighted to take part in a tree-planting event at Culham Trail in my riding of Mississauga—Streetsville to recognize Earth Day. We were honoured to have Dave Culham with us, for whom the trail was named. The Sierra Club of Peel, the City of Mississauga, Credit Valley Conservation and the Credit River Anglers Association partnered in making the outing a very successful event.

Over 80 people gathered together and planted 500 trees. We wore our earthiest clothes. We put on gloves and boots. We rolled up our sleeves and went digging in the soil and planted trees. The inspiration was knowing that the fruits of our labour would be rewarded with trees for our children and grandchildren for years to come.

I would like to thank Peter Orphanos of the Sierra Club, Lindsey Jennings of the City of Mississauga, John Kendell of the Credit River Anglers Association, Dave Beaton of Credit Valley Conservation, Mississauga city councillor George Carlson, and all the volunteers for organizing the event. I thank them all for making the day such a success.

Statements by Members

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP member for Western Arctic campaigned against the billion dollar gun registry boondoggle and then last week he forgot to vote against it.

The NDP member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River said, "I am very pleased to tell the House that for eight years, since the turn of the century—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member knows that he has to refrain from attacks on members by making statements about what they are doing. Party statements are one thing, but this is beyond that. I would urge him to switch. If he has something else to say, fine, but otherwise that is it.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise once again today to urge the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to show compassion and issue ministerial relief to one of my constituents, Mikhail Lennikov, who is appealing a deportation order.

The minister has listened to the community outcry and exercised his authority to begin the process to allow Mr. Lennikov's wife, Irina, and his 17 year old son, Dmitri, to apply for permanent residency in Canada. This is commendable. However, the deportation order for Mikhail Lennikov is still in effect and now threatens to tear the family apart. The deep and lasting pain of losing a father and husband would no doubt be devastating on Irina and Dmitri.

In the 11 years that Mr. Lennikov and his family have spent in Canada, they have proven to be nothing but outstanding citizens and a solid part of the community. Mr. Lennikov has never constituted a threat to Canadian security and has never been accused of any crime.

I urge the minister to complete what is fair and just by providing the ministerial relief required to let Mikhail Lennikov stay in Canada with his loved ones, where he belongs.

* * *

• (1415)

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Liberal leader tours the country selling and promoting his book, our Conservative government has been working hard at managing the Canadian economy.

With our economic action plan, we are reducing the tax burden on Canadian families, we are creating jobs and we are helping Canadians who are hardest hit by the global economic recession.

The Liberals have a plan, too. Recently the Liberal leader said "We will have to raise taxes". Raising taxes, imposing a job-killing carbon tax, increasing the GST and doing away with the universal child care benefit, that is the Liberal way. Can we imagine the action plan of the Liberals during tough economic times, discouraging economic growth and taxing Canadian families?

Oral Questions

Canadians have a right to know this. What taxes are the Liberal Party going to raise? How much is it going to raise them by? Which Canadians are going to be targeted? Who is going to pay?

* * *

[Translation]

OMAR KHADR

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, youth members of Amnesty International from École Thérèse-Martin in Joliette are on the Hill today with their teacher, Marcel Lacroix, to call on the Conservative government to repatriate young Omar Khadr, the child soldier who has already spent six years at Guantanamo, where he has been tortured.

The Conservatives are refusing to intervene with the American authorities on Mr. Khadr's behalf because of the judicial process that is underway. But the recent Federal Court ruling rightly points out that Omar Khadr's detention is illegal not only under international law, but also under American law. Consequently, the Canadian government's refusal to comply with the ruling and demand that Mr. Khadr be repatriated is tantamount to condoning illegality.

Despite numerous calls to repatriate Omar Khadr, this government continues to turn a deaf ear and remain insensitive to his plight. I want to pay tribute to the commitment and sensitivity of these young people from my riding, who stand in stark contrast to this government, which is clearly incapable of either commitment or sensitivity.

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CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, conventional television is going through a structural crisis. The current economic model, based on advertising revenue, no longer works, and solutions to this problem must be found. But despite the urgency of the situation, the Minister of Canadian Heritage is busier floating trial balloons than finding real solutions.

The same is true of the CBC. Less than 48 hours ago, Hubert Lacroix, CBC president and CEO, told the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage that the status quo was no longer an option and that solutions had to be found soon. This is nothing new. Everyone knows this, including the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who is refusing to budge. Why did he refuse to support the CBC when the corporation came knocking at his door?

Now, 800 jobs have been lost. But Mr. Lacroix was clear that any new decline in revenue will lead to more layoffs. How many jobs will have to be lost before the minister deigns to lift a finger? Two thousand? More? How many?

* * *

[English]

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate Israel Independence Day.

Last week I joined the March of the Living at Auschwitz and observed the hideous scene of Nazi crimes. I witnessed there the

resilience of the Jewish people, a people that has carved out of the desert one of the freest democracies on earth, in just six decades.

The Jewish state has no better friend than our Conservative Prime Minister, who has reversed the policy of his predecessors.

We were the first nation on earth to cut off aid funds to the Hamas government in Gaza, the first nation to abandon the Durban hate fest, and the only nation to block a proposed Francophonie resolution that singled out Israel.

Where once was barren sand.
Now there are trees.
Alive is the land.
The people are free.

Mazel tov and long live Israel.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week's employment insurance numbers are not good. More than 600,000 jobless Canadians had to seek benefits in February, but thousands of others remain ineligible.

The Bank of Canada says that this recession is intensifying, but the government has no contingency plan. The more the Conservatives remain in denial, the more this becomes their Conservative recession.

Would the Prime Minister confirm that an economic update is coming in September to fix, among other things, the current EI rules that exclude too many jobless Canadians?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, there will be an economic statement in the fall, as there always is. It would be too early to prejudge what will be in that statement. However, I have to take some issue with the hon. member.

Everybody knows we are part of a global recession. This government has responded with the largest stimulus package in Canadian history. We believe it is having a good effect in the Canadian economy. However, no matter how hard the Liberal Party pushes, we will not raise taxes as a solution to anything.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two and a half million Canadians remember that he said the same thing about income trusts.

The Prime Minister claims that 80% of eligible unemployed Canadians get EI benefits, but that misses the point. The point is those eligibility rules are too tight for today's reality. They were designed at the beginning of an unprecedented surge in economic growth, which lasted more than a decade. However, the surge is over and the growth has stopped. The rules do not work any more and the recession is on the Conservative watch.

Oral Questions

Will there be a fiscal update and will the Conservatives fix EI?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just answered the question. In fact, this government has already brought in important improvements to EI that make the system much more generous than the one we inherited.

When it comes to taxes, Canadians know this government cut business taxes. This government cut the GST. This government cut personal income taxes. This government allowed income splitting for our pensioners. Every time, the party of taxation, the Liberal Party, voted against those measures.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this party cut taxes by more than \$100 billion.

The Prime Minister does not seem to realize that thousands of jobless families, the Canadians who he excludes from EI, are not getting the help they need during a recession that is intensifying, that the Conservatives now own. They own it because they will not help. They peddle stupid fiction about taxes. They let CPP executives get big bonuses. They hand lucrative media contracts to George Bush lackeys in the U.S.

Why are the Conservatives more concerned about helping themselves than helping jobless Canadian families?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is interesting coming from the Liberal Party. Talk about fiction on taxes and EI. The last time we had a recession, it cut employment insurance, raised taxes and cut transfers to the provinces for health and education.

This government has done exactly the opposite, helping working Canadian families when times are tough.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are working hard to make ends meet, yet the Prime Minister has decided to give American consultants nearly \$50,000 per month to do work that members of his staff are already paid to do. That \$50,000 could help a lot of families that need employment insurance benefits but cannot get them. That \$50,000 could help a lot of families put food on the table.

Why did the Prime Minister decide to spend taxpayers' money so irresponsibly?

• (1425)

[English]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that the Liberal Party would criticize us in these times of economic uncertainty.

When there are forces of protectionism breathing down the necks of Canadian workers, the best thing we could do is employ people to fight on the front lines on our behalf.

The previous Liberal government did this. It spent more. It engaged Bill Clinton advisers. Other governments around the world spend more on this. This is nothing more than a distraction from the

Liberal Party leader's own words when he said, "We will have to raise taxes".

On this side, we will not raise taxes. We will protect Canadian jobs instead.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the Conservatives use the TV time to talk about the banking system. The hon. member will separate his shoulder patting himself on the back about the banking system, when Canadians know it was successive Liberal governments that stood up for banks.

Half of that frontbench fought tooth and nail to deregulate the banks in this country. If we had listened to them, if they had their way, we would be in the same mess as the Americans are in.

Why do they not quit playing politics and stand up for the people of this country?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals want to blame us for everything that is going on in the economy and then take credit for everything that is going right. That is an example of the Liberal hypocrisy.

We have defended our financial institutions. This party and both of its legacy parties opposed any bank mergers. That is our record. We pressured the Liberals to back down from allowing those to go ahead, but more than anything, they are trying to distract from what their Liberal leader said. He said, "We will have to raise taxes". Those were his words on April 14.

We will never raise taxes on this side. We will cut them and we will keep creating Canadian jobs.

* * *

[Translation]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with respect to harmonizing the sales tax and the GST, the Prime Minister says he wants to negotiate in good faith with the Quebec government. Yet, his Minister of Finance declared, in a letter sent to the media, that the federal government does not intend to compensate Quebec unless the federal government becomes responsible for collecting its sales tax.

How can the Prime Minister say that he wants to negotiate in good faith when his Minister of Finance has set a condition for providing compensation to Quebec?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Quebec signed an agreement with the federal government about fifteen years ago. The two levels of government respect this agreement. Since then, we have signed agreements with Ontario and the Atlantic provinces. The Minister of Finance was clear. If Quebec wants such an agreement we are prepared to negotiate in good faith.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister says that he will negotiate in good faith does this mean that Quebec must forego collecting its sales tax? The agreement was working well and even the federal government, whether Liberal or Conservative, boasted over the years that Quebec had harmonized its tax. Now they are finding all sorts of excuses to avoid giving Quebec what is being given to Ontario.

When the Prime Minister says he will negotiate in good faith does that mean that Quebec must forego collecting its sales tax, yes or no? The question is very clear. He must be able to reply.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, negotiating in good faith means negotiating with the other partner. That partner is not the Bloc Québécois; it is the Government of Quebec. We intend to negotiate with the Government of Quebec.

* * *

SECURITIES

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during a parliamentary committee meeting yesterday at the National Assembly, the Quebec finance minister and the CEO of the Autorité des marchés financiers again spoke of the efficiency of our decentralized system of securities regulation, which also has the support of the IMF, the World Bank and the OECD. They also expressed strong objections to the Conservative's plan for a single Canada-wide securities regulator.

Will the Minister of Finance give up on this totally counter-productive plan, which no one in Quebec wants?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have the most sound financial system in the world and that is the view of the World Economic Forum. Certainly, the IMF uses our financial system as one of the most sound in the world.

We have one glaring deficiency in that system. It is in the area of securities regulation, where we have 13 separate securities regulators. We will move forward, as set out in the first budget bill, with the plan for a national securities regulator with willing partners, willing provinces, and willing participants.

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec Minister of Finance and the CEO of the Autorité des marchés financiers are concerned about the potentially negative impact of creating such a single commission, in part because of the loss of expertise this would represent for Quebec.

Will the Minister of Finance admit that the purpose of this plan is to centralize the financial sector in Toronto and to strip Montreal of its expertise?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, absolutely not. The intention, with willing partners, is to create a national securities regulator to better serve the country, the Government of Canada acting within its area of jurisdiction and respecting the jurisdiction of the provinces.

I spoke with the minister of finance in Quebec just before question period. We agreed on a plan going forward with respect to negotiations concerning harmonization. I am sure we can have constructive discussions on other issues as well.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board lost \$20 billion last year. Nevertheless, its directors paid themselves multi-million dollar bonuses.

These people have played around with retirees' money and lost billions of dollars, yet they are rewarding themselves with millions of dollars. That is indecent.

Does the Prime Minister support these bonuses? Does he or does he not support these directors?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board is a cooperative entity governed by the provinces together with the federal government. There is a triennial review with respect to the CPPIB. That review was last done several years ago.

However, it is a joint opportunity for the provinces and the federal government to work together to set out the overall plan for the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, which has done a relatively good job given the circumstances of the global economy in the past year.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in other words, the Prime Minister intends to do nothing about these directors of the Pension Plan, who have lost \$20 billion of the savings of Canadians. It was there to protect their retirement. He is willing to do absolutely nothing while they pay themselves millions of dollars in bonuses.

That is indecent and unacceptable. I would ask the Prime Minister to stand up and defend such an unconscionable act.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think most Canadians would find it unconscionable to have politicians interfering with the operation of the Canada Pension Plan and the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board. Professionals are hired to deal with that. Certainly, we do not want people, even members of the NDP, deciding on what the investments ought to be for Canadian pensions.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians looking at this are going to say that this is fundamentally unfair and wrong. They have seen it with the corporate executives in the United States. Down there, the Americans took some action to stop this kind of thing.

Here, we have a government that is unwilling to stand up to these managers of the pension fund who lost \$20 billion. Yet, they are going to get a reward of millions of dollars and the government will do nothing about it. What kind of government do we have here? Take some action to restore some fairness to the pension system.

*Oral Questions***SOCIAL PROGRAMS**

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Pension Board, that is operated independently from government and it should be operated independently from government. It has invested the pension plans of Canadians with a remarkably successful track record.

With respect to the broader issue of executive compensation, the Prime Minister and the other leaders of the G20 have agreed on the executive compensation review under the financial stability board of the G20. Work is being done on that subject.

* * *

• (1435)

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the swine flu is spreading day by day. Cases have turned up in over 20 countries on four continents. Canada has made arrangements to get travellers out of Mexico, but has made no arrangements for them upon their return to Canada.

Why does Canada not simply find a fast, effective and recognized way to take the body temperature of every traveller returning from Mexico?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that we have taken further measures and have obtained the cooperation of the Mexican authorities to conduct medical exams on workers before they leave Mexico to come to Canada as part of the seasonal agricultural workers program. We are looking for other opportunities to perform medical exams on other temporary workers from Mexico.

The member may already be aware that Mexican visitors staying for a brief period of time do not need a visa to come to Canada.

[English]

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I received a call from a concerned constituent. His son is a medic who worked through SARS. His best friend just returned from Mexico and was not screened on his return. He was asked no questions about where he had been or if he had a cough or a cold.

Does the Minister of Health have a plan for all flights coming to Canada, not just the direct flights from Mexico?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the practice of our Canada Border Services officers to screen all individuals arriving in Canada for the purpose of assessing their health, that includes assessing them for symptoms.

Right now they are on particular alert for symptoms of human swine influenza in people arriving from Mexico. In the event where they assess that symptoms are demonstrated by someone, quarantine officers from the Public Health Agency of Canada get involved and the appropriate steps are taken.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government puts politics before people. We hoped that when the enabling accessibility fund was set up, that politics would be put aside in the interests of Canadians with disabilities. Unfortunately not.

Of the 89 applicants for major funding, only 2 received money, and guess what, both were in Conservative held ridings, including one in the riding of the Minister of Finance. Overall, 94% of all funding has landed in Conservative ridings. That is politics first and people second.

Can the minister explain why \$34 million of the \$36 million allocated went to Conservative ridings? Is nobody safe from the partisan politics of the Conservative government?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the EAB, the enabling accessibility fund, has been a great success in helping create opportunities for people who otherwise would not have those opportunities. The facilities are accessible and allow for the full participation of all citizens in this country. The awards were based on applications and the quality of those applications. We are proud of the job we are doing on the EAB.

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, only two of the 89 requests for funding were approved, and both of those were in Conservative ridings. What a surprise.

And the other big surprise? The Minister of Finance is a former director of the centre that received \$15 million.

When was the minister informed of that connection? Will she submit all correspondence exchanged between the Minister of Finance's office and her own about that funding?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one has to admit that is pretty rich coming from the Liberals who lost the 2006 election because 100% of their sponsorship money went to Liberal friends. Their hypocrisy is unacceptable.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada says that, in 2006, only 46% of unemployed workers were eligible for employment insurance, and that of those who contributed, only 68% collected benefits. The chief actuary is forecasting similar figures for 2009.

The minister's claim that 80% of unemployed workers collect benefits is therefore false. Changes made by the Liberals dramatically reduced the number of contributors entitled to benefits.

When will the minister review the eligibility criteria?

Oral Questions

•(1440)

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member does not understand the numbers. Over 80% of those who have contributed to employment insurance are entitled to benefits. The employment insurance system adjusts automatically every month to regional conditions in the country's 58 regions, and that is why people can now collect their benefits more easily than before.

Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister thinks that prolonging the benefit period by five weeks is the only solution. But that will only help 25% of claimants because not all unemployed workers collect benefits for the maximum possible period. In contrast, eliminating the waiting period would help 100% of claimants from the very beginning, which, in these hard times, would help everyone by supporting local economies.

If the minister really cared about unemployed workers who collect benefits, then why would she choose to help only 25% of them rather than 100% of them from the beginning? One does not preclude the other.

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in our economic action plan, we proposed a number of measures to enhance Canada's employment insurance system, including the five extra weeks, the expanded work-sharing program, and the creation of the targeted initiative for older workers. Taken together, these measures will truly benefit workers who have been unlucky and lost their jobs. The Bloc voted against all of these initiatives. Shame on them.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment said yesterday that Ottawa would impose standards for the capture and disposal of greenhouse gases on all future coal-fired power plants. The minister also plans to establish absolute targets for that sector, as well as a carbon exchange in order to meet those targets.

Since he was off to such a good start, why did minister stop there and not plan something similar for the oil sands? What is good for carbon should also be good for the oil sands.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for asking a question about what this government is doing about the environment.

Earlier this year, the Prime Minister and President Obama met to establish the Canada-U.S. clean energy dialogue, which will help set Canada on the path to reduce our emissions by an absolute 20% by 2020. Those are the toughest targets in Canadian history and one of the toughest in the world.

Why does that member not support getting tough on the environment?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the United States tries to reduce its dependency on oil and President

Obama is announcing significant budget increases for green technologies, Ottawa can find nothing better to do than scale back the ecoEnergy program for renewable energy and freeze funding for all new wind power projects before the end of the next fiscal year.

Does the government realize that its decisions will reduce the ability of Canadian businesses to be competitive with those of the United States? As President Obama said, the choice is not between the environment and the economy, but rather between prosperity and decline.

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that the ecoenergy renewable programs introduced by this government have been extremely successful in Canada, to the point where I can report today that in the province of Quebec alone, \$290 million have flowed there, either with renewables, ecoETI biofuels or retrofits for homes.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Omar Khadr's trial will proceed in June under a system that has been deemed flawed and unfair both here and in the U.S. The federal court has ordered the government to defend Mr. Khadr's rights as a Canadian citizen. The Prime Minister cannot ignore his duty to uphold the charter rights of all Canadians and to respect Canada's obligations under international law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Does the Prime Minister think he is above the law? Why does he refuse to do what is right?

•(1445)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said on many occasions in the House, Omar Khadr faces very serious charges. He is accused of killing Sergeant Christopher Speer, an American medic, in Afghanistan, the same country in which Canadian troops are fighting today.

As this matter is in front of the court, it would be inappropriate for me to comment any further on it.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Prime Minister.

In the name of natural justice, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Federal Court ordered the government to ask that Omar Khadr be repatriated. However, the Prime Minister does not seem to be listening, just as he is not listening now. He thinks he is above the law.

When will he fulfill his duty and repatriate Omar Khadr? When will he decide to respect the rights of all Canadians? Why not use the court's decision as an opportunity to do what is right?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what I have been saying. Mr. Omar Khadr faces very serious charges. News reports have shown video footage of Mr. Khadr allegedly building and planting improvised explosive devices in Afghanistan, the very devices that have taken the lives of dozens of Canadian men and women.

However, as I have said before, as this matter is before the courts it would be inappropriate to comment further on this file.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in absolutely shocking news yesterday, it was revealed under access to information that a government food inspector at the Maple Leaf plant in Toronto on August 26 of 2008 altered reports filed the previous February and March, five months late and immediately after 12 deaths from listeriosis had been confirmed.

Could the minister explain why this issue was never raised by his agency officials before a subcommittee? Who ordered the amending of reports and what action has the minister taken?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, the CFIA operates independently from the Department of Agriculture and from my ministry.

I will certainly pass those questions on to the president of the CFIA and seek to get the answers from her.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. The minister is responsible for the CFIA.

I have the documents right here. Attempting to tamper with documents is a very serious matter. Worse, doing it at the height of the listeriosis crisis, the worst food contamination in Canadian history, that caused 22 deaths is unacceptable.

The minister has a responsibility. Enough of the cover up and faulty investigation. Who instructed officials at the plant in Toronto to tamper with the documents?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, whether the member for Malpeque likes it or not, I am not involved in the day to day operations of CFIA. I never have been and never will be. It is an independent operation. I will pass these questions on to the president of the CFIA, Carole Swan.

I will also ask for an inquiry from the head of the union, Bob Kingston. Maybe he can get to the bottom of this.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could the minister please provide an update to the House with regard to her work with the Mexican government? I know the Mexicans have previously asked us for assistance in determining if they were experiencing a human swine flu outbreak.

Could the Minister of Health tell the House whether the Mexican government has asked the Canadian government for help yet again.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as Canada's Minister of Health, I am having regular discussions with our international partners, including the World Health Organization and my counterparts in the United States and in Mexico.

Yesterday I received a call from the Mexican minister to assist with Mexico's further testing of additional samples because of our expertise. We are pleased to assist the Government of Mexico with its testing.

This government is committed to protecting Canadians and helping our international partners during this difficult time.

* * *

CANADIAN FLAG PINS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the heritage minister is showing almost a pathological aversion for taking responsibility for the fact that his government has outsourced the parliamentary flag pin to China.

Yesterday, he tried to hide behind a bogus WTO claim.

I would like to read from *Hansard*, which states, why is the minister:

...hiding behind WTO trade agreements as his excuse for selling off the Canadian flag. Is it because he is too lazy to read the agreement? Maybe it is too complicated or maybe it has too many words.

Does the House know who said that? The former Conservative, Rahim Jaffer. Why the hypocrisy?

● (1450)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians are getting a little sick and tired of this one trick from the one trick pony of Timmins—James Bay.

The fact is that I have explained how Parliament Hill purchases of pins are done. I have explained how the Department of Public Works purchases pins. I have also explained to that hon. member how, if he wants to purchase pins that are made wherever he wants, he can do so with his own MP budget.

What I am still looking for the explanation for is how that member can go back to his riding with a straight face after having campaigned to scrap the long gun registry and then stands up in the House, burns his back on his constituents, breaks his word and does not stand up for his constituents and votes to keep the registry.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the crackers in the cheap seats might find that spectacle funny but yesterday the entire workforce of Bursan Pins, a Canadian company, were laid off. Not only were they frozen out of the contract, but they were not even given a chance to bid.

What baffles me is why the minister cannot give a straight answer for such blatant anti-Canadian practices. Why will he not admit that his government is on the wrong track for outsourcing the maple leaf pin to China?

Oral Questions

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have explained the policy. If he does not get it by now, he never will.

If he wants to talk about standing up for the manufacturing sector, perhaps he can stand up in this House and explain why he said that he would vote against the budget before he even read the budget. Perhaps he could stand in this House and explain why he campaigned in 2004, 2006 and 2008 saying that he would go to Ottawa, be an independent voice and stand and vote against the long gun registry.

Last week he showed his true colours by not standing up for his constituents, breaking his word to his voters and continuing the NDP legacy of turning its back when it comes to standing up for rural Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans recently awarded permanent shrimp quotas to fishers in Prince Edward Island, her home province, at the expense of shrimp fishers in Quebec, thereby ignoring Quebec's historical share of the shrimp fishery. Her predecessor, Loyola Hearn, also favoured his own province, Newfoundland and Labrador, when allocating fishing quotas.

Are we to conclude that if there should be a fisheries and oceans minister from Saskatchewan some day, Quebec's shrimp quotas would be allocated to Saskatchewan?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not get the question but I can say that the sharing arrangements are intended to provide a modest increase for Nova Scotia fish harvesters and for P.E.I. fish harvesters. As a matter of fact, they get 1.15% of that quota, while Quebec fish is almost 60% of it.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's National Assembly has unanimously adopted a motion condemning this decision to award permanent fishing quotas to Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia.

Does the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans promise to respond to the motion unanimously adopted in Quebec City on April 23?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased to respond to the motion when I receive it and I will respond with the very same answer I just gave the hon. member.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has a track record of leaving citizens high and dry when they are abroad. This time it is a family that has been without their

father and husband for 13 months while Pavel Kulisek is left to rot in a Mexican prison cell based on spurious evidence.

Will the courts in Canada need to force the indifferent Conservative government to get involved, the same way they did for Omar Khadr, or will the minister stand up for a Canadian citizen who needs his help now?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me assure the House that we understand and sympathize with the plight of the family of the accused. They are in difficult circumstances.

The hon. member, again today, seems to be using the research of a second-rate current affairs program that presented a very selective, one-sided tabloid example of journalism.

I want to assure the House that we are actively monitoring Mr. Kulisek's case and we are liaising with Mexican authorities to ensure his right to due process is respected.

• (1455)

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have another question for Ted Baxter.

The minister of state said that the Mexican justice system is what the Mexican justice system is. Given what he now knows, that Canadian, Pavel Kulisek, was arrested on the sole testimony of a disgraced and twice-convicted former police officer with ties to the Tijuana cartel and prosecuted by an attorney who is currently in prison for taking bribes from the same drug cartel, will he finally stop attacking first-rate investigative journalists in this country, stand up for that Canadian and show some class?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I worked for the television program in question as a producer and a reporter, we examined the facts in a fair and balanced manner.

Let me tell members, this program slandered the Government of Mexico, whose ministers are risking their very lives in the fight against drug and crime cartels. This same program slandered our foreign affairs professionals and the consular services that they are providing for the accused in this case.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the current EI system penalizes new mothers. The anti-stacking provision prevents mothers who have secured maternity and parental benefits from accessing regular EI benefits if they lose their jobs.

Oral Questions

I brought forward a bill that would finally bring fairness to working mothers by eliminating this unfair provision. I challenge the minister to adopt my bill, which would fix these inequities, before Mother's Day. Mothers deserve more than chocolates and flowers this Mother's Day. They deserve fairness and action.

Will the minister accept this challenge?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I challenge the hon. member and her party colleagues to do the right thing for a change and stand up for workers in Canada.

Our economic action plan included many enhancements to the EI program. It included an extra five weeks of regular benefits. It expanded work sharing, which is now protecting 80,000 jobs a year. We are offering training for those who are EI eligible and for those who are not.

The NDP voted against every one of those things. If it were up to the NDP, people would have no more benefits.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, mothers in this country cannot wait for the minister to understand what is at issue here. The current EI system discriminates against women because of gender and family status. This issue is about equality, something that our Constitution guarantees for all women in this country. Laid-off mothers cannot afford to go to the court to fight for their rights, nor should they have to. In this recession, EI is an important economic driver, and women deserve the same access to it as men. Any government that is committed to fairness for mothers would fix the system immediately.

The government has fast-tracked important legislation before. Will it do so now for women?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, because of the global economic recession, we worked very hard to accelerate the passing of our economic action plan. However, it was the NDP that delayed that. It was the NDP that delayed getting workers, all workers, an extra five weeks of regular benefits if they were unfortunate enough to lose their jobs. It was the NDP that voted against enhancing working sharing to protect 80,000 jobs. It was the NDP that voted against providing training for workers so that they could get back to work.

* * *

PORK INDUSTRY

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have all heard about the influenza disease that is spreading around the world. However, what is of concern for my constituents is the risk to our pork producers based on unfounded trade barriers.

Would the Minister of Agriculture tell the House what the government is doing to protect our pork producers?

• (1500)

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Brandon—Souris for the great job he is doing for the pork producers in his riding, and of course, all of Canada.

Trade must be based on science. Our pork is safe. My colleague, the Minister of International Trade and I continue to work on a science-based regime with our trading partners around the world to keep our trade flows, our trade alleys, open. We are proud to do that job on behalf of the great pork producers in this country.

* * *

WESTERN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has discovered that the Conservatives have funded everything from flagpoles to school murals through Western Economic Diversification Canada. Meanwhile, they have slashed almost half of WEDC's funding.

How can the minister justify drastic cuts to funding that would diversify the western economy when she is spending the funds on projects that do not even meet her mandate?

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, western Canadians should be concerned that that Liberal member thinks investing in forestry, mining and agriculture is a waste of money.

Western Canadians should be concerned that the Liberals think economic development in the west is a waste of money.

More important, western Canadians should be concerned about the Liberal leader who said, "We will have to raise taxes".

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by refusing to justify 60% of the chartered flights taken by the former minister of state for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec and member for Jonquière—Alma, the Conservative government is giving credence to the claim that chartered flights were being used as a taxi service between Ottawa and that riding. We have information indicating that the new minister has adopted his predecessor's practices for travel between Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean and Ottawa.

My question is simple. Can the current Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec) and member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean deny this?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be the Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec). I am required to travel to various regions of Quebec and I am pleased to also travel to ridings represented by members of other parties.

Business of Supply

Our government represents the entire population. Thus, I will continue to travel. People live in different Quebec ridings. We, the members of the party now in government, will continue to do our work.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the Conservative government took office, it has denied, reneged and dragged its feet on climate change. Now we see the results. Environment Canada has reported that, between 2006 and 2007, Canada's emissions of greenhouse gases increased by 29 million tonnes. That is 5.5 million more cars on the road in one year.

Will the minister stop stalling and immediately impose binding absolute reduction targets on the major emitters, yes or no?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is well aware of the clean energy dialogue that is ongoing between our Prime Minister and President Obama in the United States. We are getting it done on the environment, but the big questions are, why did the NDP oppose \$1 billion for green infrastructure, why did it oppose \$300 million for eco-energy retrofits, why did it oppose \$1 billion for infrastructure on carbon capture and storage, and does it support the job-killing carbon tax of the Liberal leader?

* * *

POLITICAL FINANCING

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been some concern that politicians can take advantage of a loophole in the Canada Elections Act that allows them to use political loans to circumvent contribution limits, giving wealthy individuals greater influence over the political process.

Can the Minister of State for Democratic Reform tell us what the government is doing to ensure our continued commitment to improve accountability in financing of political parties?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is following through on its commitment to increase standards of accountability and transparency in political financing.

Yesterday our government reintroduced legislation to ensure that political loans are subject to the same scrutiny as other political contributions. This bill will help fight the perception that wealthy individuals can still buy influence and that the rules can be skirted easily if one has enough money.

The bill makes changes to the Canada Elections Act that will create uniform and transparent rules for the use of loans and limit the influence of wealthy individuals on the political process. It is time to ensure full transparency in political loans.

● (1505)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Chris d'Entremont, Minister of Community Services for Nova Scotia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[Translation]

ROYAL ASSENT

The Speaker: Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

April 28, 2009

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Honourable Thomas Cromwell, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy of the Governor General] signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the schedule to this letter on the 28th day of April, 2009 at 4:59 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Dorothy Grandmaitre
for Sheila-Marie Cook

[English]

The schedule indicates the bill assented to was Bill C-2, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the States of the European Free Trade Association (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland), the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Republic of Iceland, the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Kingdom of Norway and the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Swiss Confederation.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—HARMONIZATION OF QST WITH GST

The House resumed from April 28 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:07 p.m., pursuant to order made Monday, April 27, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

● (1515)

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

(Division No. 56)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq

Ablonczy
Albrecht

Business of Supply

Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Allison	Ambrose	Masse	Mathysen
Anders	Anderson	Mayes	McCallum
André	Andrews	McColeman	McGuinty
Angus	Arthur	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Ashfield	Ashton	McTeague	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Asselin	Bachand	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Mendes
Bagnell	Bains	Menzies	Merrifield
Baird	Beaudin	Miller	Minna
Bélangier	Bellavance	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Bennett	Benoit	Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Bernier	Bevilacqua	Mourani	Mulcair
Bevington	Bigras	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Blackburn	Blais	Murray	Nadeau
Blaney	Block	Nicholson	Norlock
Bonsant	Bouchard	O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Boucher	Boughen	Obhrai	Oda
Bourgeois	Braid	Oliphant	Ouellet
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Pacetti	Paillé
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)	Paquette	Paradis
Bruinooge	Brunelle	Patry	Payne
Byrne	Cadman	Pearson	Petit
Calandra	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Poilievre	Pomerleau
Cannis	Cardin	Preston	Proulx
Carrie	Carrier	Raitt	Rajotte
Casson	Charlton	Ratansi	Rathgeber
Chong	Chow	Regan	Reid
Christopherson	Clarke	Richards	Richardson
Clement	Coady	Rickford	Ritz
Comartin	Crombie	Rodriguez	Rota
Crowder	Cullen	Roy	Russell
Cummins	Cuzner	Savage	Savoie
D'Amours	Davidson	Saxton	Scheer
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)	Schellenberger	Shea
Day	DeBellefeuille	Shipley	Shory
Dechert	Del Mastro	Siksay	Silva
Demers	Deschamps	Smith	Sorenson
Desnoyers	Devolin	St-Cyr	Stanton
Dewar	Dhaliwal	Stoffer	Strahl
Dion	Dreeshen	Sweet	Szabo
Dosanjh	Dufour	Thi Lac	Thibeault
Duceppe	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Thompson	Toews
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra	Tonks	Trost
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Eyking	Tweed	Uppal
Easter	Fast	Valeriote	Van Kesteren
Faille	Flaherty	Van Loan	Vellacott
Finley	Foote	Verner	Vincent
Fletcher	Gagnon	Volpe	Wallace
Fry	Gallant	Warawa	Warkentin
Galipeau	Glover	Wasylcyia-Leis	Watson
Gaudet	Goldring	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Godin	Goodyear	Weston (Saint John)	
Goodale	Gravelle	Wilfert	Wong
Gourde	Guay	Woodworth	Wrzesnewszky
Grewal	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les	Yelich	Young
Gueorgis		Zarac — 275	
Basques)			
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)			
Hall Findlay			
Harper	Harris (St. John's East)		
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn		
Hiebert	Hill		
Hoback	Hoepfner		
Holder	Holland		
Hughes	Hyer		
Jean	Jennings		
Julian	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)		
Kania	Karygiannis		
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)		
Kent	Kerr		
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)		
Laforest	Laframboise		
Lake	Lalonde	Nil	
Lauzon	Lavallée		
Layton	Lebel		
LeBlanc	Lee		
Lemay	Lemieux		
Leslie	Lessard		
Lévesque	Lobb		
Lukiwski	Lunn		
Lumney	MacAulay		
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie		
Malhi	Malo		
Maloway	Marston		

NAYS

PAIRED

Members

Bezan
Crête
Plamondon

Cannon (Pontiac)
Freeman
Tilson — 6

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

The House resumed from April 22, 2009, consideration of the motion that Bill C-241, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (removal of waiting period), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made Monday, April 27, 2009, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-241 under private members' business.

(The House divided on the motion.)

(Division No. 57)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Arthur	Ashton
Asselin	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Beaudin	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Bevington
Bigras	Blais
Bonsant	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brunelle
Byrne	Cannis
Cardin	Carrier
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Coady
Comartin	Crombie
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dion	Dorion
Dosanjh	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Faille
Footé	Fry
Gagnon	Gaudet
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	Harris (St. John's East)
Holland	Hughes
Hyer	Jennings
Julian	Kania
Karygiannis	Laforest
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lavallée	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemay	Leslie
Lessard	Lévesque
MacAulay	Malhi
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mendes	Minna
Mourani	Mulcair
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Oliphant	Ouellet
Pacetti	Paillé

Paquette	Patry
Pearson	Pomerleau
Proulx	Ratansi
Regan	Rodriguez
Rota	Roy
Russell	Savage
Savoie	Siksay
Silva	St-Cyr
Stoffer	Szabo
Thi Lac	Thibeault
Tonks	Valerioté
Vincent	Volpe
Wasylycia-Leis	Wilfert
Wrzesnewskij	Zarac — 138

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Ashfield
Baird	Benoit
Bernier	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boucher	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrie	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guerjis
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenny (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Paradis	Payne
Petit	Poillievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Scheer	Schellenberger
Shea	Shibley
Shory	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thompson
Toews	Trost
Tweed	Uppal
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner

Private Members' Business

Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wong
Yelich

Warawa
Watson

Woodworth
Young — 138

PAIRED

Members

Bezan
Crête
Plamondon

Cannon (Pontiac)
Freeman
Tilson — 6

• (1525)

And the result of the division having been announced: yeas 138; nays 138

The Speaker: As hon. members are aware, in circumstances such as today's it is customary, for this Speaker at least, to vote in favour of a motion at second reading.

[*English*]

This is the third time I have had to vote on a second reading motion to break a tie, and on both previous occasions I voted yea, so today I will also vote yea and declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

[*Translation*]

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

The House resumed from April 23 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made Monday, April 27, 2009, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 294 in the name of the member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges under private members' business.

• (1535)

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

(*Division No. 58*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Asselin
Bagnell
Beaudin
Bellavance
Bevilacqua
Bigras
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Byrne
Cardin
Charlton
Christopherson
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
DeBellefeuille

André
Ashton
Bachand
Bains
Bélangier
Bennett
Bevington
Blais
Bouchard
Brunelle
Cannis
Carrier
Chow
Comartin
Cullen
D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers

Deschamps
Dewar
Dion
Duceppe
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Eyking
Foote
Gagnon
Godin
Guay
Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jennings
Kania
Laforest
Lalonde
Layton
Lemay
Lessard
MacAulay
Malo
Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
Mendes
Mourani
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Nadeau
Ouellet
Paillé
Patry
Pomerleau
Rodriguez
Roy
Savage
Siksay
St-Cyr
Thi Lac
Tonks
Vincent
Watson
Zarac — 119

Desnoyers
Dhaliwal
Dorion
Dufour
Easter
Faille
Fry
Gaudet
Gravelle
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les

Hyer
Julian
Karygiannis
Laframboise
Lavallée
LeBlanc
Leslie
Lévesque
Malhi
Maloway
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Minna
Mulcair
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Oliphant
Pacetti
Paquette
Pearson
Proulx
Rota
Russell
Savoie
Silva
Stoffer
Thibeault
Valeriote
Wasylcia-Leis
Wilfert

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Arthur
Baird
Bernier
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Cadman
Calkins
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Crombie
Day
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Fast
Flaherty
Galipeau
Glover
Goodyear
Grewal
Hall Findlay
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Jean

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Andrews
Ashfield
Benoit
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Casson
Clarke
Coady
Davidson
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra
Finley
Fletcher
Gallant
Goldring
Gourde
Guergis
Harper
Hawn
Hill
Hoeppepner
Holland
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)

Points of Order

Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Lee
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	McTeague
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murray
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Paradis	Payne
Petit	Poillievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Szabo	Thompson
Toews	Trost
Tweed	Uppal
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Volpe	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Woodworth
Wong	Young — 152
Yelich	

PAIRED

Members

Bezan	Cannon (Pontiac)
Crête	Freeman
Plamondon	Tilson — 6

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

[*English*]

Order. The Chair has notice of a number of points of order. Before I deal with those, I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, government orders will be extended by 29 minutes.

The first point of order I will hear today is from the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

RESPONSE BY MINISTER TO ORAL QUESTION

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday during question period the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism stated:

We have taken steps through our Colombo mission to expedite these applications.

I have contacted the CIC 1-800 hotline and checked the websites of CIC, Foreign Affairs and the Canadian High Commission in Colombo. There is no mention of this on any of the websites. The

bureaucrat I spoke to had no knowledge of any move to expedite applications from Colombo.

I am asking that the minister take this opportunity to admit that he misled the House yesterday or that his bureaucrats are misleading me today. Who did the misleading, the minister or the bureaucrats?

The Speaker: I think the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt will recognize that this does not appear to be a point of order. It appears to be a dispute as to facts. He may want to ask a question about this another day, but it does not strike me as a point of order.

Is the hon. Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism rising on the same point? I do not really want to get into a debate here.

• (1540)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clearly not a point of order and neither are any of the allegations included in that statement accurate.

The Speaker: There we are. I have heard enough. This is clearly a dispute as to facts and I would urge hon. members who have disputes to ask another question. It is not for the Chair to decide what is accurate and what is not.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development also has a point of order.

STATEMENT PURSUANT TO S.O. 31

Mr. John Duncan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to appeal to you regarding being cut off after two sentences of my S.O. 31, otherwise known as statements by members. Mr. Speaker, I believe you said that personal attacks were not allowed during our S.O. 31 statements. I think that if you examine my words, you will find that what I said were statements of fact, not as you described.

I believe that my statement should have been allowed. I was explaining what people said before a vote, on the record, and then how they voted or did not vote. In my planned statement, of which I delivered only two sentences before being cut off, I make this comparison four times.

The statement I was going to make was that the NDP member for Western Arctic campaigned against the billion dollar gun registry boondoggle and last week he forgot to vote against it. The NDP member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River said, “I am very pleased to tell the House that for eight—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member is rising on a point of order, but he cannot use the point of order to read the statement he otherwise could not have made. I made a ruling. Is he appealing the ruling or suggesting that I review the matter? Is that his request? I think he should stick with the request rather than read the statement again.

Points of Order

Mr. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I was informed that I would be allowed to read that, so I was not pushing the envelope in any way. Yes, I would like you to review it. There were partisan statements from other members during members' statements prior to my turn in the rotation and they were not cut off.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have a major question of policy difference here and I request that you review the actions that were taken.

The Speaker: I will happily look at the matter again.

Is the hon. member for Vancouver East rising on the same point?

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on the same point of order. This has come up before. I do want to say that we support the ruling you made originally because we believe that, particularly in statements pursuant to Standing Order 31 where there is no right of reply, for members to launch personal attacks on other members is completely inappropriate.

This has come up before. We support your ruling. We believe there should be respect in the House. For members to use statements to attack other members is completely unacceptable. In this particular case, the attack was on the NDP. Mr. Speaker, obviously, we urge you to stand by your ruling.

The Speaker: The issue with the statement by the hon. member for Vancouver Island North was he dealt with specific members in the House in his statement. In my view, the earlier statements he referred to, there were some quotations from members, but that is it. Then the attacks appeared to go against an entire party for being inconsistent, or whatever other words members may have used. I did not memorize them all and I would not.

There is a difference between an attack on a party's position or a party's apparent decision from an attack on an individual member. That is what happened in the course of the hon. member's statement. He went after two members for their vote on a particular item and the statements those individuals had made. In my view it constituted an attack.

There was one very similar one earlier in the week, quoting, I believe, the same hon. members. I did not get up at that time, but I did speak to the hon. member who made the statement and indicated my displeasure and unwillingness to countenance this again. The member received a warning from me. It was not done in public; it was done in private.

In this case, being the second time this week I have heard the same statement, or a very similar statement, I moved to end it.

In the circumstances, I would urge hon. members to look at what they are going to say. Attacks on party positions are entirely permitted. I have not ruled those out of order. I have simply said that attacks on individual members are out of order because, as the hon. member for Vancouver East said in her statement, there is no opportunity for a general reply. We have lots of those during question period, but there are opportunities for supplementary questions or responses to questions during that period.

Standing Order 31s are not intended as debate. They are statements by members. I quoted that in my original ruling on this subject and indicated very clearly that they should not be used for

attacks on individual members. It was the individual part of it that I objected to in the hon. member's statement and it was on this basis that I interrupted him. I am sure he will take it to heart in future.

● (1545)

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am seeking further clarification so all members can clearly understand just exactly where it is that you intend to draw the line. If I am not mistaken, I heard some members opposite attacking individuals on this side.

Is it the case, Mr. Speaker, that you intend to allow an attack on a minister? That minister is still an individual. If a minister is being attacked, is that going to be allowed? If we are trying to hold members accountable for a disparity between what they say and what they actually do, that is somehow not allowed and you consider that a personal attack.

The Speaker: If the government House leader feels there was a statement that constituted a personal attack which I missed today, I would be happy to see it.

Hon. Jay Hill: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Maybe I missed it. Maybe I was engaged in a discussion at the time and did not hear it. I will double-check. If there was a statement, I can assure the government House leader that I will have words with the member who made it. I do not recall hearing another one today.

There was one that I had some reservations about, but it moved on from the quotes of an individual member to something else, and it appeared to go okay. I did not hear every word in the statement, as often happens, but I will double-check. If there was a breach, I will come back to the House or at least to the hon. member and deal with the issue.

I would not want to have the government House leader or any other House leader upset that I was not applying the rules fairly and equitably on all sides.

COMMENTS OF MEMBER FOR KAMLOOPS—THOMPSON—CARIBOO

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for the opportunity to rise on a point of order in regard to what the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo said yesterday.

She said that I was criticizing the government for investing too much in the west, and then she spoke of the World Police & Fire Games coming to B.C.

The member knows that no money was going to the police and fire games until after we issued a release demanding that it be funded, as the *Georgia Straight* reported. The government would have been quite happy to sweep the whole thing under the carpet and fund flagpoles and murals in Conservative ridings if I had not issued that release.

The member should not tell lies. She should tell the truth. She should not mislead the public and the House when I cannot defend it.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member knows that suggesting members have lied is not parliamentary and I am sure he would not want to persist with the suggestion.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member should well know that he had nothing to do with the funding for the World Police & Fire Games.

We worked very hard to ensure that British Columbia was represented, with a cash injection to help its economy. We have worked toward helping the firefighters. We want to support the firefighters, the police and the corrections officers. He had absolutely nothing to do with it. I do not know why he would mislead the House on that matter.

The Speaker: Again, it sounds like a dispute as to facts. I will not make a ruling on this one.

COMMENTS OF MEMBER FOR NIPISSING—TIMISKAMING

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order regarding Monday, April 20. The member for Nipissing—Timiskaming stated in his question for the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development that I had agreed to a meeting with Domtar union members and then did not show up.

This is hardly the truth. In fact, I had arranged to meet with the union members. I had met with them previously. We are going through some very difficult times at Domtar. I meet with company officials as well as other community members on this important matter.

This is a patently untrue and false statement and I ask that the member retract it from the record.

• (1550)

The Speaker: I am sure the hon. member will take note of the member's statement. We may hear more on this later.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

PUBLIC SECTOR INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I have the honour, pursuant to section 38 of the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, to lay upon the table the report of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2009.

[*Translation*]

This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

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

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO

Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the visit of the political committee, the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations, held in Warsaw, Poland, September 17 to 19, 2008.

As well, Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation to the visit to the United States by the Defence and Security Committee, held in the United States of America, January 26 to 30.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two reports from the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources in relation to the main estimates for the fiscal period ending March 31, 2010.

As well, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. In accordance with the order of reference of Thursday, April 2, your committee has considered Bill S-3, An Act to amend the Energy Efficiency Act, and agreed on Tuesday, April 28 to report it without amendment.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-372, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (victim restitution).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank my seconder, the member for Hamilton Mountain, who is constantly thinking about the quality of life in Canadian communities across the country.

This bill, which I am reintroducing, an act to amend the Criminal Code, essentially concentrates on victims of crime. The bill would amend section 738(1) of the Criminal Code to ensure that judges take into consideration victims for sentencing, victims of violent acts and property crimes.

This is important. As the House knows, the NDP adopts a smart on crime strategy. We believe very clearly that the most important thing to reduce crime is to ensure crimes are not committed in the first place.

However, in this case, when crimes are committed, we believe there should be restitution to victims of crime. That is why I am reintroducing the bill in the House today.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

• (1555)

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE ACT

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-373, An Act to establish criteria and conditions in respect of funding for early learning and child care programs in order to ensure the quality, accessibility, universality and accountability of those programs, and to appoint a council to advise the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development on matters relating to early learning and child care.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to reintroduce this landmark legislation designed to build a universal high-quality affordable and non-profit early learning and child care program for Canada.

Generations of children of hard-working families have been desperately waiting in vain for child care. Successive reports, including those from OECD and UNICEF, rank Canada last of all industrialized countries in early child education and care investment. A recent Senate report also pointed that Canada did not have a comprehensive national child care strategy.

My bill is supported by the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada and thousands of Canadian families. They want an act which ensures accountability that funding designated to children will be spent wisely on high quality education and care.

Just like the Canada Health Act becoming a cornerstone of Canada, this act would enshrine a national child care system in Canada. For the sake of our future generations, let us make national child care a reality. Canada simply cannot work without it.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

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

That, notwithstanding any Standing Orders or usual practices of the House, when the motion to concur in the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, presented on Wednesday, March 11, is moved, the length of speeches be ten minutes maximum and the speeches not be subject to a question and comment period; and after no more than one speaker from each of the recognized parties have spoken, the motion be deemed agreed to on division.

The Speaker: Does the government House Leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I move that the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration presented on Wednesday, March 11, be concurred in.

New Democrats are pleased and proud to move concurrence to this motion that would place a moratorium on the deportation of people to Sri Lanka.

Of course, this raises the issue that is before the world right now of a horrible civil war that is going on in Sri Lanka where there are gross violations of civil and human rights taking place as we speak.

This motion also gives us an opportunity to discuss the longstanding oppression of the Tamil people and once again an opportunity for us to highlight the need, the immediate need, to recognize the political autonomy of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

I would like to share a little bit of history. Upon independence from British rule, Sri Lanka was left as a unitary state, without constitutional safeguards and protection of national minorities. Successive governments have imposed discriminatory policies to reinforce the notion that Sinhala is the national language and Buddhism is the state religion. This has resulted in widespread discrimination against the Tamil minority and repeated government-sponsored pogroms against the Tamil people.

Over the last 25 years of this conflict, over 70,000 people have been killed by government forces, the vast majority being Tamil civilians. Over half of the Tamil people have become refugees, most with multiple displacements: 800,000 in the west, 100,000 in India, and one million internally displaced people in Sri Lanka.

There is an unacceptably high level of political repression, restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly, press censorship, electoral abuses, low percentage of Tamil population eligible to vote, and even fixing of elections.

The level of human rights abuses and war crimes directed at the Tamil people is something that the world needs to stop immediately. There have been reports that can only be described as ethnic cleansing, shelling of civilian areas, disappearances, long-term detention without trial, torture, rape, the use of food as a weapon of war, large-scale arbitrary arrest, and the passage of oppressive laws.

There is a humanitarian crisis going on in Sri Lanka. Several NGOs, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Committee of the Red Cross, have raised serious concerns about the ongoing humanitarian crisis taking place in north and east of Sri Lanka.

Since the Sri Lankan government unilaterally broke the six-year-old ceasefire brokered by the Norwegian government in January 2008, there has been a steady escalation in the armed conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Over the past month, the Sri Lankan government has been pursuing an aggressive campaign to wipe out the Tamil Tigers, and innocent Tamil civilians in the north and east of Sri Lanka are caught in the crossfire.

Despite calls by the international community for an immediate ceasefire, the Sri Lankan government has categorically rejected the notion of a ceasefire and is bent on pursuing a military approach to the conflict. As a result, fierce fighting between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE continues to this day.

Routine Proceedings

A humanitarian catastrophe is taking place in the northeastern part of the island as over 300,000 Tamils are entrapped within the conflict zone, cut off from basic necessities such as food, clean water, shelter and medical care. Each passing day brings more news of civilian casualties.

Issues of grave concern include the following: first, attacks on civilians in so-called safety zones.

Over the past several months, there has been an increase in aerial bombardment of Tamil villages in the north and east of Sri Lanka, resulting in unprecedented civilian casualties. The demarked safety zones have habitually come under attack by the Sri Lankan government forces.

On January 22 over 300 civilians were killed when the Sri Lankan air force bombed a civilian site in a declared safety zone. On February 9 thousands of civilians fled as an entire area demarcated by the government, again as a so-called safety zone, came under mortar, artillery and rocket fire. Since the beginning of this year, almost 6,500 people have been killed, Tamil civilians, and 14,000 have been injured. These are statistics as of April 24.

Second, the Sri Lankan government is blocking humanitarian aid. For months, the Sri Lankan government has been blocking all international humanitarian aid from reaching civilians in the conflict area.

●(1600)

In September 2008 the government ordered all international aid workers to leave Tamil areas, with only the Red Cross and World Food Program remaining. With the escalation of violence, the Red Cross has stated it is prevented from operating in the area. In a news release dated February 10, the Red Cross stated:

Most of the region's population is now displaced and completely dependent on outside aid, yet none has reached the area since 29 January.

Third, there are massive abuses at government detention centres. Amnesty International has reported that individuals who have left LTTE-controlled areas are being "held in de facto detention centres, or so-called welfare villages and are vulnerable to abuses by government forces".

Human Rights Watch has criticized the treatment of civilians fleeing the conflict zone and described the detention camps as no better than war prisons. The Sri Lankan government has announced plans to open up more permanent detention centres and force 250,000 trapped civilians to reside in these internment camp facilities for the next three years.

Fourth, there is a lack of medical care in the conflict area. In direct violation of international humanitarian law, the Sri Lankan government has repeatedly shelled local hospitals in the conflict area. A top government health official has confirmed the attacks on a hospital and health care workers, and that has been corroborated by international aid agencies.

The only working hospital in the war zone was evacuated and forced to close down due to repeated shelling. The shelling has continued to affect the provision of medical care, and makeshift hospitals sheltering patients have also come under attack. The Red Cross has reported that medical convoys transporting the sick,

injured and wounded have been hit by shelling and aid workers have been killed and injured evacuating the wounded.

Article 18 of the IV Geneva Convention states:

Civilian hospitals organized to give care to the wounded and sick, the infirm and maternity cases, may in no circumstances be the object of attack, but shall at all times be respected and protected by the Parties to the conflict.

The Sri Lankan government is violating this preceptive international law and committing war crimes in the process.

Fifth, there is suppression of the media. Reporters Without Borders have stated that Sri Lanka is the third most dangerous country in the world for journalists. Since 2006 over 14 journalists have been killed. As the conflict has escalated, government censorship of media has also intensified. Amnesty International reports that newspapers have been closed down, employees intimidated and attacked, and websites blocked.

There is a consistent and persistent campaign by the government to silence media and critical voices. In January the editor of *The Sunday Leader* was assassinated in Colombo after publishing editorials that were critical of the government's approach to the armed conflict.

In particular, we are concerned about the forceful abduction and arrest of the editor of *Uthayan*, the only Tamil daily functioning from the Jaffna Peninsula. According to eyewitnesses, he was forcibly taken by men into a white van while attending the funeral of a close relative. These so-called white van abductions have become the means by which the Sri Lanka state curtails any divergent opinions. He has not been released despite calls by international press agencies as well as human rights organizations.

This is the country to which we in the New Democratic Party are saying we should not be deporting anybody. There are civilians in Sri Lanka who are being murdered by the thousands as we speak. This is the country that the government opposite, the people on the other side of this House, think ought to be defended and supported. This is a disgrace.

This country is dangerous. It is reminiscent of past episodes of turning back refugees, such as South Asians at the British Columbia border or those fleeing the Holocaust. Canada should not be complicit in this. Not only that, but Canada has to protect people in Canada at the moment, all residents of Sri Lanka, and keep them in this country until the conflict is stopped.

Beyond that, we must press the government of Sri Lanka to call for a ceasefire immediately, to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the sovereignty claims of the Tamil population, and end the oppression of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka.

The world is watching. It is time that we took action on this to protect these people.

Routine Proceedings

•(1605)

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the motion presented by the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway. While not a member of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, he is often a participant and is there to observe and does put his time in to assist his colleague from Trinity—Spadina in their work at committee. But today, this motion is calling for a moratorium on deportations to Sri Lanka and making sure there is a rush put on to see family class sponsorships and refugee claims from the danger zone.

Let me be quite clear at the outset, although we are sensitive to the challenges faced by Sri Lankans and we extend our wholehearted sympathies to the victims of this conflict, this government does not support this motion. The reason we do not support it is really not that complicated. In fact, it is irresponsible and it is overboard. Our government already has robust measures in place to address the legitimate aspects of the hon. member's concerns.

Protection of people in need and family reunification are two of the primary priorities of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. When serious conflict is occurring, or a natural disaster has taken place that directly affects the relatives of Canadian citizens and permanent residents, the Government of Canada responds with a humane and flexible approach to ensure that families are reunited as quickly as possible. Special measures are generally not necessary for dealing with serious conflicts or natural disasters.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada already has all of the necessary legislative and regulatory authority to deal with exceptional circumstances such as these. Applications from applicants in the danger zone who contact the mission in Colombo are expedited. Applicants appearing in person at the mission can get an immediate review of their application and if possible, a decision within two days. Humanitarian and compassionate grounds are also being examined to facilitate approval of applications.

Let me deal with the hon. member's first point, "—the government should declare a moratorium on deportations to Sri Lanka—". Many of the people who we are deporting are people who pose a threat to Canadians. The Canada Border Services Agency prioritizes the deportation of criminals and other individuals who pose a threat to Canada. It would be deeply irresponsible to enact a policy that would allow these people to stay here in Canada indefinitely.

Canadians of Sri Lankan descent should not have to fear the possibility that people who have committed war crimes might be allowed to live in their neighbourhood. They should not have to feel powerless when they report these people to the authorities and are told that, no, we cannot remove these people from our country no matter what they did. Canadians of all backgrounds should not have to fear criminals from other countries. Canada should maintain, wherever possible, the right to remove foreigners who commit crimes from our country.

This motion could make Canada a haven for fugitives from justice and organized crime figures who would exploit a misguided policy to prey on Canadians. The people who this motion addresses are people who simply do not qualify as refugees or who are inadmissible to Canada. People who have their refugee claims

denied have access to an exhaustive series of processes to make sure that no one who is a refugee is denied refugee status in our country. People who are inadmissible are inadmissible for a reason and should not be in our country.

We already have a refugee system that provides ample protection to people who are at a risk in their homelands. All individuals under removal order have the opportunity to apply for a pre-removal risk assessment. This assessment which stays the removal order is performed by citizenship and immigration officers and ensures that no one in need of protection is removed from Canada. These decisions are subject to review by the Federal Court of Canada and if the court elects to review a decision, the removal continues to be stayed until a final decision is rendered.

•(1610)

All individuals under removal order are entitled to apply through the various immigration channels available to them. For example, foreign nationals may at any time apply to remain in Canada on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. This provision allows for the flexibility to approve deserving cases not anticipated in the legislation.

Let me explain that.

The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act allows people who have not met the requirements for permanent residence to apply to remain in Canada on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. This provision allows for the unique circumstances of each individual to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Humanitarian and compassionate considerations could include, for example, the time that individuals have already spent in Canada, their establishment in this country, their integration into Canadian society, and the best interest of any children directly involved. An application for permanent residence on humanitarian and compassionate grounds is a mechanism for people with deserving and compelling circumstances.

When the members opposite were in government, they understood this. That is why they continued to allow the deportation of dangerous individuals to Sri Lanka during this long-running conflict.

Let me now address the second part of the motion we are debating today:

the government should...expedite any family class sponsorships...from the danger zone.

Once more, this is redundant. To put it clearly, as the member for Vancouver Kingsway should already know, this is already happening.

Family reunification is a key priority for the government. The permanent resident applications of spouses and dependent children are processed on a priority basis. What is more, in this case, the mission in Colombo is already expediting applications from Sri Lankan individuals migrating from the danger zone. Applicants who appear in person at that mission receive an immediate file review to identify outstanding requirements, and usually receive same-day or next-day processing if their file is close to completion.

Routine Proceedings

I want to now address the third part of the motion regarding expediting refugee claims for persons from the danger zone.

Canada has one of the best refugee protection systems in the world. Refugee claims are assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Immigration and Refugee Board. Furthermore, a number of appointments were recently made to the board, and that is again more concrete proof of this government's commitment to ensure faster decision-making on all refugee claims.

As one final point, Citizenship and Immigration Canada must strike a careful balance between dual objectives. On the one hand it strives to facilitate the admission to Canada of those individuals who are in need of protection or family reunification, but on the other hand, it must work to protect Canada and Canadian society. The removal from Canada of those who do not meet our admissibility requirements is a very necessary part of the protection function, and so is the rigorous screening of individuals that occurs during the processing of applications both in Canada and abroad.

In principle, Canada removes all persons who are found to be inadmissible to Canada. However, in exceptional circumstances, the Minister of Public Safety has the right to impose a temporary suspension of removals to a particular area or country.

Although Sri Lanka is not currently one of the countries on which a temporary suspension of removals has been imposed, I repeat that no one is removed from Canada without consideration of the individual's need for protection.

Also I would like to note that by their very nature, asylum seekers tend to come from countries experiencing turmoil or where they would individually be in a dangerous situation. Our system works best when we process individuals fleeing from violence and persecution equally.

I repeat that his motion is unnecessary. Measures are already in place that allow people in exceptional and compelling circumstances such as these to remain in our country, and that is why more permanent resident applications from individuals migrating from the danger zone are already being expedited.

Our government and our caucus has taken a reasonable position on this issue. We are committed to helping the people of Sri Lanka; there is no question about that. But I would hope that the members here realize and agree with the responsible approach of the government. We will continue to defend those who are in need and are seeking asylum based on real and true persecution.

● (1615)

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I paid close attention to the statement made by the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

I want to put this motion into what I think is its proper context by clearly outlining what is in fact occurring in Sri Lanka. It is a very serious issue that we collectively, as members of Parliament in the House of Commons in Canada, need to give the attention it justly deserves.

The situation in Sri Lanka is the following. The escalating violence between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation

Tigers of Tamil Eelam has resulted in the deaths of thousands of innocent, largely Tamil civilians, many of whom are relatives of citizens here in Canada. Many more have been displaced and left homeless. We feel that the international community has a responsibility to intervene and protect these innocent victims of civil war.

We on this side of the House recognize that Canada is in fact home to one of the largest Tamil communities outside of Sri Lanka. Many Canadian families are under tremendous emotional strain.

I have witnessed that emotional strain. I met with members of the Tamil community in my constituency office in recent weeks and saw how the children, parents and grandparents, individual Canadian citizens, are deeply concerned about the status of their own family members in Sri Lanka.

It is really when one looks into their eyes that one sees the distress they are in and one recognizes that we as a great compassionate and humanitarian country cannot sit idly by and watch what is going on without doing something about it. That is one of the reasons the Leader of the Opposition met with members of the Tamil community last week, to hear first-hand from the Tamil Canadians whose families and friends in Sri Lanka are suffering from this crisis.

I say to hon. members on the government side that, in fact, Tamil Canadians deserve the support of their government to help keep their family members safe. For months, the Liberal Party has called on the Conservative government to press for the creation of a humanitarian corridor for the delivery of aid and the safe evacuation of the affected population.

Also, in relation to the issue of immigration, we have called for the Canadian government to examine the feasibility of fast-tracking existing visa applications under a special assisted relative class for those wishing to escape the violence and join their immediate family members here in Canada. New applications should be dealt with as quickly as possible, and processing fees should be waived for those who have been personally affected by the escalating violence.

The government, of course, should not only make a statement about doing this, but as everyone knows, the immigration system in this country also requires greater funding and resources to turn the words that we say in the House into reality so that people can in fact be helped.

On this issue, a senior humanitarian assistance delegation led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs should be sent to Sri Lanka on an emergency basis to assess the situation and report back to Parliament. This delegation should evaluate what can be done on the ground to assist the victims of the violence and whether it is feasible to send Canada's disaster assistance relief team to help relieve the suffering.

● (1620)

As one can see, this motion and the statement I made about the immigration component of this issue are part and parcel of a greater, more comprehensive plan that the Liberal Party is offering.

Routine Proceedings

Canada also has a special responsibility to assist in international efforts to bring about a political reconciliation. Canada must assume a leadership role in condemning the ongoing violence in the region and press the Government of Sri Lanka to commit to an immediate and permanent ceasefire. Renewal of Sri Lanka's International Monetary Fund loans should be contingent on their commitment to such a ceasefire.

The Government of Canada must also press the United Nations to appoint a special representative for Sri Lanka to facilitate a return to dialogue. The Government of Sri Lanka must understand that there are no military solutions. Canada must call for national reconciliation and help build a future of justice in Sri Lanka.

This immigration issue cannot operate in isolation. It must operate within a wider, more comprehensive and more holistic approach to resolution of the crisis. It is also very important that Canadians understand that our party has made clear statements about the measures we are calling for. These include the creation of a humanitarian corridor for the delivery of aid and the safe evacuation of defected population, the fast-tracking of new and existing visa applications for those wishing to escape the violence and join their immediate family members in Canada, and Canada must press the government of Sri Lanka to commit to an immediate and permanent ceasefire.

I reiterate: These are important points that the government needs to think about as it tries to address this issue.

I want to read on the record some statements that were made by the Leader of the Opposition, so that Canadians are very clear on his position on this particular issue. On April 8, he said:

The humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka has continued to deteriorate, causing grave concern to the international community and demanding urgent and coordinated action to end this conflict...

The international community has a responsibility to intervene and protect these innocent victims of civil war. As home to one of the largest Tamil communities outside of Sri Lanka, Canada has a special responsibility to assist in international efforts to bring about a political reconciliation and to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches those who need it.

The Liberal Party will continue to put pressure on the Canadian government and the UN Secretary General to appoint a Special Representative for Sri Lanka to serve on behalf of the international community to assist in bringing about an immediate ceasefire and an end to this crisis.

Canada must continue to press for diplomatic engagement and additional humanitarian assistance while strongly condemning these ongoing attacks on the civilian population. We stand with the people of Sri Lanka in calling for an end to all hostilities as well as with Canadians of Sri Lankan descent whose lives and loved ones are affected by this conflict.

Ultimately, we in the House must remember that we are talking about people, people who are in need, people who look to us to provide them with what they need to be part of that global village that is committed to peace and committed to individuals who want to help one another.

I will conclude with this: Recently, my leader met with members of the Tamil community and once again called for access to humanitarian efforts and dialogue. He said:

We cannot sit back and watch as thousands of innocent lives are lost in the cross-fire, and we condemn any attempt to use civilians as human shields.

● (1625)

Let us always remember this as we continue to address this very important issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be here in this House to express our support for the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, on which I sit with great interest. This fifth report states:

In the opinion of the Committee, the government should declare a moratorium on deportations to Sri Lanka until a safe environment exists there, and that it should expedite any family class sponsorships and refugee claims from the danger zone.

It is important that I begin my speech by reading that proposal, because, after all, we are debating the adoption of this committee report. I was not surprised at the argument put forward by the parliamentary secretary—a man for whom I have a great deal of respect—because I had already heard it during our debate in committee, but I am still a bit confused when I hear him say that we do not need this motion because there is no problem and people are not sent back to places where their lives would be in danger. The government is wondering what the problem is.

So what is the risk to the government in supporting a motion that says that we will not deport people to danger zones where their lives would be threatened? The government says that a procedure is already in place. In fact, there is already a procedure to apply for permanent residence on humanitarian grounds. It is good to have a procedure, but it is administered by human beings who can make mistakes. When we see the images on TV and hear about what people in Sri Lanka are going through, we cannot afford to make mistakes.

The purpose of the recommendation is not to give all these people permanent residence or citizenship automatically, but to declare a moratorium. We just have to say that we will be applying the precautionary principle. Sri Lanka is a hot spot in the throes of a very violent ethnic conflict. It goes without saying that we do not want to risk deporting people to these danger zones when they could end up paying with their lives.

Beyond all the fine policies adopted by Parliament and all the structures put in place by the state, we are dealing with human beings. The government must drop its obsession with viewing all issues, including immigration, through the prism of a bureaucratic machine and a regulated operation. We must remember that human beings are involved in these tragedies.

Therefore, the government should not have any difficulty supporting this recommendation, especially if that is already the case, as it claims. If there is not a problem and no one is being deported, why object to formally stating that individuals who could be at risk in Sri Lanka will not be deported to dangerous areas? There is a stubborn refusal to consider the human dimension of the problem and to detach themselves from the purely bureaucratic aspect.

Routine Proceedings

●(1630)

In this House, various political parties and successive immigration ministers, both Liberal and Conservative, often have been asked to use the special powers at their disposal to settle cases where, clearly, the machine did not do what it was supposed to and failed. We sometimes are faced with totally unacceptable situations where we should intervene.

We are not asking the government to do anything illegal. Under our laws, special powers are granted to ministers, precisely so they can intervene and counteract the shortcomings of the system. This does not mean that they reject the system. On the contrary. They are simply acknowledging that the system is managed by humans and that mistakes can be made. If the legislator has included the possibility of ministerial intervention in the legislation, it is because the legislator acknowledged that, no matter how good a system is put in place, mistakes can be made.

Here is an example, and this is not the first time I have raised it in the House. Abdelkader Belaouni is a resident of my riding and an Algerian refugee. He is diabetic and blind and has taken sanctuary in a church rectory for some years now, since January 2006 to be exact, because he is threatened with expulsion to the U.S., from where he would very likely be returned to Algeria.

This man is in an extremely difficult situation, having lost at "commissioner lotto", a game some of my colleagues may be familiar with. When people make a refugee claim, they play "commissioner lotto". If a toss of the dice gives them a good commissioner, they may have some chance of getting accepted, but Mr. Belaouni landed on a bad one, Laurier Thibault, who turns down 98% of applications submitted to him. Imagine going before a judge and learning that this judge finds 98% of those who appear before him guilty. One would get the impression that justice was not being served. There is an obvious problem when people end up in situations like that.

The minister has been asked to intercede, and I am asking him once again. I hope that he will do so, that he will have sufficient compassion and intelligence to recognize that the system can be imperfect and that it is not necessary to do away with it, but merely to correct errors that may crop up.

I am drawing this parallel here because it is important. The motion before us today does not say that the system is not working, that it makes no sense, that it is sending people to their death, or that it does not respect our international obligations. It merely points out that the situation in Sri Lanka is of such concern that the most basic prudence would lead us not to take the risk. People's lives are at stake. These are human beings, just like ourselves. They come from the other side of the world, as we can see on a globe. Looking at it, we can see that Sri Lanka is truly on the other side of the world, both literally and figuratively. These are human beings, people the same as all of us, who are seeking refuge here.

This would be the most humane thing to do. This motion must be passed, we must call a moratorium on deportations to Sri Lanka, until security is restored, and this matter must be given careful study. When the context has changed, we will be able to return to the usual procedure. This would reassure these people and would also enable

us to say that we have a real concern for the fate of human beings who are living in extremely distressing situations.

●(1635)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Pursuant to order made earlier today, the motion to concur in the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration is deemed carried on division.

(Motion carried)

* * *

PETITIONS

CANADA POST

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to present a petition calling on the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to intervene with Canada Post to reopen a local post office in Domaine Saint-Sulpice, in my riding. That post office was closed in June 2008.

The region affected by the closure has a population of 9,000, of whom 1,000 have signed the petition. Thus, it is a major petition and I think, and I hope with all my heart, the minister will consider the request of the people of Domaine Saint-Sulpice.

I therefore present this petition.

[English]

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELLING

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of tabling two petitions today. It is my pleasure to table another petition about the need to improve food and product safety in Canada. I want to take this opportunity to thank the many residents of Hamilton Mountain for promoting this issue in our community.

The petitioners are concerned that a product of Canada need not have been grown, raised, caught or, in any way, begun its life in Canada. Canadian regulations only require that the last substantial transformation of the goods must have occurred in Canada and that at least 51% of the total direct cost of producing or manufacturing the goods is Canadian.

This is particularly troubling to the petitioners because they note that Canada's failed trade policy limits safety standards and sends jobs overseas. As a result, tainted imports from China and other countries have led to recalls of thousands of toys, food products and pet food products.

Instead of acting to effectively deal with this trend, the federal government is proposing trade agreements with countries such as Peru and Panama that already have been cited for food and safety concerns.

Because of these concerns, the petitioners are asking the House to do a full review of its regulations for product of Canada and made in Canada designations so that all Canadians can be assured of the accuracy in country of origin labelling.

• (1640)

BUILDING TRADES

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): The second petition, Mr. Speaker, that I am pleased to present is yet another petition on behalf of members and supporters of the building trades. The petitioners come from all over British Columbia and I am sure many of them will be in Ottawa next week for the building trades legislative conference.

Building trades across the country have lobbied successive governments for over 30 years to achieve some basic fairness for their members. They want trades people and indentured apprentices to be able to deduct travel and accommodation expense from their taxable incomes so that they can secure and maintain employment at construction sites that are more than 80 kilometres from their homes.

It makes no sense, especially during these economic times, for trades people to be out of work in one area of the country while another region suffers from temporary shortages of skilled tradespeople simply because the cost of travelling is too high. To that end, they have gathered hundreds of signatures in support of my bill which would allow for precisely the kinds of deductions their members have been asking for.

I am pleased to table these petitions on their behalf and share their disappointment that this item was not addressed in the last federal budget.

FISHING INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today from over 100 individuals from southern Vancouver Island, communities of Victoria, Saanich, Sidney, Chemainus, Duncan, Cowichan Valley and Nanaimo.

The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to look at the issue of the halibut allocation. They are asking for a viable allocation framework that would provide stable and predictable year-round opportunities for anglers and sustainable economic benefits for those who are employed in the public fisheries and for the coastal communities in which they live.

They are asking to include compensation for the transfer of fishing quotas to the public.

This is an issue that the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore has spoken on. We have asked for a fishery summit on this issue and others in British Columbia.

It is very clear, from the minds of these petitioners, that this is an issue the government must deal with. As a result of that, they are asking the House of Commons and the Minister of Fisheries to deal with the issue and, we suggest, through a fishery summit in the west coast.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

Government Orders

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised today at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Québec, Guaranteed Income Supplement; the hon. member for St. John's East, The Budget; the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona, Airline Industry.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY ACT

Hon. Helena Guergis (for the Minister of Health) moved that Bill C-6, An Act respecting the safety of consumer products, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent that I share my time with the member for Kenora.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Does the parliamentary secretary have unanimous consent to split his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in support of Bill C-6. This proposed legislation delivers on the Government of Canada's commitment to improve protection for Canadian consumers through stronger product safety laws. Canadians should be confident in the quality and safety of the products they buy.

The proposed Canada consumer product safety act would modernize our system by raising the bar for industry and by improving protection of the public against the few who would act irresponsibly.

Most Canadian companies manufacture, import and sell safe products and yet, some high-profile safety issues related to consumer products have caused concern among Canadians. These include lead found in imported children's toys and small, powerful magnets found in a variety of children's products that have been known to break off and can then be swallowed by a child. Those incidents highlighted the need to improve consumer product legislation.

Government Orders

This proposed legislation addresses the need to modernize part I of the Hazardous Products Act, an act that has not been amended since its introduction in the late 1960s. Much has changed in the past four decades. Globalization has meant that many consumer goods available in Canada are now manufactured in countries with lower standards for consumer health and safety. Technology has also had an impact. Many of today's consumer goods contain elements and compounds unheard of 40 years ago. So, over time, the safety net that Canadian consumers have come to expect is not as broad as it could or should be.

Allow me to detail a few of the gaps that exist in the current Hazardous Products Act.

It contains no general prohibition against supplying unsafe consumer products that pose an unreasonable danger. It provides only limited authority to detect and identify unsafe products at an early stage. It does not allow government to respond rapidly to unregulated products or hazards. It does not contain the power for government to recall flawed products when a company is uncooperative or slow in doing so.

In short, the existing act needs to be strengthened. Bill C-6, the proposed Canada consumer product safety act, would do just that.

The proposed new act would make it an offence to supply products that pose an unreasonable danger to human health or safety. It would expand the scope of legislation to cover the manufacture of consumer products. It would introduce mandatory reporting of incidents, requiring industry to report when it has knowledge of a serious accident or incident, even if that incident has not caused harm. This would provide an early warning mechanism to allow government to act.

The proposed new act would give the government the authority to require manufacturers and importers to provide results from tests or studies on products. Packaging or labels on products which are false, misleading or deceptive as they relate to health or safety would be prohibited under the proposed legislation. It would require industry to keep detailed records so products could be traced through their supply chain.

The proposed legislation would also introduce an order power so inspectors could require suppliers to recall or take other corrective measures, as well as to take quick action when the supplier failed to do so.

Finally, the proposed act seeks to put in greater deterrents. Fines and penalties would be significantly increased. Maximum fines of up to \$5 million would be in place for some offences, while others would have a maximum that would be left to the court's discretion.

We believe these provisions would give Canadian consumers the protection they deserve and expect when they purchase goods ranging from toys to household goods.

There are several groups of consumer products that are regulated by other acts and would not be subject to the proposed legislation. For example, natural health products, which are regulated by a section of the Food and Drugs Act, would not be subject to this proposed legislation. Some stakeholders have expressed confusion about this. As a result, the Minister of Health has written the chair of

the health committee to inform her that our government would be moving forward with an amendment to this bill, making it clear that this proposed legislation would not affect natural health products.

Coupled with other initiatives under the food and consumer safety action plan, this proposed act seeks to provide Canadians with a comprehensive scheme for safer consumer products, responsible suppliers across the board and better informed consumers.

This government takes consumer safety seriously and we are taking action. Canadians look to the federal government to show leadership in enhancing the safety of consumer products in this new global marketplace and we are responding.

This proposed new legislation has been developed in consultation with numerous stakeholders and also reflects input made during the discussion on former Bill C-52 in the second session of the 39th Parliament. After 40 years, it brings Canadian consumer protection up to date and provides the same level of protection enjoyed by residents of other countries.

• (1645)

As well, by raising the strength of our product safety system up to the level of our major trading partners, we are safeguarding our marketplace against the risk of becoming a dumping ground for substandard products.

The lowest price can be alluring for consumers and even more so in tough economic times. As a result, we can expect industry to cut corners where it can. Bill C-6 would help prevent any shortcuts on safety. We need the improvements proposed in Bill C-6 now more than ever before.

With the support of members of the House, consumers and businesses will reap the benefits. We have created the ideal package of consumer protection by combining measures to improve prevention, monitor high risk products and act swiftly if a dangerous product enters the supply chain.

Canadians deserve to have confidence when they buy products at their local store. I trust that all members will agree and will join us in supporting Bill C-6.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health is very simple.

If Bill C-6 were to pass second reading and be sent to the Standing Committee on Health, of which we are both members, and we were to study Bill C-6 in the near future, does he believe, as I do, that it would be in the public's interest to receive all the groups that wish to appear in order to present their point of view on Bill C-6?

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for all his help and good work on the health committee.

I believe, as I think he does, that the committee gets to choose which witnesses it would like to bring forward. With any type of legislation it is very important to this government and all members of the House to entertain the opinions of all stakeholders who have an interest in the legislation.

The idea here, on which I think everyone in the House would agree, is that the health and safety of Canadians is very important. Canadians have to have confidence in their government and confidence in consumer products. The legislation on the books now is from the 1960s. It is time we modernized it. We live in a new global framework.

I look forward to the bill going to committee. I know we will be working diligently to bring forward good legislation for the Canadian people.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the hon. parliamentary secretary could comment on how the precautionary principle is being applied to the bill.

Specifically, while precaution is being exercised with respect to recall, it is not being applied to known toxic chemicals. Why is there a discrepancy in application of the principle? Why is there a hesitancy to phase out known and probable carcinogens?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her question and for her good work on the health committee.

She is bringing up something that is handled both in the Hazardous Products Act and in CEPA. With this new legislation, there is going to be some crossover between the two pieces of legislation. The government will study this to see what are environmental issues, what is going to be handled under the new act and take appropriate action as required.

I hope that answers the member's question.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have received many calls from people concerned about the natural health products issue. The parliamentary secretary said that Bill C-6 does not deal with natural health products.

I would like to know specifically how he will deal with their concerns in this bill. He mentioned he was going to put forward an amendment to the bill. Could he tell us what sort of amendment it will be?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, to give the member a bit of my history, I was one of the members who brought forward Bill C-420, which was a natural health products bill. I continue to be involved with that community.

In the original writing of the bill and in the past version, Bill C-52, there was some confusion in the language and stakeholders from the natural health products community required some clarification of it. The minister has written to the chair of the health committee. We will be putting forward an amendment to clarify that exactly so that the stakeholders from the natural health products community know that this bill excludes natural health products and food and drugs under the Food and Drugs Act.

• (1655)

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Oshawa for sharing his time with me today.

I rise in support of Bill C-6, the government's proposed new legislation to better protect consumers from products that might be dangerous to their health or safety. These are improvements that Canadians want and need. They will make a safe marketplace even safer.

We need to adapt our legislation to reflect the changes in the world's changing economy. Products are now being manufactured in places where product safety may not be the high priority that it is to Canadians. We cannot necessarily rely upon those manufacturers and their host countries to adopt a standard acceptable to Canadians.

Whether they come from outside or within Canada, our government needs modern tools to help shield Canadians from flawed or dangerous goods. We have a mandate to work to protect our citizens from harm, no matter where a consumer product comes from.

Changing our consumer product legislation will help maintain Canada's position as one of the best countries in the world in which to live. The world's economy is going through a challenging time. As the world's manufacturers compete for shrinking markets, the temptation for unscrupulous manufacturers will be to cut costs at the expense of the safety of the goods that they produce.

Whether the stream of faulty products is a trickle or a flood, we need to be ready, and this proposed legislation will give us the base we need to stem the flow. While we invest in stimulating the economy, we need to continue to invest in ways to keep us safe from dangerous consumer products. Bill C-6 would help us do that.

Our government has invested \$113 million over two years to support the action plan to modernize and strengthen Canada's system for food, consumer products and health products. The plan is built on three elements: first, active prevention, to avoid as many problems as possible before they arise; second, targeted oversight, to closely monitor consumer products that pose a higher risk to health and safety; and third, a rapid response so we can take action more quickly and effectively on problems that do occur.

I would now like to elaborate on these three elements.

The first aim of the proposed legislation before this House is to improve prevention. Bill C-6 would establish a general prohibition against manufacturing, importing, advertising or selling consumer products that pose unreasonable dangers to human health and safety.

Importantly, I should mention that the natural health products are exempt from the proposed consumer product safety act, as they have their own regulatory framework under the Food and Drugs Act. Some stakeholders have expressed confusion about this. As a result, the Minister of Health has written to the chair of the health committee to inform her that our government will be moving forward with an amendment to this bill making it clear that it will not affect our natural health products.

Government Orders

Second, Bill C-6 targets products that pose the highest risk for oversight. It proposes to allow the minister to require commercial manufacturers and importers to provide safety test and study results for their products. Suppliers would be required to provide reports regarding any serious incidents and defects involving their products, including near misses, and the manufacturer or importer would need to provide a detailed report, including its plan of action to respond.

Industry is already subject to mandatory reporting in the European Union and the United States. Therefore, Bill C-6 would bring us up to the same standard as two of our most significant trading partners. Suppliers would also be required to keep detailed information about the sources and destinations of their products to help track products that need to be recalled.

Third, the proposed legislation will give us new tools to help us respond to problems as rapidly as possible. Governments could require companies to pull unsafe consumer products from the shelves as soon as the problem is discovered, and we would also have the power to act swiftly if the supplier fails to do so.

Will Bill C-6, we are also seeking to raise fines to levels that are similar to those in other industrialized countries. The financial penalties must be serious and a deterrent to those who might risk human health and safety. For example, the maximum fine under the Hazardous Products Act is now set at \$1 million. With this proposed bill now before the House, the maximum fine would be raised to \$5 million for some offences and possibly higher fines at the discretion of the courts for other offences.

• (1700)

However, we will not rely on this proposed legislation alone. Laws and fines are an important part of the solution but not the only solution. We will be working with other countries to promote safe manufacturing processes. We will work with our own industry to improve awareness of health and safety issues in the manufacturing process.

It bears mentioning that our current safety system has served us well and the vast majority of Canadian manufacturers, importers and other providers and suppliers provide safe products, but our current consumer product legislation was drafted in 1969. We are now part of a global economy and a global marketplace. We need to modernize our system to meet the new reality and to safeguard against the very few who do act irresponsibly.

Our Hazardous Products Act has not been thoroughly reviewed in 40 years and it needs to be modernized. Without new legislation Canada risks becoming a dumping ground for the world's unsafe products. This is not the future we want for Canada's marketplace.

The proposed legislation will give our inspectors the power they need to get unsafe products out of the marketplace before they get to the homes of Canadians. Improving health and safety is in everyone's interest and so I urge my fellow members to vote in favour of Bill C-6.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member could comment on how this legislation compares with that of the EU and the U.S.

I would also like to hear his comments regarding why the legislation does not include mandatory labelling like proposition 65 which has provided Californians with information they can use to reduce their exposure to listed chemicals that may not have been adequately controlled under other state or federal laws.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, the goal of this legislation is to bring Canada into the modern marketplace that is consistent with the legislation that is currently in place in the European Union and in the United States.

With respect to the second part of the hon. member's question, some of the legislation is currently found in the Environmental Protection Act.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on the question from the Liberal Party member when she asked about mandatory labelling, which is a pretty important issue to be dealing with here.

One of my constituents suffered all last summer because she used sunscreen that contained chemicals called oxybenzone and benzophenone-3, which I had never heard of, but the chemicals caused her huge problems with reactions. One of her relatives also had the same sort of reaction. She tells me that this is a big issue that the federal government should be dealing with. Part of it has to do with having proper labelling on the product.

The member asked a very good question and her question did not really receive a full answer from the government member.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, very briefly, this legislation is designed to deal with issues that arise. If there are safety issues with respect to the product, this legislation is designed to do that, include labelling.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to support Bill C-6, An Act respecting the safety of consumer products.

Albert Schweitzer, doctor, philosopher and Nobel Prize winner, warned that "Man has lost the capacity to foresee and forestall. He will end by destroying the earth".

I would like to give the House a lesson in history regarding a product and a devastating disease.

Animal slaughterhouse wastes have been recycled into animal feed since the beginning of the 20th century. In the mid-1970s, the U.S. department of agriculture decided that carcasses of sheep afflicted with the disease scrapie should not be used in animal or human foods. Tragically, the U.K. government decided that its industry should be left to decide how its equipment should be operated. It was not until 1996 that processing standards were introduced.

Government Orders

In the United States, government oversight and relatively inexpensive restrictions may have prevented the mad cow epidemic. In the United Kingdom, industry self-policing provided ideal conditions for the development of the progressive, fatal disease that affects the brain.

Reducing risks to health has been a preoccupation of people, physicians, and politicians for the last 5,000 years.

Virtually every major advance in public health has involved the reduction or the elimination of risk, with the result being that the world is a safer place today. It is safer from accidents, deadly or incurable diseases and safer from hazardous consumer goods.

Therefore, it is the government's duty to do all it reasonably can to accurately assess and reduce risks, such as making sure that food, medicines and other products are safe.

Although government can rarely hope to reduce risks to zero, it can aim to lower them to a more acceptable level and should openly and transparently communicate risk and risk reduction strategies to the public.

The Canadian government introduced Bill C-6 on January 26, 2009, to ensure, through regulation, that risk is reduced and that Canadians have access to safer consumer products.

The bill is important because it would fill many regulatory gaps and give government the power to issue recalls and raise fines. Companies and their directors, officers and employees may be held criminally liable for contravention and penalized up to \$5 million.

The bill would prohibit the manufacture, importation, advertising and sale of a consumer product that is a danger to human health or safety, is the subject of a recall or does not meet the regulatory requirements that apply to the product.

The bill would require that all persons who manufacture, import or sell a consumer product for commercial purposes maintain documents identifying from whom they obtained the product and to whom they sold it, and provide regulators with all related information within two days of becoming aware of an incident. These mechanisms will help ensure that products can easily be removed from store shelves when a recall is made.

Bill C-6 would also give regulators the power to order manufacturers and importers to conduct tests on a product, to provide documents related to those studies and to compile any information required to confirm compliance.

The bill also would give inspectors new wide-ranging powers, including the power to order a recall if they believe, on reasonable grounds, that a consumer product is a danger to human health or safety. These powers may be invoked even when there is a lack of full scientific certainty.

This is a strength of the bill, as scientific standards for demonstrating cause and effect are extremely rigorous and often time-consuming, substantial damage to humans may result during long testing. For example, many experts strongly suspected that smoking caused lung cancer long before overwhelming proof became available. Unfortunately, hundreds of thousands of smokers died waiting for a definitive answer. Thousands of others, however,

quit smoking because they suspected, as there were 7,000 articles by 1964, that tobacco probably caused lung cancer.

● (1705)

When a product raises threats of harm to human health, precautionary methods should be taken, even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically.

Perhaps the following questions might be asked at committee. Why does the bill not phase out or ban known carcinogens and other toxic chemicals in consumer products? Why does the bill not create a mandatory testing and labelling scheme? Does the bill go far enough to protect the health of Canadians from toxic imports? Will the government dedicate the necessary resources to enforce the bill?

The United Steelworkers remind us that, "recalls and fines all happen after the fact. Canada needs a strategy that repairs...trade deals that have led to toxic imports crossing our border in the first place", such as in 2007, when millions of Chinese made toys were recalled by both the EU and the U.S. The European Commission subsequently identified over 1,600 products that were considered risky.

We live in an increasingly chemical society. Toxic chemicals are found in everyday consumer products, including art supplies, kitchenware, personal products, pet food, toys, water bottles and many products intended for babies.

When researchers test the air in our homes, the average readings for volatile organic compounds increase in areas where cleaners are stored. CBC's *Marketplace* showed Pledge registered 273 parts per billion, Clorox wipes more than 1,000 parts per billion. Anything over 500 parts per billion could be a problem for people with sensitivities. Lysol's disinfecting spray, however, recorded 1,200 parts per million, or 1,000 times higher than the Clorox.

Experts do not know how dangerous these chemicals might be, but they are starting to worry. Dr. Gideon Koren, a pediatrician at the Hospital for Sick Children, asks, "How can we, as one of the most advanced countries in the world, allow these to enter our household for small children, without the appropriate testing to see that it's safe?"

Young children are especially vulnerable because they virtually live on the floor. Everything goes into their mouths, and their basic body systems are still developing.

We cannot continue to repeat the key mistake of the past, namely, responding late to early warnings as we did with benzene and PCBs.

Government Orders

Ever since anemia was diagnosed among young women engaged in the manufacture of bicycle tires in 1897, benzene was known to be a powerful bone marrow poison. Recommendations made in the U.K. and the U.S. in the 1920s for substitution of benzene with less toxic solvents went unheeded. Benzene-related diseases of the bone marrow continued to increase dramatically through the first half of the 20th century. Benzene was not withdrawn from consumer products in the U.S. until 1978, and this was done by manufacturers on a voluntary basis.

A chief medical inspector of factories wrote in 1934, "Looking back in the light of present knowledge, it is impossible not to feel that opportunities for discovery and prevention of disease were badly missed".

As we continue to debate the bill, let us ensure that in 2034, future generations do not lament missed opportunities.

I would like to share my time, Mr. Speaker, with the member for St. Paul's.

• (1710)

The Deputy Speaker: As we are in the first round of speeches, the hon. member needs unanimous consent to split her time. Is there unanimous consent of the House for the member to split her time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's speech is well documented.

We have a lot of products and in those products are a lot of byproducts, many of them carcinogens. Canada has gone a long way to identify much of what goes into products, on which we can pride ourselves. This seems to take it one step further.

The question I have today pertains to imported items. An issue that comes up often is Canada goes to great lengths to have safe products. However, we do not see what is coming in from other countries. As far as the testing and labelling of imported products goes, how will the bill help us get around products that are dangerous to Canadians when these goods are imported?

• (1715)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, U.S. companies must label their ingredients in consumer products under the fair packaging and labeling act. In California, products that contain chemicals known or suspected by the state to cause cancer or disrupt normal reproductive functions must have a warning label.

The European Union has an eco-label system. Products such as cleaners, indoor paints and varnishes have to meet certain environmental criteria. Products cannot carry the eco-label flower if they contain cancer-causing substances. It is really important to understand that cosmetics in the European Union are highly regulated. Cosmetic manufacturers must provide safety information on all their ingredients and substances known or suspected to cause cancer are not allowed in European cosmetics.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 65% of consumer goods sold in Canada are imported. Perhaps I should ask a government member, but I will ask the member this. Has the use of counterfeit approval labels, which are primarily

associated with offshore products, been adequately dealt with in this bill?

As we know, that is a big issue with offshore products. Counterfeit labels are being mass-produced in other areas of the world. Those products come in to Canada with counterfeit labels on them and the products are not what the labels say they are.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important issue and we would like to hear about that in committee.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the public is hungry for reliable product safety information and a law that will get unsafe products off the shelves, if not keep them from being sold in the first place. Parents especially want safe toys. Ninety consumer products, many used by children, were recalled last year and already thirty-seven more this year.

Would the member comment on how she sees the bill affect the safety of products that are used by our children in particular?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree. As I mentioned, children spend their lives virtually on the floor. They put everything in their mouths and their body systems are still developing. We have to know what is going into the products they use.

I point out that the Canadian Cancer Society reports that healthy lifestyle choices could prevent about 50% of cancers. Each of us has pollutants in our blood and urine: heavy metals, pesticides and other toxic chemicals such as mercury, lead and PCBs. The government currently requires big polluters to report how much is coming out of smokestacks, but it does not require them to report what is going into the products they are making.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on Bill C-6, An Act respecting the safety of consumer products.

This enactment modernizes the regulatory regime for consumer products in Canada. It creates prohibitions with respect to the manufacturing, and especially the advertising, selling, importing, packaging and labelling of consumer products that are a danger to human health or safety.

The purpose of this bill is to make it easier to identify a consumer product that may be a danger and to more effectively prevent or address the danger.

The Liberal Party has always had a commitment to improving the health and safety of Canadians. We will continue to support measures which reinforce the regulatory process in order to be sure that Canadians are consuming healthy products.

Government Orders

•(1720)

[*English*]

The purpose of Bill C-6 is to protect the public by addressing or preventing dangers posed to human health or safety by consumer products that are circulated within Canada and those that are imported.

The bill was first introduced as Bill C-52 in the 39th Parliament and was part of the package that also included Bill C-51, which dealt specifically with natural health products. While Bill C-51 was considered contentious legislation, Bill C-52, now Bill C-6, was generally more accepted by stakeholders, but I do not have to tell the government that this is still hugely problematic to many stakeholders.

An analysis of the bill makes evident that the current consumer products safety system functions on a voluntary basis. If a product is dangerous or poses a health threat, the corporations can issue a recall. The new would bill prohibit the sale, import, manufacturing, packaging, labelling and advertising of consumer products that might pose a risk to consumers. While voluntary recalls will continue to happen, inspectors named under the act or by the minister will now be able to order the recall of a consumer product.

The proposed bill will give substantial regulating powers to the minister. It will be necessary to further study these powers to ensure transparency, effectiveness and accountability. It also requires further study to ensure that it can be implemented effectively.

Increased numbers of inspectors will have to be named by the minister and we need to ensure that the human resources and funding are available to do the job properly.

As with Bill C-11, I will be proposing an amendment at the committee stage, instructing the Minister of Health to consult with an expert advisory committee with a mandate to give public advice before the minister can restrict access to a product.

We have been hearing from many stakeholders who are concerned that C-6 will negatively affect access to natural health products.

[*Translation*]

The Liberal Party has a deep conviction that Canadians have a fundamental right to make their own choices as far as looking after themselves and remaining in good health are concerned, and that we must guarantee them access to those choices. We have no intention of limiting the consumption, sale and distribution of safe natural products. On the contrary, we wish to promote and protect the health and safety of Canadians and improve our regulations so that they may have access to the foods, remedies and consumer products that are the healthiest and most effective.

That is why we asked the minister to submit Bill C-6 to the appropriate committee of the House of Commons before second reading. This would have provided answers to most of the questions raised in your letter. Unfortunately, the minister refused to do so.

[*English*]

I am concerned, yet again, that the proper stakeholder consultations did not take place with regard to Bill C-6 as with Bill C-11. It was clear during the Bill C-11 hearings that the key stakeholders

were not consulted properly during the drafting of the bill. As we know information sessions are very different to meaningful consultations.

We have already heard concerns from key stakeholders that Bill C-6 needs an amendment to deal with tobacco manufacturers and another amendment regarding hazardous substances and toxic chemicals, as the member for Etobicoke North so eloquently put forward.

We have been transparent with the Department of Health and provided it with copies of these proposed amendments and will insist that they are included in a future bill.

If this was to be a repeat of Bill C-11, where information sessions were substituted for meaningful consultation, I hope the government has learned its lesson and will make the appropriate government amendments and bring back the witnesses with the most serious concerns and ensure the bill, as amended, would be acceptable to them.

In any bill we need to ensure that Parliament is able to do its job to develop the best pieces of legislation possible, which requires thorough stakeholder dialogue and input.

As I said, the Liberal caucus has asked that the bill be brought to the committee before second reading so it would be possible to make substantial changes as asked for by the stakeholders. We will reluctantly support the bill going to committee after second reading, but we want Canadians to be assured that we will be continuing to be vigilant in the study of Bill C-6 as it enters the health committee, as we had successful changes with Bill C-11.

It is very important that politicians do the politics, that scientists do the science and that the transmission of information from the scientists to the politician is done in a way in which citizens of Canada are included in the decision.

•(1725)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member whether she would agree that the act should create a hot list, similar to that for cosmetics, listing carcinogens, reproductive toxins, neuro toxins; that these substances should be prohibited in products, with temporary exemptions granted only to the extent that the product is essential and only where alternatives do not exist; and that at a bare minimum, any product containing such chemicals should be required to carry a hazard label, as is required in California, Vermont and the European Union? I assume that the member would be in agreement with that list. I know she is a medical doctor, so I would like to get her opinion on that issue.

Government Orders

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, we know that we have a lot to learn from the ways that other jurisdictions have dealt with exactly these issues, particularly, around importation and around how we know that what is on the label is really what is in the product and for that we also need resources. We have learned from the FDA in the United States that it may not be able to inspect even 1% of the drugs that come into that country.

I thank the member very much for raising these issues around counterfeit products and labelling. If the member has any suggestions of witnesses who should come before the committee, we would very much like to hear from any of the stakeholders that he has heard from who are concerned. We will do our best to make this bill as good as it can be.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for St. Paul's criticized the government for how it conducted consultations with regard to Bill C-11, and rightly so. She said they were botched, that they were more like information sessions than meaningful consultations, and that the government must ensure that all of the concerns expressed by the witnesses are heard and properly addressed.

My question is for the member as someone who voted in favour of the bill at the report stage here in this House, as well as for her colleagues. Following the committee's examination of Bill C-11, there were some lingering concerns expressed by expert witnesses who work with pathogens and toxins every day. So why did she decide to ignore those witnesses and vote in favour of Bill C-11 at the report stage?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, after listening to all the experts, I am completely confident that their concerns will be addressed by the regulatory process.

[*English*]

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this bill is called the Canada consumer product safety act. However, in reality, whether we are actually protecting consumers or not will very much depend on whether there are enforcement mechanisms and whether we can actually trigger the kind of decisive action that consumers are counting on us to ensure is in the legislation, so that they can be absolutely assured that products that they are consuming, that they are in contact with, will in fact be safe.

I wonder whether the member would agree that we actually need to include some very specific triggers for government actions and criteria around what should trigger that kind of action and—

An hon. member: And why didn't they do it?

• (1730)

Ms. Chris Charlton: Yes, exactly, Mr. Speaker. The question is also why has the government not acted?

I would like to suggest five of them, just by way of example.

Do we need to decide whether the release of harmful substances from products during use or after disposal, including to house and into air, must be considered?

The potential harm from chronic exposure to the substance itself should be considered, in my view. The potential for harm to

vulnerable populations, of course, is another. The cumulative exposure to a substance Canadians receive from the products of concern—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I must stop the hon. member there to allow enough time for the hon. member for St. Paul's to respond.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, these are excellent questions. Whether or not those questions can be dealt with in the law or whether they would be dealt with specifically in the regulations or, again, in a framework that the expert advisory committee would have to deal with in terms of advising the minister in a totally transparent way needs to be looked at. What we are saying is that if we are going to have an advisory committee that deals with the science, then we want that science—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I have to stop the hon. member for St. Paul's there.

[*Translation*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Verchères—Les Patriotes has the floor.

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon as the Bloc Québécois health critic to address Bill C-6, an act respecting the safety of consumer products, which was introduced by the Minister of Health at first reading in this House on January 29, 2009.

I will read the summary of this bill.

This enactment modernizes the regulatory regime for consumer products in Canada. It creates prohibitions with respect to the manufacturing, importing, selling, advertising, packaging and labelling of consumer products, including those that are a danger to human health or safety. In addition, it establishes certain measures that will make it easier to identify whether a consumer product is a danger to human health or safety and, if so, to more effectively prevent or address the danger. It also creates application and enforcement mechanisms. This enactment also makes consequential amendments to the Hazardous Products Act.

The very least we can say is it is about time. In fact, we have known since November 2006, because of a report tabled by the Auditor General, that there are problems and that urgent action is needed. Those responsible for the safety of consumer products were not given or no longer had the means to effectively carry out their duties. Nevertheless, we have had to wait more than two years to debate, in this House, at second reading, Bill C-6 on consumer products.

I would just like to give a bit of background. As I said, we waited far too long before we could debate this bill in this House. Canada currently does not require that manufacturers of hazardous products under its jurisdiction, such as cosmetics, cradles, tents and carpets, test their products or prove that they do not pose any threat to consumer health and safety. As a result, consumers would not have any real protection against incidents like the one that forced the recall of a number of products some time ago. Many parents feared the worst and, with the approach of the holiday season and other gift-giving occasions, wondered whether what was on the shelves in stores was safe and what precautions they should take to make sure that what they were buying for their beloved children was hazard-free.

Government Orders

In December, after four months of inertia in the wake of the first toy recall in the summer of 2007, the government finally proposed to introduce a bill early in 2008 and to change its strategy for regulating product safety.

This inaction created a real feeling of insecurity, especially around toy purchases. You could feel it when you listened to consumers talking about product safety on radio and TV and read their letters in the papers.

But it is important to point out that instead of introducing a bill quickly, the government decided last fall to post a survival guide online to help parents protect their children's safety. In late November, it launched a personal test kit consumers could use to determine the safety of consumer products themselves. This is a government that is clearly abandoning its responsibility for product safety.

• (1735)

It made consumers and parents responsible for making sure that the goods they buy are safe for their families and children. The government should be responsible for making sure that consumer products are safe, but it abdicated its responsibilities the moment it put that guide online.

However, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, in November 2006, the Auditor General of Canada warned the government about concerns involving dangerous consumer products. These concerns were expressed by program managers. Chapter 8, *Allocating Funds to Regulatory Programs—Health Canada*, clearly indicated that product safety program managers could not do their jobs properly for a number of reasons. I will read points 8.21 and 8.22 of the Auditor General's November 2006 report.

Product safety program managers considered many of their regulatory activities to be insufficient to meet their regulatory responsibilities. We found these opinions were confirmed in an internal study of the program's resource needs, documents relating to resource allocation, and in interviews conducted as part of our audit.

The product safety program has requested additional funding, but it received very little funds for special initiatives in 2005-06 to address the shortfalls presented above. Program managers indicated that their inability to carry out these responsibilities could have consequences for the health and safety of Canadians, such as exposure by consumers to non-compliant hazardous products. There is also a risk of liability to the Crown.

Because of the Auditor General's report, the Government of Canada has known since November 2006 about the risk to consumers resulting from inadequate program funding. This raises a number of concerns about the government's real desire and commitment to move forward. However, now that we have Bill C-6, we need to take a closer look and pass it at second reading so that we can hear from stakeholders in committee without delay.

I therefore encourage all of my colleagues to proceed appropriately with the second reading examination of this bill, not only here in the House but also at the report stage in the Standing Committee on Health. As colleagues have done before me, I would encourage all stakeholders, as well as all colleagues here in the House, to give us their views and any clarifications in order to ensure that Bill C-6 is as effective as possible and that lack of consumer safety will be, no longer the rule, but the exception, and a rare exception at that.

Essentially, this bill comprises five measures, which I shall present to my colleagues and to all those listening this afternoon to this debate on second reading.

• (1740)

I will give a brief overview of the five measures aimed at reversing the burden of proof concerning safety.

First of all, there is the safety of consumer products. As I said, currently, no constraints are imposed on manufacturers or importers. They do not have to prove that their products are not dangerous and do not pose a threat to consumer safety. Bill C-6 is intended to reverse this. In future it will be up to the manufacturer to prove to us that the products offered to consumers are without danger.

The bill also proposes forcing manufacturers and importers of consumer products to test the safety of their products regularly, and, most importantly, to disclose the test results in order to ensure maximum transparency.

The bill would also require businesses to report all measures taken or illnesses caused because of their products, whatever the country. This puts the onus on manufacturers and importers, because it forces them to prove that their products are safe,

The second measure has to do with increasing inspectors' powers. As the Auditor General stated in a report, in order to ensure that this bill is implemented and effective, inspectors on the ground will have more powers when Bill C-6 comes into force.

For that to happen, consumer products will have to be subject to recall, relabelling or a licensing amendment. These inspectors will be the means to enforce this bill's most important provisions.

It is important to point out, however, that increased duties and responsibilities can raise a certain number of concerns and questions. As part of the committee's review of this bill, it will be important to confirm whether there are enough human resources to ensure that the strict measures outlined in Bill C-6 can be properly monitored and enforced across Canada.

This bill also gives the minister new powers concerning recalls. At this time, health authorities do not have the power to recall consumer products found to be dangerous. Recalls are issued on a voluntary basis by manufacturers and importers themselves. This bill would give the minister the power to recall any products that are defective or endanger consumer safety. However, the regulations will stipulate the requirements and the conditions under which the minister can act. In committee, it will also be important to look at how this recall power can be executed.

Government Orders

There are also stricter punitive measures that will provide a greater deterrence. At this time, for instance, the fines imposed are usually around \$5,000. With Bill C-6, an offence could lead to a fine of up to \$5 million for the company at fault, and people caught red-handed could face up to two years in prison.

• (1745)

Lastly, Bill C-6 will introduce product traceability. The bill includes a record-keeping requirement that could be compared to a traceability process, as I said earlier. With this record-keeping system, we will be able to determine the product's history and quickly track down retailers who have the product, as well as its origin.

In addition, if an incident occurs here or elsewhere in the world, the manufacturer or importer is required to notify the minister, which will allow the authorities to more efficiently remove products that could pose problems.

I would also like to share a few comments, and we will have the opportunity to come back to this in committee and further question the officials who drafted the bill, as well as the Minister of Health. In the preamble—it is unusual to spend any time on the preamble, because we spend much more time on the clauses of the bill—there is a definition that approaches the precautionary principle. It would be interesting to know what the government's real intention behind this statement is, with regard to enforcing the legislation.

I would simply like to read part of the preamble into the record:

Whereas the Parliament of Canada recognizes that a lack of full scientific certainty is not to be used as a reason for postponing measures that prevent adverse effects on human health if those effects could be serious or irreversible;

The preamble also contains a general statement about the relationship between consumer goods and the environment:

Whereas the Parliament of Canada recognizes that, given the impact activities with respect to consumer products may have on the environment, there is a need to create a regulatory system regarding consumer products that is complementary to the regulatory system regarding the environment;

Outside of the preamble, the environment is only mentioned in clauses 16 and 17 of the bill in connection with disclosure of personal information. It will be interesting to ask the government about its intentions.

Would the government like to go a little bit further in the regulations and impose more environmental requirements?

We can come back to that. With regard to regulations, Bill C-6 contains a number of measures that can be taken by the minister by regulation. Thus, the regulatory powers are expanded and it will be interesting to see in committee how the minister will use this discretionary power and what limits will be placed on this power.

In closing, I would simply like to say that the industry cannot be allowed to be self-regulated. There have been a number of cases in the food industry, not covered by this bill, demonstrating that self-regulation alone cannot address all problems.

• (1750)

We have to give some teeth to the bill and some powers to the inspectors responsible for enforcing it.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague with interest.

I would like to make a comment and ask a question. He clearly noted that, when it comes to safety, self-regulation does not work. There is virtually nothing in this bill to address imported goods. Two-thirds of all the products purchased in Canada are imported. That is where we have seen one problem after another, without implementing any comprehensive way to look at and inspect these products before they arrive on the Canadian market.

In addition, we have a government that promotes less safety and lower standards in every area, whether it is rail transportation or air travel. We must ask ourselves whether we can trust a government that systematically ignores all existing safety measures and continues to give us substandard safety systems in the area of transportation that put Canadians at greater risk.

Mr. Luc Malo: Mr. Speaker, with regard to the first part of my colleague's comment, it will be important to take an equitable approach. Companies based here that manufacture consumer products here must be subject to the same rules as companies that manufacture their products abroad. Once Bill C-6 is adopted, we need to make sure that all companies are on a level playing field. My colleague is right to raise this issue. We need to have inspectors everywhere in order to make sure that the enforcement measures clearly set out in Bill C-6 can be applied. What good is it to tighten the rules if there is no one in the field to make sure that they are followed?

My colleague was also right to mention that we have seen the negative effects of self-regulation in recent months. Crises have occurred just because funding for the organizations that protect public safety has been cut.

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech. He obviously knows a good deal about this bill and is well informed. By the way, what a beautiful name his riding has: Verchères—Les Patriotes. It is wonderful.

I would like the member to explain how he imagines the committee will determine how and where these products will be checked. Will Canada follow the example of Japan, which sends government technicians to other countries to test products and determine whether they meet Japan's standards and criteria, instead of waiting until the products reach Japan? We know that private companies are reluctant to send products back. As a result, hazardous goods sometimes wind up in our landfills instead of landfills in the countries where they are produced. I would like the member to talk about that.

• (1755)

Mr. Luc Malo: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Brome—Missisquoi for his very good question.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

It is the kind of question that we will have to put to knowledgeable individuals when we study this element in committee. It is important to know where and how officials will be checking imported products to ensure that they are completely safe for people.

Bill C-6 makes importers and manufacturers responsible for product safety. That is important because they are ultimately accountable for making sure that the products they put on store shelves are safe. That being said, because we want more control over the process through Bill C-6, we must make sure, very early on in the process, that the products that end up on our store shelves are safe.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the previous speaker for the Liberal Party indicated that the Liberal Party was always interested in safety issues. However, the Liberals were in power for 12 years and were asleep at the switch on this whole file. In fact, by 2005-06, more than 40% of the product recalls were a direct result of U.S.-initiated action. We not only see that there, but we also see it in crime issues and financial issues. The American system is able to prosecute and put people in jail, but we are not able to do that here in Canada.

The Liberals were asleep for all those years. PCs are really free market people and believe in the industry policing itself. Can we really trust them to enforce this act?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Malo: Mr. Speaker, I would urge my colleague to refer to what I said.

The Auditor General recognized the problem in 2006. It is now nearly May 2009, and this is the first time this bill has come before the House. As the saying goes, the members opposite were asleep at the wheel. The Liberals did not do any better, however. The Auditor General discovered these shortcomings in 2006, and they were in power shortly before the study was conducted. As such, both the Liberals and the Conservatives have dragged their heels when it comes to making sure that products on store shelves are safe.

However, now that we know about it, we have to act quickly. That is why I am asking all of my colleagues to move this bill through second reading and to ensure that the committee's review will be both efficient and effective so that we can take a thorough look at all of the bill's consequences. We have to make sure that, if and when it is adopted, the government will do everything in its power to make sure that the legislation has all the teeth it needs to ensure that consumers no longer have to worry as they have recently.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:59 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

● (1800)

[*Translation*]

**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE
CANADIAN EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY IN DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES**

The House resumed from March 9 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak on Motion No. 283.

I sit on the Standing Committee on International Trade and the government has signed free trade accords and agreements, obviously. This element affects the mining companies that, obviously, do not realize their responsibilities. What is more, these free trade agreements contain nothing about the social role the companies should assume. These are conditions the Bloc Québécois feels are vital to its support of such agreements. Given the fact that the agreements have already been signed, all that we can do is to put a stop to the implementation bill. I do not think that things will change as quickly as they should, or should have, changed.

To review the motion itself rapidly, it reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should act immediately to implement the measures of the Advisory Group report "National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries" by creating, in an appropriate legal framework and with the funds needed, an independent ombudsman office with the power to receive and investigate complaints

There are Canadian mining companies in many countries—around 100 countries, I believe. Canadian mining companies have invested in some 3,200 or perhaps 4,000 operations abroad. What is more, these companies are heavily involved in such operations. The Bloc Québécois has long been concerned with the issue of social and environmental responsibility of Canadian companies abroad, and most particularly Canadian mining companies.

To all intents and purposes, Canada is one of the world leaders in the mining industry. It has a significant presence in Africa, where the majority of companies are Canadian or American, incorporated here or listed on Canadian stock exchanges. This is a sign that there is something going on. The majority—60% I think—of Canadian companies operating mines in other countries are of, course, listed on Canadian stock exchanges but have their origins elsewhere. In order to take advantage of the generous Canadian legislation, they get themselves listed on Canadian stock exchanges and then operate mines elsewhere.

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For some years now, a number of Canadian mining companies have been directly or indirectly associated with forced population displacements, significant environmental damage, support to repressive regimes, serious human rights violations and sometimes even assassinations. I very clearly recall, during a committee visit to Colombia, we had the opportunity to visit villages where people had been displaced from their lands, from their homes, from their territory, specifically to make room for certain mining companies. Furthermore, some mining companies are even protected by armed paramilitary groups. And those paramilitary groups in Colombia are definitely not boy scouts.

● (1805)

That is why the Bloc Québécois has always defended the need to impose standards of social responsibility on companies when operating abroad. But the federal government has always defended the principle of laissez-faire, preferring a voluntary approach. Also, we have always defended the recommendations in the advisory group report entitled "National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries", whose recommendations were unanimously supported by civil society and the extractive industry. The Bloc Québécois therefore supports motion M-283. We have frequently denounced the overseas activities of certain Canadian extractive companies that violate human rights and compromise the sustainable development of local populations.

I would remind the House that since the report of the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries was released, the government has not taken it upon itself to implement any of the advisory group's recommendations. The government is not imposing any accountability measures on Canadian companies in the extractive sector and has not created an independent ombudsman office to examine complaints received about Canadian resource extraction companies.

As I was saying earlier, the issue of the social and environmental responsibility of Canadian companies abroad, especially Canadian mining companies, has been a longstanding concern for the Bloc Québécois. Canada and some mining companies maintain that mining operations in the southern hemisphere provide a means of fighting poverty and ensuring the development of these countries. The reality is altogether different. Canada has taken the position, and defended it since the 1990s, that foreign investment in the extractive sector brings development to poor countries and helps reduce poverty.

This type of investment strategy can actually produce wealth in poor countries and engender economic and social development. However, for that to take place, the state in those countries must be able to define medium- and long-term development strategies. That presupposes that the local state has the institutional and political means to do so as well as the necessary resources to negotiate and implement such development strategies and ensure that they run their course.

In the 1980s and 1990s, certain multilateral financial institutions imposed draconian debt repayment measures on these countries. These institutions imposed liberalization and privatization measures

on indebted states to ensure repayment of the amounts owing. These structural adjustment policies forced the local state to withdraw from these areas of activity and to allow foreign investors to step in. Thus, local states lost the ability to regulate and monitor the existing practices necessary for social, environmental and economic development.

Time passes very quickly. I only have enough time to conclude my remarks, even though I could have identified tens, if not hundreds, of important aspects that we must remember and keep in mind. At present, the government is not acting as a good parent. It is allowing Canadian companies that operate mines in foreign countries to act irresponsibly by not respecting their social role and, above all, by not protecting the environment.

● (1810)

The Canadian government should take all important aspects into consideration in order to ensure that there is a real framework for the conduct of mining companies abroad and that these companies foster the development of the people and the countries in question.

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the mover for this motion and also thank his colleague for the legislation he put forward.

I am going to start my comments by quoting an article that was written a couple of years ago by Eve Ensler. Her article, which was in *Glamour* magazine, sent shock waves through the world. It started off with, "I have just returned from hell". Those words were conveying her return from the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where we see horrific violence. What she had just seen was something no one should ever see, but for sure no one should ever experience.

She had been to the Panzi Hospital. She had seen girls as young as eight years old who had been gang-raped. She had seen the effects of gender war on a civilian population. What she had seen is something that is still ongoing.

Hundreds of thousands of women and girls, children, have been subjugated into something that is not just deplorable, but something that has been contemplated. What we are talking about is rape as a weapon of war. Indeed, it is rape as a strategy in war.

I say this because it relates directly to the responsibility of our corporations to make sure that when they conduct themselves in countries abroad, they follow every single humanitarian, labour and environmental standard that they follow here.

Right now, the machines that we all use on a daily basis, that we keep our calendars on and send emails from, these BlackBerrys, contain a mineral called coltan. A majority of the coltan that is used in our BlackBerrys comes from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Right now, the money that is being earned by some companies is directly connected to the war that is going on in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Indeed, if we recall years ago the whole issue of blood diamonds, we are now having to deal with the issue of blood coltan.

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Right now, over 80% of the mineral coltan that keeps our PlayStations going, that keeps our computers going, that keeps our BlackBerrys functioning, comes from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the exact place where we see rape being used as a weapon of war and the exact place where unscrupulous mining techniques are being used to actually fund and keep the oxygen going for the conflict, where we have three to four proxy armies absolutely devastating not only the geography but the humanity of the area, and that is the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

This is not just about a nice piece of legislation that we should all pass. This is about our commitment to human rights. I have to say, it is not good enough to say nice things about corporate social responsibility. Indeed, we must act when it comes to corporate social responsibility, and the only way to do that is what is contemplated both in this motion and in the bill that was presented. We must have not just guidelines but absolute certainty in how companies behave abroad.

Further to that, members might not be understanding of the issue, perhaps, but what has been proposed by the government is guidelines, instead of absolute, strict adherence to protocol abroad. Also, it says we would have a counsellor instead of an ombudsperson to make sure that these practices overseas are actually adhered to.

● (1815)

If we in this country are going to stand on the world stage and say we are doing everything we can to end gender violence, to end rape as a weapon of war, to stop the ongoing absolute war against women in the Congo, then we must actually adopt this motion. We should adopt legislation like Bill C-300, and we must make sure that everything we can do is being done to end gender violence, to end the war on women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I would like to take a minute to give some historical perspective on this. My predecessor, Ed Broadbent, started this file when he asked that the government of the day conduct a study to have business and civil society work together to come up with recommendations about how companies should do their business abroad. It was carried on by Alexa McDonough. It is now in the House by a motion and by a bill by my colleagues in the Liberal Party.

This has been an ongoing project. It took the government two years to respond to a report that was done in concert, where we had civil society and business working together and what they came up with was that Canadian companies would adhere to the same laws and provisions that they adhere to here in Canada and that we would have an ombudsperson to make sure that would happen. My constituents would say that is a reasonable proposition. That is the proposition we have in front of us in the House.

The proposition that the government has put forward, after two years of having it in front of it, says we should have guidelines, which may or may not be followed, and a counsellor. It is not strong enough. If we are serious about Canadian companies, who by far have the largest footprint in mining and extractive industries of any other country in the world, we must adhere 100% to the laws that we have here in Canada. That means that no money goes to those who

commit genocide. No money goes to proxy armies. No money goes to people who are using it to abuse the people who are supposedly benefiting from the presence of a company there.

Members should take the time to read the history of what is going on in the Democratic Republic of the Congo right now. There is a direct connection between what is going on there and what is happening with the investments of multinational corporations. These are things that Canadians are waking up to. Over five million people have been killed in the D.R.C. since the late 1990s. Most people are not aware of that. As I said, hundreds of thousands of women have been raped, and many of those are children. Many of those are women who have been raped multiple times. Why? It is a tactic that is used by militias, not only to use violence against women, but a strategy to clear out villages so that they can get to the economic bounty that is fueling this conflict.

In sum, if we in the House, as members of Parliament, are serious about having an effect on femicide, as some people are calling it, on what is going on in the D.R.C., if we read the words written by Eve Ensler a couple of years ago that she has just returned from hell and then try to do something about that hell on earth, we must pass this motion. We must pass Bill C-300.

● (1820)

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased this evening to rise to speak to Motion No. 283. It is a privilege to join in this discussion on an issue that has such obvious implications for Canada's reputation around the globe.

All Canadians have pride in the Canadian flag. It means a lot to us and we care about what it stands for in the world, and we want it to stand for the best of everything.

In that regard, we want our Canadian companies to adhere to the highest standards in relation to human rights and environmental matters. So my colleague from Pierrefonds—Dollard is to be commended for bringing this motion before us in the House.

When he spoke to the motion on March 9 of this year, he did so with passion, commitment and intelligence. I know many members feel that way about these matters, but his commitment to the issue is clear to those who are fortunate enough like me to be in caucus with him, as is the commitment of my colleague, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, to these issues.

The member for Pierrefonds—Dollard noted in his comments the immensity of this task and the weighty responsibility it calls on us to assume, and it is a weighty responsibility, to examine this measure and find a response that will work effectively. He added that it is well within the capacity of Canadians, as well as in keeping with the values that best characterize this country.

Indeed I believe the issue of corporate accountability and corporate social responsibility is one that Canadians take seriously and one that the official opposition endorses.

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In Nova Scotia, my province, we have a very strong mining sector. Of course, we have a history of coal mining, particularly in Cape Breton but also in Pictou County, as the Minister of National Defence would well know and as my two colleagues, the members for Cape Breton—Canso and for Sydney—Victoria could tell you more about.

Of course, that history of the coal mines is the stuff of song and legend, whether it be about coal or whether it be about mining for gold or tin. In fact, an ancestor of mine whose name was James Skerry, on my father's side, started the second gold rush, in the village of Waverley, Nova Scotia, in about 1869. So there is some history in my own family in that industry, but that was a long time ago. My grandfather, I gather, told my aunt when she asked about this history that no one ever made much money from those gold mines, even though he discovered some gold. So I guess none was left behind. No money was passed on.

I had the pleasure recently of attending a reception held in Halifax by the Nova Scotia branch of the Mining Association of Canada. They were clearly a very dedicated group of investors, innovators, prospectors and very proud business lenders. In fact, there was a fellow there who gave a demonstration of panning for gold and it was interesting to see how that really happens. It was, in fact, fascinating. I am not about to go out and start panning, myself, but I guess politics are sometimes like that. We are looking for the best things.

My impression is that they would support the intent of this motion. Most of them would be mining locally, domestically in Canada and in Nova Scotia. Of course, many of the cases we are talking about here are companies that mine elsewhere.

When the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard opened debate on this motion, he noted that, to understand the issues at play, Parliament must remember that Canada leads the world in resource extraction in developing countries. No less than 60% of mining companies concerned with these issues are Canadian.

In fact, one of my colleagues mentioned to me that he lives in the world's largest mining community, because he lives in Toronto. We do not think of Toronto as mining community, but in fact it is the headquarters of more mining companies than anywhere else. Something like over 500 mining companies are headquartered in Toronto. They are listed, in many cases, on the Toronto Stock Exchange or on the Canadian Venture Exchange and they raise their capital here in Canada. Toronto is a centre for raising capital for mining.

● (1825)

The mining industry is a global leader in innovation and technology in this sector and we have to make sure that Canada is also a leader in corporate social responsibility. This motion is an important part of that process.

Motion No. 283 calls for the creation of an independent ombudsman's office with the power to make sure that Canadian companies operating outside our country do so with the same degree of respect for human rights and the environment as we would expect of them in their domestic operations.

This recommendation flows from the March 29, 2007 report of the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries.

A number of years ago, the Liberal government at the time established the national roundtables and they did a wonderful job. No doubt it was a challenging job with many different points of view. I am sure it was difficult to come up with a report on which they could all agree and there were probably issues on which they could not agree.

When former prime minister Paul Martin was in power, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade established a subcommittee on human rights and international development with a mandate to examine human rights throughout the world. Developing countries would be one of the key areas the subcommittee would look at. This led to the roundtables being put in place. Over the course of their hearings, the round tables received approximately 260 presentations, including the participation of 57 prominent Canadian and international experts.

In its March 2007 report, the advisory group brought forward a number of recommendations which promote significant measures for establishing standards for corporate social responsibility. The advisory group expressed the belief that all of the recommendations needed to be taken as a package. It discouraged the idea of cherry-picking from among those recommendations and suggested that they be taken as a whole and not one at a time. In the preface, the report states:

The recommendations in this report are the result of extensive discussions between all members of the Advisory Group. The recommendations contained in this report are intended to be read as a comprehensive package, each element building on the others.

That is an important statement for us to consider as we go through the report. I hope that my colleagues will take the time to do that, because if members are going to vote on this motion, they would want to know what the report says. However, it is true there are times when we rely on other teammates to examine some of the things we vote on because there are so many details to many of the issues that we deal with in this country, and I know that hon. colleagues would have to agree with it, whether they were keen on agreeing or not.

I think my colleagues would also agree that the establishment of an independent ombudsman as outlined in Motion No. 283 would be an important element in building a comprehensive corporate social responsibility framework for the Canadian extractive sector, particularly for those companies operating in developing countries.

Even the government has indicated that it agrees with the intent of the motion. This is a surprisingly enlightened position from our friends across the way. You are smiling, Mr. Speaker, so I think you must agree with that comment. Of course, you cannot agree because as the Deputy Speaker, you have to maintain absolute and total neutrality, and we respect that.

However, the Conservatives' lack of significant action on this file over the last two years speaks volumes about what their true position is. It is a bit like their lack of significant action on climate change. We have been hearing for three years a promise that they would bring in regulations, and there is no sign of any regulations whatsoever. Even though the six greenhouse gases were listed in June 2005 and they could have brought in regulations as soon as the following winter, they failed over that period to do that.

In view of the Conservatives' lack of interest in moving on this issue, and lack of action in general, we can see why this motion is necessary. That is why I am happy to support the efforts of my colleague from Pierrefonds—Dollard in bringing this issue to the House. Of course, I also want to express my admiration for my colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood.

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to explain how the government's approach to corporate social responsibility, or CSR, is substantially better and ultimately would be more effective than what has been proposed by the opposition.

Let me first begin by thanking the dozens of Londoners who have written to me on this important issue. In London we are blessed with a great quality of life, but my constituents know this comes with responsibility. Our success cannot come at the expense of others. Their message to me on this has been heard loud and clear.

On March 26 the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's tabled in this House a new CSR strategy for the extractive sector that has placed Canada among the world's leaders in good CSR practice.

The opposition has tabled a variety of proposals in response to this complex issue seeking to ensure the behaviour of Canadian companies abroad is nothing short of exemplary. We share that goal, but I can assure members that the strategy we are implementing would be more comprehensive and more effective.

Our government's strategy encompasses many of the recommendations of the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Sector in Developing Countries of 2006 and the report of the advisory group. It has been widely consulted and represents a balanced approach to the issues, taking into consideration the views of all stakeholders and the territorial limits of Canadian legislation.

Today I wish to elaborate on one of the most important aspects of the strategy and that will play a key role in encouraging Canadian companies overseas to implement CSR best practices. I am referring to the creation of the office of the extractive sector CSR counsellor.

I appreciate that Motion No. 283 being debated here today was tabled before the government announced its CSR strategy and that the hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard had the best intentions in its drafting. It is now clear, however, that this motion has become redundant. Allow me to explain.

This is not simply a question of whether "counsellor" or "ombudsman" is the right title for this role. In the government's strategy, the counsellor, upon receiving a complaint, would open channels of communication to all of the concerned parties, seeking to engage in an informal mediation process. If warranted, the counsellor may also engage in fact-finding activities, including

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travelling to any region specified in the complaint. Dispute resolution models must operate in a permissive environment on the principle of engagement; otherwise, the situation could become more aggravated, thus creating more conflict between the parties involved.

On the subject of parties to a dispute, the government's proposed course of action would not limit the scope of eligible requests for review by the counsellor to communities in developing countries. Requests for review may be submitted by anyone affected by the operations of a Canadian extractive company abroad or its legitimate representative.

It is important to note that the counsellor model proposed by the government would focus on dispute resolution and mediation between such parties; that is to say, the counsellor would endeavour to work with the company in question and those affected by its operations to make things better. Moreover, the counsellor's ability to focus on the issues themselves and not just the parties involved would enable a wider variety of complaints to be addressed.

While in some cases disputes arise as a result of the activities and policies of an extractive sector company operating in a particular location, it is frequently a lack of information and dialogue that prevents the resolution of the dispute. The extractive sector CSR counsellor proposed in the government's CSR strategy aims to address that fundamental problem.

By and large, Canadian companies have solid CSR reputations. The opposition has said as much, and I agree. Our companies recognize the benefits of early engagement with local communities, strong environmental assessments, good labour, health and safety protocols, and other forms of CSR best practice, including reporting. They know that this is the key to securing financing, access to sites and what is often called a social licence to operate. It makes good business sense and, to be clear, it is the right thing to do. When I was in Peru recently, I saw that firsthand, speaking to extractive companies in terms of their direction to make Peru better.

Nonetheless, we recognize through all of this that problems can occur. This is why the government has developed a comprehensive CSR strategy to help companies better anticipate and mitigate the risks associated with their operations abroad. Instead of abandoning a company in a crisis situation, the CSR counsellor will have the ability to approach that company and work with it to ensure that it has the necessary tools and information to either prevent or remedy the situation.

● (1830)

We are of the view that if a Canadian company is in difficulty, this is precisely the time when the Government of Canada can be most useful.

It may be the opposition's intent to simply make an example of our companies, but we believe that lasting resolutions require constructive engagement with all parties.

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In the models proposed by the opposition, if one of the parties to the dispute refused to participate or failed to recognize the legitimacy of the proposed ombudsman, then there would be no dialogue. One can imagine that the problem would not only endure, but would worsen.

However, with the active engagement of all stakeholders, the CSR counsellor we have proposed would be able to ensure that the dialogue established is meaningful and that it contributes to the resolution of the dispute. It is this question of buy-in that is essential to any dispute resolution framework.

One model proposed by the opposition and recently referred to committee would actually do the opposite of what was recommended at the national round tables by embedding the dispute resolution function deep within the government. That particular model would certainly not contribute to the perceived neutrality of the process.

The CSR counsellor, on the other hand, would not be housed within the government but instead would operate at arm's length. To increase the transparency of the office, the CSR counsellor would publicly issue a statement after each complaint received, whether it proceeds to formal mediation or not, as well as table an annual report here in Parliament.

This kind of transparency can be a powerful force to compel cooperation and should not be underestimated. As a businessperson, this approach is prudent and effective.

Moreover, the CSR counsellor would be able to follow up with the parties to monitor progress in the adoption of any recommendations made.

In addition to the dispute resolution role I have just described, it is important to add that the counsellor as envisioned by this government can undertake research and be proactive in trying to resolve issues through informal discussions before any formal complaint has been laid. This goes back to the fact that the CSR counsellor would focus on resolving issues rather than simply deciding who is right and who is wrong, as if that were a simple decision to make.

The proactive nature of the government's proposed model also distinguishes it from other dispute resolution models as they remain, above all, reactive.

Last, the CSR counsellor we have put forward in our strategy would be more inclusive than any of the other models being proposed by the opposition. Engagement on the issue will be what counts.

In closing, it is clear that the CSR counsellor the government announced in its new CSR policy this past March is more effective, more transparent, more proactive and more inclusive as a tool for both the resolution of disputes and for the wider promotion and adoption of CSR best practices than anything yet to be proposed by the opposition.

The motion is now unnecessary, and I urge all my colleagues in the House to vote against it.

• (1835)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to focus what time I have in this debate on some of the urban myths that seem to be developing around Bill C-300.

However, before I do, I want to commend my colleague, the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard, for his tireless enthusiasm, following this issue over many years and his extraordinary knowledge about the issues of CSR. Liberals are, indeed, fortunate to have him in their caucus. We are fortunate that he is in the House as he has put forward and advocated this issue over a number of years. Bill C-300 and what is behind it would not exist except for the hon. member and the efforts he has made over these many years.

Last week, by a very narrow margin, Bill C-300 passed in principle. I want to speak to the issue that in the House we sometimes talk the good game, but we do not actually legislate the good game. We speak favourably at great length about the principles of CSR and environmental responsibility, but when it comes to actually putting some legislative teeth behind what we say we believe, we sometimes degenerate into some hand-wringing and raise, so to speak, a certain level of bogus concerns.

I thought I would take an opportunity to address four, five or six of these and see whether I can put to rest some of what I call urban myths. The first has to do with our companies being at a corporate disadvantage. The logic, apparently, is that if other countries are doing atrocious things in developing countries to people and/or environments, then our companies should not be prevented from doing the same things or be subject to new, onerous, unclear and unnecessary rules if others are not.

I am not quite sure how to handle an argument that if another country or company is not adhering to CSR or environmental standards, somehow or another our companies should be able to compete at that level. I do not think that is in the best interests of Canadians or, indeed, of companies that fly the Canadian flag.

I would like hon. members to take note that in Bill C-300 the IFC's policy on social environmental sustainability, performance standards, guidance notes to those standards and environmental health and safety guidelines, et cetera, are standards that are neither new or unclear nor are they deemed to be unnecessary or onerous. Indeed, the previous speaker spoke about the minister's March 26 statement wherein the minister in fact referenced some of those guidelines in his statement. If the minister references them in his statement, how could they, therefore, be new, unclear, unnecessary or onerous?

The second complaint we hear about Bill C-300 in particular but CSR in general is that we are in an era of financial instability. That is true. There are financial difficulties around the world and we are in the down part of the economic cycle. It follows, therefore, that apparently we should only introduce legislation when times are prosperous.

If that is true, then the government missed a wonderful opportunity in the last two years to respond to the round table reports and introduce legislation which would, presumably, encompass an ombudsman, as was suggested in the reports. Unfortunately, the government, for whatever reason, chose not to respond to the round table reports.

The third criticism that we hear is that Bill C-300 has massive sanctions. It is one of those criticisms that is so over the top that it reduces the credibility of the critics. Whatever the sanctions are in Bill C-300, they are hardly massive.

All that Bill C-300 proposes is that in the event that a finding is made and gazetted, the offender be cut off from the government's credit card. A lot of people, in fact hundreds of thousands of Canadians, do not want their money used in that way. If in fact these companies want the public dime, then they should be prepared to meet public expectations. The public has clearly set forth its expectations in subclause 5(2) of the bill.

• (1840)

The only sanctions that are contained in Bill C-300 are that the company, if it is gazetted, would not be entitled to access EDC or BDC or CPP or government promotional activities. Those are hardly massive sanctions. It is quite reasonable on the part of the public to say that if companies cannot adhere to corporate social responsibility guidelines and environmental standards, then do not ask us, meaning the taxpayers, for financial support.

The fourth complaint we hear is about frivolous and vexatious complaints. At present, good companies are actually subject to trial by media. Anybody can file a complaint about company X doing activity Y, and the company, particularly good companies have no effective recourse.

Companies that actually are doing these activities, however, appear to prefer taking on lawyers and public relations experts and spending massive sums on them rather than actually addressing the activity or in fact having an alternative dispute resolution process.

For companies that routinely breach CSR and environmental standards, hiring lawyers and hiring PR people may in fact be a preferable process, but for companies that actually value their reputation, this process that is proposed in Bill C-300 is a complete and full answer to frivolous and vexatious complaints.

The fifth issue is foreign and domestic standards, as if there might be some conflict between foreign and domestic standards. There is no conflict if in fact a local country has good CSR standards and good environmental policies, and therefore there would be no conflict between the guidelines set out in Bill C-300 which are internationally recognized and accepted guidelines.

If the jurisdiction exceeds those guidelines, we then have a happy situation and Bill C-300 certainly does not apply. If, however, the local jurisdiction does not meet or enforce its standards, then Canadian companies should surely be expected to adhere to something of a higher standard.

There is some complaint that somehow or another this is an imposition of Canadian law on foreign jurisdictions. Nothing could be further from the truth. International law 101 says that Canada

Private Members' Business

cannot project its law onto other jurisdictions. Bill C-300 cannot be characterized as doing that regardless of how desirable it may be to impose Canadian laws and standards in a jurisdiction where maybe the laws are not adhered to as rigorously as one might hope. Extraterritorial application of Canadian law to another jurisdiction is not only beyond the scope of a private member's bill but is certainly beyond the scope of the government, as well.

The sixth criticism is that there is no consultation. I would suggest the critics take a look at the round table reports in 2007 and look at the signatories on those round table reports. It reads like a corporate who's who of Canada. Included in there are Enbridge Inc., Petro-Canada, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Shell Canada, Talisman Energy, et cetera. In addition, as one speaker referenced, there are well over 200 other witnesses, many of whom come from the corporate who's who of Canada. There has in fact been massive consultation.

When the government repeatedly refused to respond in spite of the re-tabling of the report, Bill C-300 was something of a response to that report. The government issued a press release in March 26 proposing an investigative process which is dependent upon the consent of the corporation involved. It is a little like being subject to an assault, and we can only investigate the assault if the person who is accused of the assault consents to the investigation. Rightly, many others have criticized the response of the government as inadequate and untimely.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to those urban myths.

• (1845)

In the event that there are others who wish to enquire about Bill C-300, I then commend my hon. colleague for his energy and enthusiasm in his motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. There being no further members rising, we will go to the hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard for his five minute right of reply.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 9, I introduced in this House Motion No. 283 on the social responsibility of the Canadian extractive industry in developing countries. Since then, we would have been entitled to expect the government to finally not only shoulder its international responsibilities, but also make good on the formal commitments the Prime Minister himself had made more than two years previously at the G8 summit in Germany.

I would have been very happy to stand up today to celebrate the eagerly anticipated honouring of a ministerial commitment on an issue that, as enlightened individuals will readily admit, goes far beyond partisan considerations. Narrow partisanship has no place in this debate, which, in addition to having an obvious moral dimension, also concerns our national interest, in that Canada's credibility and international image are at stake.

Adjournment Motion

As I said in my speech on March 9 in this House, Canada leads the world in resource extraction in developing countries. No less than 60% of the mining companies concerned are Canadian. Canada therefore has only one valid, logical option: it must become a world leader in the social responsibility of the extractive industry in developing countries.

But there is another important reason why partisan logic should play no part in this debate. The vast majority of Canadians feel a moral obligation and a sense of justice toward the peoples in the countries where our resource extraction industries operate. In my frequent and regular discussions with people who are concerned about this issue, I have also found that most people understand that the duty to do the right thing goes hand in hand with promoting our best interests abroad, particularly when it comes to economic investment.

In addition, the national roundtables on corporate social responsibility and the Canadian extractive industry in developing countries advisory group is calling for the creation of an independent ombudsman office, which would have the power to receive and investigate possible complaints. It could work within the appropriate legal framework and would have the necessary material and financial resources. This requirement is merely a reflection of what most Canadians who are interested in this issue want. Indeed, it is the result of a consensus that is not only strong, but is without any ambiguity on the part of the various contributors to those very roundtables, in other words, the Canadian extraction industry itself, as well as various qualified experts, numerous NGOs and other civil society organizations.

The fact that such a consensus finally emerged after long negotiations and discussions among the roundtable participants constitutes a huge step forward and extremely significant progress. The roundtable participants showed tremendous leadership, and it is now up to the Canadian government to follow suit. That was the thrust of the introduction to motion M-283, and that is also what I would like to emphasize more than ever in closing this debate.

So what has happened since we began this debate on March 9? The current government has not done anything particularly impressive. After waffling and waiting two years to respond to a request that was perfectly justified in light of the facts, the Conservative government finally produced a response that was so vague it could not but disappoint Canadians and everyone involved. Once again, the government chose to play with words, the better to fool Canadians while breaking its own promises.

The Conservative government came up with a plan to create an advisory position for mining companies. How nice. I should point out that the advisor in question would have no powers, according to the terms set out by the Conservative government, so his or her role would be completely useless. Moreover, the government deliberately ignored the very important fact that the mining industry itself, as a stakeholder at round tables, agreed to the creation of an independent ombudsman with the authority necessary to carry out his or her duties.

That is why, in my final speech today, I am urging my colleagues in the House to put Canada's national interests abroad before everything else and vote in favour of the motion we are debating. I

am asking them to do so because I believe that Canadians expect nothing less of their elected representatives.

● (1850)

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for debate has expired. Accordingly, the question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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 nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 83, a recorded division stands deferred until Tuesday, May 6, 2009, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT MOTION

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

[*Translation*]

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am taking part in this evening's adjournment debate because the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development did not reply to my question concerning an increase in the Guaranteed Income Supplement. What is more, she is totally insensitive to a proposal to increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement by \$110 a month.

Her answer was that there was a \$1,000 tax credit. However, that credit applies to people in a position to pay income tax because they have incomes higher than the clientele we are referring to. The minister's answer was therefore off topic and she is misleading people by saying that she is concerned about the worries of those with low incomes. The people we are talking about do not pay income tax. A person who benefits from a non-refundable tax credit has an income over \$12,675, but the ones we are concerned about have less than that. We know that housing expenses are now around \$550 to \$600 at the very least. If a person wants to wear clothes, eat food, and also have some sort of quality of life, a minimal income is needed. The minister's answers do not apply to that clientele.

Adjournment Motion

This evening I would like to urge the government to do more, and to increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement. People who are eligible for the GIS receive a pension from the Old Age Security program and must have an income of under \$12,675, if single, and between \$20,000 and \$35,000 if a couple, depending on age and certain other criteria.

The minister's insensitivity as shown by her answers here in the House is flagrant. FADOQ, the Quebec federation of seniors, is calling for the same amount for seniors. Furthermore, there should be retroactivity. A number of people were entitled to the supplement but did not apply for it because they did not know how to go about it and how to fill out some of the rather complex forms. There are still close to 24,000 people in that situation.

This government has made about as much effort as the Liberals did when the Bloc Québécois rang the school bell to say play time was over, and that it was time for a publicity campaign. The Bloc Québécois stirred up the various organizations that deal with seniors' rights. That resulted in close to 25,000 people being convinced to apply for the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

I hope that the Conservative government member who responds will be able to tell us whether the government will finally agree to increasing the guaranteed income supplement by \$110 per month, as requested by FADOQ.

A number of initiatives could be implemented, such as automatically registering people for the old age security program. The government should synchronize information from various departments, such as the Canada Revenue Agency.

Right now, the responsibility lies with older people who, in many cases, do not know how to proceed. They think that the government will contact them. We should make things easier for older people, but that is not at all what is happening now.

• (1855)

[English]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can certainly understand the enthusiasm and passion that the member for Québec has on this issue. What I cannot understand is why the member and members of her party voted against a number of initiatives that we put forward to help seniors in significant ways.

I would like to highlight the government's commitment to all older workers and seniors in Canada. Canada has one of the lowest rates of poverty among seniors in the world, lower than the United States, the United Kingdom and Sweden.

The percentage of low-income seniors in Canada has declined sharply from more than 21% in 1980 to less than 6% in 2006, and those are clearly significant steps of progress. It is good news but, of course, we will not stop working to bring that number down even lower. That is why, since coming to office, this government has been taking action to improve the well-being and quality of life of our seniors.

I remind the House that since taking office our government has increased the guaranteed income supplement, referred to as the GIS,

by 7% over and above regular indexation to compensate for increases in the average wage. In fact, the average income for seniors in that time has doubled. We have increased the GIS earning exemption for working seniors from \$500 to \$3,500. As a result, pensioners eligible for the GIS can now keep up to another \$1,500 in benefits. That is a significant amount.

We also passed Bill C-36, legislation that makes it much easier for seniors to apply for and receive their GIS payments. This change allows seniors to make a one-time application for the GIS and receive it year over year as long as they are eligible, provided they file annual tax returns. To help encourage seniors to apply for GIS benefits that they may be entitled to, we sent out application forms to low income seniors identified through the tax system. These efforts alone have helped to put benefits in the hands of more than 328,000 additional seniors.

Canada's economic action plan also clearly underscored our government's commitment to seniors. Among other things in our economic action plan, we invested an additional \$60 million over three years in a targeted initiative for older workers and we have expanded the program to include a number of additional eligible communities. The age credit was also increased by \$1,000, allowing low and middle income seniors to receive up to an additional \$150 in annual tax savings.

Furthermore, we have allocated \$400 million over two years through the affordable housing initiative to construct housing units for low income seniors. However, our support for seniors goes much further. In 2007, our government created a National Seniors Council to advise on issues of concern to seniors. Our creation of the position of Minister of State for Seniors speaks volumes about our determination to promote the interests and protect the well-being of Canadians.

We have instituted a number of projects across with regard to combatting elder abuse in all its forms, physical abuse, financial and emotional abuse. These projects are funded under the new horizons for seniors program, another important federally funded initiative that has funded over 4,200 projects across Canada helping seniors to bring their leadership, energy and skills to benefit our communities.

I have had the opportunity to deliver some of the funding to communities across my constituency and the funds were very well received and put to very good use. It is a great way of respecting our seniors, what they have done for us and our country and how they have built our country through the many years of their hard contributions. We can only pay that back by investing in them.

• (1900)

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, once again, I am getting answers that do not apply to the people I am talking about—people who earn less than \$12,675.

Adjournment Motion

I would like to mention two other numbers to the member who responded on the government's behalf. We should raise seniors' income from \$14,034 to \$15,534. That is what the \$110 per month would do. Their income would then be above the poverty line instead of below it, as is the case today.

I have another number for the member. Currently, 1.1 million people over the age of 65 live in Quebec. Half of them, 515,000, receive the guaranteed income supplement and a pension from the old age security program. That means that half of those 65 and older receive—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.
[*English*]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the member's energy and passion but I would once again question why the member did not support the many initiatives that we have taken over the course of our government.

There is no question that we all share the aim of doing all that we can to help our country's seniors enjoy a better quality of life. We owe a great deal of gratitude to our seniors across the country. We understand that there is always room for improvement. Our government will continue to work to ensure the needs of seniors, including low income seniors, are adequately met.

I am extremely proud of our government's track record in looking out for our seniors. I am disappointed that the Bloc member, including members opposite, voted against the measures that I spoke about earlier and the measures that have been put forward before the House.

We will continue to ensure that the interests of seniors are looked after and protected.

THE BUDGET

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in this debate to ask further about a question I raised with the Minister of Finance regarding the equalization changes that were made unilaterally by the Government of Canada in this year's budget.

These budget measures, which were buried in the budget, hidden, and found only by Newfoundland and Labrador government officials in examining the details, robbed Newfoundland and Labrador of approximately \$1.5 billion in payments that it would have received through the equalization formula and offsets that were supposed to come to Newfoundland and Labrador under the Atlantic accord.

The Atlantic accord was the agreement between the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Canada, when the Progressive Conservatives were in power in the eighties and Prime Minister Mulroney was the author of that document on behalf of the Government of Canada, that guaranteed that Newfoundland and Labrador was to be the primary beneficiary of its offshore oil and gas resources.

That was a commitment made by the Government of Canada and a commitment that was reiterated by the current Prime Minister in 2006 when he was asked whether he would adhere to that principle. He said yes in writing that he would do that by making changes to the equalization formula to remove the natural resources.

Changes were made to that formula by the government and put into place about a year or so ago. These changes were designed to provide predictable and stable funding for provinces and to respect the accord. They were imposed by the Government of Canada and they were to provide and would have provided significant dollars to Newfoundland and Labrador.

In fact, since the government came to power in 2006, the equalization payments to Newfoundland and Labrador have now been cut in half. That would not have happened if the formula that was put in only a year ago had not been changed. This year alone, \$414 million were removed from payments to Newfoundland and Labrador by the government. Over the next number of years that formula would reduce Newfoundland's payments by about a billion and a half dollars; \$3,000 for every man, woman and child in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We voted against that. I voted against that. All of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party voted against that because we thought it was unfair and a dastardly deed by the Government of Canada.

I will read from the throne speech that was delivered on March 25 in Newfoundland and Labrador and read by the Hon. John Crosbie, former minister in the government that signed that deal. It reads as follows:

Buried in the 2009 federal budget is a deep cut in funding to one province and one alone: ours. The cut will cost us more than a billion dollars the province ought to be receiving from offshore revenues from an agreement negotiated by a Progressive Conservative Government a quarter century ago. Only a year after changing the equalization program to give it stability, they have changed it again to punish Newfoundland and Labrador.

The people of my province are outraged by this action by the Government of Canada. We expected the Liberal Party of Canada to support that. The reaction, unfortunately, by the Leader of the Opposition was very lukewarm saying in fact, when he first was talking about this, that "I'm not in the business of carrying Premier Williams' water". Eventually he allowed the six Newfoundland Liberals on one occasion only to vote against the budget. However, on every other occasion, the Liberals from Newfoundland and Labrador and the rest of the country voted with the government and imposed this dastardly deed on Newfoundland and Labrador.

There is no justification for this and I would like the minister's representative to acknowledge that this was what was done by the Government of Canada.

● (1905)

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before continuing further, I have to take exception to the member's previous statements suggesting that budget 2009 was not welcomed in Newfoundland and Labrador. In fact, budget 2009 brought key benefits to the province and continued our government's strong support for Newfoundlanders.

Indeed, for Newfoundland and Labrador, federal support will total \$1.1 billion in 2009-10. This support includes \$372 million through the Canada health transfer and \$164 million through the Canada social transfer.

Adjournment Motion

This long-term support will help ensure that the province has the resources required to provide essential public services. It contributes to shared national objectives, including health care, post-secondary education, and other key components of Canada's social safety net.

Budget 2009 also brought key tax relief to the people and the businesses of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Over this and the next five fiscal years, tax reductions in budget 2009 will provide the province with tax relief of nearly \$270 million, including over \$100 million in personal income tax relief in the form of increases in the basic personal amount and the tax exempt threshold of the two lowest personal income tax brackets.

Budget 2009 also included key initiatives that will especially benefit Newfoundland and Labrador, such as over \$80 million to accelerate the cleanup of federal contaminated sites like Canadian Forces Base Goose Bay or nearly \$2 million for wharf construction at the Belleoram Harbour. That is key support for Newfoundland and Labrador and the member opposite should have supported that, but the member did not.

Even before the member and the NDP read one single page of the budget, they announced that they would oppose it. Does that sound bizarre? Yes, and indeed it was bizarre, and people across the country thought so as well.

People like the editorial writers at the *Waterloo Record* wrote the following on January 19:

Indeed no one, no matter how much a genius that person is, knows any of this today because of one, undeniable, unavoidable fact: The budget has yet to be finished and presented to the public. All this explains why federal New Democrats' dogged commitment to defeating the Conservatives over a Conservative budget the NDP has not even seen is ludicrous. It is either the irrational condemnation of something unknown to the NDP, or part of a self-serving power grab that places the party's interests ahead of the country's...What arrogance...These are extraordinary times that demand extraordinary measures. Politicians of all stripes need to work together for the common good of us all. To their discredit, the New Democrats seem hell-bent on working for their own narrow interest...Few things in this world are uglier—.

I wonder if the NDP member would like to respond to that, or better yet, apologize for it.

• (1910)

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, fiscal transfers to the province of Newfoundland and Labrador for health and social transfers on a per capita basis are only what is expected from the Government of Canada as part of our due. Every other province gets them so this is no special deal. There was a special deal that would have ensured that Newfoundland and Labrador was the principle beneficiary of its resources.

The per capita debt in Newfoundland and Labrador as of March 31, 2008, was the highest in Canada, \$22,000 per capita, almost \$12,000 more than the Canadian average. That is because we have been struggling to meet our obligations to our citizens, to look after them, and provide the kind of services they need.

The revenues that we should have received from our offshore resources instead are now going to the Government of Canada and not being offset as was agreed. We are still struggling to try and provide those services. That is the problem with this.

That is why the people of our party and our province have no confidence in the government. It is not surprising—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, we are committed to treating all provinces equally, and we have demonstrated that. In fact, federal support to the provinces and territories is at an all-time high.

The larger issue is that Newfoundland and Labrador is no longer an equalization receiving province. It is now proudly a have province. The province is one of the strong economic engines we need to keep Canada strong and we should be celebrating that. To quote Premier Danny Williams, "It's a tremendous sense of relief and gratification that we've worked so hard in Newfoundland and Labrador". He went on to say that that percolated throughout everybody in his province who can sit at home and say to themselves that they were no longer a have-not and that was huge.

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, some time ago I asked the government, particularly the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, a question regarding the plans of Ryanair to charge people for using the bathrooms aboard their airplanes.

I would have expected the member to provide a serious answer to the question, but, in fact, he did not. I would have expected that his answer, an obvious one, would have been that he could change the air regulations governing carriers in Canada to ban the practice of charging to use the washroom for Ryanair flights, or any other airline flights, flying in and out of Canada. To me, that would have been an obvious answer to my question. Instead, he did not answer the question and I had to come through this process to get further answers from the government.

The government should be proactive in this case. The government is very interested to make certain the industry is efficient and does not waste money, but I do not think we should put this airline through the big expense of asking, which it has done, Boeing to create pay-for-use toilets for its planes and then at the end of the day, closing the door on it charging in Canada.

The message should be brought out very early in the process. Ryanair and other airlines should be told that this sort of practice will not be tolerated in Canada, rather than allow the airline to go to quite a big expense to get Boeing to reconfigure their planes.

To demonstrate to the government that this company is serious, I have responses on this issue from a lot of people. I certainly could not begin to read the responses, but I can assure members, they are all very negative.

Adjournment Motion

The Ryanair people have indicated that this is no big deal. Passengers using train and bus stations are already accustomed to paying to use the toilets, so why not on airplanes? That is their rationale. This airline has made its whole reputation out of charging for all sorts of extra things such as baggage. Almost everything we could imagine that is charged for on planes today, Ryanair started.

Tommy Broughan, who is the transport spokesman for Ireland's Labour Party, said that the toilet charge idea had to be taken seriously. People on the other side of the Atlantic are taking this issue very seriously, and the government has to pay some attention to that.

Furthermore, the president of Ryanair, Mr. O'Leary, justified the proposed scheme, saying that the 33 million pounds could lead to fare savings and would keep people from annoying other passengers with unnecessary toilet trips. His theory is that people will go to the washroom before they get on the plane. If they have to go while they are on the plane, they will hold it until they get off the plane. It will make the flight a little easier because people will not make unnecessary trips. However, he still figures he will get 33 million pounds. He says, "Eventually it is going to happen. It is just we can't do it at the moment because we don't have the mechanism for charging you", which is why he has asked Boeing to come up with a card reader.

My question to the minister at the time was this. What are people without credit cards supposed to do?

• (1915)

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is an important one. I think consumers in Canada are very interested in whether they would have to pay to use the washroom at some time in the future. At this stage, it would be a question that would be answered by the airline itself. I fly almost every week out of my constituencies in northern Alberta and I can assure members that I would not fly on an airline that charged to use the washroom.

Our government also has some concerns with the bill the member has brought forward. Bill C-310 is part of the promotional activity that brings about this question. In fact, we spoke to members of the opposition at second reading a few weeks ago.

The government has stood up for consumers over the past three years. We are trying to stand up for consumers, while at the same time not impeding economic growth, which is so important for our country. Right now, there is a tremendous amount of job loss in the world. Although somewhat better off than any other country in the world, Canada will not be insulated from the fact that we will have some job losses. As such, we want to ensure we continue to promote economic growth.

Our economic action plan has outlined a very ambitious plan to stimulate the economy through targeted investments in infrastructure, industry and tax credits. We are getting the job done and protecting consumers at the same time. We want to ensure that the families, mothers and fathers continue to have jobs and continue to have the great quality of life that they have come to expect from a Canadian economy.

Our government has also met with consumer associations, industry representatives and airlines in relation to the member's proposed bill. There are a lot of issues with the bill and we want to ensure we balance them. On one side, we want to ensure consumers and people who use planes throughout the country have the rights they need in order to encourage them to fly. Flying creates economic growth as well. At the same time, we need to ensure those airlines continue to operate effectively in Canada, with a Canadian logo and flag on their aircraft.

From my consultations, even with the members opposite, I can honestly say there is a sincere interest from all sides of the House, especially from the government side, to improve the protection of the travelling public. However, as I mentioned, we cannot turn a blind eye to the economic realities facing the airline industry at this moment. From your knowledge of the industry, Mr. Speaker, as well as from the knowledge of the members opposite, we know the airline industry is going through somewhat of a change at this stage. Indeed, the industry around the world is going through somewhat of a change.

The global economic downturn has had a serious impact on both business and recreational travel. We have heard from stakeholders involved. They have said that this would be the worst possible time to introduce punitive measures into the industry. We are going to use a balanced approach to deal with this matter. We want to focus on creating jobs, not cutting jobs, as the member is proposing. We are going to support Canadian families.

How many times has the member opposite been on a plane that charged to use the washroom? Even though I fly many times a week, I had never heard of such a thing before he raised the question. Could he answer that for me?

• (1920)

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to ask the questions here and I am not getting any answers. We are here this evening to try to get some response from the government.

The answer is really simple. All the government has to do is take the sensible approach and have the minister change the regulations to ban the practice before the airlines start to do it. What is he going to do? Is he going to wait until they start charging and then ban it after they have gone to all the extra expense? That makes no sense at all.

This issue has absolutely nothing to do with Bill C-310, the airline passenger bill of rights. It is not dealing with the washroom issue. That is a different bill and a different set of issues. We will be dealing with that in our second hour of debate next Thursday and with a vote the following week. He can make up his mind then as to whether he will vote in favour or against it.

We are dealing with an issue that will cause a big problem for a lot of air—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Adjournment Motion

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, I understand the member wants the government to address a problem that currently does not exist. However, we have a lot of issues with which we want to deal.

Our main issue right now on the government side is to create jobs, protect Canadian families, ensure there is food on the table and jobs for Canadians so they can continue to enjoy their quality of life. Although we understand what the member has said, he could not answer the question of whether he had been on or had seen a plane that had this situation.

However, I am happy to report that even as recently as this week, some airlines, such as WestJet, stationed in Calgary, have introduced their own policies to ensure good customer services and improved

customer services. These are some of the best customer services in the world.

I hope I can work with the members opposite, including that member, to improve customer relations in all sectors of the economy, to keep the Canadian economy strong and keep jobs in Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:24 p.m.)

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