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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, May 4, 2009

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 4, 2009

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

• (1100)
[English]

VACANCY

CUMBERLAND—COLCHESTER—MUSQUODOBOIT VALLEY

The Speaker: Order, please. It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely Mr. Bill Casey, member for the electoral district of Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, by resignation effective April 30, 2009.

[Translation]

Pursuant to subsection 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed a warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

[English]

It being 11 a.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

STANDING ORDERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The House resumed from March 13 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today to speak in favour of this important motion.

Let me say at the outset that I think that it is important for all members to understand that there is a difference in the regime of private members' bills in our place and the regime of private members' bills and the process with which they are dealt in the Senate. If this motion is adopted, it would change the way Senate private members' bills are dealt with in our place.

Mr. Speaker, as you know and I think as most members know, when a Senate private member's bill currently makes its way to our place, it is given some precedence in our place. In other words, we have a Standing Order that allows for Senate private members' bills

to be dealt with in a more expeditious manner than House of Commons bills that go to the other place. I would point that out because I think what we are talking about with this motion is the principle of House of Commons private members' bills and the way with which they are dealt.

I would argue to all members here that we are at somewhat of a disadvantage inasmuch that in any particular Parliament there are only a handful of members of Parliament who actually get to introduce and debate their private member's bills. That is because, as we all know, we have a draw or lottery that allows for the order of precedence to be established. That determines which private members' bills are introduced at what time. Currently, with 308 members of Parliament sitting, it is unlikely that a private member's bill could be introduced and debated in this place unless one was in the top 50 or 60 names drawn in the lottery of which I speak.

However, what makes the situation even more difficult for members of Parliament to get some of their private member's bills and legislation debated is the fact that Senate private members' bills are given precedence. In other words, as we all know, the first draw has the names of 30 members of Parliament drawn in order: one through 30. That is the order in which their private member's bills would be introduced. However, if a Senate private member's bill came over, it would automatically go to spot number 31. If there were 10 Senate private members' bills that were passed in the Senate and made their way over to our place, the spots would be then taken from spots 31 to 40.

In other words, members of Parliament are disadvantaged. If I happen to be in spot 31 or 32, but 10 Senate private members' bills came over to our place, then I would not be able to present my private member's bill for debate in this place until all of those Senate private members' bills had been dealt with. I think that is fundamentally unfair to members of Parliament. I think there is a principle. Since we are the elected body, the private members' bills that we introduce should be given more precedence than any Senate private member's bill that comes over to our place by the unelected Senate.

I would also like to point out that there is a huge difference between the way in which we treat private members' bills from the Senate and the way in which the Senate treats private members' bills from our place. In other words, when a House of Commons private member's bill makes its way to the Senate, it is not given the same priority that we give to Senate bills. There is a daily routine of business in the Senate that allows for all items on the order paper to come up for debate on a given sitting day.

Private Members' Business

This means that any private member's bill, whether it be a House of Commons bill or a Senate bill that happens to be on the order paper over there, can be brought forward at any time. Even more than one Senate bill can be debated in one day. While we have a strict order of precedence here, that is not the case in the Senate. There is no precedence, no priority, given to House of Commons private members' bills that make their way to the Senate, but we give priority to Senate private members' bills that come to our place. Fundamentally, that is wrong and it must be changed.

• (1105)

That is what the motion we are debating today attempts to do. It would merely prevent priority being given to a Senate private member's bill. Senate private members' bills would not automatically be added to the order of precedence thereby bumping a House of Commons MP's private member's bill.

The motion would still allow for Senate private members' bills to be debated. If a member of Parliament, who is on the order of precedence, chose to sponsor one of those Senate bills, that member of Parliament could do so, and then that Senate bill would be debated in the slot provided to that member of Parliament. Right now we cannot do that. We are forced to debate Senate private members' bills at the expense of members of Parliament private members' bills.

Some have argued in committee that this really has not been a problem. To date, that is probably true. It really has not been too much of a problem because we have not had that many Senate bills come across to our place, but it appears that things are changing.

Right now, on average, one Senate private member's bill is introduced in the Senate every day. Theoretically, we could see a whole raft of Senate private members' bills make their way into our place, thereby bumping many members of Parliament's PMBs from the order of precedence. Let me give the House a graphic example.

Currently, there are, I believe, eight Senate private members' bills being discussed in Senate committees. There are six more private members' bills in the Senate that deal with business that has been previously introduced in the Senate. Once debate and discussion has been held on a bill, if another bill is introduced similar to that first bill that has already been debated, the Senate tends to move those bills through fairly quickly.

Quite possibly we could have a situation where 14 Senate bills would go on the order of precedence in our place. That would mean that the next time there is a replenishment of private members' bills, and we always replenish in lots of 15, they would all be bumped back and delayed because the Senate private members' bills would take their place.

Normally, a replenishment and debate on those private members' bills takes about six weeks. What that would mean, again theoretically but quite possibly, is that all of the members of Parliament whose names have been drawn for replenishment would have to wait at least six weeks before their bill could even be introduced because we were dealing with the Senate bills that have been given priority.

Again, I would argue, that totally disadvantages members of Parliament, and in particular, members of the opposition parties. It very much disadvantages members of the Bloc Québécois and the

NDP because it is highly unlikely that we will ever see a federal government comprised of NDP members. It is also impossible for the Bloc Québécois to form government since that party does not run enough MPs to form a majority government at any time.

The only opportunity members of the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Québécois have to bring forward legislation, since they will never be in government, is through private members' bills. If an NDP MP was on the order of precedence and his or her bill was bumped because of the Senate bills coming across, that would disadvantage that member from even introducing a bill, and if Parliament dissolves, there goes that private member's bill.

• (1110)

Therefore, based on principle, this motion is intended to allow House of Commons private members' bills to be given the priority they should be given. It is fundamentally unfair for the Senate to allow its bills to take precedence over ours. I hope all members will vote in favour of this very important bill.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the House will complete the last hour of debate on private member's Motion No. 277, sponsored by the member for Beauce.

The motion reads as follows:

That Standing Order 89 be amended by deleting the words "and of second reading of a private member's public bill originating in the Senate"; and Standing Order 86.2 (2) be amended by deleting the words "a Senate public bill or".

As my time is limited, I will concentrate my remarks on the purpose of the motion and what I believe to be the sponsor's motives in bringing this proposal forward.

However, before I get to the purpose of the motion, I would remind viewers that bills can be introduced by the government, known as the executive, or by private members, parliamentarians who are not in cabinet, through the legislative process. I had the opportunity in the last Parliament, as the member for Cape Breton—Canso, to introduce a private member's bill regarding a tax deduction for firefighters. Bills can also be introduced by the government or private members in either the House of Commons or the Senate.

The purpose of the motion is to amend the Standing Orders with respect to private members' bills originating in the Senate. If Motion No. 277 were to be adopted, the effect would be twofold: first, the House would not to give automatic or guaranteed consideration in the order of precedence to Senate public bills, as is the case now; and second, to force those wishing these bills to progress to the House to sponsor them by giving them their own item.

As an example, under the new rule, let us say that the Senate has passed a bill. The bill gets to the House but is not placed on the order of precedence automatically, as is the case now. Instead, a member must use up his or her spot in the priority list to sponsor the Senate bill. Therefore, a private member who is a member of the Senate will see his or her chances of getting a bill through the legislative process severely restricted, even though no restriction will be placed on the government's chances of seeing its bill evolve, even if introduced in the Senate.

The question I ask myself is why the member for Beauce and his party feel the need to restrict the chances of senators or private members to see their bills evolve through the legislative process. Does the member for Beauce feel that senators have abused the treatment that the Commons gives their private members' bills? The facts are contrary to that.

In the current session of this Parliament, the government has introduced 28 bills in the Commons and 6 bills in the Senate. Therefore, 18% of the government's legislative agenda has been introduced in the Senate. How many private members' bills originating from the Senate have found their way onto the order of precedence? The answer is zero.

Therefore, it is clear that the hon. senators have not been flooding this House with private members' bills. I must ask myself again why the member for Beauce feels it is necessary to amend the Standing Orders in this way.

I should also point out that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which is permanently mandated with reviewing the Standing Orders, is currently looking into the rules governing private members' business.

For that reason, I feel that this initiative is premature, as the member for Beauce could have waited for the committee to table its report.

I also agree with my colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine when, on March 13, she said:

Now while some members may mistakenly believe that if fewer Senate bills were on the House order of precedence, more House bills would pass, but the effect is the exact opposite. In fact, we in the House give priority to the small number of Senate private members' bills that reach our House and, in exchange, our private members' bills receive priority in the other House. It does not mean that the House always gets its way but it does mean that the absence of this reciprocal agreement would be to the disadvantage of the House.

• (1115)

Maybe the Conservatives are afraid of the kind of legislation that may come from the Senate if not sponsored by the government. Maybe the government is worried that such legislation will not be conservative enough and respect strict right wing ideology.

Therefore, being faced with the possibility of having to deal with more moderate Liberal legislation, the Conservatives prefer to restrict democracy. For this reason, I will vote against Motion No. 277.

It will be an interesting vote. I do not believe the NDP will speak to this. I know that, of the about 170 pieces of private members' business, the NDP has sponsored about 100 of them.

Private Members' Business

My party believes in private member's business. We do not whip private members' business. We encourage our members to engage in a broad range of private members' issues and I know that many have come from the other place to the House and have been very vigorously debated by both sides.

In light of the fact that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is doing a study and that it will soon be completed and tabled, it would be prudent on the part of all parliamentarians to see it through. This motion is somewhat premature. We believe the current system is serving all parliamentarians very well now. There is a good relationship.

Obviously, from my remarks, everyone knows that if there is a perceived problem, that is all it is. In actuality, there is no problem. We are not being flooded from the upper chamber by private members' bills.

On this side of the House, we will, for the most part, not support this motion.

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, I thought there would be a whole lot of interest in this subject this morning.

The member for Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre gave reasonable remarks. He is the parliamentary secretary—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I have just been informed by the clerks that the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River has already spoken to this motion. Therefore, pursuant to the Standing Orders, he will not be able to address the House again.

Resuming debate. There being no other members rising, we will go to the hon. member for Beauce for his five minute right of reply.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Motion No. 277 concerning House private members' business.

According to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, Senate private members' business that is referred to the House of Commons is automatically and immediately added to the order of precedence when it is sponsored or introduced by a member of this House.

However, a member can introduce an item of business only if his or her name is on the order of precedence.

At the beginning of each Parliament, the first 30 members on the list for the consideration of private members' business are added to the order of precedence for introducing a measure in the House.

Once the first 15 items of business on the order of precedence have been passed, rejected or referred to committee, the names of the next 15 members are added to the list.

In other words, the members of the House have to wait their turn, whereas Senate private members' business is automatically added to the order of precedence immediately. Clearly, this is extremely inequitable.

Private Members' Business

Motion No. 277 would change the rules and make them more equitable. Senate private members' business would receive the same treatment as House of Commons private members' business. We just want to be fair to the members of the House and the members of the Senate.

Motion No. 277 would give a member on the order of precedence freedom of choice. At the appropriate time, the member would be free to choose an item of business to introduce in the House. The member could choose any of his or her own items of business or an item from the Senate. The member would have the choice of sponsoring a Senate private member's bill or item of business or one of his or her own bills. That is freedom of choice.

Some members may say that we should not worry about Senate business, because only one item of Senate business has been passed during this Parliament. I disagree, and I will explain why we should be concerned about this.

During the first 30 days of the session, the senators introduced 33 private members' bills, an average of one a day while the Senate sat.

As I mentioned, the Senate has passed one private member's bill, but the House has not passed a single House private member's bill.

Moreover, four Senate private members' bills have been referred to committee in the Senate and could well be passed by the Senate by the end of May.

If that were to happen, the next replenishment planned for the last week of May would be postponed to June. As we can see, the time that should be devoted to private members' business from this House is currently being devoted to business that comes from the other place.

The many items sent from the Senate do actually make a difference, because time is very precious in this House. We, the members, lose precious time when our items are not addressed. Indeed, time—and I am choosing my words carefully—is of the utmost importance in this democratic institution we represent, and we cannot use this time any way we like.

At the rate at which Senate private members' business is passed, 10 other such items could be brought before the House of Commons by November, when the next replenishment of the order of precedence is scheduled.

Those 10 items could delay that replenishment by two sitting weeks.

In other words, this problem will only get worse over time, and items from the Senate will continue to be favoured at the expense of items brought forward by members of this House.

That is why we must act immediately to ensure that members of the House can present their items at the appropriate time.

I therefore call on all members of this House to support Motion No. 277.

• (1125)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

[Translation]

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour 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:

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 6, 2009, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Deputy Speaker: It being 11:25 a.m., there is still time before government orders is set to commence, so I would propose suspending the sitting until noon.

An hon. member: No.

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, I attempted to rise earlier and I found that the rules prevented me from doing so. At this point in time we have a half hour of dead time and I propose to raise a point of order at this point, now that I am on my feet, with respect to private member's Motion No. 277. I will continue with my point of order unless, Mr. Speaker, you have another view.

I will argue that the motion is unconstitutional and should not even be here. There exists under our Constitution an equality between our two houses of Parliament, the Senate and the House, where each house offers comity or reciprocity to the other house in relation to the disposition of the bills that are moved back and forth.

What this motion fails to recognize and what members have failed to recognize is that before a bill comes to this House, that bill in the Senate is fully passed by the Senate, another house, just as our bills are passed. If we can alter the constitutional basis on which bills come from the other place to here, the same thing could happen with government bills that come from the Senate to here.

The fact is that a bill should be treated with full respect from the Senate. I maintain that our constitutional conventions provide for that. Consigning a bill fully passed by another House to an individual private member in this House is incompatible with our Constitution.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of debate that the hon. member has already expressed in his speech, but I do find that is a point of debate.

Government Orders

Chapter 9 of Marleau and Montpetit does provide for a situation where the item before the House during private members' hour is dealt with before the hour is finished. One of the options available for the Speaker is to suspend the sitting of the House until the time provided for government orders, so I will suspend the sitting of the House until noon.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:29 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1200)

[*English*]

HUMAN PATHOGENS AND TOXINS ACT

The House resumed from April 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, An Act to promote safety and security with respect to human pathogens and toxins, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday when this bill was last debated, I asked a question of one of the hon. members about the privacy implications that are included in the bill on human pathogens and toxins. I was not quite sure whether I got a full answer but I did ask what the disposition of the concerns were with regard to privacy. The indication was that there was a letter from the Office of the Privacy Commissioner responding to a couple of points.

That letter was written on March 11 and was sent to the chair of the Standing Committee on Health. To make a long story short, it appears that the health committee had arranged its affairs in order to look at the health implications of Bill C-11.

In Bill C-11, in clause 38(1) and some ancillary matters to do with the Privacy Act the Privacy Commissioner had indicated an interest to appear before the committee to discuss the concerns with the committee. In addition to the letter of March 11, there is a letter dated March 30. I may want to table both of them. In the letter, the Privacy Commissioner's office laid out the process it went through. There was some consultation with that office. They met with officials. They did not receive a privacy impact assessment. That is a critical element that is required to do a proper assessment of whether or not the activities related to the Privacy Act are going to be handled in a matter which is appropriate and also in a manner which does not conflict with other areas of the privacy legislation.

In going through these, the Privacy Commissioner's office had a couple of suggestions right off the bat, for instance, including the word "reasonableness". It says, "the minister has the authority to order private personal information and confidential business information to be disclosed without limit and without any conditions, simply to order it to be". That raised some concern in my mind. The Privacy Commissioner indicated there probably should be the normal wording that there was a test of reasonableness, that the minister should have reasonable cause to believe that this information was vital to the administration of the act.

That change was made. In fact, based on the written input of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, an amendment was made by the government at committee.

There was a subsequent letter, and a few other changes were proposed.

The reason I am rising is not with concern related to the health aspects, the safeguards that are being proposed in the bill to ensure the safety and security of human pathogens and toxins and those who have access to, custody of, or responsibility for them. My concerns relate to how this piece of legislation impacts on privacy rights of Canadians.

The member for Eglinton—Lawrence gave a wonderful speech last Thursday. Members may want to consult it to see more detail about the concerns that have been raised. I think that would be a very good place to start. I will not repeat the points made there, but the argument was made very clearly that there were some holes.

• (1205)

In fact, subsequent to the March 11 letter, based on which some government amendments were made, the letter dated March 30 I think was written on same day the committee did its clause-by-clause study and passed the bill and sent it back to the House. I did not get a chance even to read this letter, for the members' edification, and I am pretty sure that the members probably received or at least were advised of the letter of March 11. I am pretty sure, also, that when the members voted on the bill clause by clause they were not even aware of the March 30 letter.

That raises a very significant problem with regard to the manner in which the committee conducted its affairs. The members of the committee were not apprised of relevant information to do with that on a matter which did not even have a witness before it for them to even make the necessary enquiries. This raises some concerns about whether or not that committee discharged its responsibilities in a fashion which is expected by the House. That is a matter the committee members may want to review as a committee.

It also raises the issue that should the other items incorporated in the letter of March 30 from the Office of the Privacy Commissioner raise substantive items, and I believe they are substantive, it puts us in a situation where, very quickly, somebody had to decide whether we do something about this. There are a couple of ways to deal with it. One way would be to make a motion to send this bill back to the health committee. That process requires that we identify the specific clause or clauses for reconsideration. I am prepared to do that, but I am not sure whether it would get the support of the House because the details are not there. For all the members having to deal with this, the details are not there.

Government Orders

I hope the government members, the government House leader and the government whip will consider the options. One is to send the bill back to committee to hear a witness who knows what he or she is talking about when it comes to protecting the privacy rights of Canadians. The second option would be to say that we do not have much choice, and if we cannot send it back to committee, we will have to either defeat the bill or pass it. I think it is unlikely that the members will want to defeat this bill. It is an important bill in that we are dealing with health implications here.

However, in my view, there are some changes that are necessary with regard to the Privacy Act implications. A privacy impact assessment was not, and has not been, provided to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner to enable it to give an informed opinion on whether or not the scope and the intent of the content of the legislation as it stands now are compatible with our obligations to protect privacy rights.

In the absence of the option of defeating the bill, I would suggest we have to pass it. That means this bill would go to the Senate. There is no doubt in my mind that the Senate does good work on legislation review. The Senate would look at the speeches of the day. It would look at the speech given by the member for Eglinton—Lawrence and see that some very serious questions have been raised. The member quoted extensively from both letters. If that is the case, it is my view that the problems in Bill C-11 as they currently exist are such that the Senate may have no choice but to make amendments to the bill and send it back to the House. Then we could send it back to committee for the committee to hear a witness and to fix the bill and then bring it back to the House and go through the process. It would be much more extensive.

I am calling out right now, in the middle of my speech, to the government House leader, to the whip, to the health critic, to the parliamentary secretary and to the Minister of Health to have a quick look at the situation. If they agree that this is the best opportunity for us to repair this bill, then a motion should come forward by a member speaking to this bill at this time to send the bill back to committee with regard to clause 38 and the clauses to which it relates. That is the reason I am rising, to ask the government to quickly consider the options before us.

●(1210)

I think the fastest route is to revert to committee to look at the matters, to consult with the Privacy Commissioner, not by exchanging a letter but by having representatives from the Office of the Privacy Commissioner appear.

It is a very substantive portion of this bill. It means that disclosure of personal information and confidential business information, not only of a person who has access or custody or responsibilities for human toxins or pathogens, the bill is so broad it could also lead to the disclosure of information about the person's family members. On top of this, the bill also allows this information to be shared with foreign governments.

One of the key issues the commissioner raised in this letter was what she termed "anonymize" the information about those who have custody or access or responsibilities related to human pathogens or toxins. That would mean instead of having the person's name disclosed to those it is necessary to disclose to so that we have the

tools necessary to properly administer Bill C-11, it would not put on the record the person's name, personal information, family's information, confidential business information or anything else it would dig up without explanation, limits or conditions on the minister.

The reason it just twigged with me is that I happen to be the chair of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. The Privacy Act comes under my committee's purview. We meet with the the Privacy Commissioner regularly. We are now working on some quick fixes to the Privacy Act, because it has not been touched in over 25 years.

These are important issues, and if we allow another bill to compromise the privacy rights of Canadians and effectively undermine the intent of the Privacy Act, then we have a ripple effect. It is not right.

I want to highlight a couple of things in the letter of March 30, which I do not believe the committee members even saw. It was sent directly to the chair of the committee. It would have been very difficult to have it go through the process of going through the parliamentary secretary and the government officials for health, maybe even the health minister, and then to distribute it to the committee members, who are entitled to get copies of all correspondence related to the matter before them.

In this case the assistant privacy commissioner actually signed the letter, thanking the committee for including some of the suggestions they had. They said there seemed to be a preliminary exchange of emails between the Public Health Agency of Canada and some of their officials. That was in May 2008. It was almost a year ago that they were talking about this. The privacy officials, the Privacy Commissioner, and Dr. Butler's agency, the PHAC, were aware of this.

It causes me great concern. If the Ministry of Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada, the PHAC, were aware of these items, these concerns on the Privacy Act, and still put forward a bill to the House of Commons that did not take into account the substantive concerns that the Privacy Commissioner had, it causes me grave concern. Somehow the system failed the House of Commons. Or, there is a reason. I am not going to speculate on whether someone wanted to pass by the input of the office of the Privacy Commissioner or pass by the prior consultations from almost a year ago with the Public Health Agency of Canada.

This is serious. Something has gone wrong in the operation of the committee, in the drafting of legislation, in the circulation of correspondence, and in the assessment, getting a privacy impact assessment so that the Privacy Commissioner could actually do the job.

It does say, "...we did not have many details and did not receive materials other than what was then Bill C-54, at that time". That was the bill from the last Parliament.

●(1215)

That is all they received. How could we expect the Privacy Commissioner to do her job when there is no consultation and no communication with her on this bill specifically, until afterwards, where someone somehow picks up on a couple of items?

Government Orders

This involves two acts. One is the Privacy Act, which has the oversight with regard to the government departments, but also there is the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act; it is referred to as PIPEDA. These two acts together are related, and they are involved in this matter. It is not straightforward.

The letter goes on to say:

We recognize that the intent of the legislation is to deal with the personal information of laboratory workers; however, we still have concerns that there is nothing in the Bill to restrict the collection of ancillary personal information, such as patient information.

We are getting into areas that are so sensitive.

Another ancillary collection could be personal information about a laboratory worker's family members, should they come into contact with a regulated pathogen or toxin. As well, we are aware of the potential for function creep and would therefore prefer to limit the collection of personal information.

It goes on to say:

We look forward to these issues being addressed in the privacy risk assessment work to come.

They still have not received the privacy impact assessment. That is the tool, the approach in which we look at the implications to the Privacy Act of any legislation that touches on it. There is a protocol to go through here. It is the way we do our business, because Lord knows that members of Parliament cannot be experts in every statute we have responsibility for.

We have a responsibility to make sure that the work is done. We second the responsibility for the detailed knowledge, the day-to-day knowledge, to the people who work on it in the departments, in the agencies, we have established to do this.

But the matter has not come forward. It did not come forward to the committee. It did not come forward to the House. It was not disclosed by the parliamentary secretary in his speech. It was not disclosed by the minister at any point. No release. No information. We have done a very, very poor job as the House. It is a reflection on all of us.

However, we now have an opportunity. We have identified a potential problem here. It may be nothing. I may be wrong, but the Privacy Commissioner does not think so.

I believe the best course of action is to remedy the concerns that have been raised in the letter of March 30 by the commissioner, to ensure we learn from this example, to ensure that legislation, before it is signed off by all of the cabinet, that members did their due diligence. Did they check off on every piece of information? We have the formal checklist. Are they representing that this is constitutional, that it does not contradict any other laws of Canada, that it follows the model or the protocols we have established to make sure our bills and statutes work?

We also have a grave concern about the regulations. Bill C-11 requires substantive regulations. But if there is no consultation on the bill, I am not sure we will see any consultation related to privacy when the regulations are drafted and gazetted and promulgated.

One of the other areas is clause 67. It says that this may "diminish controls over personal information". I guess that is the point of all this.

Having said that, I would like the unanimous consent of the House to table photocopies of both letters to the chair of the Standing Committee on Health: one dated March 11, one dated March 30, both in relation to Bill C-11.

• (1220)

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table these two letters?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no consent.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rather perplexed by the suggestion that the House would refuse to accept a motion to table two documents, which can be made public and which were solicited by the chair of the Standing Committee on Health, forwarded to the chair of the committee, and in the context of the way that Parliament and committees work should have been distributed to all members of the committee prior to the consideration of those clauses of the bill in question.

A member of Parliament stands before the House and says he would like to make them available to every member of Parliament so that he or she can take the consideration of this bill in its fullest context, keeping in mind that the health issues are not the ones being addressed but really the privacy concerns associated with the gathering of data pertinent to health issues. And members of the House have said, no, they do not want that information.

It might be well worth our while to ask the member to propose that again, given that members have now had a few brief moments, because that is all they would require to make an intelligent decision. If he were to present that motion again, we might find that members of the House may be disposed more favourably to receiving information that is for the public benefit and for a mature decision on this bill.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I am pretty sure that I cannot make a motion during questions and comments. I thank the member for the chance, or at least the gesture.

I can say that I am not here to put blame on anybody. I am here, as a member of this place, to suggest that there may be a problem with this bill. There are a few ways to handle it, as I indicated. Let me review them.

Number one is to make a motion to send the bill back to committee with specific reference to clauses 38, 67, and any other clauses that flow from those, for the health committee to hear the appropriate witnesses, to remediate the bill as necessary and to return it to the House.

The second thing would be simply to defeat this bill and make the government come back with another bill that has the changes in it.

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The third thing is to pass the bill with the potential or alleged flaws in it and let it go to the Senate. Then the Senate will have an opportunity to review these matters in some detail, and it will send the bill back to us and we will probably have to send it back for consideration at the health committee anyway.

The most expeditious way to find out whether we have a serious problem is to send it back to committee. If anybody would like the letters, I would be happy to provide them. I am asking hon. members to rise in their place to debate Bill C-11 and make the motion to revert it to committee. I know my Liberal colleagues would be prepared to support that.

At this point we need members to review the information, look at the options we have and try to find the best manner in which the House of Commons can dispose of an important health bill.

• (1225)

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to reflect on the intervention by my colleague, the member for Mississauga South, that the hands of the House are tied and that we would be essentially dependent upon the decisions made in the other place for how to address this bill, keeping in mind that one is talking about protecting the rights of citizens to information that is personal and private, while we take a look at all of the issues that are important from a health perspective with respect to transporting and dealing with human pathogens and toxins.

The House would owe, from my perspective, very humbly, a debt of gratitude to members of the House, like the member for Mississauga South, who underscores sometimes occasional problems associated with issues that are related to the importance of citizens' interests on privacy.

I wonder whether we can have his comment on that as well.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I would think this is potentially a bit of an embarrassment to some people, but the bottom line is that the members of the health committee did not receive the second communication from the Privacy Commissioner, which laid out at least four different areas of concern. One of them is this has no limits on how long that personal information can be kept.

That is fundamental to any legislation. If a person leaves the employ and is no longer involved, there is no sunset date as to when it has to dispose of this information. That has to be changed because it is consistent with every other treatment we have with regard to matters as it touches on the Privacy Act. I know some members are a little concerned about whether we will open up a problem area here.

I am not convinced the privacy commission is satisfied with the bill in its current form, but I do know they will participate in the continuing activity of this review. If the House is not prepared to deal with it, I am pretty sure hon. members of the red chamber, the other place, will look at this carefully to make absolutely sure that the legislation we pass in the Parliament of Canada is the best possible.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a member of the health committee, I would like to reassure the hon. member opposite that we have had great, lengthy conversations regarding the privacy assessment and privacy issues. At the end of the day, we also know that the regulations will

address some of the issues about which we need talk. There was consent, both by his party and ours, to move the bill forward.

This is very important legislation. Yes, the privacy issues need to be dealt with and I feel very sure that we will move forward in a proper and proactive way.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I am 100% in agreement except for one thing. Regulations cannot fix this. Regulations are drafted after the legislation receives royal assent. Regulations cannot change the bill in any manner that is not enabled by the bill itself.

The bill has to say that the minister has the authority to make regulations to specify the details and conditions, et cetera under which regulations can be made. Respectfully that is not in the bill now. It still needs a change.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An hon. member: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on the motion stands deferred until the end of government orders tomorrow.

* * *

ARCTIC WATERS POLLUTION PREVENTION

• (1230)

The House proceeded to the consideration of C-3, An Act to amend the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (for the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities) moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (for the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities) moved that Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, Canada is an Arctic nation, an Arctic power. The Arctic and Canada's north make up more than 40% of our land mass. We occupy a large part of the Arctic. The Arctic and the north are integral to our national identity.

Over 100,000 Canadians live in our three northern territories: Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, our newest territory.

The north also includes portions of Canadian provinces characterized by northern conditions. Many of those living in the north are Inuit and first nations whose ancestors have inhabited the region for thousands of years.

The history of Canada's presence in Arctic lands and waters establishes and supports our sovereignty over the region.

[English]

Bill C-3 is a powerful demonstration of Canada's commitment to and leadership in the Arctic. This government's commitment to demonstrating Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic is unprecedented, particularly the government's northern strategies fourth pillar, which is to protect our environmental heritage. Because Canada is sovereign over its lands and waters up to the Arctic point, we should apply the environmental safeguards needed to protect this unique piece of our identity.

Our government is doing that by ensuring the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act applies to the full extent of Canadian Arctic waters. It will do so by extending the application of the legislation from the current 100 nautical miles from shore to the full 200 nautical miles permitted by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

As many international law experts have stated, the bill is an action that should have taken place a long time ago. Once again, this government is showing leadership and a comprehensive strategy with respect to the Canadian Arctic. I commend my colleague, the Minister of Transport, on this important amendment.

It is important that members of the House understand the origins of the legislation as a significant demonstration of sovereignty over Canadian Arctic waters.

Members of the House should note that the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act was originally enacted in 1970, in response to the voyage of the U.S. oil tanker *SS Manhattan* through the Northwest Passage in 1969. The *Manhattan* was the first commercial attempt to navigate the Northwest Passage and signalled the arrival of technological advances that permitted the construction of ice-reinforced oil supertankers.

Even though the voyage of the *Manhattan* took place with the consent of Canada and with the assistance of Canadian icebreakers, it was nevertheless viewed as a trial run by commercial interests to test the feasibility of year-round transport of oil by sea from fields in

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Alaska to facilitate on the northeastern U.S. coast through the Northwest Passage. However, the difficult ice conditions experienced at the time confirmed that even at their annual minimum extent in September, there remained significant challenges to vessels navigating these Canadian waters.

Nevertheless, the *Manhattan* demonstrated the potential for growth of commercial transportation through the Northwest Passage, due to technological developments, and focused attention on the growing risk of potential consequences of a major oil spill occurring in ice covered waters.

It was in this context that the Parliament of Canada passed the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act to underscore Canada's commitment to protect the Arctic environment and its resolve to exercise sovereignty over Canadian Arctic waters.

● (1235)

Canada's ratification of the UNCLOS in 2003 provides an additional international legal basis for the proposed amendments in Bill C-3. Prior to the conclusion of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, or UNCLOS, in 1982, international law did not recognize the concept of a 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone as it does now.

Today there is no question that the exclusive economic zone provides coastal states, such as Canada, the legal authority to exercise sovereign rights and jurisdiction over living and non-living resources up to 200 nautical miles from the shore, including important rights with respect to the prevention of marine pollution.

Canada also benefited from UNCLOS through the inclusion of an additional provision, further recognizing the legality of the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act under international law. Canadian negotiators were successful in including article 234 within UNCLOS, permitting additional rights for Arctic coastal states, such as Canada, within ice covered water. Article 234 is commonly referred to as the Arctic exception and is the product of negotiations between Canada, the United States and the then Soviet Union.

It is beneficial to consider some additional international legal considerations of the proposed amendment. Some states have differing interpretations with respect to the international legal status of the various waterways known as the Northwest Passage.

For example, in 1988 Canada and the United States concluded a bilateral international co-operation treaty concerning the transit of U.S. government icebreakers through the Northwest Passage. This agreement, resulting from an initiative of former President Reagan and former Prime Minister Mulroney, allows Canada and the United States to continue to maintain differences in the interpretation over the international legal status of the Northwest Passage by literally agreeing to disagree, while on a practical basis allowing movement of icebreakers through the Northwest Passage on a basis within the best interests of both states.

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The legislation under consideration would not affect provisions of this agreement. As a matter of policy, Canada is nevertheless willing to permit international navigation in and through the Northwest Passage, so long as the conditions established by Canada to protect security, environmental and Inuit interests are met. These measures include, for example, pollution monitoring and control under the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, which we are now considering.

As marine traffic to the north increases, our government will adapt the regulations and systems already in place to protect Canadian interests. Our government has also pledged an enhanced surveillance and military presence in the Canadian Arctic waters. We are also implementing an ecosystem-based approach to ocean management in the Beaufort Sea and elsewhere.

● (1240)

[*Translation*]

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I am committed to strengthening our bilateral cooperation with other Arctic nations. That is why I will be touring circumpolar capitals to promote the Arctic and Canada's interests in the region.

We have some interests in common with our Arctic neighbours—Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Iceland—and we have a lot to learn from their experiences.

We are looking at how trade, innovation and investment can contribute to sustainable development in the north.

[*English*]

Partnership with Arctic countries must rest on a solid legal foundation, and Bill C-3 is an integral part of that foundation.

I would like to emphasize that Bill C-3 is yet another means of exercising Canadian sovereignty over its Arctic waters. By extending the application of the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act from 100 nautical miles to 200 nautical miles from shore, Canada will give full effect to the sovereign rights permitted by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. These rights were secured in large part by Canadian negotiators. Their inclusion in UNCLOS constitutes international recognition of Canadian domestic legislative action over its Arctic waters through this act.

By passing Bill C-3, the Parliament of Canada, the government and Canada will take an important step to ensure that the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act applies to all Canadian Arctic waters and to ensure proper stewardship of this important Canadian region for future generations.

I look forward to the support from all parties on this important amendment.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the intervention of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the debate, inasmuch as this has been presented as a bill on transport.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has preceded the presentation of the bill by his colleague in the House with some expressions of concern about our sovereignty that elicited responses by the Russian Federation and others with respect to his claims.

I make special mention and I would like the minister to comment for us, because we are talking about Canadian interests, and those of us in this party and on this side of the House are always promoting Canadian interests.

I am glad he referred to the 1970 legislation, the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, which was presented and passed by a former government, not his and not associated with his party, and a subsequent piece of legislation that confirmed the law of the sea for Canada, which allowed us to get into this particular legislation, again by another Canadian government, not his

I refer specifically to two aspects of it: first, his suggestion that this is an unprecedented bill, given the context I have just given; and secondly, that it is a powerful demonstration of our commitment to the north, to the peoples of the north and to our sovereignty in the north.

We can talk about “unprecedented” for a moment. I would like him to comment on how that is unprecedented, given that it involves legislative powers we already held. More important, I would like him to address the issue of “powerful demonstration”, because I think most members of the House and the public who would be following the debate would suggest that the word “power” comes with means and mechanisms to ensure that the interests we have put on the table for the world to examine come with them measures that reinforce our claim and that they are not just simply laughed at by others who take a look at this exaggeration as a cover for lack of competence.

Mr. Speaker, you may recall that the Minister of National Defence, following on the initiatives presented by my hon. colleague opposite, made some claims about other people making incursions in our territory, which prompted comments by foreign affairs ministers and defence ministers from the Russian Federation and the rest of the world, scratching their heads as to what they were talking about.

I wonder if he would take a moment or two of his time to enumerate for the House those specific demonstrations of power that will accompany—

● (1245)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Mr. Speaker, I would be more than pleased to do so, to enlighten my colleague who clearly is not familiar with Canada's northern strategy and its four pillars. I refer to environmental protection; I can refer to sovereignty; I can refer to the issue that deals with governance; I can as well refer to the issue that deals with economic development and sustainable development.

Those are the four pillars that this government has put in place as a matter of policy. I invite my hon. colleague to look at the budget, not only last year's budget but this year's budget as well, to realize what has been invested in terms of infrastructure, in terms of commitment to make sure that we do have deep-water ports that will be able to accommodate the vessels that will be there, and also to reflect on the fact that Canada is putting an additional 500 rangers in that region to be able to go forward and assume our sovereignty.

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We will be going through a lot of exercises. We do so on a regular basis. We are working in close tandem, in lockstep, with other Arctic Council partners in terms of research and development, and elaborating new policies.

I have just come back from Tromsø, Norway, where last week we had a meeting of the Arctic Council, the first meeting in two years. A lot of decisions have been made. Canada is playing a fulsome leadership not only in the Arctic Council, but as well, on 57 projects that deal with the circumpolar year.

These are factual things that are being done. These are tangible example of things that this country and this government is doing. When the hon. member wants a demonstration of powerful things, all he has to do is come to the Arctic Council and have somebody from his party come to the Arctic Council, who refused to come with me, and they would have witnessed to what point and to what extent this government is standing up for the Arctic.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's speech. It is urgent that we adopt an Arctic policy that reflects the importance of climate change and the new reality in this part of the world. Therefore, the Bloc Québécois will support this government bill.

However, I would like the minister to indicate if he intends to use a particular angle, that of history, to ensure Canada's sovereignty in this part of the world. This year, we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the completion of Captain Bernier's expedition. This is an important historical event and I would like to draw the minister's attention to this chapter of history. There was also John Franklin's expedition.

Does the government plan on promoting this history through the production of movies or books or by some other means? One of our local organizations made a presentation on this subject in order to obtain funds from a program to commemorate such events. Is the minister prepared to invest energy and resources into promoting history in order to support Canada's position in this regard?

• (1250)

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Mr. Speaker, I cannot make a specific commitment to my colleague about allocating monies to the promotion of the Arctic in particular.

However, I do know that we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of Captain Bernier's expedition that made Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic a reality. That is what I have been told. It is not just the 100th anniversary of the Department of Foreign Affairs or of the Montreal Canadiens, but of the fact that we took possession of that place.

I was in Norway last week for a meeting of the Arctic Council and I can also speak about the centre we opened in Oslo, within our embassy, not only to promote the Arctic on behalf of those living there but also to call for projects that could benefit all parties.

Therefore, we are already promoting the Arctic.

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, of course the larger diplomatic issues that surround Arctic sovereignty include Russia, where we see that the government has taken a very hard line about overflights.

Last summer when I attended an Arctic conference in Fairbanks I had an opportunity to talk to the admiral in charge of the United States Coast Guard. He told me at that time that the Russians were filing flight plans for all their overflights with him.

My question for the minister is this: We have created quite a situation with our declarations about these overflights. Why did Canada not get the information from the United States on these flights?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that there is a commitment under the START I convention that was signed between the former Soviet Union and the United States of America where there is an obligation to be able to log the overflights that will be coming. Canada is not part and parcel of that.

What I can say, and I want to reassure my colleague and the members of the House, is that I have had the opportunity of speaking with the Russian Federation's foreign affairs minister to see what can be done to advance the cause.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to this bill on a personal basis, as well as a representative of the Liberal Party, Her Majesty's official opposition. As an individual Canadian, and I am sure like all parliamentarians in this House, I welcome the fact that the Government of Canada, any Government of Canada, takes a proactive measure that says what we are going to do is advance the cause of Canada; we are going to advance the interests of Canadians; we are going to promote all those things that make us richer, not just in financial terms but in cultural, social and political terms as well, and more productive for all to see—in other words, that we want to take our rightful place in the world. We see that. We do that with great pride.

The minister, as I said in my intervention a moment or two ago, addressed the issue of this being a powerful demonstration of our commitment to the north, to our claims in the Arctic, and our willingness to take a rightful position in the north, and in fact, in the entire world. Then he said, as well, it is without precedent.

So we want a powerful demonstration of defence of Canadian interests.

Do members know how much we want that, those of us from the official opposition, those of us who work here but want to carry on the tradition of Liberal governments that looked out for the interests of Canadians throughout the ages in all aspects of Canadian interests?

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In 1970, so much for unprecedented, the Canadian government of the day, that of Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, passed the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act. It is the basis for Bill C-3, because that act gave the legislative powers to the Government of Canada to not only outlaw waste disposal in the north, but regulate a wide range of fields, including the construction standards of ships using the Arctic. It contained enforcement powers and a regime of civil liability for 100 miles and left the opportunity to extend that an additional 100 miles to be included in Canada's exclusive economic zone.

One might add, why did we not do that then? Did we not recognize Canadian interests should expand and extend that much further?

I will go back to the issue of unprecedented action. Governments of the day would appear to have had a rather mature approach to making claims, ones that the minister opposite just recognized, but we cannot do it unless we are in a diplomatic environment where other people recognize those interests, realize that they are legitimate, and are prepared to support them. Otherwise we have to engage in some military tactics in order to get our point across.

The government of the day continued its diplomatic efforts, and I noted that, reluctantly, the minister opposite conceded that, yes, there was some further activity in 1982 when, pursuant to that Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, we signed on to an internationally accepted and mandated authority to extend those rights in what is, of course, the UN Law of the Sea, in article 234.

So we have had this authority for quite some time. One might say, why did we not extend it further? Why did we not do that before? One could pose that today in a petty partisan fashion, because after all, the government has been in office for three years and did not think this was important until now. But we are not going to do that, because we recognize that things change and as they change they demand different approaches by governments of the day.

One of those changes, of course, has been global warming and its impact on the navigability of Arctic waters. Because of the navigability of those Arctic waters being improved, there have been a series of interests by various governments and by various private sector organizations that decided they needed to look at the potential of the Arctic.

• (1255)

Keep in mind, it is the potential that is there. For example, scientists coming from the United States Geological Survey went and examined the potential of the subwater beds for conventional energy sources. Ever since the first oil crisis, people have been talking about the shortage of conventional energy resources, basically those that are petroleum-based, natural gas.

What did this centre discover? Well, it discovered that the Arctic holds some 13% of undiscovered conventional petroleum sources are resident in the Arctic. This is an estimated number and we are willing to allow that they may be wrong, that it may actually be underestimated. A further 30% of natural gas deposits may be resident in the Arctic. That is 30% of all potential in the world and a further 13% of natural gas liquids resident in the Arctic of all potential in the world.

We can imagine that there are people who are interested. What did they do? They have to look for indicators. For example, Shell recently paid \$2.1 billion for the lease rights in Alaska, in the Arctic Circle. BP did something similar to the tune of \$1.2 billion. These companies put money where their interests lay. Exxon contributed something like \$585 million, according to a recent newspaper article, for similar rights.

These companies, private sector corporations, interested in exploiting the potential that is held in secret by Arctic waters and ice are now looking at the potential to go and make exploration and economic development. They are doing it.

Countries, on their part, are beginning to do the exploration necessary to see to what extent they can lay their appropriate claim to that territory. We saw the Russians do it recently.

Government members opposite say, "Baa haa haa, that was a gimmick". Maybe not so much more of a gimmick than that of the Minister of National Defence who decries the fact that the Russians are going in overflights on Canadian territory without telling us, and then we find out not only is that not an accurate reflection of the truth but it is also a distortion of the reality.

Then we find that the Minister of Foreign Affairs says, "We are going to do this. We will not tolerate anybody incurring into our territory".

Why did he have to do that? According to the minister's speech a moment ago, he was to establish a diplomatic environment where we could advance our cause. Why, for example, would he not then go to the Chinese, who are already taking a look at the possibility of moving a lot of their transport through that Northwest Passage, using the warming that appears to be taking place in the Arctic waters in order to take a look at the economic competitive advantage they want to establish through different transportation modes down the road, building ice breakers and ships that can navigate in waters where icebergs are the norm, and where ice floes are a natural part of the environment and where thick ice may have to be blown over to one side in order to allow this navigation.

They think this navigation will give them a competitive advantage in the transportation field. Rather than use other means, they are going to go through the Northwest Passage to deliver their goods to Europe, not to Canada and North America but to Europe.

So we can see that the interest is there. The Chinese, by the way, contrary to what the Minister of Foreign Affairs would have suggested a few moments ago, are already very busy indicating to the entire world that they are going to consider that passage as international waters.

The minister can claim, all he wants in this House, that there is a powerful demonstration of the Canadian government's willingness to do something, but I think that the facts tell us a different story.

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● (1300)

The Americans have already said, “You can say what you like, but this is what we're going to do and, by the way, if you want to do it with us, we'll give you a face-saving way to get out”. However, please do not tell us that this is an unprecedented act to advance Canadian interests. Let us say that this is a necessary item that brings full circle the initiatives that were begun in 1970 and then we will deal with things in a mature fashion because that mature fashion then takes a look at how to protect those interests.

We want to protect the environment. We are well aware of what the four pillars of a northern strategy are. We put them forward from this side of the House many years ago. We do not need to be reminded that they now have a different name and that we are going to try to spin it differently. The fact of the matter is we want to protect the environment. We want to protect the interests of the indigenous population, we want to develop the economic potential that is resident in the north, and we want to expand our position internationally because it is our position.

Not only are we custodians of the environment of the people in the north, but we are the proud heirs of the work done by others. Let us not turn our backs on the work that has been done by others, even if it was done by those with a different partisan stripe.

We took a look at this in committee and members will probably know that the committee said it wanted to support this. A mature approach would say, yes, but we must be prompted by care and due diligence. We need to take a look at what the other part of the government's claim is and that is that this is, again, a very powerful issue and that we are going to do everything we can in order to protect Canada's interests.

For those who are following this debate, they need to understand that the implementation of Bill C-3 is one that says we are going to expand the Canadian territory by an additional 500,000 square kilometres. That is the equivalent of a province the size of Saskatchewan. There are very few countries in the world that are the size of Saskatchewan. That calls to mind immediately the need to engage in diplomatic negotiations with other countries in order to recognize that claim.

More importantly, it then imposes a responsibility on the Government of Canada to ensure that it can do what it says it must do under the four pillars of a northern strategy, an Arctic strategy, that safeguards the environment, promotes the interests of the people who are indigenous to the area, allows Canadian economic interests to be advanced, and allows for us to advance our political leadership in that area.

One would ask, “What are the measures the government is putting in place to substantiate that?” The committee began to ask that question. For example, Mr. William Adams, the chair of the Defence Science Advisory Board, referred to the fact that we will have great difficulties in the case of environmental cleanups because there is a growing probability of a major oil spill.

● (1305)

[*Translation*]

Émilien Pelletier is a professor at the Institut des sciences de la mer de Rimouski at the Université du Québec à Rimouski.

[*English*]

He says that, “In cold water, after just 48 to 56 hours, oil turns into a sort of pudding that is difficult to pick up. It then becomes impossible to recover”.

What do we have as a measure to prevent that from occurring? Environment Canada officials, who appeared before the committee, said that Environment Canada does not have a mandate to enforce the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act. That is problem number one. If we do not have the authority to enforce it, why do we claim that we have powerful instruments at play?

Transport Canada officials said that surveillance and enforcement are limited to, are members ready for this, a single Dash 7 airplane and access to satellites. A single Dash 7 airplane to cover the territory equivalent to the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that is your home province. Can you imagine one single plane, a Dash 7, patrolling all of Saskatchewan? Except that this territory is spread out over a longer distance and is limited by the amount of fuel that it can carry, given the climatic situations governing flights like those of the Dash 7. Just imagine.

The general public in listening to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, applauds the fact that the government has powerful instruments to enforce our interests. A Dash 7 to survey incursions into our territory. We know they are coming. The Russians have said they are going to do it. The Chinese said they are going to do it and the Americans said, “to heck with you if you want to stop us”, especially with a Dash 7.

Now they are not the only ones. Did not the Minister of National Defence, in a moment of bravado, suggest that if the Russians want to continue their incursions into Canadian territory, whether it be by air or by sea, that they would find us ready? Well, it appears that his own officials said no, the Department of National Defence does not have a mandate to enforce the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act. I do not know whether bluster is allowed to replace fact but the government is trying very hard to establish that principle.

Now hold on a moment, I think I said initially that this was a transportation bill because it was presented by the Minister of Transport. He appeared before the committee and said that in order to have a truly effective legislation, we must have a government that presents legislative items and measures in order to enforce it. We must be proactive, we cannot be reactive and we need to back that up with real action.

I wonder whether he talked to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of National Defence, Minister of the Environment, and Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. Why? Because the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is responsible for the Coast Guard. Oh, Coast Guard officials before the committee said that they do not have any plans to increase northern capacities in order to assist the enforcement of Bill C-3.

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We wonder whether the measures to back up a piece of legislation that we know is the logical conclusion of legislative initiatives by Liberal governments starting in 1970 going to 1982, are ones that we find ourselves having to support. We saw the critic for the Bloc Québécois stand and say the Bloc will support this bill. The government has enormous goodwill from everyone, I dare say even the critic for the NDP will stand and say the NDP supports the bill. Heck, I am critic for transport on this side of the House and we find that we want to close the circle.

● (1310)

However, we cannot accept the government putting a claim down for a bill that skims over its competence to deal with the issue of enforcement and the issues that deal with international cooperation. The minister talked about the issues of consultation and that officials from his department said that most Arctic neighbours who were consulted, although we do not know who they are, did not express concern about Bill C-3. That is imaginable because it is consistent with the normal flow of the first initiatives in 1970 and 1982.

The United States has asked us for more information and the Russians have expressed some concerns but nowhere did they say that they would be as observant about Bill C-3 as we would like them to be.

We will support Bill C-3 because we must support Canadian sovereignty but we have the reflections of concern about the government's competence to handle our interests in an international affair.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was struck with how the member's speech dealt with not just the environmental issues in the bill but it seemed to deal with issues involving the boundary between Canada and Russia and the alleged grandstanding by the Russians close to our territory. Probably, in that incident, they flew in their own territory. There is nothing wrong with that. Perhaps it was the grandstanding of our own defence minister in alleging that there was something strange about Russians flying military flights in their territory close to Canadian territory. I am just wondering whether that has muddied the waters in relation to the bill. In fact, no country, Russia, Canada or the U.S., will be publicly debating in a place like this the measures they may take to protect their own sovereignty in places like the Arctic.

Could I conclude that the member does not see the bill as hugely problematic but that it may involve a lot of sidebar issues that are distracting us from the bill? In other words, should we not get the bill passed and then move on?

● (1315)

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Scarborough—Rouge River, in his usual erudite fashion, has asked the position that every individual who is following this debate is asking, which is: Do we as members of Parliament stand for the development of individual Canadian interests and collective Canadian interests?

There is an easy answer to that. I belong to a party that has always promoted the Canadian interest and the interest of every individual Canadian no matter where they come from

I feel exceptionally proud when we can say that we are providing leadership, as we did when we promoted the Arctic waters act and when we had the additional measures under section 234 on the Law of the Sea. This is an extension of that and a recognition of that.

I want to advise my colleague that the interventions by ministers of the government in the last little while, yes, they have muddied the waters. They have bruised our reputation, so much so that the Russian minister of defence, I think it was he, felt that he had to write an opinion piece in one of our national newspapers to correct the record. That does not help in any diplomatic relations that we will have going on down the road. The government keeps insisting on poking the eye of the Chinese.

However, I think we will support the principle of the bill.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for an excellent outline of the debate and its ramifications.

All sorts of topics were brought forward in committee by government ministers and government officials tangential to the bill. However, the one that is brought forward most often is basically, as the member for Scarborough—Rouge River said, an administrative extension of the great Liberal bill by Trudeau. The ramifications are that we have this huge area the size of Saskatchewan to protect. What all the opposition parties are questioning is the ability of the government to protect that area.

We can give ourselves new power but there is no one to protect it, or if we add 100 square miles to the area to be policed but there are no new policemen, how will we monitor it? The government had no answers to that except to say that it definitely did not put any money in the budget and no department would respond that it had added any new resources.

I wonder if the member has concerns about the ability to monitor this area the size of a prairie province.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Yukon came to committee to raise precisely those issues.

We approached the bill in a serious fashion. We said from the very outset that we wanted to support the principles of the bill, which is a logical extension and conclusion of initiatives that began in 1970 and then proceeded in 1982 under a Liberal government led by Pierre Elliott Trudeau. We felt that this was the way to go but we all wanted to have answers about the environment. It was not the what to do about the environment but the how to do it. How would the environment be protected? What measures would the Government of Canada take to illustrate that there would be a serious approach to ensure that any polluters would pay, or to use the words of the Minister of Transport, "polluter pays"?

We brought forward officials from the various departments to see how they were equipping themselves to take on this additional responsibility. Members heard what I said in my speech. They shrugged their shoulders and said that they did not know, that they did not have the mandate and that nobody knows what is going on.

Government Orders

That raised questions. Does the government have the competence to do what the bill demands it to do? Is the government exaggerating its own importance in doing what is the logical extension of previous legislation? On that, there is no doubt that the government exaggerates and demonstrates incompetence.

● (1320)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is the second time I have spoken about Bill C-3. Many people here are wondering why the debate on this issue is escalating.

The bill focuses on preventing pollution in Arctic waters. If we look at what has happened in the past few years, we can see that this is a growing issue that is garnering a lot of attention not only here in Canada, but also in circumpolar countries and international forums.

This issue has grown recently in part because of climate change, which is speeding up. Like it or not, the Northwest Passage is opening up, with all that that implies.

It is not just the circumpolar countries that are concerned about the extent of their respective sovereignty. With the Northwest Passage allowing shipowners to shorten shipping routes and with the extensive deposits in the Arctic, as shown in American geological studies, it is no wonder the debate is heating up.

I have been attending the NATO forum regularly for the past few years. I recall very clearly making a comment at NATO four or five years ago. As we all know, NATO is a large political and military organization. I had asked if the Northwest Passage, which was going to be opening up over the next few years, would change the geopolitical situation of the entire planet, whether militarily, environmentally, economically or culturally. My speech fell flat because no one seemed to realize the importance of the situation.

This issue now comes up on a regular basis in Brussels, which illustrates how important it is. I would like to give some examples, because I think there are some international shipowners who will be very happy about the opening of the Northwest Passage. I have here the distances travelled by a ship from London, England to Yokohama, Japan, for instance. The ship would travel 23,300 km if it goes through the Panama Canal, 21,200 km if it goes through the Suez Canal and 32,289 km if it goes around Cape Horn. The Northwest Passage shortens the journey to 15,930 km.

As we can see, there is a big difference. The distance between New York and Yokohama or Hamburg and Vancouver would also be shorter. The journeys nearly everywhere are shortened. Distances are shortened by using the Northwest Passage.

Knowing how private enterprise works and how shipowners operate, and with everything that has happened around the world recently, everyone is chasing the buck. People are not even maintaining their ships. People do not care if there is another *Exxon Valdez* in Canada's far north. People do not care if a ship goes through, runs aground and causes an enormous environmental disaster. Clearly, shipowners and business want the cheapest, fastest passage possible, with the least amount of regulations.

That is why it is important to have this debate, and this goes beyond increasing the limit from 100 miles to 200 miles. It is only

normal that it should go further. As I said, it will have major economic, cultural and environmental repercussions.

So what should we do about it? I understand why Canada wants to prove that these waters have always been part of its territory. Canada believes that these waters belong to it. I also understand why others disagree. The region holds tremendous resources, so it is not surprising that other nations, particularly circumpolar nations, have taken a keen interest in this matter and dispute Canada's claim. The United States is a typical example. The Americans do not believe that these waters necessarily belong to Canada. They consider them to be an international waterway. There is no need to wonder why.

● (1325)

There are a lot of resources and fossil fuel deposits in the region. I think that the Americans are trying to position themselves for access to those resources. That is to be expected, and we understand their position, but we also have to understand what Canada's goals are in this regard.

I want to take a few minutes to talk about something that few people ever mention: the importance of Inuit and first nations people in the far north. These people have been ignored for so long. The far north was such a difficult and challenging environment that few people ever went there. Now, even with global warming, those who do go must be very well equipped because a minor incident can quickly turn into a major tragedy. For many years, centuries even, the government ignored the people who have been living in the region since time immemorial: the Inuit.

An excellent article by the leader of the Bloc Québécois, on why we must promote and work with the Inuit of the far north, appeared in the paper today. It is very important because it is their land. Those who challenge this fact should reread their history books. They were here well before white people arrived in America. There is still no consensus about their origin and where they came from. And yet, they live there. When something happens in the far north, we generally forget that they were there before anyone else. Therefore, it is important that they be consulted knowing that this human presence in the far north, which goes back to time immemorial—as they like to say—is probably the most significant factor in defining Canadian sovereignty.

I had the honour and the privilege of serving on the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development for seven years. It is only by travelling to the far north that we can appreciate the significance of their presence and admire how they have been able to survive in such an inhospitable climate with such rudimentary means. For centuries before the arrival of snowmobiles they used dogsleds. I remember the first time I arrived in Davis Inlet. The Inuit leader came to collect me with a sled harnessed to a snowmobile. It was about -25° and I was not dressed warmly enough. My experience of the conditions they have to contend with kindled my great admiration for them. That is the reality in the far north.

Government Orders

Yet the Canadian government rarely consults the Inuit about policies that have to do with the far north. In our opinion, Arctic development hinges on the Inuit, who are recognized as Canadians. The government must see these people as vitally important. At the time, there were four areas for the Inuit: Labrador, northern Quebec, Nunavut and the Inuvialuit in the far west. Gradually, they made demands and set up governments. They do not enjoy full autonomy or complete self-determination, but the governments that came before the Conservative government always conceded that they were entitled to some autonomy and gave them self-government with the right to certain territory. Today, those territories have parliaments. It is important to continue to do that. The government must recognize that the Inuit presence is an important element in Canada's policy on Arctic sovereignty.

The bill before us has many implications. I could go on at length about the environment, but everyone knows that this bill serves to assert Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic. Starting on the archipelago and all the islands, if we extend the exclusive economic zone from 100 miles to 200 miles, we are laying claim to more land.

• (1330)

That is not enough because, as I said earlier, some nations covet the major deposits and the shipping lanes in the Arctic. Canada will have to assert its sovereignty in the far north in various ways.

The Standing Committee on National Defence is currently conducting a study on this issue, and when various departments appeared before that committee, I was very pleased to see that the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs was responsible for coordination. Naturally, other very important departments are involved, such as Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Environment Canada and Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. Another department that also plays an important role is National Defence.

I would just like to caution, though, that we will never deal with this issue by militarizing the far north. It is absolutely impossible. I often ask how long the Canadian navy could stand up to the U.S. navy if we did not get along and we decided to take on the Americans and bar the way to an American frigate. Canada's fleet would soon be on the bottom of the Arctic Ocean. We would not last very long. The same thing would happen if we were to take on the Russian navy, which has a whole slew of nuclear submarines.

That is not going to solve the problem. That is why I agree somewhat with the member who spoke before me, and with others. The government should not attempt to exercise its military might in the Arctic. That would be counter-productive. The government cannot walk the talk because Canada simply does not have that kind of military capacity. That is not the right way to do it.

However, the Department of National Defence does have a role to play, as it always has. Think of the DEW line, the distant early warning line, a radar network built in the 1950s to keep an eye on what the Russians were sending our way back when the Russians and the Americans were global superpowers. The government watched what the Russians were up to by building a radar network that covered nearly 5,000 kilometres. That was important at the time.

As an aside, that network is proof that we have not done enough on the environmental regulation front, which is so important. We have an awful environmental mess in the far north because of that network. Whole barrels of toxic materials have been left behind in the far north, where the ecosystem is very sensitive. Now we have to try to fix that because the entire food chain is falling apart as a result. Canada has to do something about the environment, and extending its jurisdiction from 100 to 200 miles is part of that.

The armed forces have a role to play. They should conduct land-based exercises. We have the right to do so because we occupy that territory. We should also conduct exercises in the air. My colleague mentioned a single Dash 8, but we have more than Dash 8s up there. Auroras are patrolling the area too. There has also been talk of using drones, which cost a lot less. A similar strategy has been proposed for Afghanistan. It is a lot cheaper to conduct surveillance of a coast or the far north with drones than with planes that weigh who knows how many tonnes, have motors that pollute and have to be maintained. Military drones are important right now.

The navy, meanwhile, can send frigates, but it cannot do so with aggressive intentions. Indeed, as I was saying earlier, we are not in a position to stand up to the Americans or Russians if we decided to go the military route.

Another very important aspect is being developed at this time, and that is monitoring those who use the passage. Did they tell anyone they were coming? How did they enter the passage? Where are they going? From a military perspective, satellite observation will be very important. I had the privilege of visiting MDA Corporation in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, which manufactures RADARSAT-1 and RADARSAT-2. It also made the Canadarm. It will be extremely important in our far north. Satellite observation will be very important. Furthermore, National Defence can be asked to contribute, in terms of military force.

• (1335)

Incidentally, I was pleased that the Canadian government stopped the transaction with the Americans.

We all understand that if MDA—which is sending its RADARSAT-1 and RADARSAT-2 satellites into orbit for observation—were to be controlled by the Americans, they could decide to enter into our marine space. For instance, an American submarine could surface in the far north. We all know that if the Canadian government asked the American government for satellite imagery from a particular date and time in order to see if an American submarine had been in Canadian waters, they would probably tell us that they did not have that imagery. We would have no way to confirm that.

Thus, it was very important that we maintain control regarding the issue of satellites and this will become even more important. We have invited MDA and COM DEV, two companies that work on satellites, to come and give a presentation on the far north to the Standing Committee on National Defence. It will be interesting to follow this.

Government Orders

The bill also addresses the environment and the importance of establishing—I will not say regulating—environmental standards. As I was saying earlier, it must be the most cost-effective route for shipowners or those who travel the passage. Consequently, there must be as few regulations as possible. We must be vigilant and ensure that the environment of the far north is protected always.

The Department of Foreign Affairs also has a role to play. The last time Foreign Affairs representatives appeared, they were accompanied by an official who I personally found to be very arrogant. They did not seem to think that there was a need for an international treaty. I do not see how we can function without one. The treaty could begin by setting out that government to government diplomacy, and not military authority, would be used to settle disputes in the far north. In my opinion, we could consider this.

Those watching may not be aware that there is a United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, which currently has a very important role to play. I was surprised to note that it just extended Norway's continental shelf by 230,000 km² in the direction of the North Pole. Some people are now starting to say that that could result in the overlapping of areas claimed by Norway and Russia. This dispute will have to be settled by independent and autonomous nations, that is sovereign nations.

Therefore, it is important to know that this commission has a role to play. Yet, the fact that it recognizes such boundaries does not give them the force of law. What often becomes law is an international treaty and then international courts must untangle the Gordian knot. As far as we are concerned, Canada is continuing with its study of the continental shelf because it is important.

How can we address the issue of sovereignty? I talked a bit about this earlier. I spoke about occupying the land, and I want to come back to that if I have time, but there is also the scientific issue. Denmark and Canada are looking at this together. That is what I have been told. They are looking at the shelf that extends under the ocean, from the edge of the continent. How far that shelf extends is critical.

It is clear that circumpolar countries such as Russia are saying that their shelf goes further. Canada is saying the same thing. That will have to be settled eventually, and we will see what the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf has to say. But we will have to sit down with our friends and colleagues in the far north to reach a peaceful, diplomatic, non-military agreement.

I call on the government to stop acting tough on this issue. When we are faced with someone who is stronger than we are, we can try to say we are stronger, but we know we are not. Acting tough will get us nothing but a punch in the nose.

We should take a diplomatic approach. We should go through the international courts. We should use scientific studies on land occupation from time immemorial. Then we will have the right arguments to defend Canadian sovereignty.

• (1340)

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I quite enjoy the member at the aboriginal affairs and defence committees. He made a very good point about the importance of aboriginal people

who have lived in the north for thousands of years and their role in sovereignty there.

Could he comment further on that and give a cogent example of when the United States tried to send a ship through without having asked Canada for permission, although we gave it? An Inuit dog team pulled up and stopped the mighty ship's progress forward. I would love to have a picture of that for my wall. As international lawyers define historic use, which has gone on for a thousand years, this was a perfect example of that. Could the member talk about that role in sovereignty as opposed to a lot of the military items about which we have talked today?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my hon. colleague for giving me the opportunity to talk a little more about the Inuit and first nations presence.

The member gave an excellent example, specifically, the ship that violated Canadian sovereignty. He is quite right. Canadian authorities granted authorization after the ship had already passed. People in the far north objected and positioned themselves in the path of the ship.

There was a point I was not able to address in my speech and I would like to address it now. It has to do with the presence of the Canadian Rangers. The Rangers, who are often Inuit, patrol the far north. I even asked the Rangers if I could go out on a few patrols with them. It is the basic map that will prove to international opinion and to international courts that these are the people who live on that land. Not only are they Inuit, but they are also Canadian.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say that the government must include Nunavik in its strategy for the far north. Nunavik has been completely overlooked. The importance of other Canadian regions is finally being recognized, with the exception of Nunavik in Quebec. I urge the government to include Nunavik among the other Inuit partners. Yes, the Inuit presence is extremely important in our argument to prove Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic to the rest of the world.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Saint-Jean on his excellent speech. As other members of the House will have noticed, he is very familiar with this file. Personally, I have one concern about this issue.

Government Orders

Members have talked about the impact of climate change—we have seen the ice melt and the consequences of failing to invest in the Kyoto protocol—and the importance of working with the Inuit on this file. I also have a problem with militarizing the Arctic, which will involve huge sums of money. Enormous amounts of money. Military spending has gone up since the Conservatives have been in power. This government tends to spend heavily on the military. And this would mean spending vast amounts of money. Money spent on this kind of thing does not help unfortunate people who lose their jobs, nor does it help to create social programs.

I would like my colleague to comment on that. What can we really do to avoid increasing military spending in the Arctic?

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question. Since the Conservatives were elected, militarization has run rampant. Purchases of aircraft alone total \$16 billion, not to mention procurement for land and naval forces.

The government promised to purchase a huge icebreaker, which is not a military item. It is required for travel in areas where there is thick ice so that Canada can maintain a presence in Arctic waters. It seems that this has been shelved and they are considering purchasing military vessels. That is a dead end. I said, as did my colleague, that we are all worried about the military presence in the far north. That is not the solution because we are facing much larger players than ourselves. We would not succeed even if we were to use Canada's total budget. The United States spends almost three times as much as Canada: \$450 billion per year compared to our budget of about \$200 billion. Thus, that will not work. That is not the answer.

My colleague is right. Diplomacy and science, the continental shelf, and the presence of the Inuit people are our best bargaining tools.

• (1345)

[English]

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-3. We in the NDP came out in support of the bill at second reading. After a fairly rigorous examination of the simple bill in committee, we felt we could continue to support it. It really does not have any negative aspects other than the fact that it is unable to provide the level of protection through the actions of the government, which a bill like this would tend to make people think would come.

Bill C-3 extends coverage of our environmental laws to 200 miles offshore, but in evidence given in committee, it was quite clear that this new limit really only applied in one part of the Arctic, and that is the area adjacent to the Beaufort Sea, now covered with ice. As the witnesses demonstrated in committee, there was no traffic at all into the region the bill was designed to expand our control over. It is covered with ice and no ships are entering other than perhaps research vessels or the Canadian icebreaker.

The area is not under dispute between different countries. This is a rather innocuous change but it is an important subject. That is why all of us are standing up one after the other to talk about it. That is why we took time in committee to look at all aspects of Arctic development and had witnesses appear from a variety of government departments and a variety of other concerns. The Arctic is important and what happens there is extremely important. What happens to the

Arctic in terms of climate change will change the ice coverage in the area we are extending our jurisdiction over.

There will be more traffic. There will be other uses coming forward, whether it is shipping, tourism or other things. It is important that we join the rest of the world in understanding how we can deal with the Arctic. One of the key aspects we have to approach is our relationship according to how the other countries of the world, which have a stake in Arctic waters, approach the issue.

I had the opportunity to attend, on behalf of my party, the Ilulissat, Greenland meeting. As well, last summer I had an opportunity to visit with the Arctic parliamentarians when they met in Fairbanks, Alaska. I had a chance to learn about the attitudes of people across the world toward Arctic waters and to hear questions about the change in the nature of the Arctic ice cover to the importance of Arctic resources.

Quite clearly, the government needs to continue to expand its international presence on Arctic issues. When the government took office three and a half years ago, it had the attitude that it would use the Arctic sovereignty issue as a political football to enhance its image as standing up for Canadians. In some ways, that is exactly the wrong approach to take.

It is not a question of Canada's status in the Arctic. We have great status in there. Our status has come through our work, along with other countries, to ensure the Arctic is developed and used in a responsible fashion.

• (1350)

I am pleased to say, at the meeting in Tromsø, which unfortunately I was unable to attend but which I have followed very closely, the 2009 Arctic marine shipping assessment report was delivered. That report has been in the making for a number of years. It speaks to many of the issues in the Arctic and it speaks to them on the basis of all the Arctic countries, which I think is a very useful approach.

When it comes to sea ice, what does the marine shipping assessment say? There is a possibility of an ice-free Arctic Ocean for a short period of summer, perhaps as early as 2015. This would mean the disappearance of multi-year ice, as no sea ice would survive the summer melt season. To people who live and work in the north, this is a truly frightening occurrence. We are completely changing the nature of the Arctic.

What does the retreat of Arctic sea ice over these recent decades mean? It has improved marine access to some degree, although when we talk about particular shipping lanes, we talk about the fact that when we take off, we will see a lot more movement of ice through the areas as well, as the ice cover comes off. There will be more pack ice moving through. There will be more intermittent access than perhaps steady, free access to that area.

We will see changes in coastal ecology and biological production. We see that in the types of fish that are coming around the coast of Alaska from the Pacific Ocean and that are starting to show up in the nets of fishermen on the Arctic coast.

On the other side, we see that the change in the melt ice has created a situation. This was talked about today on the radio, the decreased level of salt in the waters off the coast of Labrador and those areas. Those things are happening right now.

There are adverse effects on many ice-dependent marine mammals. We have the issue of the status of the polar bear, which came up strongly last year. We also have increased coastal wave action. That plays out very much in my riding on the Beaufort Sea, where the lack of sea ice cover has increased the type and severity of the weather there. Once again, we see these problems.

From the marine shipping assessment report, what is one of the main items that are considered? The most significant threat from ships to the Arctic marine environment is the release of oil through accidental or illegal discharge. In committee this was raised by the parties, through their witnesses, and the answers were much less than satisfactory. The answers that Environment Canada had for its enforcement or its ability to get out there and find out what was going on were very limited. The technology development in which we were all interested, in terms of how to ensure that these—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could encourage somebody else to speak to this issue after my—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member makes a good point. It is becoming increasingly difficult to hear him. He is on the other side of the chamber. Perhaps we could have a bit of order, as we should always have, to allow the Chair to hear his remarks.

The hon. member for Western Arctic.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, I bow to the goodwill of the other members of the House to continue my address.

When we looked at the problems that we had in terms of the major and most significant threats from ships in the Arctic, we did not have answers, at least no answers that we could identify which suggested that we were on top of this issue.

How much is the Arctic being used right now? The marine shipping assessment report says that there are approximately 6,000 individual vessels making multiple voyages in the Arctic regions and that approximately half of them are on the great circle route in the north Pacific that crosses the Aleutian Islands. Approximately 1,600 of these vessels are fishing vessels.

Nearly all the movement in the Arctic is destination, conducted for community resupply, marine tourism and moving natural resources out of the Arctic. There is no trans-shipping yet that occurs in the Arctic regions. That is something that probably would more likely occur once the future ice cover has moved back and we have a clear understanding of the intermittency of the pack ice in the area.

Significant increases in cruise ships, the majority of them not built for Arctic waters, have been observed in summer season around

Greenland within the past decade, and certainly those ships have been identified as an area of potential concern.

What is the governance? When we are talking about the need to protect the Arctic, we are talking about the need to protect from marine vessels. We are not talking about much else when we talk about how we will deal with marine protection in the future. How do we deal with the governance of Arctic shipping?

The law of the sea is reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It provides the fundamental framework for the governance of Arctic marine navigation. The International Marine Organization is a competent UN agency with responsibilities related to the global maritime industry. It has been very active in developing guidelines for ships operating in Arctic ice-covered waters. I think that is one of the issues that we must come to grips with here. Guidelines are not good enough.

What we need for Arctic shipping to protect the Arctic is international regulation that says that ships operating in the Arctic must meet minimum conditions for Arctic waters. The International Association of Classification Societies has developed non-mandatory unified requirements for its members that addresses the issues around ship construction, which are defined again in the guidelines.

We need to move forward from that point, which is where Canada can work very effectively at the international level and potentially within our own waters to ensure that we have that quality of ships working in the Arctic.

There are no uniform international standards for ice navigators. Quite clearly, when entering into Arctic waters, one needs to have proper navigation, a pilotage system that can deliver those ships safely through very difficult waters. Even within the Northwest Passage, the charting that has been done there is very minimal.

We have a new marine terrain opening up and that marine terrain has to be well protected.

• (1355)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Western Arctic will have approximately six and a half minutes the next time this bill is before the House after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize one of the world's leading centres of performing arts and digital media education, the Sheridan College Institute in Oakville Ontario.

On Friday evening, Sheridan's School of Animation Arts & Design celebrated its awards evening for Sheridan's famous musical theatre school, one of the world's best, where some of Canada's most brilliant young performers develop and polish their art.

Statements by Members

Sheridan graduates amaze audiences from the Stratford and Shaw Festivals to Broadway, Disney World and Hollywood. Graduates from Sheridan's computer animation department have led the world in artistic digital storytelling, helping create films in Canada and internationally; blockbusters like *Star Trek*, *Star Wars* and the *Terminator* series.

Every performer in Canada helps create jobs and opportunities for others, like stagehands, set designers and carpenters. Our artists also serve us by helping define who we are as Canadians. That is why federal funding for the arts and culture in Canada has never been higher than right now.

We salute the dedicated, talented young people at Sheridan and across Canada, and their teachers who put their futures on the line to tell Canadian stories and touch our hearts.

* * *

• (1400)

KATYN, POLAND

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring to the attention of the House and Canadians the horrific historical event that was the Katyn massacre of 1940.

It is commemorated each April by the Polish Canadian community to bring recognition to the systematic slaughter of 23,000 Polish military and civilian leaders in the Katyn forest and other locations and their burial into mass graves by the Russian army on the orders of Stalin.

Long denied, today the horrors that were suffered are only partially recognized. I invite members of Parliament to join with our Polish Canadian community in pressing internationally for full recognition of the Katyn massacre for the genocide it was and to help bring final peace for the victims and their families.

* * *

[Translation]

AIMÉ DESPATIS

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the people of Les Moulins are in mourning, for Aimé Despatis has passed away. We have lost a great scholar, a true community builder.

Aimé Despatis was passionate about information. He was remarkably open and honest, easy to talk to, connected to people, generous and cultured. He brought significant cultural, social and political change to his community.

Among other things, he played an important part in the Quebec ministry of culture's acquisition of Île-des-Moulins, which is now Quebec's second-largest historical site. He also founded Terrebonne's independent *La Revue*, a newspaper that told the story of our growing city and region for 50 years. Thanks to Mr. Despatis, the people of Terrebonne have discovered whole chapters of their local and regional history. He was the heart and soul of "his" paper until the very end.

The Bloc Québécois members and I would like to offer our most sincere condolences to Mr. Despatis' family and friends, as well as to the staff of *La Revue*.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, I attended a rally held in front of the Beta Brands plant, in London, Ontario. This plant closed more than two years ago and workers are still waiting for money owed to them. They did not receive any severance and their pensions are gone. Workers at this plant have lost their jobs, their homes and their life savings. Some had to wait six weeks or more for EI and others six months or more to even find out if they could access retraining.

Plant closures and layoffs in London have been far too frequent and are devastating to the people involved and to our community. Lives are thrown into turmoil with every closure.

More needs to be done to address these job losses. The government needs to fix the employment insurance system, create more opportunities for retraining and implement all of the NDP's workers first bill to protect those pensions.

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LEUKEMIA & LYMPHOMA SOCIETY OF CANADA

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the past seven years, Ted Dawes has teamed up with the UFCW locals 175 and 633, and has raised closed to \$75,000 in support of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Canada.

This year, Ted and his team are taking their efforts on the road and he is walking 440 kilometres from Parliament Hill to Nathan Phillips Square. Event coordinator, Sue Amsbury, and her team have worked tirelessly to organize this event and with great success.

Many companies have stepped up to support, including Imprinted Apparel, Jack McGee Chevrolet, Gold's Gym, the law offices of McGillen, Ayotte and Dupuis, Coca-Cola, Reebok, Del Mastro RV, as well as many individual donors.

Ted's official department from Ottawa will be tomorrow at 11 a.m. and he expects to arrive in Toronto on May 22 where the Toronto Argo cheerleaders will cheer him across the finish line.

I encourage all of my colleagues to come out to the reception this evening and support the "Ted on the Road" team and meet some of Peterborough's finest citizens.

With each step, he is putting the boots to leukemia and lymphoma.

* * *

HELEN GRAVES

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all colleagues in the House, I want to acknowledge with sadness the passing of Helen Graves on Tuesday, April 14.

Statements by Members

She was best known here for the political internship program designed by her for our House of Commons in 1984 and which she directed for over 20 years. It was the first of its kind then, an experimental education program, and to date, over 500 U.S. students interned in Ottawa under Dr. Graves.

It has provided valuable resources to MPs, given opportunities to students and added value to cross-border relations, benefiting both countries over many years.

Students learned parliamentary functions, did research for MPs and drafted written work. Many of these students went on to become active in politics and they all hold a special place in their heart for Canada and Canadians.

Helen believed deeply in the power of education and she was a professor for several U.S. universities where she implemented the internship program and earned numerous academic and civic awards.

We in the House join in celebrating her life, her love of learning and her manifest contribution to U.S. and Canadian democratic institutions.

* * *

●(1405)

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of all the important campaigns Canada was part of during the second world war, the Battle of the Atlantic was unlike any other.

For six years, day after day, courageous Canadians met the challenge of making the relentless crossings of the treacherous north Atlantic, sailing from Canada's east coast to a beleaguered British nation and bringing with them vital troops and much needed war supplies. These were ordinary Canadians who did extraordinary things.

Sixty-six years ago, in May 1943, the tide finally turned in favour of the allies but a terrible price would be paid for this victory as more than 4,600 courageous men and women lost their lives at sea.

They are our heroes and today we honour those who endured Canada's longest battle of World War II. We remember their supreme sacrifice to defend our values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law, those whose final resting places cannot be marked by graves.

Canada's military men and women are fighting to protect those same values today.

Canada remembers the Battle of the Atlantic.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TRAIT D'UNION COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Trait d'Union community centre is celebrating its 25th anniversary today. That organization serves the people of my riding, especially those in the Sacré-Coeur neighbourhood of Longueuil. It provides a place for people to come together and share resources and ideas, and it serves as an anchor for the entire community.

Community involvement and the tenacity of many local stakeholders have produced positive results. Today, the Trait d'Union offers social and cultural recreation programs, summer day camps for children, sports and other physical activities, as well as community programs for all age groups.

I would like to congratulate and sincerely thank the staff and many volunteers who dedicate their time and energy to the well-being of their community day after day. I would also like to posthumously recognize the enormous contribution made by Raymond Guay, one of the founders of the community centre, who served as its director for 20 years.

* * *

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the recent discovery of H1N1 influenza on a farm in central Alberta has led to many questions regarding the safety of pork in Canada. The answer is simple: Canadian pork is safe and this is not a food safety issue.

The World Health Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health and all scientific experts agree that the H1N1 virus cannot be transmitted via cooked pork.

In fact, the science is so conclusive that the European Union has said that it will keep its borders open to Canadian pork. Following a conversation between our agriculture minister and the U.S. secretary of agriculture, Tom Vilsack, Americans will continue to eat Canadian pork and keep the border open.

I want all Canadians to be assured that the Canadian government is taking every step possible to protect our food supply and Canada's pork industry.

In the meantime, I urge all Canadians to fire up the barbecue, throw on some chops or ribs and enjoy Canadian pork.

* * *

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all my colleagues that yesterday was World Press Freedom Day.

[*Translation*]

The United Nations has declared May 3 to be World Press Freedom Day.

[*English*]

We all know what a fundamental cornerstone of our democratic system a free press represents.

[*Translation*]

Without strong, independent media, our democratic system simply could not work.

Statements by Members

[English]

Our citizens need to be informed of what is happening in their world. Without this kind of information, they cannot make informed decisions and cannot fully benefit from living in our society.

[Translation]

Whether in matters of public health—as we are seeing right now with the flu crisis—or to inform the public about decisions made by their government on their behalf, information provided by the media allows everyone to make more informed choices.

• (1410)

[English]

Let us take this opportunity together to reflect on the vital, no the indispensable, role of the free press in our society.

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FIREARMS REGISTRY

Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how can the NDP members say they are standing up for their constituents?

The member for Western Arctic said he would vote against the gun registry because the majority of the residents of the Northwest Territories wanted the registry abolished.

The 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, my constituents have told me that we need to get rid of the long-gun registry”.

The member for Timmins—James Bay said, “It was never set up to deal with the realities of northern Ontario”.

The member for Winnipeg Centre said, “I wouldn't want one more penny to go to that gun registry”.

Yet, they all voted in favour of the registry. How can members of the NDP say they will vote against something then sit on their hands or oppose it? How can the NDP members say that they are standing up for their constituents?

* * *

PENSIONS

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the pensioners of AbitibiBowater's Thorold plant need to know that their previous employer will be held accountable for their pension obligations and that AbitibiBowater will not be allowed to cut and run from the workers of Thorold.

The pensioners of Canada, regardless of what industries they have spent a lifetime building, deserve more. Canadian pensioners are mothers, fathers, grandparents, and they ought to be spending the time they banked by the sweat of their brow enjoying their grandkids, spending time at the lake, taking care of loved ones or exploring new parts of the world.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. Pensioners are facing anxiety and sleepless nights because they have no guarantee of financial

security. Their financial security is being destroyed and the ripple effect across Canada is being felt in every home.

Companies must be held accountable for their pension obligations. The very foundation of our society depends on it. Without economic security for our pensioners, the system will crumple under the weight of fear and lost hope.

I want pensioners to know that they are not alone, that New Democrats—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

* * *

[Translation]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tax, tax, tax, that is the mantra of the Liberals, who held a unilingual English love-in in Vancouver. The Liberal leader, who is the father of the carbon tax, still does not want to acknowledge that this tax hurts people. During the most recent general election campaign, Canadians rejected this tax on everything. When I say everything, I mean everything: fruit, vegetables, cereal, goods and public transit.

As he and his party believe and as he is so fond of saying, taxes will have to be increased. Raising taxes is what Liberals do. Punishing Canadians with taxes is what Liberals do. Adding to the tax burden on Canadians is what Liberals do. Keeping quiet and not saying which taxes will go up is what Liberals do. But reducing the tax burden, giving Canadians tax breaks and lowering taxes is what Conservatives do, and we are very proud of that.

* * *

QUEBEC NORDIQUES

Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 30th anniversary of the merger of the World Hockey Association and the National Hockey League, which made it possible for the Quebec Nordiques to join the NHL. Marcel Aubut, then their legal advisor, handled the merger.

It was 22 years ago, in the fifth game of the quarter final series against the Montreal Canadiens, that Alain Côté scored in the 17th minute of the third period, although the goal was disallowed. The team's coach, Michel Bergeron, also known as "the Little Tiger", protested vehemently. To this day he maintains that it was a goal. This goal will remain etched in the memory of Quebecers and marked the history of the Nordiques.

During the current playoffs, the hearts and minds of Quebecers are filled with nostalgia for competition between these two Quebec teams and a desire for the return of the Nordiques. When will the Quebec Nordiques return to the NHL?

Oral Questions

[English]

HALIFAX FOREST FIRE

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as residents of Purcells Cove and Ferguson's Cove of Halifax deal with the aftermath of last week's devastating forest fire, I would like to express our deep gratitude to everyone who came to the assistance of families who had their lives disrupted or homes destroyed.

Nova Scotians always rally to the aid of their neighbours at difficult times like these and we are proud of the efforts of the brave firefighters, police officers, Red Cross officials and community volunteers who responded.

We were all shocked by the random destruction of the fire and thankful for reports that nobody in the community suffered any serious injury.

I know all members of the House will want to join me in letting everyone touched by this tragedy know our thoughts are with them.

* * *

●(1415)

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's economic action plan is delivering real results for Canadians.

At this critical time we are reducing taxes on Canadian families, creating jobs, and helping Canadians who are hardest hit by the global recession. That is what Canadians have asked for and that is what we are delivering.

This is in stark contrast to the Liberals. Over the weekend the Liberal Party reaffirmed its commitment to taxing Canadians. The Liberal leader supported the risky carbon tax scheme during his first leadership race and the Liberals have once again adopted a carbon tax policy at their convention.

We also know that they want to increase the GST and they want to end the universal child care benefit. As if that was not enough, the leader of the Liberal Party recently announced that he will have to raise taxes. The Liberal Party is just reaffirming its economic clumsiness.

When will the Liberal leader come clean with Canadians and tell them which taxes he will raise, by how much he will raise them, and who will have to pay these increased taxes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, employment insurance is not working in this country and there are some key issues that need to be fixed: access, benefit levels, maternity leave, fairness across regions, and the status of the self-employed.

Will the Prime Minister commit to launching an independent examination of these issues and present concrete proposals for reform before the House rises in June?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the leader of the Liberal Party should know, Canada has a very generous system of employment insurance that was, in fact, enhanced in the most recent economic action plan of this government.

I am perplexed by the sudden interest of the Liberal Party in NDP employment insurance policy. I guess the reason to borrow this is to create a diversion from the reaffirmation at the Liberal convention of the carbon tax. It is not any better an idea the second time around.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister believes in magic thinking. He believes that if one repeats a falsehood constantly, it becomes true. It does not. It remains a falsehood.

On employment insurance, there is one problem that can be fixed right now. There are 58 standards of eligibility for EI across the country. That makes eligibility depend on where one lives and that is wrong. Will the Prime Minister commit to an immediate 360 hour national standard of eligibility for employment insurance—

The Speaker: Order, the right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the leader of the Liberal Party will know that that is a long-time policy of the New Democratic Party, not of the Liberal Party.

When we are talking about saying things that are true, I am only quoting the leader of the Liberal Party himself, who has said repeatedly that he wants to raise taxes. I know he is being honest. He is just honestly wrong.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for a prime minister who levied a punitive tax on income trusts, that is really something.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister is in a position to help thousands of unemployed workers who are not currently eligible for employment insurance right now.

Why will he not commit to creating an immediate 360-hour national standard for EI eligibility?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our party asked the Liberal Party to share its suggestions for the economic action plan in January. We did not receive any suggestions. Instead, we improved employment insurance benefits.

●(1420)

[English]

Let me just go back to this issue of the tax fairness package, which was a big net tax cut to Canadians, brought down business tax rates across the board, and for the first time in history brought in income splitting for the pensioners of this country. That party voted against it. This party voted for it because we believe in cutting taxes.

Oral Questions

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Conservative recession is destroying Canadian families, many of whom cannot collect EI. Rather than establishing a national standard for all claimants, the government's response is to tell newly employed Canadians to wait and hope that enough of the people in their region lose their jobs and then maybe they can all qualify for help.

They have been failed by the government, which has not ensured that EI is available when it is needed most. The question is simple. Surely, the time has come. When is the government going to fix EI eligibility?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that it was his party that created the current EI system, but we did improve upon it because we had to. As an example, people in the Kitchener region right now, where unfortunately the unemployment rate has gone from 5.4% to 9.5%, can now access EI four weeks sooner, that is with four weeks less work, and they get 13 weeks more benefit than they did a year ago.

While we are increasing EI access and benefits, the Liberals are only increasing rhetoric and taxes.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to the minister's logic, the unemployment rate would have to go up for unemployed workers to be eligible. In the lower St. Lawrence region, a claimant needs 455 hours of work to be eligible. In Montreal, that number is 595, and in Gatineau, it is 700. The employment insurance system should be fair to all unemployed workers, to all Canadians, regardless of their postal code.

Does the Conservative government acknowledge that the time has come to create a national standard—

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

[*English*]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we are all aware of the folks in Oshawa who have seen a lot of job losses in the last year. The system is working there. Now it takes two weeks less of work to qualify for nine weeks more of benefits. That is because things have gotten worse. Our system is responding. We have added an extra five weeks.

Once again from the Liberals all we get is increased rhetoric and taxes, where we are increasing benefits and access.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for years, the Bloc Québécois has been asking that the minimum to qualify for employment insurance be 360 hours. That proposal is included in phase 2 of our assistance plan. The Liberals suddenly understood the importance of such a measure at their convention and are now proposing to introduce it. We need to remember that the Supreme Court ruled that the Liberal government illegally took money from the EI fund in 2002, 2003 and 2005. We are talking about a surplus of more than \$8 billion over three years.

Instead of legalizing what the Liberal government did, why does the Prime Minister not use that surplus to improve the employment insurance plan?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, during tough economic times such as these, we need to have compassion for people who are losing their jobs and are in difficulty. Our employment insurance system is based on the unemployment rate in a given region. The higher the unemployment rate, the fewer hours people have to work to qualify for employment insurance. As well, our economic action plan added five weeks to the benefit period so that people can receive employment insurance longer when they are going through a difficult time.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, everyone is calling for a reform of the employment insurance system. One of the first things that needs to be done is to eliminate the waiting period. That would help unemployed workers directly and stimulate the economy.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for to go ahead with this other proposal in phase 2 of the Bloc's assistance plan, which is supported by the CSN and the FTQ?

● (1425)

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, before we tabled our economic action plan, we consulted all Canadians. People wanted more flexibility during tough economic times. We looked at different options, and instead of adding two weeks, as the member is proposing, we are adding five weeks when people need it most, because it takes time to find a job.

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, difficult situations call for daring ideas. Until now, this government has not come up with anything particularly bold for unemployed workers. In phase 2 of the Bloc's plan, we proposed increasing benefits from 55% to 60% of the claimant's salary.

Will the government seize this opportunity to be creative and get behind the Bloc's proposed measure?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Bloc Québécois has made a series of proposals. It knows perfectly well that it will never be held accountable because it will never be in charge of a budget in this House. We, on the other hand, have to make decisions based on the needs of the people. We are going through hard economic times right now. We think that it is important to give people more opportunities and to enable them to collect employment insurance for a longer period of time. Instead of just two weeks, as they have proposed, we are offering five.

Oral Questions

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, an American economist has said that “The virtue of extending UI benefits goes beyond simply providing financial aid for the jobless to more broadly shoring up household confidence”.

Given the situation, how can the government not provide a tool such as the income support program for older workers, which is another way to stimulate consumption and mitigate the cash shortage caused by the crisis?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, we consulted Canadians when we brought in our economic action plan. We implemented measures to support the economy and help those who were having a hard time finding jobs. We are providing an extra five weeks of employment insurance benefits. The Bloc Québécois would have provided just two. Anyone who is entitled to 30 weeks of employment insurance would get nothing more under the Bloc's proposal, while our initiative will provide five extra weeks. That is why our plan is better.

[*English*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 55 days ago the House adopted the New Democratic plan to fix the EI system. It was very specific. It said that the hours required to work to qualify should be reduced to 360 across the country. It said that self-employed workers should be a part of the plan. It said that the rates should be increased and the two-week penalty should be eliminated.

The Prime Minister used to say that a prime minister had a moral obligation to respect the will of the House. I think he would agree that he has a moral obligation to help those in need in a crisis.

When will he fix EI to help Canadians who are trying to get through this economic crisis?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was not that long ago that the House adopted the government's economic action plan which increased benefits to the unemployed and which provided additional funds for retraining, both for those eligible for employment insurance and not eligible for employment insurance.

This is not an abstract question of parliamentary right or wrong. This was real benefit for Canadian workers. The New Democratic Party should have been onside and should have been supporting those changes for workers.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the problem was the budget did not get the job done and talking to Canadians across this country makes that very clear. This brutal recession is making it very clear to workers that because of a generation of changes to EI, they are being left out. Women are not being treated equally. People in different regions across the country are not being treated equally.

The Liberal record is clear. Before the Liberals were in government, 75% of workers were able to get EI help when they needed it, but when the Liberals left government, it was down to 40%. Now is the chance to fix it.

Will the Prime Minister assist in fixing the EI system that—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, when this government brought in five additional weeks of benefit, it did it for every region right across this country equally. There is no excuse for the New Democratic Party and the Bloc to vote against these benefits for workers.

● (1430)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unemployment rates are reaching record highs across the country. The NDP is making concrete proposals to help people.

For instance, the bill introduced by the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing reduces the number of hours required to be eligible for employment insurance to 360, increases benefits and does away with the distinctions between regions.

Will the government and the Prime Minister support these changes to employment insurance?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for some time now, the employment insurance principle has been that when unemployment goes up in a given region, benefits are increased to help the sectors in difficulty. In our economic action plan, we added five weeks of benefits for all regions of Canada. This is a very important improvement for all Canadian workers. The NDP and the Bloc Québécois should have voted for those benefits, and not against the workers of Canada.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Foreign Affairs concerning the 25 Canadians being held in quarantine in China.

It appears that there is no public health risk to justify this decision by the Chinese government. What will the minister do for those Canadians at this time?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

I have asked authorities and our consular officials in China to go to meet those people and, first of all, ensure that they are properly served, as well as ensure that everything meets public health standards. I also asked them to make the necessary approaches to the Chinese authorities to clarify the situation.

[*English*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, another drastic decision by the Chinese government is something on which the Canadian government needs to fight back, and that is the question of the Chinese government deciding that it will not accept importation of Canadian pork products.

Oral Questions

There is absolutely no scientific evidence whatsoever that either cured or cooked pork represents any kind of threat to the health and safety of anyone. I would like to ask the minister, if he agrees with me, why would he accept the pathetic words of the Minister of International Trade, who said that the decision by the Government of China was “disappointing”? It is more than disappointing, it is illegal.

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is absolutely right. China is operating outside of sound science. China has received those assurances from the World Health Organization and the OIE. It has also received calls from the Minister of International Trade and me on that very issue.

We are looking for clarification as to why it has gone as far as it has. We will have a response to that very shortly. Should China continue on, of course there is the WTO challenge which we would not hesitate to initiate.

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EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the victims of the economic crisis are growing. The Chrysler plant in Brampton has shut down. The Chrysler plant in Windsor has shut down. The result is 8,000 people who have no jobs. Those 8,000 Canadians face an uncertain future and will be looking to EI for help.

The Conservatives have already turned their backs on these thousands of unemployed Canadians. Will they finally show some compassion? Will they finally step up to the plate, take some leadership and reduce the eligibility requirements for EI so that these victims can actually get the help that they need now?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member should keep up with the times. The accessibility has dramatically increased in Windsor for EI, as well as the length of the benefits.

We are there also with special programs for long-tenured workers, those who have been in the workforce for quite a while, who may be 40 years of age with little in the way of transferrable skills. We are helping those people get the skills they need so they can have jobs in the future.

It is time the Liberals caught up and stopped with the rhetoric, and stopped talking about raising nothing but taxes.

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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May 1 has come and gone and if the minister has not noticed, the auto crisis is deepening.

All the support in the world will not help the auto industry if Canadians are not buying cars. The minister promised the secured credit facility would be ready by May 1 to help buy and lease cars, but it has yet to be deployed. The BDC admitted that it does not have the expertise to create or implement the facility and had to recently appoint a team to do so.

Did the Minister of Finance mean May 1, 2009, or May 1 some other year for this credit facility?

• (1435)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said in response to the hon. member last week, we have been consulting with Canadians carefully, with auto dealers, with the auto assemblers, with the auto parts people to frame this package in an intelligent way so that it will actually work for the industry. I look forward to making the announcement shortly.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources has further isolated Canada by calling on California to abandon its plan to combat greenhouse gas emissions caused by automotive fuels. She has gone so far as to make veiled threats of judicial reprisals against one of the most progressive states in environmental matters.

Can the Minister of Natural Resources look beyond her role as minister of oil and realize that the oil sands operations are a complete environmental disaster?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not so. The Bloc Québécois should do its homework.

We have the same principles as the U.S. We have adopted the same targets as the U.S. There is definitely much at stake and that is why we have established a mechanism for maintaining dialogue with the U.S. on clean fuel, technologies and science. The Bloc members should abandon their partisanship and support the government.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa is lobbying California to abandon important elements of its fight against greenhouse gas emissions. That is not dialogue.

Is it not the minister's real intention to weaken American regulations as much as possible so that we do not have to change anything here at home?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not so. Our government is presently working with President Obama on a plan based on the same principles as those adopted by the United States. We share the same economic and environmental space as the U.S. and that is why we are working together to reach an agreement in Copenhagen.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Abdelrazik cannot be brought back to Canada because he is on the United Nations' no-fly list. According to Richard Barrett, who is in charge of the UN team monitoring al-Qaeda's activities, Canada could allow this Canadian citizen to go home, even if he is on that list.

Oral Questions

Since the UN is not opposed to his return, will the government deliver a passport to Mr. Abdelrazik, so that he can come back to Canada at the earliest opportunity?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I already mentioned in this House, we will not deliver an emergency passport to Mr. Abdelrazik, for national security reasons.

Mr. Abdelrazik is on the list established by the United Nations Security Council as an individual with ties to al-Qaeda. Therefore, he is subject to a travel ban and an asset freeze.

Our government is taking its obligations seriously and that is why we are not going to do this.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 2007, both the RCMP and CSIS cleared Mr. Abdelrazik of any suspicion. However, according to a briefing note, Mr. Abdelrazik's name was put on the UN no-fly list at the request of the Bush administration.

Why does the federal government refuse to respect the rights of this citizen, and why does it oppose his return to Canada? Is it out of nostalgia for the Bush era?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a procedure allowing Mr. Abdelrazik and his lawyer to ask that his name be removed from that list. We encourage this individual to avail himself of that option.

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BROADCASTING AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives still refuse to help our broadcasters, both public and private, even though they are all going through a serious crisis at this time.

What is the minister doing in the meantime? He is twiddling his thumbs, as usual. If twiddling one's thumbs were an Olympic sport, he would win every category.

This crisis has already had disastrous consequences on the diversity of information sources, especially in the regions.

Will he continue to twiddle his thumbs, or will he do as we are doing, and try to find a solution for all of them right now?

• (1440)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is false. As I have said here many times, there is definitely a crisis in the global economy, and this is having an impact on broadcasters on the ground here in Canada.

We got the job done. During the election campaign, we promised to invest \$1.1 billion in CBC/Radio-Canada. That is what we did. We created the new Canada media fund, with \$310 million for the broadcasting industries, to help them create Canadian content. We are getting the job done.

[English]

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, CBC Radio in Moncton and Saint John, along with other Atlantic Canadian cities, had to cut staff because of the

Conservatives' decision not to give our public broadcaster bridge financing.

The Conservatives say they want to sit down with the private broadcasters to find solutions to their problems. Will the CBC be invited to those discussions so it can benefit from possible solutions and continue giving Atlantic Canadians, and all Canadians, the level of service they deserve?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we made a very specific promise during the election campaign to maintain or increase funding for the CBC, and we kept our word.

When the Liberals had their opportunity, they made a promise to maintain or increase funding for the CBC, and what did they do? They cut funding to the CBC by \$414 million. Not only that, but when the Liberals were in office, they cut 4,000 jobs at the CBC.

Our Conservative government respected our promises. Let us not forget, this Conservative government was elected in 2006 because the Liberals failed. We were elected in 2008 because we are getting the job done.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more taxpayers' money is being wasted.

Last week, we learned that the government had wasted \$50,000 paying American consultants to do the work of staff of the Prime Minister's Office. Today, we learn that the government wasted more than \$1 million to fund a public appointments commission that does not even exist.

A million dollars could have helped a lot of families in difficulty in this Conservative recession. How can the government justify this waste of money when so many Canadians desperately need help now?

[English]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government came forward with a very qualified nominee to head a review board for public appointments. The opposition decided to play partisan games with that nomination. As such, our government was unable to fill that position.

We continue to make appointments based on merit, and the government is currently laying the groundwork for the eventual establishment of a public appointments commissioner. That is transparency.

Real transparency on that side would be for the Liberal leader to explain what he meant when he said, "We will have to raise taxes".

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the commission that the Prime Minister created and then cancelled himself when Parliament would not let his top party bagman chair the commission.

Oral Questions

If Joe Public got a job and then quit before doing any work, he would not be paid. Why is this any different? Plain and simple, this is another example of the Conservative government's ability to waste money.

One million dollars would provide some 3,000 EI payments for Canadians who could really use the help right now.

Why did the government spend taxpayers' dollars so irresponsibly?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): In fact, Mr. Speaker, there are officials, three of them, within the secretariat in question who are in the process of establishing this important enhancement in the way that appointments are done.

That does not change the fact that the Liberal leader said, "We will have to raise taxes". We have asked some very clear questions: Which taxes would he raise, how high would they go up, and who would have to pay?

I would invite the leader of the Liberal Party to rise to his feet and answer those questions.

* * *

• (1445)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while this government is continuing to work towards a North American plan to reduce greenhouse gases with the United States, the Liberal Party, in Vancouver, celebrated the return of the green shift's carbon tax. It is back. Yes, it is true, the carbon tax is back.

Can the Minister of the Environment remind Canadians why they completely rejected this plan only seven months ago?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the rotating Liberal environmental plan of taxes, tiddlywink bills and incremental excrementalism has stopped again on taxes.

It is hard to believe, but the Liberal Party wants to impose a carbon tax on Canadians. This will damage investments, kill jobs, and raise prices.

Canadians have a government with a real environment plan, working with our allies internationally and also continentally. We will get the job done.

We will leave taxes and tiddlywinks to the Liberals.

* * *

ABITIBIBOWATER

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Minister of Finance to take action to help seniors who were being kicked off their AbitibiBowater pensions. Eight hundred people are affected, some as old as 94.

He shrugged off their plight, saying they should take it up with the provincial government. That was both callous and wrong.

Federal legislation regulates bankruptcy and insolvency rules, and right now, employees are at the end of the line to get what they are owed in severance and retirement payments.

Will the minister now take action to change the rules to protect employees' benefits, or will he continue to side with the bankers and lenders at the expense of ordinary people?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the point I made with the member last week was about pensions, that the majority of pensions in this country are subject to provincial regulation, which is the case in AbitibiBowater.

It has gone to court. There is a bankruptcy proceeding going on. I see that the judge today ruled in favour of the union with respect to certain collective agreements and the fact that they must be respected.

That is the role of the courts, applying the bankruptcy laws of Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK OF CANADA

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the *Sun* says today that another group of government employees is costing us a lot of money. Outrageous salaries, questionable bonuses and a mysterious allocation system mean that executives of the Business Development Bank of Canada earn more than the Prime Minister. The bank says that it has to pay these mandarins that much to keep them, but it refuses to reveal the exact figures.

How can the government tolerate such abuses when people are losing their pensions and 60% of people who lose their jobs do not even qualify for employment insurance?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member may have heard, of course the BDC has to roughly match private sector banks in terms of its remuneration. It has to match Treasury Board standards. The BDC continues and will continue to play an important role in assisting small and medium-sized enterprises with their loans. They oversee over \$3 billion in loans right now.

We will certainly always review to make sure that it is consistent with Treasury Board guidelines.

* * *

[Translation]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): For too long, the wharves in eastern Quebec have been in such a state of disrepair that, during violent storms, fishers cannot dock and, for their own safety, are forced to wait out the storm in open waters. This situation has also affected the safety of the ferry service between Rimouski and Forestville.

After a 12-year wait, will the government acknowledge that it is high time to take action and invest in the reconstruction of the Rimouski wharf?

[*English*]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government did recognize the need for improvements to small craft harbours. That is why our economic action plan has set out an additional \$200 million to make improvements to small craft harbours across the country.

I am not quite sure if Rimouski is on that list, but I will only be too happy to check.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, will the government adopt phase 2 of the Bloc's assistance plan, which recommends immediate action by investing \$300 million in small craft harbours and renovation of its wharves?

That is another means of supporting the economy of regions in dire need of assistance.

[*English*]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are supporting the industry by upgrading a number of harbours across the country.

As I said to the hon. member, I am not sure if Rimouski is among those. I do not ever recall hearing from that member that there was a problem with Rimouski. However, we will definitely look into that.

* * *

●(1450)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Pavel Kulisek is still in prison in Mexico, and the minister of state is still blaming and berating others for his government's failure to help Mr. Kulisek. His family and friends feel abandoned by the government.

Why is it that the minister appears to favour interests on a commercial basis with other countries over human and consular rights? When are we going to get some action from the minister on a Canadian wrongly accused?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members of the House that we are actively monitoring this case. We are liaising with the Mexican authorities to express Canada's interest in this case, and in his case, obviously, to seek at the same time the assurances that Mr. Kulisek's right to due process is respected.

As we know, consular officials regularly visit him. As a matter of fact, our ambassador to Mexico has done so on at least two occasions over the course of the last month.

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister intervening for the minister of state, but we would like to get a clear answer.

First that minister blamed a journalist and then blamed Mr. Kulisek's lawyer. Last week, when asked repeatedly which aspects of

Oral Questions

this case had been misrepresented to the public by *W-FIVE*, the minister could not come up with one single example, not one.

Now that he has run out of other people to blame, will the minister sit down, look at the evidence, and finally come to the defence of a Canadian who has been so clearly and wrongly imprisoned? More important, when is Ron Burgundy going to stand up for Canadians wrongly accused in Mexico?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are actually standing up for this Canadian. As I mentioned before, consular officials have been there, and the ambassador has gone there. My parliamentary secretary has actually been there and visited with this individual and has spoken with him. We are on this file and we are following it actively.

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CANADIAN FLAG PINS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the role of a minister of the Crown is to take responsibility for the contracts and the decisions of his department. However, for a week, we have had this minister running through the spectacle of dodging a simple question as to why a Canadian company was frozen out of a contract and the maple leaf was then outsourced to China.

First he blamed the gift shop. Then he blamed the WTO and he blamed the Speaker. It is like he is running through Tory Rolodex of excuses.

Here is the question: If he is not willing to take responsibility for his department, why does he not step aside and let someone else do it?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that member has been wrong about pins in the parliamentary gift shop, wrong about pins purchased by the Department of Public Works, wrong about the contracting process, and wrong about the responsibility of our government to respect our trade agreements.

I guess the bit of advice that I would give my friend from Timmins—James Bay is that if he is going to devolve himself to being a single issue MP, then he should have a clue about the issue he is talking about.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the real issue here is the fact that we have a minister who cannot give an honest answer in the House of Commons.

We have asked about the contracts and the outsourcing and he continues to make it up. Meanwhile, the CBC has been undermined, international art tours are being cancelled and there is the China flags pact.

I would ask him to be at least prudent this time because his political proboscis is such now that he is poking the poor members of the Bloc in the chest.

Oral Questions

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, given that there is no question there, I will use this 30 seconds to make a statement for the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

The member mentioned a number of things. I have been crystal clear on this process from the very beginning. If he wants to continue to build this soapbox to stand on, he is, frankly, building a faulty soapbox.

With regard to the CBC, we made a commitment in the campaign and we have kept our word.

If the member for Timmins—James Bay wants to stand up in the House of Commons and talk about integrity, he ought to first go back to his constituents and explain to them why, in the campaigns of 2004, 2006 and 2008, he said that he would vote against the gun registry and then showed up in the House of Commons and betrayed his constituents. He should explain that.

* * *

• (1455)

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader has had a free ride from his friends in the media on taxes.

He calls himself a “tax-and-spend, Pearsonian, Trudeau Liberal.” He invented the Liberal carbon tax. He said, “I’m not going to take a GST hike off the table”. He said, “We will have to raise taxes”. This weekend the Liberal Party voted again in favour of a carbon tax.

If the media will not report these inconvenient facts, will the parliamentary secretary?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month, the hon. leader of the Liberal Party said, “We will have to raise taxes”. Therefore, we asked him which taxes he would raise, by how much he would raise them and who would have to pay.?

On Saturday, his party answered with a resolution favouring a carbon tax, which is a tax on everything.

His words are clear. There is no need to deny or reverse them this time. The distinguished gentleman is in favour of higher taxes, so let the debate begin.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in March, British Columbia suffered the largest job losses of any province with 23,000 jobs lost. Since October, total job losses in B. C. have been 69,000, and that is without the April figures that are yet to come.

Many British Columbians cannot qualify for EI because of regional differences.

When will the Prime Minister stop apologizing for his inaction and establish a national standard for EI so Canadians can get EI when they need it where they need it?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, right now, in every region in British Columbia, individuals have easier access to EI and they get benefits for a longer period of time. That is because we updated the system so that it does meet the needs of those who are unfortunate enough to lose their jobs.

We have also expanded training for those who are eligible for EI and for those who are not because we want them to have jobs in the future.

While we are raising EI access and benefits, the Liberals just want to raise rhetoric and taxes.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first it was the city of Shannon, in the Quebec City area, and now Val-Bélair has discovered TCE in its drinking water. TCE is the contaminant that was used by the armed forces at the Valcartier base and that was suspected of causing many of the people of Shannon to develop cancer. Acting preventively, the mayor of Quebec City closed two wells and is asking Ottawa for \$4.5 million in compensation. The Conservative government has said no.

The federal government is responsible for the presence of TCE in the water. It is paying for Shannon's water system. Why is it refusing to do the same for Val-Bélair?

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course we are concerned about the health and safety of the people of Val-Bélair, as we are about that of everyone living in the Quebec City area. That being said, reports have been released, and people were invited to an information evening in early April. Val-Bélair's water quality has been found to be up to par.

That being said, it is within Mayor Labeaume's jurisdiction to close wells if he wants to.

* * *

[English]

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government was asleep at the switch when the Afghan rape law was passed. We also know that it did not read the report of the Afghan human rights watchdog, which stated that law enforcement officials being trained by Canadians do not know that torture is illegal.

Now the Afghan human rights commission warns that many women will not get to vote in the upcoming elections due to irregularities.

What is Canada doing to ensure that women will be able to vote? This time the government cannot say that it did not know. Ignorance is not a way out of this one.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, this government has been extremely active in terms of getting a larger number of people ready for the vote. Through our different programs, we have been able to increase the number of citizens who will exercise their vote, and, of course, that includes women.

I would like to indicate for my hon. colleague that through our six point program we are not only increasing the number of people who are working in Afghanistan on these projects, but we are also ensuring that women are getting back—

● (1500)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Miramichi.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the global economic downturn has put a great deal of pressure on Canadian families and they are looking to the government for leadership. Fortunately, this government has an economic action plan that is being rolled out across the country, creating jobs and quality infrastructure, to lead Canada through these difficult times.

Would the Minister of State (Transport) please inform the House about his recent announcement with VIA Rail?

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was in Moncton this morning announcing more than \$100 million be awarded by contract by VIA Rail. These contracts will support some 200 jobs in the Moncton area, upgrading VIA Rail, LRC, Renaissance Cars.

The difference is that while the Liberals are on one side of this country explaining to Canadians why they will raise their taxes and hurt their future, we are on the other side of the country investing in their futures and creating jobs.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's Veterans ombudsman says that Ottawa is abandoning its former soldiers, leaving them to languish on the streets of our country, despite repeated warnings that many desperately need help.

After what these brave men and women have done for Canada, any veteran living on the streets of Canada is nothing short of a disgrace.

Other countries are able to keep track of the needs of their veterans. Why can this minister not do the same thing?

Hon. Greg Thompson (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's concern because she has been with me on some of the things we are doing. She has been feet on the ground with me when we have announced some of our OSI clinics, which we have doubled across the country, and that is significant in itself. We are working very closely with our veterans organizations to identify these men and women.

Routine Proceedings

One of the problems is that, by its nature, homelessness is very difficult to identify because many of these men and women suffer from alcoholism, drug dependency and other mental illnesses. We are there to help and will continue to do our best. I appreciate the member's interest.

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POINTS OF ORDER

WITHDRAWAL OF UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stood on a point of order last week and you mentioned that I had used an unparliamentary word. I had no intention of using the word and my intentions have always been to respect the House and the members of the House and their integrity. Therefore, I would like to withdraw that word.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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FARM IMPROVEMENT AND MARKETING COOPERATIVES LOANS ACT

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-29, An Act to increase the availability of agricultural loans and to repeal the Farm Improvement Loans Act.

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

* * *

● (1505)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to its study of the federal employee compensation system. The committee adopted a report tabled in the House on May 1, 2008, entitled "The Right Pay for Valuable Employees".

Points of Order

Since the government did not provide a response to that report before the August 29, 2008 deadline, we are giving it a second opportunity to table a comprehensive response.

I want to record for the record, in relation to that report, that the House, according to previous Speakers, takes very seriously the failure of the executive to comply with House filing deadlines. In fairness, however, the last Parliament did dissolve for an election within a few days after the August 29 deadline. We are asking again for a comprehensive response to this report.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and a motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, April 23, the committee recommended that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women supports the government in its efforts to continue to press the Afghan government to meet its commitments to review the legislation violating the rights of women in Afghanistan in order to uphold their international human rights commitments. This will be reported.

As well, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women in relation to women's rights in Afghanistan.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women in relation to women's rights in Afghanistan.

The Standing Committee on the Status of Women calls upon the government to say that it will take measures if President Karzai refuses to repeal the legislation violating the rights of women in Afghanistan.

* * *

PETITIONS

INCOME TRUSTS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 and as certified by the clerk of petitions, I am pleased to submit another income trust broken promise petition sent to me by Mr. Ken Charles from my riding of Mississauga South in Ontario who remembers the Prime Minister boasting about his apparent commitment to accountability when he said that the greatest fraud was a promise not kept.

The petitioners remind the Prime Minister that he promised never to tax income trusts but that he broke that promise by imposing a 31.5% punitive tax which permanently wiped out over \$25 billion of the hard-earned retirement savings of over two million Canadians, particularly seniors.

The petitioners, therefore, call upon the Conservative minority government to: first, admit that the decision to tax income trusts was based on flawed methodology and incorrect assumptions, as demonstrated in the finance committee hearings; second, apologize to those who were unfairly harmed by this broken promise; and finally, repeal the punitive 31.5% tax on income trusts.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions that I would like to present.

The first is with respect to the Democratic Republic of Congo. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada and all members of Parliament to take action with respect to providing relief to human suffering in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

DARFUR

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with respect to the situation in Darfur. The petitioners urge the government to take action to deal with the genocide and the situation of humanitarian relief.

• (1510)

LOCAL TELEVISION

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition today from hundreds of residents in Barrie with regard to local television. The petitioners ask the government to look at solutions to protect local television in our country. They focus on the A-Channel in Barrie, which is going through some difficult financial straits, like others through the country are with local television.

It is pleasure to present this petition on their behalf.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand on a point of order with regard to the comments made by the chair of the government operations and estimates committee.

In his tabling of the report, he commented that the committee was disappointed in some actions of the government. I first want to make a clarification in terms of his remarks.

I sit on that committee and the committee is in no way, shape or form disappointed in the least. There was no discussion within committee about the disappointment it had with regard to the minister or the executive.

I want to read from page 375 of Marleau and Montpetit, which might help the hon. chair in terms of the clarification of his point. It reads:

However, even if a document is technically due during the adjournment period, a Minister still has the option of waiting until the first sitting day following the adjournment to table it in the House or deposit it with the Clerk.

This may help to alleviate any concerns the chair of that committee may have with regard to the tabling of the document. However, I assure everyone again that no committee member had expressed any disappointment in the way the document was or was not tabled in the House or sent back to the committee.

Government Orders

The Speaker: I am sure the member for Scarborough—Rouge River will read, with relief, what the hon. member had to say and possibly have something else to say on the subject, if necessary. I know we do not usually have debates about committee reports until someone moves a concurrence motion and then there could be a debate. Things like that sometimes come out in those debates. However, I am sure the member for Scarborough—Rouge River will appreciate the hon. member's point of order.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ARCTIC WATERS POLLUTION PREVENTION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: When debate was interrupted, the hon. member for Western Arctic had the floor. There are six and a half minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks.

I therefore call upon the hon. member for Western Arctic.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before question period, I talked a lot about the new 2009 Arctic marine shipping assessment that was presented in Tromsø, Norway. I want to wrap up my discussion on the bill. I have pointed out the importance of preventing pollution being an international concern. We have to work well internationally to accomplish the goals we have for our arctic waters.

The assessment was as a result of the work of a number of Arctic nations, including Canada, so it is important that we look at the recommendations.

Under oil spill prevention, we need to see the Arctic states enhance a mutual co-operation in the field of oil spill prevention, in collaboration with industries that support research and technology transfer, to prevent the release of oil into Arctic waters. They have identified quite clearly that this is the highest priority in the Arctic for environmental protection as the ice recedes and shipping increases in the area. There is a clear message to the government to join in internationally to make this happen.

We should support development of a comprehensive Arctic marine traffic awareness system to improve the monitoring and tracking of marine activity, enhance data sharing in near-real time and augment vessel management services in order to reduce the risk of incidents. As I pointed out before, some 6,000 vessels are in Arctic waters now and are engaged in many voyages. We do have the quantity of ships entering Arctic waters. We need to have the

systems to ensure that we can keep track of them and that they are well accounted for.

Last year, we saw the sinking of a cruise ship off the coast of Antarctica. This type of disaster has the potential to occur in our Arctic waters as well. Many of the cruise ships that are now plying the Greenland coast, between Greenland and Canadian waters, are simply not equipped for the Arctic conditions. These national monitoring systems and working together internationally to ensure that vessel traffic is well understood in the Arctic will do more to prevent pollution occurrences. We need to monitor the way the ships conduct themselves in the Arctic waters and work to ensure that the pollution from those ships is limited.

The third recommendation was circumpolar environmental response capacity. This would be to see that the Arctic states continue to develop circumpolar environmental response capabilities that are critical to protecting the unique Arctic ecosystem. This can be done through circumpolar co-operation and agreements as well as regional bilateral capacity agreements. This would cover areas as well as search and rescue.

The world recognizes the importance of protecting the Arctic environment. Canada's role is to work with the rest of the world in co-operation to achieve the goals for our rapidly changing Arctic.

• (1515)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know this area is very important to the member. In the minister's speech on the bill at second reading, he talked about the development of oil and gas, how important it was in the North and the rich resources there. That was one of the reasons the bill was necessary. Does the member think the bill is very helpful in supporting oil and gas development for his constituents?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, the bill does not address that issue very well. It would simply extend the boundaries that we would protect. Without the work going into the issues that I have talked about, we are very much leaving ourselves at the mercy of the good intent of the industries that are going to be engaged in the North.

We need to take real, concrete steps to ensure that ships and industries that want to utilize the resources in the Arctic, be it fishing, tourism or oil and gas, follow very strict guidelines. In fact, we do not only need guidelines, regulations that ensure these vessels and crews act in a manner that is acceptable and uniform across the Arctic waters.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his astute comments on the bill. Canadians are united in their desire to see a high level of diplomacy and negotiation conducted among all nations that touch on the Arctic. I believe there are five competing jurisdictions and we all understand the need for co-operation in this interconnected world in which we live.

Government Orders

Could my colleague comment on his views or feelings about the current state of diplomacy and international co-operation going on in this region and on the subject of the bill?

• (1520)

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, the major issues facing Canada with international agreements really lie with Canada and the U.S. We need to sort out the issues of the Northwest Passage in a fashion that we can move ahead. We need a certain measure of understanding between the United States and Canada as they both have valid interests, Canada in protecting its territorial waters and the U.S. in ensuring it has some valid access. Those things have to be worked out between the two countries.

A much more interesting near time issue is the boundary between Alaska and Yukon, which, since 1982 when the U.S. changed its policy on the boundary, has left an area of 4,000 or 5,000 square kilometres in the Beaufort Sea. This is likely a development area that is under dispute between Canada and the U.S. Those bilateral discussions must go ahead in a fashion that can lead to a solution.

When we are talking about the Beaufort Sea, we are talking about an area that is under active exploration right now. To have this extent of a border issue in that area is not acceptable. We need to work in that area. I have not heard that the government has made any movement in this regard.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend from Western Arctic for his work on this file.

I recall back in the mid-eighties when Mel Hurtig, a publisher from Edmonton, dropped a Canadian flag with a note on a vessel going through our north saying, “You should have asked permission”. That wound up with me being first president of the Hamilton Chapter of the Council of Canadians. I have had a concern about sovereignty for a long time.

The member spoke about vessels going through the north, that the ice flows would break up earlier and there would be more tourism and more vessels going through. Are there any provisions concerning the fouling of the waters by these ships? We know that happens in the main oceans.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Madam Speaker, the Arctic marine shipping assessment, which was presented in Tromsø, talked about the expanded marine traffic increasing the possibility of introducing alien species into Arctic waters, which is of major concern, and then pathogens from ballast water discharge and hull fouling.

These activities occur with ships all over the world. The difference is, within the pristine Arctic conditions, the introduction of any of these fouling emissions can have a serious deleterious effect on that environment.

All of us in this world want to maintain what is good in the environment now in the face of what has happened over the last hundred years.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, in my home province of British Columbia I know how important the coastlines are to the citizens and how deeply they care about maintaining the pristine nature of the waters up and down the coast.

One of the many ways this concern is expressed is in ensuring that ships carrying toxic materials, such as oil tankers, are carefully regulated and, in fact, banned in many areas, so we do not run the risk of having terrible oil disasters, like what happened with the *Exxon Valdez* some years ago.

Could my hon. colleague from Western Arctic, whom I want to congratulate on his wonderful work on this bill, elucidate a bit on how the bill may or may not impact upon the possibility of dumping oil or other toxic substances in the pristine waters of the Arctic?

• (1525)

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Madam Speaker, I think the House has to recognize that this bill speaks to an area in the Arctic that is not accessible by ships right now. What it does is focus attention on all the issues we have within the waters of the Arctic that are now accessible within the 100-mile limit. To that extent, the bill is useful.

We have had the debate here in Parliament. We have talked about the issues. The government needs to provide leadership, and it also needs to work much more closely with the international community that has significant interest in the Arctic.

Those are the results that I want to see from this bill. Those results will mean that we will protect our arctic waters.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak to Bill C-3.

Of course the Liberals will be supporting this bill, because this is additional modernization support for the bill of the Right Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau of 1970. This bill will basically make a small administrative change to that bill. As international law extended the sea boundaries that countries could have, we needed a local administrative change to extend the boundary that Canada could have.

We are delighted that the Prime Minister is so strongly supportive of Pierre Elliott Trudeau's bill, the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, the AWPPA, of 1970. At that time it brought in very sweeping changes to the protection of the Arctic, leading the world to show that Canada was serious about the Arctic waters.

It gives rules related to the deposit of waste in the Arctic. It gives rules related to someone who may be doing work that would lead to the deposit of waste in the Arctic. They have to get a permit, which could be rejected or modified. It gives rules about control over shipping zones in the Arctic. It gives enforcement provisions. It also gives instructions on the types of ships that can go in that area. They are in dangerous, ice-filled waters, and they need to have special ships that can handle that dangerous area.

Government Orders

When the bill was first enacted, Canada's boundaries and other countries' boundaries were 100 miles, but when Canada joined the law of the sea, in 2003, an international law was changed, giving us a limit of 200 nautical miles. The bill, of course, then has to be adjusted to keep up with international law. So this is a 10-line bill that makes that administrative adjustment.

One might think that lengthy debates here and in committee are much to do about nothing, but the minister and officials from various departments have brought up a number of issues and ramifications related to this bill and what needs to be done to deal with those. I am going to be following up, primarily on the comments made by those people in committees, and the other considerations that may need to be taken into effect when we are increasing Canada's control over something in an area that is bigger than one of the prairie provinces.

Of course it becomes increasingly important to have this type of pollution control and monitoring in the Arctic waters because of the melting of the ice cap. For small periods in 2007 and 2008, for the first time in history, the Northwest Passage, which I like to call the Canadian passage, was actually navigable. The ice cap in the Arctic was 39% smaller in 2007 than its average in 1979 to 2000.

This leads to more commerce. According to the marine shipping report that just came out, as a previous member mentioned, there were 6,000 shipping activities in Arctic waters over the time period of a year. If the Northwest Passage were to be an international strait, there could be overflights by other countries, which of course we do not want. There are thousands of overflights over the Arctic now. I will be talking about some of the aspects that are very important to prevent that.

One of the major concerns that all parties have raised about this is their lack of faith in the government's will and ability to monitor this. If we take authority over a much greater area, we have to make some steps to protect it.

Toronto is a very large city, with thousands of police officers. What if we said we would take over policing of another equally large city but we were not going to provide any more police officers? Would that not be absurd? We would have authority that would go unmonitored and unenforced. Not only would it be a laughing stock but it would be a very dangerous situation, because how could they then enforce in the areas they can take care of?

• (1530)

All the parties have brought up their lack of faith in the government to enforce. The government reinforced this in committee. When asked this question by all the parties a number of times, it basically confirmed that it has no plan and no additional resources for enforcement. There was nothing in the budget to increase enforcement. So how can it deal with that?

I think it was last summer that there was an explosion in the Arctic. The government was nowhere nearby. A couple of weeks later, a submarine surfaced. Once again, that was confirmed by our arctic peoples. The government did an investigation. As Canadians, we were not told what it found out about that whole situation. Not only is government not there and not telling Canadians, but now it is adding this huge area that is the size of Saskatchewan with no ability to monitor it.

The minister himself said the government has to exercise, and be seen to exercise, effective control over merchant shipping in the Canadian Arctic. Well, it is not there now, and it is not providing any more resources. Believe me, the government was asked about this numerous times in committee, and no department would say how it would deal with this massive increase in monitoring and change. This is an area that is larger than my riding, the Yukon. It is roughly half a million square kilometres.

The minister suggested that the environment department had some of the monitoring. He was a former minister of the environment. But then he was asked how many ships or planes the department had to monitor it and he had no idea.

In the very dynamic Liberal convention we just had on the weekend with 3,000 delegates, the delegates came up with a resolution, one of the 32 resolutions, to increase aerial surveillance and naval patrol of the Arctic, because it would seem it is not being accomplished by the present government.

We can also remember when we created a satellite, which is part of what is needed. It certainly cannot do the job alone. You need a kaleidoscope of forms of surveillance depending on the situation. A Canadian company built a satellite, and it was about to sell it to the United States. We fought and fought, and finally they did not allow that sale, thank goodness. We would have lost some of the limited surveillance we already have.

Two of the previous speakers suggested that in committee someone had said there was a single airplane to surveil this whole huge area: a de Havilland propellor plane. I do not remember that, actually. I had thought someone had said there were three planes: one for the Pacific Ocean, one for the Atlantic Ocean and one for the Arctic.

I, and a professor who deals with the Arctic, had a good laugh over that. I think a one propellor plane for the Pacific Ocean or the Atlantic Ocean, or indeed the Arctic Ocean with the world's largest coastline, is a little insignificant.

People have this impression that the government is taking care of arctic sovereignty. In fact, I think if people in the provinces were asked, they would say, "Oh, yes, they are doing things. They are announcing things. They are talking about things". I would invite anyone in the provinces to tell me one of those things the government has actually done. Which one is finished? Which one is there? Which one is accomplished?

The Prime Minister, when he first came in, and this was quite a while ago, announced that three icebreakers would be built. The government broke that promise in the first throne speech and budget. We pushed and pushed, and finally a couple of years later the government announced that in the distant future it would build one of those three, breaking the promise on the other two.

Government Orders

There was an announcement about ice-strengthened supply ships. Then that order was cancelled. There were to be planes for Yellowknife, and that order was cancelled.

I think it is great to have this bill. We support it to extend our authority, but we really need to do something about monitoring that authority.

• (1535)

I want to also talk about, in that area, a pet project I have been working on for a number of years now, which is search and rescue.

There is not a single search and rescue plane in our major fixed-wing fleet north of 60 and yet, the government goes to international conferences. I was at the one in Ilulissat where the five nations of the north made agreements on how we would work together related to extending boundaries in the Arctic under UNCLOS. We talked about Canada being part of a new search and rescue demand in the north. We have had thousands of overhead flights and incursion of boats. Well, of course we need more search and rescue. But we do not even have search and rescue for our own Arctic people north of 60. This is a failing. Once again, it is great to talk about the north, but we really have to come forward, and produce and take care of northerners.

Another reason I support this bill strongly is because it builds on the four pillars of Paul Martin's northern strategy. People who were not here at the time might not remember. This was probably the most major announcement and largest press conference I have seen in my nine years in Parliament. I do not think in history there has been a press conference with so many ministers there, all announcing the Arctic strategy for the north. It was over in Hull. It showed a dedication not just of one department, INAC. All federal departments had to follow the prime minister. One of those pillars of Paul Martin's strategy was sovereignty, and this of course builds on that. Others were the environment, economic development and governance, and I am going to talk about those shortly.

However, I want to read one of the rationale's for sovereignty in this bill that the government used in debate that allows us to make this extension, allows us sovereignty over this 200-mile limit.

I have given a copy of this document to the translators. For new members of Parliament, I know the translators in the translation booths in the corner appreciate it if they can have documents in advance that members are going to read from or in fact their speeches if members have written them.

This is article 234 that Canada created and worked hard to get into the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. This deals with ice-covered areas. It is very important for this and other bills that Canadians know about this particular clause in the Law of the Sea. It states:

Coastal states have the right to adopt and enforce non-discriminatory laws and regulations for the prevention, reduction and control of marine pollution from vessels in ice-covered areas within the limits of the exclusive economic zone, where particularly severe climatic conditions and the presence of ice covering such areas for most of the year create obstructions or exceptional hazards to navigation, and pollution of the marine environment could cause major harm to or irreversible disturbance of the ecological balance. Such laws and regulations have due regard to navigation and protection and preservation of the marine environment based on the best available scientific evidence.

So, this clause is a great support for us to move forward with this bill regarding ice-covered areas. It would give us the authority to have these major enforcements that Pierre Elliott Trudeau put in the bill in the first place.

However, my question, which the minister has heretofore been unable to answer, is this. If this is the basis for the bill, this clause in the Law of the Sea that gives us authority to do these things in ice-covered areas, then what happens when this area is no longer covered in ice?

As I said earlier, in 2007-08 the area was free of ice. For the first time in history, the waters were navigable for some time. So, where is the authority to continue our implementation of these strong measures in that area and what are we doing to move forward on that?

The minister also mentioned IPY. He had come back from the Arctic council and he was actually very proud, apparently, and I did not quite catch the drift of his remarks, but I think he was saying there were 57 Canadian projects there. And of course, those were funded under the \$150 million that Anne McLellan, when she was deputy prime minister, set aside. So Canada has been a leader. I think we all owe a great deal of thanks to Anne McLellan and the finance minister of the time, who is now our House leader.

• (1540)

Now, that time is virtually over, however, we need to continue to commit those moneys to the north. I hope the government will take seriously the requests from scientists and people working in the Arctic council to provide money for permanent monitoring, so that we have ongoing statistical records of the Arctic. We cannot let it all die now that International Polar Year is over.

The other pillar of Paul Martin's northern strategy, and I congratulate the government for continuing that strategy going forward, is governance. The INAC minister I believe spoke about Arctic sovereignty at the defence committee. He said:

Our deputy minister chairs a committee of deputies that meets on a regular basis to ensure that initiatives already announced as funded are being implemented—

Later he stated:

—but we haven't finished the business of land claims.

That is true. The biggest issue for aboriginal people in the north is the lack of appropriate implementation of land claims. I hope that the government follows the statements from its own officials. I hope the deputies follow that up as a priority in the meetings they are having. There is a conference in a couple of weeks. I hope the government has strong force, learns about the problems that have been brought up year after year, and deals with them first and foremost.

Government Orders

It was interesting that the minister today actually talked about leadership at Arctic meetings. I am delighted he was at the Arctic council because over the years the present government has been a bit of an embarrassment at Arctic meetings by sending lower level officials. Previously, the foreign affairs minister always attended and we have been very negligent in recent years.

Can members believe that the position of polar ambassador was cancelled? Can members imagine a government that wants people to think it is serious about the Arctic and yet cancels the position of Arctic ambassador? We have missed many opportunities to have a high-profile ambassador at many Arctic meetings over the years and there is no sign that the position is going to be reinstated, but we are going to keep fighting for it.

What came out in the hearings on this particular bill was the fact that oil spills could occur in the Arctic and could not be dealt with. When the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities was introducing the bill in committee, he talked about great resources of oil and gas, that 33% of the world's remaining gas and 25% of the world's remaining oil should be developed in the Arctic and that it would bring great resources to Canada. Basically, the Conservative government has just cut that off.

How has it made it impossible for the natural resources to be developed? It made it impossible by not doing the research, which I have asked for a number of times, on oil spills in the Arctic. Witnesses such as Mr. William Adams from the Beaufort project has done great research in this area and Professor Émilien Pelletier explained that after 56 hours there really is no chance of cleaning up an oil spill in the Arctic. It is not technically possible yet from what we know.

We need to do the research, so let us get it underway and stop cancelling our scientists in the north, like the Manitoba centre that is closing, the environmental centre that the government is going to close in Eureka, the cancelling of the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences, and the hundreds of researchers that would otherwise have been in the north.

The INAC official stated, "I'd also like to draw your attention to the science and technology element—", and that is of the northern strategy, "—which is really foundational and cuts across all pillars, because it really is the basis of knowledge to inform good decisions on all the pillars"

The senior official of the government must be horrified at all the cuts to scientists that I have just mentioned. In fact, even the minister said weather stations, climate change, research and scientific work are all important. He must be horrified at his own government cutting all the scientists in the north.

Economic development was mentioned and I want to go on record and say that I hope there will be a major office for that in Whitehorse. I also wanted to reinforce what the member for Western Arctic said. We must begin discussions on the hundreds of square miles of disputed land in the Beaufort Sea, so we can get our fair share of those resources.

• (1545)

I will just close by saying that it is important to protect the sea in the north. In the conservation caucus that Parliament had a couple of

weeks ago, a book was brought forward, *Sea Sick: The Global Ocean in Crisis*, showing that life on earth could end by the deterioration of the seas, mostly by pH but by other pollutants, even before climate change causes these disastrous effects, and this is very important.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I share the member's understanding of the impacts on the north, having spent some time in the Yukon and I appreciate his love of Yukon. I wonder if the member could address the issue of the involvement of the people of the Arctic and ensuring that they are directly engaged in decisions about the future development of the Arctic and particularly the perspective of the first nations and Inuit people.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, we talked about that a bit this morning on the bill.

What I did not say at that time was that when the notice of the northern court was made, the people of Nunavut found out by reading the newspapers. They were not consulted as to where that particular Arctic initiative would be.

Therefore, the member is absolutely correct. As we are doing these things in the north, our party's philosophy has always been that our first and foremost asset for sovereignty are the people who will dedicate our sovereignty and who will build our resources. We must make people strong in the north and listen to their suggestions because they are the ones who found the incursion that I talked about earlier in my speech.

As well, I want to mention something that would be near and dear to the member's heart and it is kind of contradictory. Here we have a bill that in theory is protecting waters and at the same time the government is pushing through, in a sort of underhanded means, changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act and cancelling assessments on projects near water which would have obviously the opposite effect on the environment.

In talking about monitoring in the bill, the government has put in more environmental inspectors, but when we ask where they are going to be, they are going to be in Yellowknife.

If anyone knows the north, we can take a look at the map, it is not by the sea. The minister actually said the government is going to give us more boots on the ground. That is true. They are going to be on the ground but the bill does not apply until we are 100 miles offshore. That goes not make any sense in monitoring either.

I am hoping the government will review the monitoring aspect in the bill, the way it is going to be done, and as the member said, the input from the people of the north is important because they can certainly help. They are close to the situation and can perform a tremendous role in letting us know of an incident.

Government Orders

As I said, after 56 hours, we are sunk. It is over. It is a huge disaster to the Arctic ecosystem. However, the people who live there, as the member mentioned, can get back to us. They can see what is happening and play an important role in monitoring.

• (1550)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise also in support of Bill C-3. The expansions of the ambit of the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act are welcome and long overdue, but I would also like to speak to what we need in tandem with this measure, what is missing and where we need the current government to commit.

We need concerted action in a number of frameworks. It is not simply me who is standing up and saying this. We are hearing this from the other Arctic nations. We are hearing this from scientists who have just gone through two years of intensified polar research and are identifying a lot of critical actions that need to be taken by the government in tandem with other Arctic nations and to get the support of other nations around the world for those who border on the Arctic and are at risk.

We need concerted action to expand exponentially Canadian investment in polar research. At a time when the scientists have told us that they are just beginning their research and are making absolutely groundbreaking discoveries about the value of the Arctic to the world, the funding has ended.

This is a time when we should be stepping up to the plate. Canada should be taking the leadership. We have lands that border right across the Arctic. We are laying claim to the interests in being able to benefit from the resources that the Arctic can provide us. It is incumbent upon us to stand up in the international arena and say that we need all the nations, not only those bordering the Arctic but worldwide, to put resources in, to match any funding that we put in, to research further what the impacts might be once the Arctic melts, sadly, and as activities begin to step forward in oil and gas extraction, mineral extraction, and simply, shipping across the Arctic.

We hear from even the Canadian polar researchers that the Arctic ecosystem is at severe risk. It is extremely sensitive. It is already suffering the effects of climate change. There are already unbelievable changes occurring to the Arctic, not just the Arctic ice shelf breaking off but new areas that we were previously unaware of.

For example, the Arctic scientists are discovering freshwater lakes that are created when the ice melts and moves towards the land. It has created lakes we did not know about before, and there is a rich diversity of biota in those lakes that we have only begun to study. Similar to the tropical rainforests to which we turn for solutions in terms of major cancer research, and so forth, it may well be that the biota of the Arctic is even more important, which is all the more reason for us to intensify our research and send more researchers up to the north to document this knowledge.

We also need to seek the advice of the polar scientists in developing our policies on northern development and negotiation strategies at international tables. It is absolutely incumbent upon us in this country that we base any determinations on the future of the Arctic on science, and that has been sadly lacking. We need to be

intensifying that money. It is not enough to simply do the research; we need to turn to those very scientists to advise us on what kinds of measures need to be taken. These include deliberations on climate change, resource extraction, water resources and wildlife.

Dr. Warwick Vincent, a renowned polar researcher from Canada, gave a presentation on the Hill about a month ago, and much to everybody's surprise, revealed information that nobody knew previously about the Arctic, such as the freshwater lakes that we previously did not even know existed. We did not know how they were created. He is crying for support from parliamentarians to continue the research, to continue to give the support so that Canada can benefit from that information and he can continue to work in tandem with researchers from around the world.

This is not a time to be pulling out the Canadian researchers, to be shutting down those research programs or stations. This is a time to be working in tandem with scientists around the world so that we can show leadership.

This is also the time to stand up for the Arctic environment and northern communities. We need to put those interests at the forefront, not just petroleum corporations' right to develop, not just the right of Canadian interests in oil and gas development and mineral extraction in the Arctic, but to make sure that any development that occurs in the future is actually for the benefit of Canada, particularly for the northern communities.

• (1555)

We need to provide leadership at the international level at the UN climate change tables. Climate change is one of the critical reasons we need to step up to the plate and speed up our research and our negotiations with countries around the world on protecting the Arctic and making sure that there is a regime in place to protect the Arctic and prevent any kind of unfortunate impacts. The last two successive governments, the current government, has simply dragged its heels on this issue.

For heaven's sake, let us not embrace the fact that the Arctic is melting and say that is great news because we can expand oil and gas extraction. Let us do our best to slow that down until we can make sure that kind of development is done in a safe way that benefits Canada and does not simply leave us with a huge liability to try to clean up the mess left behind not just by other countries' mineral extraction and oil and gas activity, but unfortunately, possibly our own mess, if we are not ready to address those impacts.

We need to take a stronger stand in the Arctic Council. It was formed in 1996. Eight Arctic nations signed the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy. Where is Canada in taking the forefront and the leadership? It is our Arctic on which there is an impact. It is our Arctic that we wish to claim.

We need to pay more attention and put more resources into our position at those tables. We need to be sending ministers to those tables. We need to be sending the Prime Minister of Canada to those tables and declaring that we care about the Arctic; the Arctic is ours.

We need the other countries around the world to step up to the plate and take joint action with us. We want to proceed in a co-operative way.

Government Orders

Given our limited capacity now in the Arctic, there is no way that Canada is going to be able to address the kinds of activities that are speeding along as the Arctic melts. We are going to have to work co-operatively with other nations. We are going to have to share from their resources, their icebreakers, and share in their research knowledge. This is a time to show co-operation, not competitiveness.

I know full well about the Arctic Council, and I know about the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy. When I was the assistant deputy of resources for the Yukon government, I had the privilege to participate in that strategy on behalf of the Yukon government at the science table, not just in terms of scientific discoveries but to make sure that those discoveries moved into law and policy so that we would have a binding, clear framework for the northern governments and for the federal government and to make sure that all those levels of governments were included in any strategies at those international tables. It is incumbent upon us to take a stronger stand at that table.

Surely we should be raising the issue of the Arctic at the U.S.-Canada energy security and climate change table. Perhaps we are, but we do not know for sure because it is a secret table. We have had no report from the government about whether there are joint co-operative ventures on protecting the Arctic and making sure that North American interests are protected against other nations as we move forward and as we benefit from those resources.

We also do not know whether at those tables with respect to security in energy development there are joint discussions about co-operation between the United States of America and Canada to make sure that we gear up to have the proper equipment and staffing, and so forth, to actually protect and have surveillance in the Arctic. It would be worthwhile to have the ministers come back to the House and tell us whether the Arctic issue is at the table in those bilateral discussions.

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation was created quite some years back. This commission created a council of environment ministers, which includes the United States of America, Canada and Mexico. Why not use this commission and the council of ministers to further the dialogue about ensuring the environmental security of our Arctic? Surely we could initiate some projects through joint funding.

Why are we not showing leadership in advocating for an Arctic treaty? Canada is fully participating in the Antarctic treaty. It seems absurd that we are not championing the cause for a similar treaty for our own Arctic. So I would encourage the government to step up to the plate and be at the front of the line, pushing for an Arctic treaty. It can do nothing but benefit Canada's interests.

It is all the more critical for the Arctic because of the sensitivity of the Arctic environment, but also because, unlike the Antarctic, the Arctic is populated—with Canadians. So it is all the more important that we make sure that we have a treaty of nations around the Arctic and that we ensure that the provisions of that treaty put at the forefront the interests of Canadians and Canada's northern environment.

● (1600)

Are we raising these issues in our law of the sea and our MARPOL discussions? Are we making sure that the tankers that are going to be coming through the Arctic have improved standards, that the hulls can withstand the Arctic ice and that there is capacity for spill cleanup, that the spill response recovery funds are large enough to respond to the disasters that could occur in the Arctic and how complicated it will be to actually address spills?

What is most important in the Arctic is that we prevent spills, so we need to be taking action now to make sure that any development that occurs in the Arctic prevents impacts. After the fact will be too late.

We need to have expanded measures to protect the interests of the Arctic communities. We need to make sure that in terms of any kind of development that occurs in the Arctic, whether it is simply shipping traffic or whether it is oil and gas or mineral extraction, we think first and foremost of the impact on the harvest rights of the northern communities and to ensure that those communities are secure and that they are given a benefit and direct interest in any development.

We need to push for stronger standards and enforcement for tanker traffic and other vessels. As I mentioned, we need to make sure that we have spill prevention. After the fact will be too late. We need to learn from the *Exxon Valdez* spill, but for heaven's sake, we need to learn from the Wabamun Lake spill of bunker C oil. We cannot address the impacts once these kinds of spills occur; there is just no way of knowing.

I experienced that first-hand with the bunker C's oil spill in Wabamun Lake, and to this day, scientists have no idea what the fate of that oil spill is and the long-term impact on that freshwater lake. All the more so for the Arctic, an extremely fragile environment, what are we putting in place to make sure that we can respond to those spills? We do not even have the naval complement or the coast guard complement right now to address those spills, and neither does the U.S., so we need to be stepping up to the plate really quickly.

We are told by the scientists weekly that the ice is melting far faster than previously forecast. Are we putting the appropriate resources into making sure that we are ready for that? Do we have the readiness for security of the Arctic? Do we have the ships? Do we have the crews trained? Do we have all the impacts assessed and the appropriate responses? As the member for Yukon mentioned, do we have the search and rescue capacity? Certainly not at this point in time. We have very small populations up there and very little ship and crew capacity.

We are extremely vulnerable in the Arctic, and who is more vulnerable than the very communities that live in the Arctic. They have small, dispersed populations. They have minimal capacity for emergency response, even less capacity than we had in the *Exxon Valdez* and the Wabamun Lake spills. They have a very limited capacity for evacuation in the event of a major disaster.

Government Orders

I am told the naval capacity is extremely limited. There has been no Canadian navy icebreaker in the Arctic since the 1950s. There is no current capacity to enter the Arctic waters' significant ice cover. The majority of the Canadian Coast Guard icebreakers are near their end of life. We cannot rely on U.S. support, because it is in the same state as we are in terms of shortage of equipment.

Naval analysts are raising serious security issues for this development in the Arctic. They are saying there is very little ability worldwide across the Arctic for spill response and that we face serious problems with shipping security. We have no way to deal with an incident where we have nuclear devices or some other kind of explosive device coming across the Arctic, landing in our lands in the Arctic and then heading down across Canada by rail or air. Right now, there is no strategy that we are aware of.

I want to close my remarks by mentioning prescient comments by renowned author and journalist Alanna Mitchell, who gave a presentation to the parliamentary international conservation caucus just a week ago. She has issued a new book, called *Sea Sick: The Global Ocean in Crisis*. What she has presented to those who were fortunate enough to hear her is a real wake-up call, that while we are trying to get our government to actually address climate change, we have a far greater crisis occurring in our oceans. Apparently, if we lose the land base, the life in the oceans can continue; but if we lose the life in the oceans, the land base will cease to exist. So it is time for us to be putting a lot more resources into paying attention to the fate of the oceans, particularly the Arctic Ocean, which is extremely sensitive.

• (1605)

I will close my comments today with a comment from the internationally renowned author and journalist, Ed Struzik, who is published widely on the Arctic and has recently published a book on the fate of the Arctic under climate change. He states:

In the not-too-distant future, the forces of climate change are going to transform this icy world into a new economic frontier. The end of the Arctic will be the beginning of a new chapter in history. The Age of the New Arctic remains to be written.

I would say to the government, to its credit, introduce these new provisions, extend the ambit of the scope of the Government of Canada to protect the Arctic environment from impacts, but, for heaven's sake, please table with us the government's compliance strategy and how it will actually enforce this expanded law with what is coming to us in the Arctic.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to lend support to Bill C-3, a bill to protect Canada's Arctic environment and sovereignty.

The Arctic grail, or Northwest Passage, was the water route through Canada's northern islands that explorers sought for three centuries.

In 1903, Norwegian explorer, Roald Amundsen, waited months for the ice to sufficiently melt so that his vessel could be the first to successfully navigate the passage. In 1940, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police schooner began charting the grail's icy waters to demonstrate Canada's sovereignty over the north.

In the future, climate change and not navigational skill may turn the explorers' elusive dreams into a major maritime highway, with the nautical journey from China to New York reduced by 7,000 kilometres.

With climate warming, new passages will develop and Canada will be increasingly open to international traffic. Concerns will increase regarding control and regulation of shipping activities, environmental degradation and protection of northern habitats, and who controls the Arctic and its resources. About 25% of the world's remaining oil and gas reserves lie beneath the Arctic Ocean floor.

While the opening of the Northwest Passage and Arctic may be attractive, this could prove the ultimate test of our claim to Arctic sea sovereignty.

The Arctic coast represents almost 70% of Canada's coastline and stretches 165,000 kilometres from James Bay and Baffin Island to Yukon.

However, the Arctic, a region celebrated in our country's anthem, is under siege. In 1985, the U.S. sent its icebreaker, *Polar Sea*, through the Northwest Passage without asking permission of or informing Canada. In 2007, Russian explorers used a submarine to plant their country's flag on the seabed at the North Pole, 4,200 metres below sea level. Politicians bordering the Arctic saw the exercise as a plan to extend Russia's territory almost to the Pole itself and to lay claim to the vast energy and mineral resources below.

In the future, our Arctic may be vulnerable to airspace, surface, both maritime and terrestrial, and subsurface incursions. Canada must be able to monitor and recognize such invasions and enforce sovereign claims over its territory.

The North Pole is an international site administered by the International Seabed Authority. Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, a coastal country has the right to control access to the 12 nautical mile shoreline belt along its coasts. A country can also control the resources under its coastal waters up to 200 nautical miles from its shores. More important, a country may expand its territory much further if it can prove that the rock formations underneath the water are connected to its continental shelf.

Therefore, some questions beg to be asked. What scientific data have been collected? What have we learned about our continental shelf? Will we be ready to submit this data to the UN commission by 2013? What new funding is necessary to support required research beyond the 43 projects that were under way in 2007 for the International Polar Year.

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It is generally agreed that islands north of Canada's mainland belong to Canada, but what about the waterways? Will Bill C-3 determine who has jurisdiction over the waters separating, for example, Devon Island and Somerset, or Banks Island from Melville Island, as the channels dividing some of the islands in Canada's north are less than 50 nautical miles wide?

Will Bill C-3 support Canada's assertion that the Northwest Passage represents internal territorial waters? The United States, along with other countries, has argued that this water constitutes an international strait that any ship should be free to transit. However, there were only 11 foreign transits between 1904 and 1984, suggesting that the Passage was not used as an international shipping route.

● (1610)

If Bill C-3 does not protect sovereignty over the Northwest Passage, what action is being taken to do so? It is not enough to have an Alert military base some 800 kilometres from the North Pole when Russia staffs a year-round research base 60 kilometres from the Pole. It also is not sufficient to argue that the waters separating most of the islands in Canada's Arctic are frozen most of the year and in fact turning them into an extension of the land.

A stronger argument, however, may be that Canada's northern aboriginal and Inuit peoples use and occupy the land.

While most of the Arctic sovereignty disputes are between Canada and the United States, Denmark also has been involved. Perhaps the government could, therefore, give us a status update on Hans Island located between Ellesmere Island and Greenland.

Canada has not been doing enough to declare and enforce its Arctic sea sovereignty.

How might Canada strengthen its northern interests? First, the government must define sovereignty with elements of authority, control and perception, and with rights, such as jurisdictional control, territorial integrity and non-interference by outside states.

Second, the government must define how to exercise sovereignty. A former national defence minister stated that "Sovereignty is... exercising, actively, your responsibilities in an area".

Third, the government must plan how to enforce both our sovereignty over Arctic waters, as well as the environment to the limits of our exclusive economic zone.

In addition, the government must also consider appointing a senior minister to lead an Arctic agenda and work with Environment Canada, Indian Affairs and Northern Development, National Defence, Natural Resources Canada, Transport Canada and territorial leaders, and purchasing more than one icebreaker as Canada's fleet will not be adequate once shipping increases.

According to the Senate committee report, "Russia's icebreaking capability is what empowers it to make a claim for a large part of the Arctic Ocean".

Because the Prime Minister has stated that scientific inquiry and development are absolutely essential to Canada's defence of its north, the government must also consider the following: creating a national network of permafrost monitoring stations that northern

communities and oil and gas companies could use to plan for future buildings, pipelines and roads; endowing a separate Arctic research foundation to support atmospheric, economic development, oceanographic and wildlife research; fulfilling a promise to create northern research chairs at Canadian universities; and reinvesting in the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences.

One hundred years ago, on April 6, 1909, Robert Peary and his team reached the top of the Earth. Five months later, when the group landed on the northern shores of Labrador, Peary sent a cable that made headlines around the world: "Stars and stripes nailed to the North Pole".

We need to ensure that Canada remains sovereign over ours, the Northwest Passage, and the waterways between our Arctic islands. We need to ensure that we identify the true expanse of our territory. We need to keep our north, the "splendid frozen jewel...for which centuries, men of every nation...struggled...suffered and died", Canadian.

I forgot to mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Newton—North Delta.

● (1615)

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member for Etobicoke North could elaborate on the effects of climate change on this very sensitive geographical terrain in the Arctic.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, climate change is the most pressing environmental issue facing Earth. Temperatures will increase over the coming century by about 2°C to 4°C. We are already seeing impacts here in Canada, such as an increase in extreme heatwaves and weather events. The Great Lakes water levels are going down. In the north the permafrost is melting and glaciers are receding.

A few years ago I had the privilege of spending time researching in the far north, north of Norway. We were told to go and see the glaciers. Some of the glaciers are receding so rapidly they will not be here in the next 100 years.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her very well researched and delivered speech.

She mentioned the urgency of dealing with climate change. I fully concur with her concern and perspective on that basis. I am wondering if she could tell the House what her thoughts would be on the best means of dealing with greenhouse gas emissions and whether she thinks that a carbon tax or a cap and trade system would be the best way to deal with that.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, climate change is the most pressing issue affecting our planet. We must look at both mitigation and adaptation.

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On the mitigation side, we have to look at technologies that will be good for the environment as well as the economy. We must take a lesson from the corporate world. The corporate world knows that of all the CSR initiatives, from business standards to environment and health promotion, it is the environment that pays off on the bottom line.

We must look at many options. We must also be adapting in Canada. Our agriculture must adapt. Health must adapt. For example, as the number of heatwaves increase, we need better heat warning systems.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Etobicoke North for sharing her time with me and for her thoughtful words on Arctic sovereignty and the environment.

There is an old saying that the road to hell is paved with the best intentions. In looking at Bill C-3, an act to amend the Arctic waters pollution prevention act, that is what comes first to my mind.

This proposed legislation is relatively simple in terms of its purpose. Bill C-3 amends the definition of “arctic waters” in the act to extend the boundary north of the 60th parallel of north latitude from 100 to 200 nautical miles offshore. This is most definitely a direction in which we must head.

The age of the north as an intense area of international interest is upon us. We are in a new reality. Steadily melting Arctic ice is not just exposing vast unexplored fishing stocks and mineral wealth; it has also made the Northwest Passage navigable in the summer. In September 2008 the *MV Camilla Desgagnés* as part of Nunavut Sealink and Supply Inc., NSSI, transported cargo from Montreal to the hamlets of Cambridge Bay. A member of the crew is reported to have claimed that there was no ice whatsoever.

An open Northwest Passage would cut 5,000 nautical miles from shipping routes between Europe and Asia.

Just about everyone agrees that the many islands that populate the Arctic to the north of Canada's mainland belong to Canada, but what about the water between them? Who, if anyone, has jurisdiction over the waters separating Somerset Island from Devon island, or Melville Island from Banks Island?

As stated by Donald McRae in a paper published by the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, “It must be demonstrated that the waters are the internal waters of Canada and that the waters of the Northwest Passage do not constitute an international strait”. Yet the Russians have planted their flag on the ocean bed at the North Pole 4,200 metres below sea level. Since 1994 the Russians have also staffed a research base, called Ice Station Borneo, only 60 kilometres from the Pole. Over the years Denmark has sent ice reinforced frigates and laid many claims to ownership over Hans Island. Just days before U.S. President George Bush left office, his administration asserted U.S. military sea power in a rebuttal to Canada's claims. The U.S. maintained the Northwest Passage is a strait used for international navigation.

Updating the act with new language to update our country's claims to the area is a natural progression of our sovereignty claims. It is something we on this side of the House support. However, at the end of the day there are too many questions that have yet to be resolved

when it comes to enforcement and tangible actions associated with such an update.

• (1620)

Canada's call to action must include northern penetration by land, sea and air. We need to be prepared to defend our rights to our land in the world courts by building a strong case to what is rightfully ours. According to the United Nations Law of the Sea, we have until 2013 to stake our claim.

By sea, Canada needs super icebreakers that can make it to the outer reaches of our territory. We also need more medium-sized icebreakers for the Canadian Coast Guard that could be stationed as far north as possible. How many ships will be needed to get the job done by 2013? Do we build, lease or borrow the ships required? Do we have the people to fill the required positions? These questions have not been properly answered by the Prime Minister.

By land, Canada must look at establishing permanent settlements in the north that would offer air access infrastructure and safe harbours for the vessels that would venture north to do seismic testing and mapping and yet, there is no plan on how and when this will occur.

By air, Canada needs to monitor movements of others in the dispute and to track changes in the ice. We need a fleet of planes that can offer supply, research, and search and rescue capabilities.

Should Canada not be able to have a military plane in the air within six hours of any potential need, do we have additional airports planned for the north so we can properly reach all of our territory?

Once again, the government has deflected these kinds of questions by offering no specifics.

This bill will extend Canada's sovereignty over additional waters that would represent an area the size of Saskatchewan. This is significant. If Canada wants to step forward and make claims in the international arena, then dedicated resources are needed, a diverse and balanced plan must be drawn up and executed and, most important, we need to stop talking without any sort of bite behind our bark. The eyes of the world are not only on the north but also on the actions, or inactions, of the government.

Right now, Canada with regard to northern sovereignty and our ability to protect what we consider ours, is being laughed at, as is our environmental stewardship.

On a final note, recently I had a chance to speak to the CEO of the Churchill Port Authority, a man who was once an esteemed parliamentarian in his own right, Mr. Lloyd Axworthy. He spoke of the great promise of the north and how fragile the ecosystem is there.

We have a short window of time to do this right. This legislation, in its current form, is not there yet.

To conclude, I and my colleagues support the simplicity and necessity behind this bill. However, we are also looking for more than rhetoric and political posturing in working toward building strength and stability in protecting Canada's north. I hope the Prime Minister and the government will realize the intentions. I would love to support this bill, and once it goes to committee, we will see how we can deal with this. This is about our country's future.

• (1625)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Etobicoke North, Infrastructure; the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour Child Care.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

• (1630)

CUSTOMS ACT

Hon. Gary Lunn (for the Minister of Public Safety) moved that Bill S-2, An Act to amend the Customs Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate having this chance to add my voice of support for this worthy legislation.

The Canada Border Service Agency operates at 1,200 service points across Canada and nearly 40 locations abroad and employs over 14,000 public servants. Since its inception, the Canada Border Service Agency has been working to integrate and build on the many risk management strategies and processes adopted by their legacy organizations, the Canada Revenue Agency, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

The proposed legislation will enhance our ability to manage risk and improve border operations by strengthening the systems for obtaining advance data on goods and people arriving in Canada and by better managing the risks existing at air and sea ports. Indeed, the provisions of the legislation help us to address some of the concerns of the Auditor General of Canada, identified in her November 2007 report entitled, "Keeping the Border Open and Secure".

It is clear that free nations, including Canada, cannot guarantee absolute safety against border threats. For example, Canada welcomes more than 95 million travellers to Canada every year and approves the entry of over \$400 billion in imported goods annually. Therefore, our focus must be on risk management.

CBSA's risk management is multi-layered. Operations are based on three fundamental strategies: pre-approval programs to facilitate low-risk people and goods; advance information on what and who is

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coming to the border; and intelligence using partnership networks, sophisticated science and technology.

The development and deployment of science and technology is crucial in supporting these strategies: electronic commerce systems to receive advanced trade data; biometrics for identifying trusted travellers; and sophisticated technologies to detect radiation, drugs, guns and other contraband and potentially dangerous goods.

During the past five years, the Canada Border Service Agency has developed a robust and sophisticated border management regime with a scientific approach to risk assessment and detection, and the results are impressive. Consider that over 10,800 drug seizures were made in the 2007-08 fiscal year, 5,700 weapons were seized, including 671 firearms prevented from entering Canadian communities. Over 7,000 items of child pornography, hate propaganda and obscenities were stopped at the border. In 2007-08 the Canada Border Service Agency removed 12,349 individuals who were inadmissible to Canada, including 1,664 criminals who posed a high risk to our country. That is a 40% increase from 2002-03.

The CBSA is now engaged in important initiatives that will further transform and modernize border management, including arming border guards and eliminating situations where they are working alone, implementing a new manifest system, which will provide advance electronic reporting for goods at the land border, and working with our U.S. counterparts to ensure that the western hemisphere travel initiative is implemented as smoothly as possible and does not impede travel and cross-border trade.

While the Canada Border Service Agency has increased its ability to detect and respond to security threats, the Customs Act has not changed since substantially since 2001. The proposed changes will ensure that the CBSA continues to evolve, while strengthening its officers' abilities to combat internal conspiracies and organized crime at ports of entry.

To combat internal conspiracies and organized criminal activity at ports of entry, the government created the concept of customs controlled areas in 2001. These zones are designated areas where international travellers and goods not yet released by the CBSA may come into contact with port of entry workers and other travellers. Implementation of the custom controlled areas concept has been impractical due to legislative constraints.

The current legislation gives Canada Border Service Agency officers the authority to examine goods and question and search people only as they exit the customs controlled area, including persons working inside the area who would otherwise not have to present themselves to the CBSA.

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•(1635)

The proposed amendments will provide border service officers with greater flexibility to patrol and monitor these controlled areas. In particular, they will have the authority to question and search people, as well as examine their goods both within customs controlled areas and when they exit these designated areas. This initiative will improve the security of Canadians as it will act as a deterrent to internal conspiracies at points of entry and decrease the risks posed by organized crime and national security threats.

The proposed changes to the Customs Act will also enable the CBSA to implement its eManifest initiative. The eManifest initiative is the next planned phase of the advanced commercial information initiative, which currently provides border services officers with electronic air and marine cargo information in advance so they are equipped with the right information at the right time to identify health, safety and security threats before goods arrive in Canada.

The eManifest initiative will require that businesses involved in the import trade chain, including those from the highway and rail modes, provide electronic data on their shipments before they reach Canada. The CBSA is working closely with industry and stakeholders to ensure a smooth, cost efficient transition to the new reporting requirements.

Extensive consultations on project requirements with stakeholders were held throughout the first two phases of the advance commercial information project. The CBSA continues to use these strong consultative networks as a forum for dialogue, input and guidance in the development of the eManifest initiative.

The Canada Border Services Agency consults with members from all facets of the trade community, including carriers, freight forwarders, importers, customs brokers and bridge and tunnel operators, regarding the design, development and implementation of the eManifest initiative. Various working group meetings have been held over the past two years with member of the trade community to ensure that eManifest design and development activities are coordinated with those of the external community.

As a result of this legislation, the Canada Border Services Agency will be better able to make informed decisions about the admissibility of goods, including identifying unknown and high-risk threats before the shipments arrive. The Canada Border Services Agency will be able to focus its resources on those goods that pose the greatest risk to Canada's security and prosperity. As well, low-risk shipments will be processed in a timely and efficient manner, which is vital to Canada's prosperity and economic competitiveness.

There are some additional elements within the proposed legislation that will further strengthen border security. The advance passenger information/passenger name record program collects and analyzes information in advance on air travellers coming into Canada in order to identify persons who may pose a safety and security risk.

Advance passenger information includes the traveller's name, date of birth, citizenship or nationality, passport or other travel document data. Personal name record data includes the travel itinerary, address and check-in information. This information is gathered by the airlines in their reservation, check-in and departure control systems.

Changes to advance passenger information provisions in the proposed legislation will require passenger and crew data to be provided to the CBSA before a conveyance arrives in Canada, allowing the CBSA to conduct a more timely risk assessment and addressing a gap noted in the November 2007 Auditor General report.

As carriers are already required to submit advance passenger information/personal name record data to the CBSA, the proposed legislative change will not have an operational impact on them and will make the Customs Act consistent with CBSA policy. In fact, the information carriers provide to the CBSA is the same information that they already collect for their own business purposes.

The data collected under the advance passenger information/personal name record program is protected under the Privacy Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The CBSA has consulted the Privacy Commissioner and has implemented strict administrative policies and guidelines to protect the privacy of personal information, including the number, collection, access, retention and use of this information.

Another part of the bill proposes to amend the present act to permit a regulation made under it to incorporate material contained in another document without reproducing that other document word for word within the text of the regulation itself. Incorporation by reference, as this process is called, can help simplify the regulatory process and is often used to incorporate material of a technical nature.

Material which is incorporated by reference is reviewed by the Department of Justice in a manner similar to a draft regulation. It is carefully reviewed for adherence to the law generally and, in particular, to the charter.

•(1640)

It is worth noting that when the bill was considered in the other place, an amendment was made. The amendment removed the statement to the effect that material incorporated by reference is not a statutory instrument for the purposes of the Statutory Instruments Act. The removal of that statement addressed the concern that was raised about wider government practice in this context. To the extent that members of the House might share such concerns, I hope they too will be supportive of this amended language.

More technical changes are proposed within the legislation. Housekeeping amendments will align the act with Canada's obligation as a signatory to the 1994 agreement on the implementation of article 7 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. These amendments would improve the alignment of the Customs Act with the World Trade Organization evaluation agreement by which the value of imported goods is determined.

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Inconsistencies will be fixed between the existing French and English versions of the act. The Government of Canada is moving forward on key initiatives that increase Canada's border security and support economic prosperity. The proposed changes to the Customs Act would give the Canada Border Services Agency the information, tools and flexibility it needs to better detect threats and tackle crime at the border.

I urge my hon. colleagues to speedily pass this legislation.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary if the government has considered exit controls for foreign nationals visiting Canada or foreign refugees who have been declined and may pose a security risk?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Madam Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows, there are no exit controls at this time and there are no plans to implement exit controls in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Madam Speaker, if I am not mistaken, we are discussing the full implementation of customs controlled areas.

I would like the member to explain the overall functioning of what is being identified and called a customs controlled area because it is not clear from the bill. We perhaps should read the statute to compare them, but when I look at the bill, it is not clear to me what is meant by a customs controlled area.

What exactly do they encompass physically and what exactly do they do?

[*English*]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Madam Speaker, the customs control area already exists. The bill would give the CBSA people the authority to operate within that customs control area. They do not need to wait until people leave the area. Some goods that are within that customs control area may escape the Canada Border Services Agency from dealing with it.

It addresses some of the issues with respect to employees who may have been compromised by outside bodies that are attempting to use them for their own purpose. It would enhance Canada's security and at the same time give us a better opportunity to deal with things within that already controlled area that exists.

• (1645)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, New Democrats have been calling for improvements in border security and, in particular, the examination and interdiction of counterfeit, illegal and harmful goods from being imported to Canada for some time. We want to congratulate the government for bringing in the bill. We think the amendments to the bill would increase CBSA's capabilities in these areas by allowing expanded searches.

I am also aware that the government has done a good job in consulting with various stakeholders in the country, including the Teamsters union and other stakeholders who are involved in the commercial movement of goods.

Could my hon. colleague share any information with us about the input received from other stakeholders, particularly in the commercial transportation of goods sector?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Madam Speaker, as the member opposite has already identified, this is not only a win-win situation for Canada and the people who work in the airports but also for that broader perspective of people who ship legitimate product in and out of the country.

There has been a wide range of consultation, as I addressed earlier in my speech, with the shipping industry, with importers and with the people who do the documentation on all of these things coming in and out of Canada. My understanding is that the proposed amendments are well-respected and have been well-received by everyone in the industry. I think it is one of those bills that will receive support in the House, and I thank the member again for his support.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. The Senate has done a lot of good work to bring the bill to this place.

I will go through the bill and some of the concerns that I have, but it behooves us to talk in a general context about the importance of balancing, on the one hand, very important security concerns, particularly in the wake of both threats to the country and threats of counterfeit and illegally manufactured goods coming into the country, against the need to keep our border open. This bill comes out of the Auditor General's 2007 report in which she detailed many concerns that she had with the Canada Border Services Agency in chapter 5, under a section entitled "Keeping the Border Open and Secure".

We have a climate where 96 million passengers enter Canada every year. These are tourists, immigrants, refugees, business people and returning Canadians. We also have over \$400 billion in imported goods annually. The volume of trade that crosses into our country is vital to our nation. While we know there are concerns, we need to ensure we see that free flow of trade continue. It is a delicate balancing act but a very important one for our economy and security.

I had the opportunity, as many in our caucus did, to be in Vancouver on the weekend and to visit the Vancouver Port. I do not think a lot of Canadians are aware of just how remarkable the Vancouver Port is. It is an example to the world. The port has people arriving from every corner of the earth to see exactly how it is operating and how it has developed a very advanced system to deal with its goods and services and keep competitive.

The Vancouver Port has been able to take, what was only about half of Canadian goods and services crossing in through Vancouver, because a lot of it was going through Seattle, to almost 97% of all goods because it moves things so efficiently and its security is so effective. It has cameras around the entire bay. When one goes into its main operation room, it can instantly give a viewpoint of anything that is happening everywhere. That has become important in law enforcement, but it is also extremely important in tracking goods and services.

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A lot of great things are happening on our border. However, while there are improvements and there are things that need to be done, such as those discussed in Bill S-2, one of the first things we need to acknowledge is that we have a very effective border that our international trading partners should know is secure. This is particularly important in conversations that we have been having with the United States where we have seen a lot of legislators talk about concerns they have with the Canadian border. These concerns are clearly unfounded if one takes a look at our border relative to others.

I mentioned counterfeit goods, which is of particular concern. This bill would give the Canada Border Services Agency greater ability to go after counterfeit goods. We know this is a massive problem for the recording industry, which is seeing an enormous amount of illegally produced music. Movies also come in through shipments. We also have problems with drugs, which we want to be able to stop at the border.

In the 2007 report by the Auditor General, she identified a number of shortfalls in terms of the assessment of high-risk passengers and dangerous goods that were coming over the border. It was important to address those deficiencies. The Senate has been working carefully on those and, for the most part, it has found a good balance in this bill at addressing a number of items of concern. We are just moving toward second reading and it will be important that we examine these items in detail in committee.

I will now go through both a background of the bill and a little bit of analysis of some of the areas that we will want to pursue when the matter comes before committee. I should mention that this bill is actually a reintroduction of Bill C-43 from the second session of the 39th Parliament. That bill did not progress beyond first reading. Bill S-2 has now passed through the Senate and the Liberal senators who were there were instrumental in providing much of the content of this bill. I had many conversations with them about it and I am generally comfortable with the direction of it. They offered several amendments, one, in particular, was to eliminate a clause that would have allowed for material incorporated by reference through the regulation to not be considered a statutory instrument for the purposes of the Statutory Instruments Act.

• (1650)

The changes in the bill can be grouped in two principal parts. The first part is the expansion of activity within a customs controlled area that officers can search, seize and stop people within a customs controlled area. The second part is advance passenger information and privacy issues that might be involved and the expansion of that information to all forms of transporting of goods into Canada, whether by ships, ports, airports or land crossings.

I would like to address the main changes in the bill and some of the areas where we will want to get a bit more information as we move through committee.

The first is clause 2 of the bill. This would now give the minister the power to directly authorize access to a customs controlled area by a person. Prior to this, the minister had the power to authorize by regulation only.

Clause 3 would do two things. It would remove an exemption that would allow persons boarding a flight to a destination outside of Canada leaving a customs controlled area from presenting and identifying themselves to an officer, reporting any goods obtained in the area and answering questions asked by an officer. Further, it would expand the presentation and identification requirements for individuals who would be in any part of the customs controlled areas. As may be known, prior to this, individuals only had to present upon leaving. It also now would include the examination of goods.

Clause 4 would be a change in regulation-making powers to include prescribing the person or classes of person who may be granted access to the customs controlled areas. We have some questions with respect to what these specific classifications mean but, again, we are happy to take up those questions in committee.

Clause 6 would grant regulation-making authority regarding the advance information that would be required for the importation of goods.

Clause 7 would amend the methods available to adjust the transactional value of goods being imported when the vendor received a benefit from subsequent sale. It would allow adjustments to the transaction price. This may lead to higher valuations, meaning higher duties being paid by importers, which is an issue that has raised some concern.

Clauses 8 and 9 would make technical changes intended to harmonize the act's French and English versions, although the deletions of certain terminology would make the French version different in some places. In that regard, we will want to take a look at the translation more carefully in committee to ensure that the intent of the act is not in any way compromised.

Clauses 10 and 11 would amend the bill to allow customs officers to search persons who would be in or who would be leaving a customs controlled area if the officer suspected, on reasonable grounds, that the person had concealed something that would be in contravention of the Customs Act, or regulations, or any other federal law prohibiting regulation or controlling importation and exportation and to search and examine goods in the possession of a person who may have been abandoned in a customs controlled area.

Clause 12 would amend the prescribed time and manner in which a person or class of persons must provide prescribed information about a person on-board a conveyance. It would not, however, change the prescribed information that is currently required by the act.

The Customs Act, which was first enacted in 1867 to ensure the collection of duties, control the movement of people and goods and to protect the Canadian industry from real or potential injury caused by the import of dumped or subsidized goods or any other form of unfair competition, needs to be updated. The act provides a legislative authority to administer and enforce the collection of duties and taxes. It is not a taxing statute.

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The current Customs Act was revamped in 1986 to take into account the developments in transportation, communications, trade and business practices. Since 1986, the act has been continuously amended in response to free trade and related international trade agreements into fine-tuned international trade measures.

It is important to state that many of the stakeholders that have commented on this bill, whether it is the Greater Toronto Airports Authority or the Canadian Airports Council, have been very supportive. We know that those involved, whether it is the Canadian Chamber of Commerce or various trade unions, have been supportive. I think some of the concerns they have stated can be addressed at committee.

• (1655)

Again, with that qualification in place, we want to ensure we strike the appropriate balance between providing appropriate security at our border and ensuring that our border is open. We look forward to continuing work on the bill, seeing it move past second reading and dealing with it in committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Madam Speaker, several changes may be made to the Canada Border Services Agency. For various reasons, more flexibility is required. They also want to expand the controlled areas. However, as the member mentioned earlier, this should not become complicated, nor should an arbitrary approach be taken to problems of accessibility. Above all, we must create an efficient flow of goods and people. Obviously, there is the issue of security, but on occasion, people find themselves in unusual circumstances.

According to the member, how do we reconcile having an efficient and smooth flow through border services, and a certain level of security, for those goods and individuals we do not wish to have in our territory? How does the member believe we can reconcile these two equally important elements?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, it is a difficult balance to achieve and it is one of critical importance. We know for a lot of businesses, for example, General Motors, which is east of my riding in Oshawa, that just in time delivery is absolutely critical to their operations. If they need to get their materials across the border to their plants and are unable to get those materials in timely fashion, it can mean millions of dollars in lost revenue, which could actually threaten the viability of those businesses. Therefore, maintaining flexibility and ensuring these borders are open is an important priority.

As I mentioned in my comments, we also have a number of security related concerns at the border, not just with dangerous individuals but also with dangerous goods being potentially transported, as well as counterfeit goods.

One of the most important ways we can streamline our process is to ensure that we enhance our trusted trader practices for companies that regularly transport goods and are known to be good. We need to continually work with them to streamline those processes to ensure they are able to move those goods and services freely across the border and have regular spot checks at the same time.

Enhanced technology provides, if we make that investment, an important ability to very quickly process information and to assess risks and dangers. If we share with the international community information on some of the other threats that exist, where individuals or companies are engaged in less than desirable activities in other jurisdictions, then we have a greater opportunity to note what to watch for.

I mention Vancouver very specifically. If the member takes a look at some of the things it has done and how it has implemented technology, it not only allows it to provide a more secure border and a more secure port, but because of the speed and the up to date the technology it is also able to move those goods and people very quickly.

Those are sort of dual objectives that do not necessarily need to be at odds with one another.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask our hon. colleague for some additional information. This morning we learned that the Canada Border Services Agency allowed people to enter Canada who could have close ties to terrorists.

Could the bill currently before us have helped in any way to avoid the situation we now find ourselves in?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, some of the advanced passenger information dealt with in the bill can assist, but there is no doubt more has to be done on the border than just the bill. It should not be seen as a panacea, sort of as a catch-all and a solution for all the problems identified by the Auditor General. She quite rightfully pointed out that there were many examples where CBSA was not catching individuals who posed a threat to Canada. She also mentioned goods.

The bill goes part of the way, but a lot of work still has to be done with the Canada Border Services Agency. I would be happy to talk about that in more detail.

One thing that is really important is to have oversight as well. It is very disturbing to me that CBSA does not have direct parliamentary oversight. This has come up in many reports. If we are to have the ability to follow-up on these things and get a complaint mechanism that goes somewhere, where we can get strong recommendations and instant action, then we need to start with an oversight mechanism similar to what was recommended by Justice O'Connor.

I do not want to hold the bill out as solving all the problems. The member has identified the fact that other issues need to be addressed outside of this legislation.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the United States has raised the issue of security of goods and services entering its country and also exiting to Canada.

I would like the member to comment on one particular circumstance.

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The bill would appear to improve some elements of accountability and public safety at the border, but at the same time the government has allowed CP Rail to fire 17 mechanical workers in the Windsor-Essex County area. These workers inspected trains coming into Canada from the United States.

The Mississauga derailment was the largest evacuation of people in North America before hurricane Katrina. Two hundred thousand people were evacuated. The trains involved in that derailment originated in Windsor. We have a lot of hazardous waste materials. Trains coming from Chicago and other areas heading to Toronto will not get the same level of inspection as a result of CP Rail firing those mechanical workers. Those trains will end up on our rail system.

There is a contradictory message here. We are trying to improve land border, but there is a contradiction taking place on the actual rail elements.

It is important to note that Transport Canada looked at the percentage of railcars that needed to be repaired and 36% failed. At the same time, Transport Canada could not even provide a measurement of those railcars coming into Canada from the United States.

This sends a mixed message. Ms. Napolitano of the Department of Homeland Security in the United States raised an issue about security at the border. The fact that we no longer have inspection service in southwestern Ontario is going to create a problem later on.

• (1705)

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member made a number of important points.

I have been deeply concerned about some of the cuts that have been made to the Canada Border Services Agency. The particular example that my colleague has raised is deeply concerning because it impacts security. There are deficiencies there.

We have to be careful in the message that we send. It would be fair to say that our border is as secure as the American border. I mentioned the Vancouver port as one example, where we have greater security. We need to get that message out.

That is not the member's point. The question the member asked related to ensuring that we continued to move forward in all directions. In other words, not just do some good things with Bill S-2, but ensure we provide the Canada Border Services Agency with the resources, both human and technological, to do its job.

One concern I have in this regard is the huge amount of money being spent to arm our border guards, around \$1 billion, yet the RCMP has made it clear that this will not improve safety. I would much rather see that money going toward improvements at the various checkpoints. We have to ensure that we have the appropriate staff and technology to screen goods and services efficiently and quickly and actually improve service.

Making these kinds of cuts in the hope that they will not be seen in the background undermines the security of our border and our ability to ensure that the goods and services travelling back and forth are safe. This not only provides a security risk to our country, but, as the member quite rightfully points out, it undermines confidence in Canada internationally.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are indeed debating the border services act. I would like to begin by reading the summary of Bill S-2.

This enactment amends the Customs Act to clarify certain provisions and to make technical amendments to others. It also imposes additional requirements in customs controlled areas, amends provisions respecting the determination of value for duty, and modifies the advance commercial reporting requirements. Finally, it provides that regulations may incorporate material by reference.

Basically, as the title of the paragraph indicates, important factors must be put into context. If we take a moment to look at this bill's progress, we all know that Bill S-2 was introduced by Senator Marjory LeBreton, the Conservative leader in the Senate, on January 29, 2009. It passed third reading on April 23, 2009, and was sent to the House of Commons. It should be pointed out that it is identical to a bill bearing the same number and title introduced on December 2, 2008, as well as to Bill C-43 introduced on February 15, 2008, during the second session of the 39th Parliament. Both of those bills, of course, died on the order paper.

Bill S-2 amends the Customs Act to clarify certain provisions of the French version of the act and make technical amendments to others. It also imposes additional requirements in customs controlled areas, grants the minister the power to authorize entry, amends provisions respecting the determination of value for duty, and modifies the advance commercial reporting requirements. The search powers of customs officers are expanded to include individuals and their goods that are in or are leaving a customs controlled area. The bill also provides that regulations may be enacted that describe the time frame and manner in which information about passengers may be provided by prescribed persons.

The current Customs Act is the result of the total revamping of the 1867 act, which was undertaken in 1986 to maintain the original act's three purposes and to allow for greater flexibility in light of developments in transportation, communication, trade and business practices.

Since 1986, the Customs Act has been amended continuously in response to free trade and related international agreements and to fine-tune international trade measures.

Primarily, though, this bill is designed to provide Canada Border Services Agency officers with information, tools and the flexibility they need to identify threats and prevent criminal activity, while ensuring that legitimate goods and travellers can cross the border efficiently.

Under the amendments that have been announced, all businesses that are part of the import chain are required to provide the Canada Border Services Agency with electronic data on their shipments before the goods reach Canada. With this advance information, the Canada Border Services Agency will be able to make better decisions about admitting goods and analyzing the risks they pose to Canadians.

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●(1710)

Other changes will allow the agency to fully establish customs controlled areas that will provide greater flexibility to officers for examining goods or questioning and searching persons, regardless of their location within these zones, and not only at exit points as currently provided under the existing legislation. Even though Bill S-2 seems adequate at first glance, an in-depth review of this legislation and close questioning of government and Canada Border Services Agency officials will be necessary.

The bill also includes other amendments. Here are some of the main changes to the Customs Act that are proposed in Bill S-2. Clause 2 eliminates the requirement for the minister to make a regulation to grant access to a customs controlled area to any person. From now on, the minister will be able to authorize such access directly. Clause 3 eliminates the exemption that applies to persons leaving a customs controlled area to board a flight with a destination outside Canada. Now, these persons will be required to present themselves to an officer, identify themselves, report any goods acquired while in the customs controlled area, and answer questions.

Clause 4 amends the power of the governor in council to make regulations respecting the persons or classes of persons who may be granted access to a customs controlled area, and regarding the manner in which a person in a customs controlled area, or a person leaving such area, must present himself or herself. Clause 5 amends the requirement to report goods imported into Canada, so that a prescribed person, and not the person in charge of the conveyance, must report the goods at the nearest customs office. So, a regulation defining those prescribed persons will determine who must report the goods at the nearest customs office.

Clause 12 of the bill amends the act to allow the minister to set the prescribed time and manner in which he can require a prescribed person to provide information about any person on board a conveyance, under prescribed circumstances and conditions. Clause 7 amends the methods used to adjust the transaction value of imported goods when proceeds accrue to a vendor following a subsequent sale. This change can lead to the setting of a higher value and, consequently, to an increase in the duties paid by importers.

Clause 10 amends the act to authorize an officer to search any person who is in or is leaving a customs controlled area if the officer suspects on reasonable grounds that the person has secreted on or about their person anything in respect of which this Act or the regulations have been or might be contravened. Clause 11 amends the act to enable an officer, in accordance with the regulations, to conduct a non-intrusive examination of goods in the custody or possession of a person who is in or is leaving a customs controlled area.

Our main point of disagreement with Bill S-2 is that the Customs Act is a linking legislation between duties and tariffs paid by importers under the customs tariff, and security and safety legislation under various other Acts. The changes made to the methods of valuation of imported goods may also decrease disputes regarding the calculation of duties. This may also increase revenues obtained from duties if the value of imported goods is more likely to be adjusted upward as a result of the proposed changes in the valuation provisions.

●(1715)

The advance information requirements proposed by the bill are intended to improve risk assessment of imported goods at the border.

Combined with the expanded search powers of officers in customs controlled areas, this may lead to decreased amounts of dangerous counterfeit goods entering Canada through customs controlled areas.

Currently, border services agents are authorized to search individuals only at exit points from controlled areas. If this bill is passed, border services agents will be authorized to conduct searches in controlled areas, as Ms. Kerr-Perrott explained during the Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence's examination of Bill S-2. She said:

—an officer would question the person at an exit point, where the person must speak to a CBSA officer. The officer can ask questions and can search if it is deemed necessary. In this new scenario, the customs officers could ask similar questions within the customs controlled area, and if there are reasonable grounds to conduct a search, the officer would indeed proceed with a search. The officers would be trained appropriately, and individuals within the customs controlled areas would be advised of the possibility that a search could occur. There would be notification.

The Minister of Public Safety has provided assurances that officers conducting these searches will be subject to the requirements of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms with respect to protecting the constitutional rights of the individuals searched. However, the bill also grants discretionary authority to the government to establish and even expand these areas. The controlled area could be expanded to cover the entire airport or port and even parking and drop-off areas.

The authority granted to border services agents would be disproportionate. Consequently, an in-depth study of these provisions must be carried out in committee. I would like to point out that the RCMP, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and Transport Canada support the changes to customs controlled areas. Airport authorities also consider the use of customs controlled areas to be a reasonable security measure and port authorities acknowledge the need for customs controlled areas in proximity to commercial and cruise ships.

To summarize, it is important to understand that there is a great need for flexibility at borders and in customs. We have also known for a number of years that there is also a great need for security.

Thus, both elements must be considered to ensure that border crossings and security are efficient. That is why I reiterate that flexibility is required in order to detect threats and to prevent criminal activities while ensuring that legitimate goods and travellers can freely cross the border.

I will close by saying that the Bloc Québécois supports Bill S-2.

Government Orders

• (1720)

As I said earlier—and it bears repeating—the bill will be sent back to committee, where certain aspects will be examined closely in order to improve the bill and increase its effectiveness. As I have already said, even if, at first glance, the bill seems acceptable, it must be scrutinized. We must also further question Canada Border Services officials to ensure that the proposed changes will be effective. The government must be open to the changes or recommendations proposed by the committee, which will surely be positive.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member opposite on the effort he obviously has put into preparing his remarks and researching this bill.

We hear in our caucus from the member for Windsor West, who has been very concerned with matters relative to protecting our borders and of course with the goods and services that are provided to our country today. We are concerned about counterfeit, illegal and harmful goods being imported into Canada.

I understand that the Customs and Immigration Union is in favour of this bill, as is the Canadian Airports Council and the Greater Toronto Airport Authority as well. Coming from Hamilton, we have one of the busiest inland ports in Canada, relative to Toronto. When we are talking about the chain of goods as they come into our country, we have the ports in the eastern and western parts of the country for ocean-going vessels.

Does the member see, in the provisions of this bill, any impediments to the movement of those goods that would be coming, particularly to Hamilton on the Great Lakes, with some of these ocean-going vessels?

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, the member talked about counterfeit goods. I am not necessarily an expert in border services, but I have had to use them on a few occasions, as many of us have. Certain individuals may have displayed some behaviour that I would perhaps not call meddlesome, but which, by their nature, could frankly help the agents do a very good job.

When I looked at this bill, I had some questions. I look at the importance of the border between Canada and the United States, and the number of places where people can cross in both directions. Of course there are border services at ports and in airports, but there are countless places that need to be monitored, and it is not humanly possible to monitor all of them.

Of course, modern techniques are needed to quickly detect if certain things are illegal. It is a huge job. Some methods do exist, but when they are insufficient, someone must also physically go there, which is what I would call scientific verification. Not all merchandise, equipment and individuals can be thoroughly checked. Someone must go there, perhaps not just by chance, but based on sampling, for both merchandise and individuals. As for counterfeit goods, even greater efforts are needed.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I understand that this bill is intended to improve security

at customs, but one provision bothers me. It expands the powers of customs officers to search people and their goods. Clause 10 even authorizes a customs officer to search anyone in a customs controlled area.

As I have recently travelled, this worries me. First, when we go through customs now, especially at the airport, we are insecure and we feel that the people we are dealing with are looking at us suspiciously. Customs officers often seem very unfriendly and cannot smile. They are also very brusque with the travellers. I am afraid that this will lead to abuse of authority. For example, a customs officer who does not like the way I look could deliberately check my bags, search me and send me into the back room. I have seen it happen. People wearing a hijab and Muslims are systematically sent into the back room to be searched.

Has any thought been given to the abuse of authority that could result from this bill?

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, I almost feel like I have been travelling with the hon. member, since I have occasionally had similar impressions. I remember one time in particular when I was crossing the border with my young daughter. As was the trend in Quebec, we sometimes went to the United States to go shopping. I did not find anything and my daughter was disappointed, but we had not bought anything. When we got to the border, we were regarded as people who were trying to bring something in illegally. They really grilled my daughter with questions about her watch, since they thought it had been purchased in the U.S. They appeared to really want to find something. I do not know if my car had been picked randomly, but that happened in the past.

I do hope things have changed, however, especially when it comes to searching people. In fact, the Minister of Public Safety must ensure that agents who carry out these searches meet the standards of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We hope, we want, in fact we insist, that they proceed in this manner so that people's rights are respected when they are being searched.

When I was an accountant, the best way to exercise audit control was to make sure that standards were properly applied. I am sure that there will not just be one border services officer searching someone alone, hidden in a corner. I would hope that human rights will be respected. In a society like ours, this is just plain common sense, and it is necessary. I am sure that that will happen. However, individual officers may take advantage of a situation. This happens everywhere in society. The power will go to their heads, and they will force someone to answer their questions and submit to a search. That may happen, because it does happen.

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I would hope that the measures that are in place to make sure that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is fully respected will be followed to the letter. People have to be able to trust border services officers. They are also working to protect our security. We want things to go smoothly at the border, but we also want security. It has become almost an obsession. There may be minor incidents from time to time. People want security, whether we are talking about individuals or goods. But we must not allow just anything into the country.

Earlier, members talked about counterfeit goods. If I purchase an original item worth \$100, I do not want to find myself with \$90 worth of phoney goods. We have to protect goods, but we have to provide just as much protection, if not more, for people, while respecting human rights.

• (1730)

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to give an example for my colleague to comment on.

I have been involved with security myself. I was on in transit New York, en route from Ottawa as part of a ministerial delegation. In New York, a particularly zealous officer took my passport and asked for my U.S. green card. I told him that I did not have one and that I had never lived in the United States. He delayed me for at least 15 minutes, demanding to see a green card, which I did not have, and refusing to let me through. The minister was waiting for me on the other side because the delegation was about to board a plane for Africa. That is what I call excessive. As members of Parliament, we all have special passports. I had to tell the officers that I wanted to talk to his supervisor, or I would never have been allowed through. In the end, he took my passport, stamped it and practically threw it in my face.

I hope that that will never happen here, and that we will have enough staff to make sure that it never does. That is what happened there, and it is still happening.

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, I understand what my colleague went through because I had a similar experience in the United States.

If ever we worry about what happens here, we have only to look elsewhere if we want to feel better about ourselves. I believe—I hope—that border services in Canada and Quebec are much better than what my colleague and I experienced in the United States.

In any case, this bill has to go to committee, and the minister has to provide satisfactory responses to all of the issues raised in the House.

• (1735)

[*English*]

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me say at the outset that I will be supporting the bill, and I believe the remaining members of our caucus will also.

The provisions are good. They are positive. They are a step in the right direction. However, there are a lot of overriding and overarching issues dealing with the border between Canada and the United States that certainly are not, in my view, receiving the attention they ought to be.

I cannot overstate that this is a tremendously important issue for our economy and our society. Some 87% of our exports cross into the United States, and something like \$1.5 billion of trade goes back and forth every day. Many people work and travel back and forth between Canada and the United States and between the United States and Canada. It has to be done in a very efficient manner.

There are basically two overriding interests at stake here. First of all, there is the free and efficient flow of people, services and goods, both ways. Second, there are the security interests of both countries. Neither country wants to be invaded by criminals, illegal drugs, illegal guns. These are situations that have to be stopped at the border. We know full well that given the size and extent of our border there are going to be situations that happen each and every day. Again, I want to state how important this issue is.

For the last five or six years, I have been a member of the Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group. I believe it is a group that functions very well. We have an annual meeting, which alternates between Canada and the United States. It will actually happen in a week and a half, in Canada.

There are a number of issues, but invariably the first one that always comes up before anything else is the border issue. Whether it is the western hemisphere travel initiative, again it is the thickening of our border that has to a certain extent impeded the natural flow of trade and the natural flow of people on both sides of the border. They have the same concerns as we have, especially the northern states: Michigan, Illinois and New York State.

Of course the vast majority of the Canadian population lives within 100 miles of the U.S. border, so this is a tremendously important issue. Anything we can do to improve the situation, as the bill does, or that helps to facilitate the movement of goods and services and people, is a positive development.

This was before Parliament as Bill C-43. I believe it passed first reading at that time. It died on the order paper, and now it has been introduced in the Senate as Bill S-2. It received debate and deliberation in the Senate.

I have been impressed by some of the amendments that have been made. I am encouraged by the work that was done in the other place, and hopefully the bill will go through the House to committee. There are a few issues that will have to be explored further, especially dealing with the minister making regulations.

I assume that the committee will also want to hear from some of the stakeholders who deal with this issue each and every day. The union that represents the customs officers, the Canadian Airports Council, the Toronto airport, many of the stakeholders have expressed general consent for the bill. I am not aware of anyone who is opposed to the bill yet. So hopefully the bill will go through the House to committee. It probably should not be that long at committee, and hopefully it will be law in the not too distant future.

The bill could be broken down basically into two general components. The first component is the expansion of the activities within a customs controlled area, which allows customs officers to search, to seize and to stop people. This is an expansion of the powers that presently exist, and again that is a positive development.

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• (1740)

The second component of the legislation is in passage of information, that is information in all forms, whether we are talking about ships, aircraft or general conveyance. Again, it is the goal of everyone to see that goods move efficiently and quickly across the border, both ways, and that people move also, that they are not stopped at the border for unnecessary reasons. At the same time it is equally important to facilitate the border people in stopping anything like illicit drugs, guns, or people who should not be allowed to cross the border.

When we read the resolutions and the policy papers coming from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives and other major business groups across Canada, this is a major issue. This is an issue that they identify regularly, and it is an issue that they want both governments to work at.

As I stated previously, this will certainly be an issue at the next meeting of the Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group, which meets in Quebec a week from this weekend.

We have had a lot of situations that have arisen over the last number of years. One of course was the western hemisphere travel initiative. That has been before this House in debates, and this is an issue that was spoken about by this group. It is something we were able to delay. It is effective now for air transport, and it will be effective for vehicle transport on June 1 of this year, which is not too far away. That has been a major concern. We are hoping that when it does come into effect that sufficient people on both sides of the border will be aware of the provisions of this new regime and that we are not going to see adverse effects to our tourism and other industries because of lack of knowledge.

I hope that I am wrong, but I can see problems, especially in some of the border towns where people are used to going back and forth each day, whether to work, or for recreation or to purchase goods and services. Let us all hope that everything will work efficiently and effectively come June 1.

When the previous round for air transport came through a couple of years ago, Passport Canada was woefully unprepared to deal with the avalanche of new passport applications. But so far, everything in my experience as a member of Parliament has been positive. I think there is a bit of a delay now, but we have seen absolutely nothing like we saw in the horrendous situation of a couple of years ago. Passport Canada was telling Canadians on its website that their passports would be back in 20 days. The people would book their flights, send their passport in 40 working days before their departure date and find out the day before that they did not have their passports.

Mr. Speaker, you probably experienced the problems of many members of Parliament, especially members of Parliament who came from areas that did not have a passport office in their area.

There are a couple of matters I am going to bring forward that are not in the bill but they relate to this debate. They are issues that concern me as a member of Parliament and that I deal with each day. It is a nagging issue that deals with the stopping of people who have what I call "old criminal records". In most instances we are dealing with records that are 20, 25 or 30 years old. Two major instances are

possession of cannabis, marijuana. At that time, 30 years ago, it was a criminal offence. Right now they probably would not be given a conviction; they would probably be given a conditional discharge or an absolute discharge. The other more common case would be an impaired driving conviction.

• (1745)

Depending on the agent who greets them at the border, this stops them from going to the United States, and vice versa. One thing I would suggest to the House is that there has to be some way of resolving these issues. There has to be a protocol developed between Canada and the United States, and a quick way of adjudicating the matter.

If someone had an impaired driving charge 30 years ago, yes, it is on his or her record. It is probably something the person is not proud of but does that really affect the security of the United States or Canada? Is there not some efficient, quick way that we could expedite that process so these people can go into the United States or, if they are in the United States, can come into Canada? That is one issue I would like to see explored and resolved.

I do not want to get into the whole gun registry debate now, but another issue is the very clear and cogent evidence of the large number of illegal handguns that come from the United States each and every year that end up in Canada, certainly some of our major cities. There has to be some way for our customs officers, the people at our borders, whether it is through technology or whatever, to identify the illegal guns that are coming north each and every year.

Of course, the Americans would certainly have other issues concerning Canadians, such as drugs. Again, one of the major issues that I hear in my role as a member of Parliament is the number of illegal handguns that come into our country from the United States each and every year.

Another issue I will bring up is the whole area of the free flow of goods, services and people each way. It requires a massive expenditure of infrastructure by our government. Two years ago I had the pleasure of taking a tour of all the customs facilities within the city of Windsor, in the tunnel. As everyone who lives there and has experienced that particular border crossing, it is woefully inadequate.

The expansion of that facility has been talked about ever since I came here eight and a half year ago. I know it is complicated and an international issue. I know there are all kinds of different versions as to the correct manner of doing it, but I would like to point out that it is something that ought to be done and done soon so that things will flow that much more freely.

As I said, I do not consider this a major bill. It provides a more efficient operation within our customs operation. It allows for a more effective pre-clearance or information flow for people. Therefore, it is a positive step in the right direction, but there are a lot of other steps that we have to take on this particular border issue.

In conclusion, I will be supporting the bill. I hope it is not in committee too long and becomes law within a very short time.

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Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned in his remarks that there were some things he would like to see changed or some concerns he had with regard to this legislation. He went on to talk about illegal guns coming into Canada through a very porous border, mainly the United States. I am wondering if he sees this bill as being helpful in that regard or is that one of the areas where he has some concern.

• (1750)

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, some of the officers will be allowed to stop, seize and search in that particular area. It will help but, again, this is a much larger issue that requires a lot more resources and attention than it is given right now. It is still going to be inadequate but, to answer the question, yes, it will be of some assistance.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member for Charlottetown to elaborate on three areas.

The first area is on the search provisions and the powers that are given to customs officers and whether he thinks they will be unwieldy; and second, will the privacy issues be resolved, preserved and protected? Finally, as a former member of the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation board, I wonder if he could elaborate on whether there are any other alternatives to the passport requirements, such as universal identification, that we should consider rather than the passport requirement that is now law.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, one of the components of the legislation expands the area that customs officers can search, seize and stop. As I indicated in my remarks, that is a positive development.

On the privacy issues, this is something that can be looked at in committee. I must confess that I did not examine it that closely, but as far as I can see, I do not see any overriding privacy issues that ought to concern the House. The last question on the exploration of other travel documents is extremely important. Of course, we do have the NEXUS system that is used by frequent travellers.

The enhanced driver's licence is being explored. British Columbia and Ontario are looking at that. I would hope that, at some point in our future, that will be the method that is used by all states and provinces. Eventually, we will come to the point where we will accept driver's licences with enhanced IT capabilities that will allow customs agents to plug in the driver's licence and see one's criminal history or whatever things ought to be of interest to a border agent when we are either exiting or entering this country.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just have a comment. I would like to publicly acknowledge the member for Charlottetown for speaking earlier so that I could speak next. I want to thank him for being generous in doing so. It is a busy schedule up here and I appreciate the fact that he was able to change his speaking slot so that I could speak next.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I thank him very much for the comments.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his pretty thorough canvas of a number of issues of concern, particularly to Canadians

when dealing with this border issue. I thought he had a fairly thoughtful analysis.

There are times when I wonder whether we just end up talking to ourselves. It seems awfully difficult to get the attention of the Americans on a whole variety of issues, a number of which the hon. member has mentioned. Because we end up talking to ourselves, we end up in some fairly frustrating situations, some of which have been precipitated or highlighted by the comments of Secretary Napolitano.

I want to ask the hon. member whether he thinks that this bill will actually make a wit's worth of difference, particularly the expansion of activities with respect to the customs control area? Witness after witness said the same thing, which is that we make all of these changes and the border thickens. Things slow down and it takes more time to get over the bridge when delivering goods and services. I wonder if he could put it in the context of talking to ourselves, in effect, and being seemingly unable to get the attention of either the secretary of homeland security or the ambassador.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I too, like the member, was a little taken aback by the secretary of state's comments. One would think that after all these years and discussions that the facts would certainly be known to the secretary of state, the one in the United States in charge of security.

However, to move on, the member asked an interesting question. Would this make any difference? I think it will, but it really has to be accompanied by some changes in the whole system. There needs to be more infrastructure and more resources. If that is not there, this probably will not make a lot of difference. We can make all the laws we want, but we must have the systems, resources, proper infrastructure and proper technology, which is so important. Of course, we need the constant cooperation between the Canadian and American authorities, which is not always there now.

Again, I think that they are all part of one package. The next speaker is the member for Windsor West. I am sure that he will elaborate on the situation in Windsor and the infrastructure challenges that are in that city right now. I believe that is the busiest border in Canada.

To go back to the member's question, let us hope that the resources will increase. Let us hope that the infrastructure will improve and let us hope that this law will make a difference.

• (1755)

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his response. He has highlighted two things: first, if no resources are put to this bill, then we really are truly wasting our time here; second, if there is no co-operation with the other side of the border, then we are also wasting our time.

I wonder if the hon. member could elaborate on the issues whereby we expand these search and seizure areas. We certify that, presumably, trucks inspected in these areas can go right through the border without further delay, and yet at the end of the day we actually have not improved the quality of exchange between the two countries.

Government Orders

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, to answer the question, I do not think we are wasting our time. I hope we are not wasting our time. This legislation, as I indicated in my remarks, has several positive elements. It is a step in the right direction. It allows the customs agents and officers more powers within certain areas, and it facilitates some of the pre-clearing information that is required.

These are just two components of an overall system that basically has to become more efficient. More resources are required. More co-operation between the American and Canadian authorities is necessary. There has to be much greater use of technology. There has to be a greater emphasis on infrastructure so that things will flow smoothly.

Until those things are done, there is probably going to be a thickening border, but let us hope that the government will continue to work on it. Let us hope that there will be improvements made.

Some funds have been identified, but I am not aware of a whole lot of improvements that have been made. I still get an awful lot of complaints myself. Again, I remain somewhat cautiously optimistic. Let us hope that the situation will improve to the benefit of Canadian businesses, American businesses, and the people who live in this country and in the United States.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I wish I, too, could share the optimism of the hon. member. I would like to hope that this will actually improve our border. I wonder if he has any concerns with respect to these passenger lists, where once people are on the bad list, they are pretty well on there forever. It is extraordinarily difficult to get—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I will have to stop the member there to allow the hon. member for Charlottetown a few seconds to respond.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that is raised in the House quite regularly. People get on this list and there does not seem to be any quick way to get off the list. It is an international issue just as much as it is a Canada-United States issue, although I believe it is driven by the United States. Again, there has to be some protocol, some method of adjudicating whether those individuals should legitimately be on that list. If there is no reason for them to be legitimately on the list, they should be taken off.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today in debate on Bill S-2, An Act to amend the Customs Act, formerly Bill C-43, which was tabled in the last session of Parliament but did not make its way through the system.

Customs changes are worthy of engagement, especially at the committee level. There are elements of the bill that are very important for the men and women who are on the front line of defence for Canada with regard to our border situation. They face an extraordinary job, and the tasks at hand of balancing the issue of trade and security. They generally do a commendable job on a regular basis.

In my area, our customs officers not only protect but actually serve at times, even without the proper equipment and training. A number of years ago they had to borrow bullet-proof vests because there were not enough available. Now there are some better supports there and I am glad for that advancement.

The bill is important because it lays out the framework for our border crossings. There are 119 border crossings between Canada and the United States. Of those, 24 are international bridges and tunnels. Of those 24 international bridges and tunnels, two are privately held: one in Fort Francis and the other in Windsor, Ontario.

I will not go down that road just yet, but it is unfortunate because of that private ownership model, we pay incredible taxes. We have seen the owner-operator of that facility basically board up homes by buying them up in the adjacent area, which has led to social grief and also diminished property values at the expense of the community. That is surely a tragedy because there are other consequences.

Of the 119 crossings, approximately 29 of them have 80% of the traffic on a regular basis between our nations. When we look at the amount of volume of trade, over \$1 billion a day, it is interesting to note that 40% of that happens along the Windsor-Detroit corridor. For those who are not familiar, there are four crossings that have that concentration in a two mile length of river front.

There is the Detroit-Windsor tunnel, owned by the city of Windsor on the Canadian side and the city of Detroit on the American side. They have a long-term lease agreement with Macquarie International. The CP Rail tunnel was built at approximately the same time, about 76 years ago. There are two single sleeve tunnels that are small. One has been expanded modestly but cannot accommodate the triple stackers. It can accommodate some train traffic, but a smaller amount.

Ironically, CP Rail inspection workers were basically fired from that location and moved up the rail line, which is a real travesty, because recently in a Transport Canada document I was able to obtain, it showed that during the inspection period process, 36% of the trains needed to be shopped out or failed the inspection, and there are pictures of derailments and so forth. This will be detrimental when we talk about the issues of border delays and issues around security, of which the bill has some elements.

When the United States learns of this change of policy, it will be very much concerned. We are concerned on the Canadian side because during that inspection process, we could not even get real numbers. There was also a leak of hazardous material from one of the tankers during that process. Now none of those trains will be inspected from Windsor pretty well all the way to Toronto and Montreal.

It is important to note that the trains involved in the derailment in Mississauga affected 200,000 people who had to be evacuated. Interestingly enough, that was before Katrina. That was the largest evacuation in North America up to that time. Those trains came out of Windsor, so we are really concerned about rail safety operations.

Government Orders

Past the CP Rail facility there is the Ambassador Bridge, which is owned by a private American citizen. Once again, this facility has the vast majority of truck and vehicle border crossings in this country. It has the highest fares too over most areas. It is double what the Blue Water Bridge charges in Sarnia. Then past that, there is the Detroit-Windsor truck ferry service, which is owned by a private American operator. It transports hazardous materials between our countries. Ironically, that operator has been recognized by the department of homeland security and has actually received grants because of its safe operation.

• (1800)

Interestingly enough, the owner of the Ambassador Bridge is grandfathered, so we pay for his customs officers. This is about the customs issues in the bill. Canadian taxpayers pay for that customs facility. Ironically, the hazardous material ferry operator actually had to go to court and finally settled with the federal government and has to pay for some of the services, inconsistent services in many respects, as the bridge has taken priority.

One of the good things we are dealing with in this bill is the ability to transfer information in advance for some vehicles, drivers and the trade merchandise so that it can be expedited through the system. It is an important improvement to diminish lineups and improve productivity.

There has been some good debate on these issues and whether this makes a difference. However, sadly enough, when there is a lack of staffing at the actual border facilities then we have a significant problem. We could have all the best products and policies in place and we could provide those powers but if we do not have the operators in place to do the work, then we defeat the whole purpose and we further frustrate those elements of commerce. This bill has to get to committee so we can study it more.

More economic development is looking at the border. Many operations have to decide whether they want to reinvest, especially in the manufacturing belt in Ontario and Quebec, which has been extremely vulnerable. The policy of artificially inflating the Canadian dollar because of an addiction to oil and gas as a revenue stream has really eaten away that base.

On top of that, as we have the thickening of the Canada-U.S. border, elements of business are questioning whether they should open up a plant in Ontario, in Indiana or somewhere else. The comments made by Department of Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano are really disturbing. They further heighten the issue of the border and are part of, I believe, a politically motivated movement to turn the Canada-U.S. border into one which is similar to the U.S.-Mexico border.

Public policy affects some of these things and how we respond to them. The imagery is being created. I would point out that in my region of Windsor-Detroit, there are gunboats on the Detroit River and the Great Lakes, because of a treaty that the Liberals allowed to move forward, and which the Conservatives have supported. U.S. Coast Guard vessels have autocannons on them that fire 600 bullets a minute. I am not sure what type of threat would come from Canada that would require 600 bullets a minute, but those are the coast guard vessels that are actually operating along the border.

We are very fortunate to have defeated a proposal to allow 40 different testing zones for firing ranges on the Great Lakes. Interestingly enough, I made a submission against that and the government made a submission. However, it made its submission against that two days after the deadline, so it was not even given actual consideration. The government basically allowed this process to go forward without any type of input. However, we were able to defeat that with some progressive forces, including hunters and fishers who are concerned about the firing ranges, and also environmental groups because the bullets have lead casings.

Blackhawk helicopters have been added to the area, drone planes, security cameras, and spy towers that oversee the area. We are seeing the militarization of the border and it is becoming more like the Mexican-U.S. border versus what it really is, a trade facilitator, which is the model we need to deal with. As the thickening of the border happens and businesses decide to avoid the border altogether, it will erode our economic base if we do not take measures like this.

One of the things that this bill does is it provides regulations to have timeframes and so forth for information coming forth on the border. It can increase productivity by having those practices in place. That is the advance commercial information component of this bill. That will actually allow CBSA to see the information not only from the point of the original supplier but it will also allow it to see the information about the contents and the driver. It is going to facilitate things right across the border.

• (1805)

It is very important that we get that change. It is one of the most important things we can do because, as I have mentioned, all these other barriers are being put in place. It might seem like a small thing in some respects, but at least it is a counterbalance to what is happening.

For example, with the implementation of the western hemisphere travel initiative, anyone who wants to get into the United States, including Americans who have left the United States, will need a passport. Luckily, some states have moved forward on the advanced driver's licence. There is going to be confusion.

All these things are taking place at a time when there is a lot of confusion. We need to put in some policies that are going to help to counterbalance for trade purposes. The WHTI will come into effect and there will be other elements. It is going to thicken the border. We just do not have the needed infrastructure at some of our crossings.

Government Orders

I want to talk about what is happening at the Windsor-Detroit crossing because the bill would allow customs agents in customs controlled areas to do further interventions. There will be greater accountability of the activity of those interventions at the plaza locations. Hopefully there will be better procedures so that when those problems do occur, there will be ways to deal with them that are a little more proper in terms of the way the areas are laid out. That is important. The older facilities do not have the space to pull over certain trucks, to question people, and so forth. If they cannot clear that out, it creates further congestion, back-ups and delays. It defeats the whole purpose of some of the measures we are putting in place here.

What is happening in the Windsor-Detroit corridor is very important, two miles west of the current Ambassador Bridge, and it would extend from four to five crossings within four kilometres. A new publicly owned bridge is going to span the Detroit River and create some redundancy in the system. If there were a problem with one of the current infrastructures, there would be an additional site located there.

The plaza development is very important, because it creates the ability to manoeuvre around new issues such as this. When we are looking at new policies and ways to enforce border security, that can be designed into the actual plaza. I am hoping to see from the designs and the government development of this some flexibility for those plazas for the future, so that there can be some reaction if there is implementation of other measures from the United States.

The United States has added a whole series of new procedures which we would not have dreamt of a number of years ago. Recently with the Bioterrorism Act, a Chilean peach from the 1980s suddenly became a security risk and threat in the year 2000. It led to additional paperwork for commercial trucks carrying fruits and vegetables into the United States. It just creates productivity loss and complications in crossing the border.

A series of these things has been implemented across the table unilaterally, often not even by the political heads but by the departments, such as the Department of Homeland Security and others that are emboldened to do these things. It creates a real problem for us.

I mentioned before about the advance pass information. It is important in many respects, not only in terms of the economic commerce that I am talking about, but also the safety and security of the general public and the men and women who work at the border plazas. Whether we like it or not, the reality is that there are illegal goods, services and materials on a routine basis not just going from Canada to the United States, but also coming from the United States to Canada. Just as our auto industry is integrated with that in the United States, ironically, sometimes there is an integrated criminal activity base for drugs and weapons that go back and forth at the border.

● (1810)

CEUDA, the customs and excise union, drew up what is called the Northgate report. This is a really good report that lays out some of the challenges being faced by the officers at the border. It offers some suggestions.

CEUDA did a survey. I want to go through some of the questions asked. Some individuals believe that when people come to Canada there is no problem, but that is not true. We have to vet these things. That is why the officers need these extra powers. One of the questions on the survey was:

Have Officers at your LAND BORDER CROSSING ever found themselves dealing with someone at Secondary they discovered was considered Armed and Dangerous after searching CPIC [their computer system] but was not cautioned as such either by PALS [their operating system] or when the traveller was otherwise referred?

Thirty of the respondents indicated yes. That is high considering that individuals had been pushed into secondary inspection to begin with and there had already been some contact.

Another question was:

Have Officers at your LAND BORDER CROSSING released a known Armed & Dangerous person up the road in keeping with CBSA's Release and Notify Policy?

Eighteen respondents said yes, ninety-three said no, and eight had no answer.

We know that we have to change some of these policies so people are not set free. That is critical for public safety.

In the Windsor-Detroit area, a couple of peculiar cases came up that really prompted my interest in this legislation.

A Detroit police officer came over to Canada and was pulled over for secondary inspection. He had hid his gun and accidentally shot himself in the knee. He lost his job in the U.S. but was given no penalty here.

These are important things that we need to look at.

A more extreme case occurred on January 7 at an Alberta crossing, where 10 semi-automatic handguns, including one semi-automatic machine pistol, 11 high-capacity magazines and 300 rounds of ammunition were seized. An Edmonton resident was smuggling these items back and forth across the border.

These types of situations are dealt with on a regular basis. The infrastructure needs to be set up properly so we can deal with these kinds of things. We also need to have the powers in the legislation to deal with them.

I want to touch on something that is incredibly important and that is the issue of United States' confidence in Canada with respect to security issues. As we go through the bill we will see some recurring elements. We heard some debate about this earlier.

Some wonder whether the bill will really make a difference because the U.S. is just going to ignore stuff anyway. I think the bill would make a difference because we are dealing with some of the operations on the Canadian side that we can control.

We need to do better with respect to the things that we can control. We need to provide more resources. If our border communities do not get the infrastructure money they need as well as the policies to go with it, then we are doomed for failure.

Government Orders

This summer, we will be moving to armed officers as part of the regular procedure, and therefore, students will not be used to fill those positions as they have in the past. The government will not be filling these positions. This summer we will not have the staffing component that we had before. This will create greater lineups and greater problems. This will defeat the purpose. This has to come hand in glove, resources and procedure.

• (1820)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the hon. member on his speech. It was certainly a tour de force. I was very impressed that he spoke for 20 minutes and took only two breaths. He was very able in his analysis of the border. Certainly his references to the militarization of the Canada-U.S. border is information that really none of us would like to hear, but it is true and it is quite regrettable.

I want to ask a question with respect to the thickening of the border and its impact on economic development. Certainly all these non-tariff barriers that seem to be getting erected by the American government as goods go over the border are impediments to productivity, impediments to proper economic relationships, and in some measure, hurt the American economy far more than the Canadian economy.

I think it is an observable fact that the American economy is having more difficulties with the current recession than are we, and each time it puts up one of these non-tariff barriers it impairs its own economy, its own productivity, and it has a detrimental effect on us as well.

I would be interested in the hon. member's comments on the ironic effect of the thickening of the border and these non-tariff barriers.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, a lot of things have led to this moment, time and place where we have seen the American border thickening. I would point back to one of the most significant changing points. In 2002, I was at the Canadian embassy in Washington and the ambassador was there. We had just learned that the United States was going to bring in the NSEERS program, which was a registry process to fingerprint and photograph non-Canadian entries from Canada, but also Canadian entries from a series of countries that they considered not secure or not worthy of actual proper processing.

Ironically we have citizens from some of those countries who have been here in Canada for 30 years and in my community where doctors and nurses go into the United States every single day and save the lives of Americans and are part of their vibrant community.

Sadly enough, the prime minister at that time never objected to that. Since then, the US-VISIT program has been instituted and we have eroded those relationships. To me, it goes back as far as that. It hurts their society, but also, this country has to speak from one voice, that every single Canadian is vetted and they should be treated the same. Until we do that, we will still have problems.

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am looking through the bill clause by clause, and I am a little concerned. I would like to get the member's comments on clause 2 of the bill, which gives the minister the power to directly authorize access to a customs-controlled area by a person. This is a new power given to

the minister. It was previously regulated that the minister had this power.

I am a bit concerned that we would give a minister of the Crown that authority and that power. I wonder if the hon. member could elaborate on that particular clause of the bill.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I agree that it is a concern. We will have to see whether there is an intent to move some more prescriptive elements of the bill as to what those situations are and how they would evolve or whether it is going to be through regulation.

Giving the ministers unvetted power like that can be very difficult, especially if it becomes more of a micro-management aspect of the bill. We have seen the same policy under immigration and a few other different elements where we have given those ministers power.

To my Liberal colleague, I would say that he has been doing unilaterally that for the Conservative Party in the House of Commons, so we will certainly be looking forward to seeing how they might want to rein that in at committee.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the member raised the issue of Mississauga in his speech yet again, I think he should move to Mississauga. I would love to have him.

The derailment raises some interesting questions, but I wonder if the member would care to elaborate further on the issue of Canadians who work in the United States. This has come up many times in this place as it relates to pension matters, as it relates to their facility to be able to cross the border on a timely basis, and what it really means in terms of facilitating this kind of activity in which there is a win-win. Maybe the member wants to sing the praises of people who do work across the border.

• (1825)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I actually used to work at Community Living Mississauga, so I am a former Mississauga worker and wish all those at Community Living Mississauga all the best. I have relatives there as well. I point to that derailment because it is so real.

I thank the member for talking about the issues of those who work in the United States. There are so many of them over there, along the border, that it is incredible. It goes both ways. We have Americans working in Canada as well. That is part of the strength of our social and cultural relationships and it is good for business as well.

One of the saddest things is that, despite corporate tax cuts that the government has given, it has not taken up the movement of its own member, the member for Essex, on the social security bill.

This was done under the Paul Martin administration, where the government taxed U.S. social security recipients resident in Canada at a different level than before. There have been many promises on the Conservative side, but the government has not even moved on the private member's bill of one of its members and we have the continued taxation of U.S. social security recipients in Canada.

The reality is that we are going to continue, hopefully, to have some of those relationships, because it is not just about the employment that takes place. It also about the research and development that we share among us.

Adjournment Proceedings

As a good example, today we saw that Canada is losing one of its top scientists to Florida, because the United States has attracted him with the Obama administration's intent to have research and training move forward, versus the Canadian government here. However, there will still be some connection with Montreal.

These are important aspects not only in terms of the hard economy that we think of, such as automotive in my community, but it is also related to research and development as well as other types of problem-solving around social issues.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Windsor West if he could elaborate on his feelings about the discretion involved with secondary searches.

It seems every time I cross the border, whether I am on my own or with my three children, I always draw the long straw for the secondary search, and I have yet to be able to cross through a metal detector with my shoes on.

Does he feel that these requirements are necessary, and could he elaborate on that?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, it is a very serious issue, and I was going to make some comment but I will not. If the member is being pulled over so often, what she might do is try to find out whether something is popping up on her record. It is unusual to have that type of situation.

I do not know whether the member is being cross-referenced with someone else. The member does not look suspicious to me, and I am sure her children do not look suspicious either.

However, the member brings up a very interesting point. It does happen on our Canadian side too. I often talk to different people who are entering the United States. I think it is one of the reasons we should institute a border czar on both sides, to work together on certain things.

It is ironic that we have all this material coming in from the ports that is never screened at all. It gets into our country. Some of its poisonous material, whether it be toys or food. Only 4% is checked.

Meanwhile, at our land border crossings, they pull over a minivan with a couple of parents and kids and send it through twice the security. Therefore, I think it is a valid point.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: There is enough time for a brief question.

The hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville has the floor.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I already asked this question today but, unfortunately, only a partial answer was given.

When we go to the airport, we should be welcomed with a smile at customs and we should feel that the officers will not abuse their powers.

Can my colleague indicate how we can be assured that this bill will not result in the abuse of power?

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Nothing changes, Mr. Speaker. If an employee of CBSA is acting inappropriately, someone should approach the supervisor. None that changes in this particular bill, because there is nothing at this point that has been proposed for that.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

● (1830)

[*English*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I grew up in beautiful Etobicoke and I have always been proud of my green community ever since my grade three class at Silver Creek Public School produced its first map and then walked our neighbourhood. We had to tell the teacher what we liked best about Etobicoke. I liked the parks, rivers and sports facilities.

All these years later, I still love to bike, run and walk the ravines of the mighty Humber and trace the paths of the first settler, John Rowntree, who brought his family to Canada in the 1830s, with the dream of a new life, a new beginning and of real hope for the future.

Ever since, Etobicoke North has drawn from people from around the world, and in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s was an ever expanding community. Schools were being built at a fantastic rate: Kipling, Lakeshore, Martingrove, North Albion, Thistleton, West Humber and Richview, where the Prime Minister went to school.

The Etobicoke Olympium was built in the 1970s and was, at the time, a world-class facility, where our diving team hosted the World Masters Games, the Canadian Olympic trials and our gymnastics club welcomed the Chinese national team, as well as top gymnasts from around the world. There was an excitement, a focus on the future. There was real investment, fostering of the next generation and the building of a strong, well serviced community.

In the ensuing decades, however, Etobicoke North suffered.

Today, numerous high-density apartment complexes mark the landscape and car infrastructure built in the 1960s is in disrepair. Almost 20% of the riding is engaged in manufacturing, the second highest percentage for the entire country. In stark contrast, only 5% is involved in management, the 301st ranking of 308 ridings in Canada. Investment disappeared, as did hope.

Today, Etobicoke North has been identified as one of thirteen at-risk neighbourhoods by the city of Toronto and United Way. The community wrestles with many socio-economic issues related to affordable housing, education, family breakdown, immigration, poverty and unemployment.

Adjournment Proceedings

Sadly, during the election campaign, two of our volunteers lost family members to separate gun crimes within a period of only three days. Each assault causes unspeakable grief to families, creates instability in communities, obstructs the development of business centres and reduces trust in government. The Etobicoke North community needs investment and our children need a real deal.

A visionary principal, Michael Rossetti, from Father Henry Carr wants to build a field of dreams for Etobicoke North. His hope is to build a first-class track and field centre and basketball courts for the school, as well as for the whole community. Etobicoke North needs investment in sports as there is no athletic centre in the district.

The field of dreams project is receiving strong support from Pat Flatley, a former alumnus of the school and New York Islander captain, who has already met with Toronto's mayor, as well as Michael "Pinball" Clemons, CFL legend and Toronto Argonauts CEO. The principal has also received letters of support from Ron Taverner, chief of 23 Division, as well as Bill Blair, chief of the Toronto Police Service.

Investment in communities is more than an economic stimulus, more than jobs and lack of investment hurts families. Our community cannot afford to finance or borrow beyond existing budgets. Will the government help?

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to address the question raised by the hon. member for Etobicoke North.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind the House of the significant investments this Conservative government has made in infrastructure nationwide. Our government is delivering an economic action plan that will stimulate economic growth, create jobs and support Canadian families and Canadian jobs across the country.

This includes a \$4 billion infrastructure stimulus fund to help provinces, territories and municipalities get projects started as soon as possible; \$2 billion to accelerate construction at colleges and universities; \$1 billion to create a new green infrastructure fund for new green infrastructure across this country; and \$500 million to support construction of new community recreational facilities and upgrades to existing facilities that are in disrepair.

This Conservative government is the real deal. We have also flowed more than \$307 million to provinces and territories under the provincial territorial base initiative. That is money more quickly given to them so they can spend it on their priorities.

Our government has taken some serious action in order to get shovels in the ground and projects under way as soon as possible to keep Canadians employed and get more Canadians employed.

Over the last few months, we have approved more than 500 projects in small communities across the country worth over \$1.5 billion in combined funding. These projects will directly stimulate local economies nationwide.

We have also announced 21 major projects with a total federal contribution of \$980 million, almost \$1 billion, including the Evergreen transit line in Vancouver, the Edmonton southwest ring

road, the GO Transit in Ontario and expansion of a drinking water facility in Lévis, Quebec.

We are getting the job done for Canadians. Since the start of the fiscal year, we have flowed \$1 billion in gas tax money to towns and cities three months early so that they could put federal money to work right away creating those Canadian jobs and making more Canadian jobs. We will flow another \$1 billion to municipalities later this year, doubling what they received in previous years.

That is just the start of the good news. In the member's own home province of Ontario, we asked municipalities to tell us what projects they could get going on with help from our infrastructure stimulus fund. The deadline for application just closed at the end of the day Friday.

Indeed, and despite the accusations of some of the parties opposite regarding municipalities not being ready to begin these projects, we have received 2,746 project proposals from over 425 municipalities province-wide, totalling approximately \$6.1 billion. These are eligible costs and a requested federal contribution of \$2.1 billion.

Our government is committed to working with our partners in the provinces, territories and municipalities in order to get projects moving and shovels in the ground as soon as possible. We are working with other levels of government to leverage two-thirds of the money to create more jobs and realize more projects.

We are getting the job done by expanding and accelerating our infrastructure investments and by cutting red tape that has been there for years. By working with other levels of government, as we are, we are ensuring Canada emerges from this global recession sooner than other countries and stronger than ever before with more jobs, more Canadian jobs.

• (1835)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I wish we did not need to go to corporations to help our schools. Our students see the opportunities that other communities have and want to know why not them. They are at risk of joining gangs because they suffer from the greatest inequality and they are also in danger of using drugs and becoming involved in serious crime.

One Canadian study showed that of 900 male school dropouts and young offenders, 15% reported having brought a gun to school. What makes change happen? Money.

Investment in North Etobicoke would mean more students staying in school, fewer youth looking to belong in gangs and more men and women eager to improve their lives if only they were given a chance. This is development. It is not something abstract. It is real change in the lives of real people.

What would the government invest if it could change a school with many students, with numerous family members, if it could change a community?

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Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, this government has moved forward. We have moved forward with a tough on crime agenda, and that is what I heard from the member. I wonder why that member has not supported us in our tough on crime legislation. Why does the Liberal leader continue to suggest raising taxes but does not want to do anything in regard to getting tough on crime?

The agenda of the Conservative Party is to create Canadian jobs, create a better quality of life for Canadians and to get tough on crime by ensuring our communities are safe. We want Canadians to have a better quality of life than anywhere else in the world. We are getting the job done and I wish the member would get on board and help us with it.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to follow up a question that I asked back before Christmas. The occasion was the third anniversary of the cancelling of the child care agreements, which had been signed by the member for York Centre and the provinces and territories around the country. Because the three year funding had been phased out, the city of Toronto announced that 6,000 spaces would be gone as a result of that cancellation.

The point is that Canada is failing on child care. It is failing its citizenry and it is particularly failing its children. In a report released in December, Canada ranked last out of 25 OECD nations on 10 key benchmarks. Those benchmarks were further to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Canada is failing on the benchmarks of early learning and child care.

In 2004-05 we had a brief hope when the Liberal government, under Paul Martin, brought in these child care agreements and the member for York Centre signed them. That was dashed when the Conservative government came forward in 2006. It cancelled those agreements and replaced them with the universal child care benefit of \$100 a month. Everybody can use \$100 a month. There is no question about that.

However, I want to refer to a book that I picked up last week called *Beyond Child's Play*, when I met with some child care advocates in Vancouver on Friday.

Speaking to the universal child care benefit, in a wonderful article by Jody Dallaire and Lynell Anderson, they said:

While families need adequate incomes, they also need services to be available and affordable in their communities. The UCCB does not build or sustain child care services.

That is very true. Nobody would argue that many families need \$100 a month, but it is a fallacy and a fraud to suggest that this is child care. It is not. We need a system in our country. Maybe some people would say that it is too expensive to have a system in Canada. I would like to quote from the same article again. It says:

Some say that, in uncertain times, Canada cannot afford to invest in child care. We say, nothing could be further from the truth. Child care services are an essential part of every community's economic and social infrastructure—an economic stimulus with long-term benefits for Canada.

There is no question among people who know what is happening in child care in our country that we need to have a system. We need to build a system. There are countries in the OECD that have a system. In Canada people like Monica Lysack, Jody Dallaire, Martha

Friendly and many others understand this and are trying to get this message across.

What kind of an outcry would there be in any community if an eight-year-old boy or girl was refused entry into elementary school? It would be on the front page of the local paper. However, every day in every community in Canada, children cannot get early learning and child care. Why does Canada have very high rates of illiteracy for a country as wealthy as it is? We are not maximizing the human potential of all children. We need to do that.

I would like to close with another quotation from an article by Martha Friendly. She said:

While many would say that a recession is not the time to be putting forward demands for a new social program, others would follow Barack Obama's lead to argue that the choice between "getting our economy moving now and rebuilding it over the long term" is a false choice—that leaders need to be able to walk and chew gum by ensuring that the demonstrated potential for early childhood education and care to contribute to a prosperous Canada is realized.

The government does not realize it, but the time will come when a more enlightened government comes into this place and makes early learning and child care a reality for Canadian families.

• (1840)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that member was part of the previous Liberal government that made many promises with respect to the national child care program. In 13 years, how many spaces did it create? It created none. The Liberals are long on promises but short on action.

Our government has made promises and has delivered. Support for families with children is one of our most important goals. Our government is committed to helping parents by providing them with real choices in deciding what is best for their children. Our government's approach is not very popular with the opposition but it is very popular with Canadian parents.

We provide choice and direct support to parents through the universal child care benefit. This provides \$100 per month to parents for each child under six. That is \$1,200 per child and that money helps families. When I stop by small coffee shops and ask the moms how many children they have under six, I find that in that little group of people in the coffee shop in that little community they receive \$9,000-plus.

The universal child care benefit has lifted about 24,000 families with about 55,000 children out of low income and it provides more than \$2.4 billion each year to 1.5 million families with 2 million young children. That is a significant number of people who are affected.

Due to the support of this government, the provinces and territories have announced the creation of over 60,000 new child care spaces since March 2007.

Last year, this government invested \$5.6 billion in early learning and child care. That was the single largest investment in child care in the history of Canada, three times more than the previous Liberal government ever invested, and that support is going up. For the next fiscal year, all provinces and territories will receive an increase of 3% in funding under the Canada social transfer. However, we will not do what the hon. member's party did, which was to balance its books on the backs of vulnerable Canadians by cutting \$25 billion in social transfers.

In budget 2009, our economic action plan provides tax relief for low to middle income Canadians. The plan increases child benefits for modest and middle income Canadian families under the national child benefit supplement and the Canada child tax benefit, something most parties agree is of significant help.

The budget also announced the creation of an expert panel to review EI maternity and parental benefits for self-employed Canadians to help those Canadians at the beginning of their children's lives.

The fact is that the Liberals promised a national child care program every year since 1993 and did not create a single space, no spaces at all during that period of time. This is not a credible record and all Canadians recognize that.

This government believes that parents know best how to raise their children. We support choice in child care. We support Canadian parents and we will continue to work to ensure that the broadest range of choices are available to all Canadian families.

In fact, our government was chosen in two elections in a row. Canadians chose this government's plan because it puts the needs of families ahead of special interest groups and additional layers of government bureaucracy. We delivered what Canadian parents wanted: choice. It is no surprise that this government's plan is extraordinarily popular with Canadian families, even though it may not be with the opposition parties.

● (1845)

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, I hear my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, talk about a system that we think should be

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built in Canada. His party talks about it being institutionalized and talks about this child care system the way that many in his party talked about medicare 40 years ago. They said that it was a terrible thing, that it would never work and that it would cost money.

We have the lowest child care access rates in the industrialized world. If that is something to be proud of, then we have done something wrong.

Does the parliamentary secretary still believe that we cannot afford to invest in early learning and child care? I do not think that we can afford not to invest in early learning and child care.

Thank heavens we have the Monica Lysacks, the Jody Dallaires, the Martha Friendlys, the Susan Wolstenholmes in Halifax and others who understand this, such as Janet Austin who hosted the meeting for us in Vancouver. They get something that the government does not. We should be investing in our children. We should not be making excuses.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member has not heard me. We are investing record amounts of dollars in early learning and child care, something the previous government promised to do on occasion but never did.

Can members imagine cutting \$25 billion from the Canada social transfer to the provinces, downloading the responsibility to the provinces and proposing a national child care program to create spaces? Over 13 years there were no spaces created.

The member should apologize every time he gets up on behalf of his government for making promises and not carrying out one logical thing that would create a space and help Canadian families.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:49 p.m.)

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