



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, October 8, 2009

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 8, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the 2008-09 annual report on the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act from the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

[*English*]

This document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, in relation to requesting an extension of 30 sitting days to consider Bill C-311, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a), a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put, and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, October 21, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. In accordance with the order of reference of Wednesday, June 17, your committee has considered Bill S-4, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (identity theft and related misconduct), and agreed on Wednesday, October 7, to report it without amendment.

EXCISE TAX ACT

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-459, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (goods and services tax on school authorities).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am just reintroducing a bill that I introduced in the last Parliament, at the request of the Canadian School Boards Association. Many school boards across the country have been asking to be relieved of this costly burden for years.

Basically through this act we want to change the GST rebate to 100% for school boards, which would save them approximately \$155 million a year and would go a long way toward helping ease the burden on every school in Canada.

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

* * *

DEFENCE OF CANADA MEDAL ACT (1946-1989)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasung, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-460, An Act respecting the establishment and award of a Defence of Canada Medal (1946-1989).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be able to table the bill entitled An Act respecting the establishment and award of a Defence of Canada Medal (1946-1989).

This act represents the hard work and vision of one of my constituents, retired captain Ulrich Krings of Elliot Lake, who presented me with this proposal to have a medal struck to honour the men and women who served in the defence of Canada during the Cold War.

It will honour the people who defended Canada in both the regular and reserve forces, police forces, emergency measures organizations, as well as civil organizations such as St. John Ambulance, which were concerned with the protection of Canada from within Canada.

The medal would recognize the support these men and women gave Canadians and the hours spent training and practising for an attack on Canadian soil that, thankfully, never happened. Their service to our country represents a period of time when we became aware of just how fragile peace can be.

Routine Proceedings

Many will remember the air raid sirens and emergency measures drills that characterized the era. This medal would give something back to all those who worked in those years to keep us safe and prepared.

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

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-461, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (use of hand-held telecommunications device while operating a motor vehicle).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to table a bill entitled an Act to amend the Criminal Code (use of hand-held telecommunications device while operating a motor vehicle).

The purpose of the bill is to ban the use of telecommunications devices for sending or receiving messages in text format as well as hand-held cellular telephones while operating a motor vehicle on the highway.

The reason I am tabling the bill is that we have heard from both the American and Canadian medical associations expressing deep concern at the number of accidents and deaths associated with the use of hand-held devices while operating vehicles.

The president of the Ontario Medical Association, Dr. Ken Arnold, stated that there have been studies that show that when cell phones are banned, accident rates decrease.

There have been actions taken by some provincial jurisdictions and some municipalities to try to fill the vacuum created by the lack of action on the part of the Government of Canada. I am therefore tabling the bill to show that we believe we should take action to protect Canadians from these incidents.

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

● (1010)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, members have been advised, and if you seek it I believe you will find unanimous consent for the adoption of the following motion:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should honour the historical voyage made by Leif Erikson, who became the first European to visit North America over 1,000 years ago, and recognize the contributions of Scandinavian peoples from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland to Canada by joining other nations and declaring October 9 as Leif Erikson Day in Canada.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

BILL C-311—CLIMATE CHANGE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP) moved:

That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development that it have the power to divide Bill C-311, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change, into two bills: Bill C-311A, An Act to set targets and timelines to prevent dangerous climate

change, and Bill C-311B, An Act to ensure the Government of Canada is held accountable for meeting its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change; that Bill C-311A be composed of clause 6 of Bill C-311; that Bill C-311B be composed of all remaining parts of Bill C-311; that the House order the printing of bills C-311A and C-311B; that the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel be authorized to make such technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion; and that, if Bill C-311A has not been reported back to the House by the tenth sitting day after October 19, 2009, it shall be deemed to have been reported back without amendment.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise that I will be sharing my time with the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North. I thank you for reading the motion, because that means I do not have to. However, I do want to explain it and explain why this motion is being brought forward.

Just a few moments ago, the chair of the environment committee brought forth a motion from the committee to basically ask for an extension and delay of 30 sitting days for the examination of Bill C-311, which is the climate change accountability act. I have to say that there is absolutely no legitimate reason for delaying consideration of this bill.

This has caused the NDP to bring forward this motion this morning in the House to instruct the committee to separate the bill and to ensure that the bill will now be examined in two parts. Part A would deal with the targets that are set in the bill and they would be brought back into the House by the 10th sitting day after October 19, which would be November 2. If the committee fails to do that, the bill will be deemed to have been reported back without amendment.

I would like to explain why we are doing this. I think members are aware that this bill was first debated in March 2009. It was actually sent to the committee on April 1 of this year. In our opinion, the committee has had ample time to deal with this very urgent matter. I would say that our goal all along has been very clear. This very substantive and important bill needed to be debated and processed through the House in order to be approved, we hope, in time for the international climate change conference in Copenhagen in November.

It was with deep concern that we learned that the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development voted to delay this bill for no good reason. From the email we get, the folks we talk to in our ridings and the strong environmental community across this country, I think it is very clear that Canadians believe that government after government has dragged its feet on climate change.

There has been no substantive action, whether by the Conservative government or by the previous Liberal government. This bill that we have brought forward both in the last Parliament and in this Parliament, and in fact it was approved in the last Parliament, is a strong effort to say that the will of Parliament should be brought forward to Copenhagen and that the will of the Canadian people to see action by our government on climate change and to set clear targets is something that is fundamental to the direction and the health and safety of Canadians and the future of our planet.

Routine Proceedings

It was with dismay that we saw that various members of the House are trying to delay this bill. I think we have to ask why this bill is being delayed, because there is no legitimate reason to do so. The bill is actually very clear and straightforward. In fact, clause 6, which is the clause that we are now saying should be brought back to House by the 10th sitting day, through this debate today, is the clause that deals with the interim greenhouse gas emissions and sets out a target plan for 2015, 2020, 2025, 2030, 2035, 2040 and 2045.

The target plan clearly lays out that it would establish a Canadian greenhouse gas emissions target for each of those years; specify the scientific, economic and technological evidence and analysis used to establish each target, including consideration of the latest reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the most stringent greenhouse gas emissions targets adopted by other national governments, and it would show that each target is consistent with a responsible contribution by Canada to the UNFCCC's ultimate objective of preventing dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system and with Parliament's strong commitment to the Kyoto Protocol.

●(1015)

The separation of the bill and what we have now been forced to do is necessary in order to ensure that Canada has set targets and that those targets will be met. We want to go to that conference in Copenhagen knowing that Canada will finally have some legitimacy. After so many years of delay and inaction, we want to have a bill that speaks for the Canadian people on the issue of climate change.

When this was first debated in the House, the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, who introduced the bill, gave one of the most beautiful speeches I have ever heard in the House. It was passionate, articulate and full of scientific fact. It was about his own riding. I remember one of the things that he said:

Opinion polls keep saying that 80% of Canadians favour strict measures to reduce emissions, yet our own governments have been impotent and unwilling to confront what will be the defining issue of the 21st century: a changing climate and a dying world.

The next world conference in Copenhagen this December will provide another opportunity to regain some stature on the vital issue of climate change. This act would help re-establish our credibility at the bargaining table and increase the chances of persuading major developing countries to take on such commitments. In this 40th Parliament, we have one last opportunity to take real action to prevent the threat of worsening economic and health effects of climate pollution. Bill C-311 would ensure that the government is accountable to Canadians on climate change and that Canada is accountable to the world.

That is a perfect summary of what this issue is about and why it is so urgent. All the more shame for what took place at the environment committee and the fact that there is an attempt now to slow down this bill so that it will not make it through the House in time for the Copenhagen conference.

As New Democrats, we are committed to doing everything we can for Canadians to ensure that this legitimate and credible and very sound bill does come before the House for a vote. We hope that it will be passed. We hope that a majority of members of Parliament will listen to their constituents about what needs to be done in this country, to take a stand and set real targets for climate change. Nothing less will suffice.

We regret that this debate is taking place today. It should not have to take place. The bill should have come out of committee. I am sure

witnesses were lined up. I am sure all kinds of people were ready to debate the bill clause by clause. I am not on the committee so I do not know if there would have been some amendments. I find it most disturbing that it appears the bill is being deliberately delayed.

This motion is to put on the record how urgent this issue is. The bill must come back from committee. The motion before us is clear. It asks the committee to examine clause 6 that deals with the interim targets and get the bill back into the House by November 2.

This is a very straightforward and transparent motion about what needs to be done. I implore members of the House to ensure that we rise above the partisan politics and whatever political agendas are operating here and think about what Canadians sent us here to do. I implore members to think about the most urgent issue facing our country and our planet: climate change. It is shameful that in the international community Canada has such a terrible record.

Let us deal with this legislation and get it through the House. Let us hear witnesses—

●(1020)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the hon. member has been sharing with the House details from an in camera meeting, for which she apologized yesterday. If her apology were sincere, she would not repeat what happened at an in camera meeting. It is quite inappropriate and unparliamentary.

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday I came into the House and apologized for a press release that was sent out in error. I did that in good faith and with genuine intent.

We have already heard from the chair of the committee that the committee has come forward to the House asking for a delay of 30 days. I have not divulged any information about the vote; I am not privy to that. All I know is that a decision of the committee was made which is why this motion came before the House today.

There is nothing out of order with that, so I will certainly continue speaking to the motion that is before us today.

I want to reiterate that there are obviously going to be a lot of political games played today.

I want it to be on the record that what is happening here is really quite shameful. What the NDP has always tried to do with the bill is to have it go through its due process. It was sent to committee. The committee has had adequate time to deal with the bill. The fact that it is now being delayed is obviously part of some other political agenda. Other parties will have to account for their own actions.

All I know is that what is important about the bill is to get it dealt with, particularly clause 6 which deals with the targets. That is why we have this motion before us today. It is perfectly in order. In fact, it was imperative to bring forward this motion because there really was no other way to deal with it.

I ask the members of the House to support this motion and to ensure that Bill C-311 is dealt with, brought back to the House so we can hold our heads high when we go to Copenhagen and say that we represent what the Canadian people want us to do.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat confused that the NDP would want to bring forward this motion saying that the committee has been playing games. The committee has not had a chance to properly consider the bill.

In the report we said that we had other reasons. The committee had delays in bringing forward the witnesses. We had an agreement at committee on how we would proceed in dealing with witnesses and making sure that we had a fulsome discussion on the bill.

There are merits in the bill and we have to take a look at them to make sure that they fit all the concerns that have been raised by witnesses. We also know there are many people who are not happy about the bill and we need to hear from everyone on this, from industry and climate scientists, and economists on how this could actually damage our economy in an irreversible manner.

I ask the member to reconsider bringing forward such a motion. All it does is bog down the committee with even more work which it does not necessarily need to undertake at this time. This motion brings before the House part of a bill that has not been considered, vented and amended by committee.

• (1025)

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, this bill has been before the committee for six months. If the committee believes it is a priority and an urgent matter, and I hope it would, it has had ample opportunity to examine the bill.

No one is suggesting that the committee not hear from witnesses or not examine the bill. The objection is that the committee made a decision, in our opinion, to deliberately delay the consideration of the bill in order to prevent it from being dealt with before the important world conference in Copenhagen in December. That is the issue. If the committee wants to do its job and hear from witnesses, it can go right ahead. That is what we want to see happen. We want the bill to be dealt with. We do not want it to be delayed.

I find the rationale, the excuses or whatever they are from the member to be very lame. I do not think he has answered the substantive question as to why it is that the bill is being delayed.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was the member's own leader who, in a previous Parliament, introduced Bill C-377 which is virtually the same bill. He recommended that the bill be costed.

We know that there would be a substantial cost to the Canadian economy if Bill C-311 were to go ahead. It was the same thing for Bill C-377 and her leader suggested that it be costed. The fact is it was that member who said to "abandon this bill. Get rid of this bill. It is no good from beginning to end. So I think that is a message that we need to consider very carefully. Unfortunately we could not offer what the costs were going to be. Do we have any idea what the costs would be? Has anyone tried to figure this out? I feel that the committee needs to do this before we blindly go ahead and adopt this very radical approach on something that we have no evidence that it is even going to work".

It was that member who said that. It was not on this bill. It was on a bill that she disagreed with, but the principle is the same. Why would she not want to have a fulsome debate, find out what the cost

would be, what her carbon tax bill would mean to the economy of Canada?

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, the member's question is inexplicable. It seems to me he is mixing apples and oranges. I do not know to which other bill he is referring.

The reality is that the committee has had this bill for six months. As he himself pointed out, there was an almost identical bill in the last Parliament, Bill C-377, which also had extensive examination by the committee.

If he had issues or concerns around economic questions, he and his government had more than ample time. Good heavens, the Conservatives have claimed from day one that this is something they care about, so why have they themselves not done their economic analysis? They should not pin it on this bill. This bill has been the only one to come forward that has set a course that Canadians want in terms of climate change.

Again, the excuses and rationales are incredibly lame because they do not deal with the question as to why the committee chose to delay this bill. We should deal with the substantive part of this bill, get it before committee, hear the witnesses and deal with the arguments. That is what we are here to do. We should ensure it comes back for a proper debate and vote in the House. That is what we are here to do. Let us get on with it.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am quite shocked and dismayed at what has been occurring and the delay that is being proposed. For me personally and citizens across Canada, this is a litmus test as to whether Canada is a leader or a follower on the world stage.

On Tuesday, as we heard this morning, the environment committee voted shamefully to delay consideration of Bill C-311 until after Kyoto, rather than before.

An hon. member: Shame on them.

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Shame on us. Shame on that committee.

It seems that some parties are choosing to play partisan politics with the fate of the planet and Canada's leadership role in dealing with it. This is the only legislation before the House that presents a plan to deal with climate change. The government has no plan and the Liberals have no plan. Past targets have not been dealt with and there has been no plan to go with lofty words supporting Kyoto.

There is a mountain of testimony on this from the passage of a similar bill last year. A multitude of witnesses from industry, government and the scientific community came forward. There is consensus from the scientists, there is consensus from the United Nations and there is consensus from over 80% of Canadians for us to show leadership on this issue. We have spent many months and there has been deliberate stalling by several of the parties in the environment committee.

I have spoken to numerous members of the House and many of them, including members on the government side, support a strong regulatory framework to deal with climate change. Will they have the courage to stand up to the PMO? Will they have the courage to stand up to their own party and do what they know is right?

Routine Proceedings

This is not a matter of right versus left. This is a matter of right versus wrong. We are at a defining moment in the history of the world. Are we going to be leaders or are we going to be followers?

I have a much longer speech, but I am not going to deliver it. We know what is right. I call upon the Liberals who will decide the fate of this bill and Canada's role in saving the planet to do what they feel is right and force this bill onto the floor so we can all vote with our hearts and consciences.

• (1030)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, clearly the member's comments are very heartfelt and it is a difficult speech to make today. Indeed, the fate of the earth is before the House today.

The NDP brought forward this motion in good faith. We are recommending that the committee have the power to divide out the simple decision of setting the targets. It is regrettable that the government has not seen fit to table legislation which would prescribe targets.

It is my understanding that survey after survey, including one by the Conference Board of Canada released today, says that industry is waiting for the prescribed targets so that they can shift their investments. I am wondering if the hon. member could speak to the issue about the value of federal legislation to actually drive the investment toward the reduction of greenhouse gases.

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the well-known environmental group, Shell Oil. The *Calgary Herald* reported on Tuesday that Gerry Ertel, Shell's manager of regulatory affairs, said:

If we don't take action for five or 10 years, (the actions to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions) are going to have to be potentially much more severe. So we think it's to the advantage of our industry, and of all sectors, to move now and to put that regulatory framework into place so that we can start down the road of (greenhouse-gas) reduction today.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the NDP for bringing this motion forward this morning. It is an important motion, an important bill and, more important, it is a crisis issue that the planet is dealing with now. We are here dealing with this bill this morning chiefly because the Government of Canada has no plan. Parliament is now forced to work off what we concluded is an incomplete bill, yet an honest effort by the NDP to do something productive.

However, I would like a specific question of the member who is sponsoring the leader of the NDP's bill. Could he inform the House how he expects the Waxman-Markey bill in the American Congress, or the Kerry-Boxer bill in the Senate, or President Obama's intentions to regulate greenhouse gas emissions under the United States environmental protection act, any one of them or in combination, to affect what he is calling for in this bill?

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, when I look at the history of Canada, I have seen sometimes in the past when we had Liberal leaders who formulated clear, decisive, bold Canadian policy and did not kiss the backside of the Americans.

• (1035)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the NDP side how

important it is to move on climate change and yet we have a government that is not willing to move forward. Consistently the Liberals and the Conservatives have not wanted to move forward on the Kyoto accord. We heard a few minutes ago with regard to the costing of such a bill.

I would like to ask my colleague what the cost would be for not doing anything?

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, the costs of dealing with climate change will be significant but I believe those costs will be positive. They will create a green economy, a sustainable economy, green jobs and regrow jobs in Canada. The cost of inaction, according to 2,500 scientists from around the world, will be that the fate of the world hangs in the balance. The cost of losing our planet is the real cost to be considered here.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, does the member not think that one of the primary issues that is being ignored right now is the possibility of feedback loops and that the melting of the polar ice caps and the release of methane will cause a feedback loop that will feed into the increase of temperature of our oceans and their inability to absorb carbon dioxide?

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, we have one Liberal here who has an understanding of the significance of the issues and I encourage him to pressure those in his party who would stall to ask that question of them. Scientists are persuaded and I am persuaded, but time is of the essence.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That this House proceed to orders of the day.

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 of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

(The House divided on the motion:)

(Division No. 113)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Benoit

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Baird
Bernier

Routine Proceedings

Bezan	Blackburn	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Blaney	Block	DeBellefeuille	Demers
Boucher	Boughen	Deschamps	Devar
Braid	Breitkreuz	Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Dion	Dorion
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge	Dosanjh	Duceppe
Cadman	Calandra	Dufour	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie	Eyking	Faille
Casson	Chong	Folco	Foote
Clarke	Cummins	Freeman	Garneau
Davidson	Day	Gaudet	Godin
Dechert	Devolin	Goodale	Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Côte-Nord)	
Dykstra	Fast	Hall Findlay	Harris (St. John's East)
Finley	Flaherty	Holland	Hughes
Fletcher	Galipeau	Hyer	Jennings
Gallant	Glover	Julian	Kania
Goodyear	Gourde	Karygiannis	Kennedy
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Laforest	Laframboise
Hawn	Hiebert	Lavallée	Layton
Hill	Hoback	LeBlanc	Lee
Hoepfner	Jean	Lemay	Leslie
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Lessard	Lévesque
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr	MacAulay	Malhi
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Malo	Maloway
Lake	Lauzon	Marston	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Lebel	Lemieux	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Lobb	Lukiwski	Mathysen	McCallum
Lunn	Lunney	McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie	Ménard	Mendes
Mayes	McColeman	Minna	Mourani
McLeod	Menzies	Mulcair	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Merrifield	Miller	Murphy (Charlottetown)	Nadeau
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)		Neville	Pacetti
Moore (Fundy Royal)		Patry	Pomerleau
Nicholson	Norlock	Proulx	Rae
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon	Rafferty	Ratansi
Obhrai	Oda	Regan	Rodriguez
Paradis	Payne	Roy	Savage
Petit	Poilievre	Savoie	Scarpaleggia
Prentice	Preston	Sgro	Siksay
Rajotte	Rathgeber	Silva	Simms
Reid	Richards	Simson	St-Cyr
Richardson	Rickford	Stoffer	Szabo
Ritz	Saxton	Thi Lac	Tonks
Scheer	Schellenberger	Trudeau	Vincent
Shea	Shipley	Volpe	Wasylcia-Leis
Shory	Smith	Wilfert	Wrzesniewskij
Sorenson	Stanton	Zarac — 131	
Storseth	Strahl		
Sweet	Thompson		
Trost	Tweed		
Uppal	Van Kesteren		
Van Loan	Vellacott		
Verner	Wallace		
Warawa	Warkentin		
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to		
Sky Country)	Wong		
Weston (Saint John)	Yelich		
Woodworth			
Young — 131			

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bagnell	Beaudin
Bélanger	Bellavance
Bennett	Bevilacqua
Bevington	Bigras
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Byrne
Cannis	Cardin
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Coady
Cotler	Crombie
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	D'Amours

Nil

● (1115)

[*Translation*]

And the result of the vote being announced: Yeas, 131; Nays, 131

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laval—Les Îles on a point of order.

● (1120)

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to make sure that my name was called. I wanted to vote against the motion, and I am not sure that my name was called.

The Speaker: The hon. member's vote was taken into account.

[*English*]

Given there is a tie vote on a motion that would terminate a debate, as hon. members are aware, the Chair normally votes in favour of further debate on a matter. Accordingly, in this case, I will vote no on the motion so that the debate on the motion before the House may continue.

PAIRED

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to challenge this motion of instruction. I believe the motion should be ruled out of order because a motion of instruction should not be used to time allocate a bill and the motion has two separate proposals.

On page 854, of Marleau and Montpetit, it describes a motion of instruction as:

A permissive instruction gives a committee the power to do something it would not otherwise be able to do, but does not compel the committee to use that power.

What is unusual about this motion is the last sentence. The motion is attempting to time allocate the bill at committee stage. It is not a permissive instruction. It states, "if Bill C-311A has not been reported back to the House by the 10th sitting day after October 19, 2009, it shall be deemed to have been reported back without amendment". In addition, the motion proposes to do two things. It gives the committee the authority to divide Bill C-311 and it time allocates the committee stage of Bill C-311.

Two separate proposals would require two separate motions.

As I said earlier, the second instruction is not permissive. If the committee does not take action, as proposed by the motion, the committee is no longer a player. In that case, there is no instruction whatsoever. The motion, in that case, would override the Standing Orders that already apply to a reporting date for Bill C-311.

I would argue that such a motion presented as a motion of instruction is out of order.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the point of order.

First, I would suggest it is a little late in the day to raise this point of order because we already previously presented the motion. Obviously the government is frustrated that it lost its motion just now so it wants to revert.

However, we have studied this very carefully and based on Marleau and Montpetit, on page 631, it is quite clear that a bill, once it has been referred to a committee, the House may give the committee an instruction by way of a motion. The motion before the House currently does that. It is also quite clear that it is left to the committee to decide whether to exercise the powers given to it by the House.

Therefore, this is a permissive motion. It refers it back to the committee with an instruction, but it is still within the prerogative of the committee to decide whether to exercise the powers given to it by the House.

I believe you will find, Mr. Speaker, that the motion is in order.

The Speaker: The Chair wants to thank the hon. parliamentary secretary and the hon. member for Vancouver East for their comments. I will look into the matter and come back to the House in due course with a ruling in respect of the motion. I hope I can do that before the question is put on the motion.

However, as hon. members know, if debate continues until 2 o'clock, the debate on the motion will end, it will be transferred to

government orders and then the parliamentary secretary may have something to say to the government House leader about when it will be called again. Time alone will tell.

In any event we will see what happens. I will try to have a ruling done very quickly to assist the House in its deliberations.

Resuming debate on the original motion, the hon. member for Ottawa South.

● (1125)

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to this motion which would empower the environment and sustainable development committee to split Bill C-311 into two parts.

At first blush, I want to state for the record that I am pleased to see that the NDP, through this motion, has finally seen the light and is taking the advice of the Liberal Party of Canada. We are pleased to see that the NDP, having resurrected a bill brought forward by the leader in a previous Parliament, now understands how important it is to echo the call we have been making now for over four years to this Republican Conservative government to table in this place a climate change plan for the country.

It has been difficult for the Republican Conservatives because for so many years they were affiliated with the Republican movement in the United States. They were taking their instructions from the Bush administration. Our policies were aligned. In fact, the Prime Minister himself denied the existence of climate change until it was former President Bush's own scientific advisers who disabused some of that notion and convinced him that the science underlying climate change and the crisis were in fact real, that it would be wreaking havoc not just on our natural order going forward but on our economies.

Dragged kicking and screaming into the 21st century, the Prime Minister then appointed a third environment minister in three years, and of course we have no plan in this country now on climate change. It is a vacant hole. It is a blank sheet.

For the NDP to finally come to the realization that the essential need for Canada is to bring the government to heel so that it actually delivers up a plan on climate change for Canada is of paramount importance.

When Bill C-311 was first tabled as a whole, it was in a different time and in a different context. Things have progressed and things have moved forward. Chiefly, perhaps the most important single change and driver going forward has been the election of a Democratic administration in the United States.

In the United States we have three separate legislative possibilities to deal with climate change. We are not proposing, as the official opposition, as the Liberal Party of Canada, to hide behind the skirts of the existing Democratic administration, as is now the plan and in fact is the position of the Government of Canada, but we are cognizant of the fact that we must work in synchronicity with the Americans, never of course abdicating our sovereignty, as we have seen now under this third Minister of Environment and under the Prime Minister, but we must take into account those three possible outcomes in the United States.

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There is a bill in the American Congress, in the House of Representatives, the so-called Waxman-Markey bill, which sets out standards and targets, and how allocations for trading systems will work in the United States.

There is a second bill, let by two senators, senators Kerry and Boxer in the American Senate, again with some variation on targets but with a hard cap-and-trade system, with an allocation system designed into it, and of course third, President Obama has made it very plain just this week that he is not afraid of using the regulatory powers that he has under the United States environmental protection act to in fact regulate greenhouse gases.

That is something, by the way, which the government has had the power to do for four years now. When it formed government in 2006, it began by cutting \$6 billion in climate change programming expenditures. It gutted the tax credits for wind power production incentives, renewable power production incentives. In fact, its own renewable power fiscal program has effectively expired this month. There is no money left. That is why our wind power producers are running to the United States to try to conquer those American markets as we continue to send the wrong signals into the marketplace.

However, the government has had the power to do what President Obama has talked about doing for four years. It has inherited a regulatory structure that had all the powers necessary to stand up, present a plan and regulate greenhouse gas emissions. All that was prepared by the previous Liberal governments. In fact, it was prepared originally by the good work of a Progressive Conservative government, not a Republican Conservative government, under Brian Mulroney.

Mr. Mulroney, the former Prime Minister, I am sure is shaking his head in disbelief as he sees that four years into this administration, the Republican Conservatives, who are now in government, refuse to deliver up a competent plan for Canada to deal with the climate change crisis in Canada and to deal with it internationally.

It is a whole different kind of party, a whole different kind of regime, and of course Canadians are seeing more and more of it.

There are problems on both sides of the House here. We have on the one hand the NDP that, at face value, is in good faith trying to make a positive contribution but refuses to acknowledge that the ground is shifting.

For example, just yesterday, the pre-Copenhagen negotiations in Bangkok went off the rails. The Chinese authorities are now accusing the American authorities of not being sincere in their efforts to deal with the climate change crisis. The Americans are returning that rhetoric, and it is very unfortunate because that is exactly the time when Canada is most needed. Canadian values, Canada's negotiating ability, our middle power, our competence and our reputation on the international sphere ought to help lubricate the relationship, if I might, to facilitate the relationship between China and the United States.

•(1135)

That is hard to accomplish now, given what the Minister of the Environment did in New York just two weeks ago when the Prime Minister refused to show up at the UN to even give a speech on

climate change and support President Obama's efforts to come to an international agreement. Instead, what we saw was the immaturity of a government in Canada who came out of a meeting after the Chinese authorities announced they were prepared to consider targets, albeit intensity targets, but targets to deal with the climate change crisis, and the reaction of the Minister of the Environment was to finger wag, lecture, gesticulate, harangue the Chinese authorities and accuse them of not having gone far enough.

It is an interesting pattern of conduct, as my colleague mentioned here today on the floor of the House. It is almost as if Canadians could be forgiven if they came to the conclusion that the Republican Conservatives were deliberately trying to undermine the success of the international round of negotiations so that Copenhagen becomes a failure. Instead of us mounting the kind of international effort to bring the world together, we have abandoned not only our sovereignty with the United States but we have abandoned our role at the international level. That is a very important point for Canadians to know.

Why are we here today debating the bill? Why are we debating splitting an NDP bill? We are debating it because there is no plan in Canada today to deal with the climate change crisis. There is no plan. When this Minister of the Environment asserts that his targets, that he claims this country still possesses, are aligned with the American targets, it is really conduct unbecoming of the member and the minister because anybody who can read plain English, or plain French, knows that this is not the case.

President Obama's two bills that he has called for from Congress both speak to at least a 7.5% reduction in hard terms, hard numbers, from 1990 as the baseline year compared to the government's 3% from 1990. So, there alone we see the kind of disingenuous conduct from a minister, who is not really interested in delivering up a plan, nor are the Republican Conservatives here in Canada interested in delivering a plan. They really do not want to level with Canadians and deal with the climate change crisis.

It was only several years ago that the Prime Minister was in London, England. He was on a so-called ecoenergy tour through Europe. In a speech in London, transcripts of which are available for Canadians online, he said that he would be putting a price on carbon at \$65 a tonne. It was the first and only time the Prime Minister ever spoke about pricing carbon. It has never been repeated. There is no regulatory regime here being put forward by the government. There is no price on carbon.

The Conservatives are not levelling with Canadians on the potential impact on energy prices in whatever plan they bring forward. They are not telling Canadians the truth, that if we do not deliver up a good, strong, Canadian domestic climate change plan, we will take our design for our plan from the United States, we will take a price on carbon emissions from the United States, and we will take our instructions from the United States. Instead of hiding behind the skirts of that administration and pretending that there is some kind of energy dialogue going on, there is no plan. So we go cap in hand to the United States with a blank sheet of paper, nothing written on it, and we ask the American administration to write the plan for us.

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No sovereign nation state that is competent and actually represents its citizens would enter into bilateral or international negotiations conducting itself that way. No one would enter into a negotiation and say, "We have not written a draft, but we want to hear what you are doing and we will govern ourselves accordingly, even though we know the plan that you devise for your economy and your people may not be to the benefit of the Canadian economy and the Canadian people". That is where we are at and that is why we are having this debate today because there is no plan. That is why we are here. This issue is not being dealt with; it is incomplete.

Earlier we heard the parliamentary secretary once again in true Republican Conservative fashion attack the NDP, claiming that it had not costed out its bill. That is so rich as to be almost laughable and I will tell the House why. The government has no costed plan. The government has asked, for example, that the NDP bill be sent to the Parliamentary Budget Officer to be costed. This is the same Parliamentary Budget Officer who cannot get basic information from the government on its \$50 billion advertising campaign, who cannot get basic information on the state of the so-called infrastructure spending projects. The Parliamentary Budget Officer cannot get basic information on trying to warrant the numbers the government puts out for deficit numbers.

Furthermore, the government, having called for the appointment of the Parliamentary Budget Officer and now referring the NDP bill to the Parliamentary Budget Officer for costing, is now stripping the Parliamentary Budget Officer of the funding that office needs to do its work. It is disgraceful conduct and the government is being found out now and Canadians are cottoning on. The Conservatives can bob, they can weave, they can sing and they can dance, and they can pretend. The Prime Minister is the great pretender. The Conservatives can pretend, but Canadians know they have no climate change plan.

We have not made the progress that Canadians deserve and that they want to see. We have not built on the shoulders of the previous Progressive Conservative government, of the previous Liberal governments. We have done none of this. For four years now Canadians have watched. This is disgraceful because of the implications for our natural world. Our species, like wild salmon, are being compromised on the west coast. There are 40% decreases in pollinating bee species and populations across North America in the last two years.

Einstein told us that if we had no pollination on this planet, we had about nine years as a species to live. It is important to have a climate change plan to deal with those natural phenomena that are in play; such as, sea level rises, temperature increases and stresses on species.

• (1140)

Perhaps an even equally important factor here of the government's inaction is that we are losing the race to other jurisdictions that understand that the 21st century is all about becoming the most energy efficient jurisdiction in the world. It is about energy efficiency. It is about new technologies. It is about the clean economic future. It is about clean jobs going forward.

For example, the government lauds its own so-called infrastructure spending even though about 12% of the projects it photo ops

and announces are actually in play. Has the government attached any conditions to that spending? Has the government said to a municipality or to a province or to whomever it is doing business with that it wants the greenhouse gas implications measured not only to meet our targets but to drive up our energy efficiency?

Why are the Americans spending 16 times more on renewable energy power than we are per capita going forward? Why are our wind power producers fleeing Canada and going to the United States for multi-billion dollars of opportunities? It is about winning an energy efficiency race.

Has the government spoken at all about serious reduction, reusing, recycling of materials? It has said nothing. Why would we do that? Californians now describe waste as "unrecaptured profit". A wasteful economy is an unprofitable economy. An inefficient economy is an unprofitable economy.

This is about winning the race for the future. This is not just about bears and bees, bunnies and bugs. It is about jobs. It is about investment. It is about new technologies. If we get the right set of policies and a climate change plan, we will win the race.

Canadians can compete anywhere, but for four years we have lost. We have drifted. Now that we are facing the perspicacity of President Obama to move forward with his administration, Canada is getting into trouble.

That is why this clean energy race is so important. That is why the need to address the climate change crisis is so important. There should be no more distinctions between the environment and economy. They are integrated. Anybody who is thinking straight and thinking forward understands that they are integrated.

It is our job now to set the policies and govern the way we spend to give rise to new jobs, to give rise to new opportunities. We are not hearing this from the government and that is why this debate is so important today.

Just yesterday, a consortium of automakers announced a movement to electrify the city of Vancouver, so that we could make the quantum leap as a country to one that actually has the ability to power up electric vehicles. This car making consortium now tells us that they will be able to power up an electric car in 30 minutes or eight hours overnight. This can be done by just plugging the vehicle into a home electrical outlet.

That is the kind of thinking we need. That is the kind of quantum leap we have to make as a nation state. That is why we need to have hard caps. That is why we need to have a baseline that is in sync with the world. That is why we have to put a price on carbon emissions.

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Yet, there is nothing forthcoming from the government. That is dispiriting and disappointing to Canadians because they know we are beginning to lose the race.

Canadians care deeply about their environment. They care about it instinctively and innately because it is about their kids and their grandkids. It is about caring capacity. It is about understanding that nature is not just something that is harvested and drawn down. We have to restore what I call our natural capital. It is like a bank account. If we draw down on our capital, we will not live long on the interest.

If we restore our capital, we will generate even more interest, so that we as a species and a planet not just survive but thrive into the future and deal with this climate change crisis which is now upon us.

• (1145)

In closing, we will be supporting this motion. It is about time members of the NDP understand that this is about a plan for Canada. We have been calling for it for four years. I am glad they are joining us in our refrain now to demand of the government a plan, not just domestically but in advance of the Copenhagen round of negotiations. Hiding behind what is going on in the United States does not a Canadian plan make.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order that will be instructive to members, as I believe the table and the House are deliberating on the Conservatives' motion to defeat this process that we are in.

I call members' attention to a decision from May 30, 2005 concerning Bill C-43. The member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl and the member for Niagara Falls, who are now sitting on the Conservative benches, instructed the House through a motion that it give instruction to the Standing Committee on Finance to divide Bill C-43, which was an act to implement certain provisions of the budget. It was obviously an important bill. I will just read the last part of the motion because it is relevant to what we are dealing with today. It reads:

...that the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel be authorized to make such technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion; and that Bill C-43A be reported back to the House no later than two sitting days after the adoption of this motion;

My point of order is that we have had precedence for the motion that we have moved and are now debating today. The government has stood against the motion. We just had a vote over that very issue and it lost the vote. It then said that it was not in order, where clearly a motion moved by some of the government's own members, not four years ago, addresses this very thing, which is to divide a bill and seek the committee to return the bill by a prescribed date to the House so that it can have a free and fair vote in this democratic place.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley and perhaps invite him to leave his notes with that precedent at the table so that it can be taken into account for the consideration of the points raised earlier.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member outlined well the government's sorry record on

this file over the time it has been in power. I was particularly interested in his comments regarding the role of the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the whole idea of sending it to the Parliamentary Budget Officer for costing.

It seems to me that these are nothing more than delay tactics on the part of the government. This is an attempt on its part to extend this as long as possible in the hopes that it will go away in the short run and maybe even in the long run. It does not really want to come to terms with this issue. It has no intention with dealing with it unless it is forced to take action.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, I cannot disagree. I think it is a ruse. I think the government is hiding behind the Parliamentary Budget Officer as it underfunds and undercuts that office, claiming that it wants any environmental initiative to be costed that is not its own.

Did it bring costing for its own environmental enforcement bill? No, it did not. Has it costed a plan that does not even exist? No, it has not. Can it tell us what the price of carbon will be in year one through year five through year ten? No, it will not. Are we waiting to take instructions from Washington? Yes, we are.

This gives me the opportunity to remind the House how proud we were as a party to have passed in this place the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act, which helped set out a pattern of conduct and a plan until 2012. It is a plan, by the way, that is being challenged in Federal Court right now by the Government of Canada. It is trying to block what has been passed by the majority of the House.

We gave Canada a Federal Sustainable Development Act in the last Parliament through my former colleague, Mr. Godfrey, calling on the government to come together with a national plan to deal with this crisis. Again, where is it with respect to the government?

Finally, we need to build on the good work of the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartier, our former leader, who chaired a massive international meeting of over 100 countries in Montreal, which had great success in moving forward the international climate change dialogue.

• (1150)

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my friend's comments and I must say that I was in opposition at a period of time when that member and his former leader, who he referred to, was the minister of the environment. I had an opportunity to travel with that particular member and I found him quite articulate.

However, I would like the member opposite to name one concrete thing that he and his caucus did to change Canada's future when they were in government. They were in government for 13 years. They talked a lot. They pointed at charts and graphs. They discussed many things, but they never did anything.

I would like him to stand in his place and point to one thing that they did concretely to save the planet and move forward on greenhouse gas emission reduction.

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Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, let me count the ways. The first thing I would return to is what I made reference to in my remarks. Greenhouse gases were regulated under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, an act, need I remind the member, that was brought in by the former Liberal government, as well as the Species at Risk Act, as well as the creation of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development office, as well as a suite of new environmental indicators at Statistics Canada.

The list is too long, but we gave the Conservative government all the powers it needed in 2006 when it came to power to regulate greenhouse gases and come up with a plan.

We were promised regulations in January 2010. That promise has been moved twice before and now we are told it is delayed indefinitely. There are so many numerous things we have done to move Canada and to build on the shoulders of a previous Progressive Conservative government to deal with this climate change crisis and prepare ourselves for the energy efficient race that we are in for the 21st century economy. There are so many things to list but time is simply too short.

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on a well-informed, articulate and very educational speech for a lot of us who may not have had the wealth of experience that he has had in this area.

Having listened to the commentary from the Conservative colleagues, why does the member think it is that the Conservative government is dragging its heels on such an important issue for the world?

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, that is a difficult question. I cannot divine what is in the minds of the Prime Minister and his ministers for example.

However, for all of his adult life, in all that he has written and all that he has done, the Prime Minister is personally opposed to multilateral responses to most issues. He does not believe in the United Nations or Canada's role within it. He does not believe, and had not believed until about two years ago, in the phenomena of climate change, rejecting the science and describing the only international agreement to deal with it as a socialist plot to transfer wealth from the north to the south. Can anyone imagine that kind of talk in dealing with what we are dealing with?

It is very difficult to know why the government still has not tabled a plan. We anxiously await it so we can debate it and move this country forward.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the points my colleague made. My question is with respect to the timing of the bill and the timing of the legislation moving forward this fall on the eve, which I think is less than 60 days away now, of the Copenhagen round, the Copenhagen conference in which Canada will have a place. It is critical for the Canadian people, never mind the global community, to have Canada come forward with legislation like this that would actually put Canada on side and in line with where the rest of the world is moving, as opposed to the alternative option, as the member described in his comments, a Canadian government without a plan, without a set of real targets and without any notion of being able to

play with the other kids in the sandbox to address and to fight dangerous climate change.

I am wondering if the member could speak to the timing of the motion as much as anything else.

• (1155)

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, the timing of this motion was agreed to at committee. The environment committee agreed that we would have a full, frank and open debate this fall about where we are in this country, and that committee is sitting as we speak in the House.

It is all about trying to figure out where we are going, not just in terms of our domestic response here in Canada, which Canadians want to see because they want to win this energy efficiency war competition, but they also want a better idea of where we are going.

Because the government does not have a plan, we agreed at committee to have this debate in the fall at the environment committee which is precisely what we are doing.

It is very important at the same time to take into consideration, as the member knows, what is happening around the world. I heard some discouraging things yesterday out of the Bangkok negotiation setting where the Chinese and the Americans may or may not be actually moving forward together. We need to see that happen.

However, my colleague is right, we do need a Canadian plan.

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for Ottawa South if this is all about specific remedies or about hot air.

He said that the Prime Minister does not believe in multilateral forums, but this is a Prime Minister who has taken a lead in the G8, the G20 and in the United Nations pursuing values that I think the Liberal Party is famous for pursuing as well, for instance in dealing with the violation of human rights in Iran.

This is a government that has brought in specific targets of 20% reductions of greenhouse gases by 2020, the first mandated targets with measurable—

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to comment on the remarks of the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley regarding the admissibility of the motion under debate today.

The difference between the motion the member referred to and this current motion is that the motion regarding Bill C-43 did not have language that would deem the bill reported back without amendment in the event the committee ignored the instruction. The motion regarding Bill C-43 was permissive in that the committee could ignore the instruction without consequence.

The motion we are debating today would make something happen, essentially time allocation, in the event the committee did not take action. That is very different from the example given by the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

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Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, in the event of my colleague attempting to split hairs over the notion of what the consequence is for a time allocation, which was his first and most important point on this point of order, it is clear that the motion the Conservative members moved in 2005 allowed for the exact same thing to take place. Now he is going to go further down the excuse line to find another reason that we are not going to deal with a bill on climate change which his government has failed to move on. This is simply no longer tolerable to the Canadian people.

He should get over it and get on with it. We are moving forward on this issue and this debate. I encourage the member to enter the debate, offer up reasons or excuses for his government's lack of action on climate change, otherwise he should let the House get on with it.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague was entering into debate on my point of order rather than responding to my point of order.

We are not, as the member seems to suggest, splitting hairs. There are procedures and practices that we all follow in the House, Mr. Speaker, and you know that better than anyone being a Chair and Speaker. So to suggest that we are splitting hairs and that we should ignore some procedures and some practices but go to the larger picture of debate is inconsequential. It is irrelevant. There are procedures and practices that we are bound to follow. That is what makes this Parliament work.

The point of order I raised specifically deals with a point of order and a procedure that we need to follow. It refutes the member's original argument and that is not splitting hairs. That is merely pointing out the procedures and practices as set out in Marleau and Montpetit that we must, not should, but must follow in this place.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader and the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley and my understanding is that a decision is being contemplated as we speak.

The member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country had asked the member for Ottawa South a question. I am not sure if he heard the rest of it, but if he would like to respond to that which he did hear, I would give him that opportunity now.

• (1200)

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, I did catch about half the question but I stopped listening after half of it.

However, I would like to take a moment to remind the member that during the debates for the creation of the G20, his leader, the Prime Minister, ridiculed the notion of creating the G20. Just three weeks ago in Sault Ste. Marie, caught behind closed doors on a tape, ridiculed the notion that Canada would be an active player in the United Nations.

The problem is that on so many of these fronts, like international affairs, the Prime Minister is just pretending. We are not sure if it is Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde. We are not sure which prime minister is standing up and speaking.

If the member has difficulty understanding why the Prime Minister may not be committed to multilateral processes, he should

go back and read the speech he gave to the American council in 1997 when he told the most right wing Republican think-tank in the United States that the group was his inspiration and he intended to bring its values to bear in Canada.

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to spend some time on this particular issue. I have been in the House some period of time and have had the opportunity to look at the Ross Perot Liberals, their charts and graphs and their ability to talk a good talk but not walk a good walk.

I had the opportunity to see some budgets from this Conservative Prime Minister and some real tangible results, things like the Northwest Transmission Line in British Columbia that will take many diesel operators off the grid, and the Mayo B investment of some \$71 million, by this federal government, through which five communities were taken off diesel. Tonnes and tonnes of greenhouse gases were taken out of the environment.

There are some real tangible investments that this government is making from coast to coast to combat climate change. That is why I asked the member opposite in particular what the Liberal government did in 13 years, and all he did was talk and point to graphs. Really, it did nothing tangible. That was what I witnessed and I think most Canadians recognize that this government and this Prime Minister are taking real steps toward combating climate change.

We have made a strong commitment; we have taken continued action and we have a plan for what we are going to do. We are taking steps. We are taking this aggressive action on combating climate change in three ways. We are doing it domestically, continentally in North America, and internationally.

Indeed, this government takes this issue very seriously and there has been a great deal of progress recently, especially in the most recent three and a half or four years that we have been in government, including regulatory action to address greenhouse gas emissions and working with the United States on a harmonized approach. Obviously we are one continent, and it is important that we harmonize with the largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world.

Canada is also committed to being an active and constructive participant in Copenhagen and working toward a post-2012 agreement on global emissions reduction. This government has established a national target of an absolute 20%—that's right, an absolute 20%—reduction in greenhouse gases relative to 2006 levels. This we plan to do by 2020.

Over the longer term, it has set a target to reduce Canada's emissions 60% to 70% below 2006 levels by 2050. That is right, it is one of the most aggressive targets in the world, 60% to 70% below 2006 levels.

Canada already has one of the cleanest electricity sectors in the world and, as I mentioned at the beginning, we are moving forward even more aggressively to make sure clean energy in the electrical sector is even more rampant in Canada.

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We have committed to further progress as well and have set a goal that by 2020, 90% of our electricity needs will come from non-emitting sources. For the first time, Canadians should be proud that there is a federal government, a Prime Minister and a Minister of the Environment who are moving forward with real tangible results that Canadians understand, results to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to combat climate change.

We have established targets that are consistent with scientific consensus and with the contributions Canada can and should make to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions.

By contrast, this bill, Bill C-311, would impose a 2020 emissions reduction target that goes far deeper, and we agree that it goes far deeper, than what is being contemplated by our closest ally and trading partner, and that, quite frankly, is not realistic. It is a target that would put our economic recovery from the recent global downturn, as well as our economy and Canadian jobs, at serious risk.

Indeed, it is hard to fathom how and why proponents of this legislation, the Liberals, the Bloc and the NDP, can continue to support it while conceding that they have never done any analysis of its potential impact on the Canadian economy, no analysis at all of how many jobs would be devastated by this proposal.

In the November 2008 Speech from the Throne, the government committed to working with the provincial governments and all of our partners to develop and implement a North America-wide cap and trade system for greenhouse gases and an effective international protocol for the post-2012 period. This is very important and we have committed to doing this.

The government is moving forward on these commitments, and we will bring forward a cap and trade system that will lead to significant greenhouse gas emission reductions. That is along with the other things we are doing.

• (1205)

The cap and trade system will cover all industrial sectors and will require mandatory emissions reductions. It will promote the development and the deployment of key technologies, such as carbon capture and storage, that will be a very great key to reducing emissions.

As a first step, we have recently set out guidelines for a carbon offset market that will establish tradeable credits within the proposed cap and trade system. We are taking steps in a very short period of time. After 13 dark years of Liberal rule in this country, in which nothing was accomplished, this government, in a short period of time, has taken real steps, tangible steps that Canadians understand are exactly in accordance with Canadians' priorities to protect their jobs and at the same time save our environment.

We will set up a cap and trade system that reflects Canadian priorities and realities but that will also promote harmonization with the United States. We will phase in our approach over time ensuring the ability to adjust and adapt as the United States finalizes its approach.

We will continue to work closely with stakeholders and provincial and territorial governments on this issue. In fact, the Minister of the Environment recently completed a cross-country tour to meet

provincial and territorial premiers and ministers to consult with them, to talk with them, and to understand their priorities on the development of the cap and trade system.

There are already areas where we are harmonizing with the new leadership direction of the United States. For example, the government is using its regulatory authorities to transform our auto industry, which is so important for jobs in Ontario and for families in Ontario, to meet the new challenges of the low carbon economy of the future.

About 80% of new vehicles manufactured in Canada by Canadians are exported to the United States, which creates a need for a standard. Regulation of tailpipe emissions, which cause a tremendous amount of the greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks, will be consistent with the fuel efficiency regulations recently announced by President Obama, thereby ensuring a continuing North American standard for vehicles and continuing to ensure that Canadians will be employed.

It is important to remember, even as we move forward on a cap and trade system, that the government has also put in place a suite of ecoAction measures aimed at reducing emissions in the energy and transportation sector, which account for such a large part of emissions.

These investments are increasing the supply of renewable power, improving energy efficiency in homes and workplaces across the country, and reducing emissions from commercial transportation. These are real tangible steps that were never even contemplated by the former Liberal government, and were certainly not put in place.

Through Canada's economic recovery action plan, the government is investing in both Canada's economic and environmental future, including investments of \$1 billion each in the clean energy fund and the green infrastructure fund, which I spoke of earlier, real tangible investments that get Canadians employed and at the same time save our environment.

The environmental commitments in this budget alone totalled \$4 billion. These investments will play an important role in providing economic stimulus and keeping Canadians employed, as well as in reducing Canada's greenhouse gas emissions. I am proud of these investments. We are doing the job that was not done by previous governments.

The Government of Canada knows that taking action on climate change is a global concern. We must work with our global partners. We will continue to work on a North American approach on climate change as well. We work with our partners and we work with the world at large because we know doing so is necessary.

The Prime Minister's recent visit to Washington marked further progress in harmonizing our efforts with those of the United States and the administration there. As we know, President Obama and the Prime Minister created a U.S.-Canada clean energy dialogue when the President first visited us in February. The dialogue actually covers three themes.

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●(1210)

First, we will develop and deploy clean energy technologies, with a focus on carbon capture and storage. Second, we will expand clean energy research and development, which is so important for our future and is certainly part of the solution. Third, we will build a more efficient electricity grid based on clean and renewable energy generation, which is so important for Canada, especially to create jobs and maintain jobs and our great quality of life.

In Washington, a report to leaders was presented that outlined joint progress under the clean energy dialogue action plan. Indeed, under the action plan, both countries have identified the most promising opportunities to work together to accelerate the development and deployment of clean energy technologies as we move toward a clean energy future.

We want a clean energy future. However, we do not want to just talk about it; we want to actually do it.

In addition to the report to leaders, a set of projects was announced, which provides concrete examples of the on-the-ground action to deliver results that advance the goals of the clean energy dialogues.

In summary, significant progress is being made under the dialogue, and there will be additional progress to report over the coming years. We, on this side of the House in the Conservative government, are proud of this progress, because we are balancing and, at the same time, getting real tangible results through work.

Our North American partnership is not just limited to the United States. In fact, we are looking beyond the United States. We are working toward a common North American approach that would also include our Mexican neighbours to the south.

The recent North American leaders summit in August, attended by the Prime Minister, President Obama and President Calderón, marked significant progress in this development. At this meeting, agreement was reached to cooperate on a common North American approach to climate change, supported by agreement on a practical and outcome-based work program that actually sees real results and that will provide a strong foundation for these efforts.

Finally, a very important meeting is coming up in Copenhagen in the very near future. We are watching this with anticipation. It is the 15th conference of parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will take place in December.

Throughout the negotiating process, Canada has been engaged in, and a constructive contributor to, the development of a new global post-2012 agreement.

We will continue to act on the basis of clearly established principles, including balancing environmental protection and economic prosperity; maintaining a long-term focus for generations and generations to come, our grandchildren and great-grandchildren; focusing on funding, developing and deploying clean technologies, which we believe are part of the solution; engaging and seeking commitments from both developed and developing countries, which are very important, especially with the rise of China, India and other countries across the globe that are actually causing a large part of the

emissions issue; and, finally, playing a constructive role at international and continental tables.

In conclusion, the Government of Canada, this Conservative government, is responding to the challenge presented by climate change and responding to the needs and demands of Canadians. We are implementing a very robust agenda, one like this country has never seen before from any federal government. It will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen the competitiveness of the Canadian economy. It will protect jobs and it will save our environment.

●(1215)

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad to hear the member opposite talk about the robust and rigorous plan that the Conservative government has put forward.

My question then is why the Conservatives are opposed to this motion to simply separate Bill C-311 to look at one section that they would obviously love to be part of, to simply release their plan, to reassure Canadians, to reassure industry, to let them know, to let everyone know what the targets are in this great plan they have. That is the motion we are discussing here today, and that is what I would like to hear the hon. member respond to.

Mr. Brian Jean: Madam Speaker, it is just like the Liberal Party—and I know this member is new to this place and I have not had an opportunity to listen to him speak often or to listen to his thoughts. With the Liberals there is more talk, more talk about motions, more talk about getting results instead of getting results.

We are on the ground. We are establishing electricity grids across this country. We are ensuring we have new technologies. We are establishing standards for tailpipe emissions. We are actually getting the job done.

I do not know why that member cannot just get on board with this government and get the results that Canadians are demanding, because we are getting it done. We can see it in the Mayo B investment in the Yukon Territories, where we took five communities off diesel and actually saved thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year. We are actually getting results. We are saving taxpayer dollars at the same time, for example, \$8 million in transportation costs a year just in the Yukon.

We are getting results for Canadians, and Canadians want us to continue to do that. I do not know why members continue to throw motions around instead of just coming on board and helping us with the plan that Canadians demand.

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Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague asked why New Democrats have consistently forced this issue with the previous government and now again in this Parliament. The answer is that the consequences of unmitigated climate change are disastrous for the global community and for Canada in particular. The government is sitting on a number of reports from natural resources that talk about the effect of climate change particularly on our far north. As the sea ice melts in the Antarctic, the effects are felt the strongest in the northern hemisphere, particularly in the Arctic.

My colleague talked about results on the ground. We know that the fund the government set up to enable wind energy has been completely exhausted. There was a small brief period of wind energy investment across Canada. The investment climate was not as good as what the U.S. and Europe were offering, but Canada was starting to move closer to what those countries were offering. The Canadian wind industry was moving forward on a huge suite of announcements. Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and that member's own province of Alberta were moving forward as well. We have now come to realize that the fund has been completely exhausted well before the intended date and there are no more dollars in the fund.

Does he understand as a businessman himself the uncertainty his own government has created in that critical industry will be anathema to Canada matching the other countries that are moving forward? Every critical number shows this. Every way we cut and slice this, the developed countries are far surpassing Canada's own investment ratio. They are far surpassing Canada in terms of the renewable energy we are putting on line.

On the specific topic of the funds available to the wind industry to allow it to build the generation capacity this country requires, would the member agree that the funds have been depleted at the federal level, or can he reassure us otherwise?

Mr. Brian Jean: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the NDP for supporting this government and for having confidence in our Prime Minister so that we can continue the great environmental investments that we are making.

I would like to talk about the green infrastructure fund. I do not know where the member is getting his information, but I have talked to wind energy providers in P.E.I., Nova Scotia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. There are huge plans to move forward with wind energy in this country. There is even talk of wind energy in the north.

The green infrastructure fund is mandated specifically to deal with wind energy and other forms of energy. That is exactly what happened when the Liberals were in charge. They talked about doing things but we are actually getting results. We are looking now at investing seriously in wind energy across the country. We are in discussions with wind energy providers to do just that.

If the member knows of some people that are not moving forward with wind energy but have that opportunity, I would invite him to talk to me specifically so I could approach those people and help them with their challenges and their investment opportunities.

I know firsthand that wind energy is part of the solution. Our government is moving forward to support wind energy in all parts of the country.

• (1220)

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate our government's tangible actions on the ground to make a difference.

I would like to talk about the electricity grid. I agree with my colleague that it is going to be important for us. Eastern Canada has a tremendous amount of renewable power which, through a proper grid, can be used not only in eastern Canada but also potentially could be exported to other areas, including the U.S. northeast. There are great opportunities.

I was reading an article this morning about the struggle the U.S. is having with its climate change bills in Congress and in the Senate. The real challenge is if the U.S. will be able to get those bills passed. The member for Ottawa South was talking as though this were a no-brainer, but it is not.

Given the challenges and the importance of our working together as an international community, I would ask the member, what folly is in Bill C-311?

Mr. Brian Jean: Madam Speaker, we have to work with our partners. We cannot just be a lone voice out there.

Canada is responsible for somewhere in the neighbourhood of 1% of the total emissions in the world. Working by ourselves, having aggressive targets that quite frankly would destroy our economy, will not help anything. We will not make significant progress.

For the first time in a long time we have a Prime Minister who will actually work co-operatively with other leaders, who is respected by other leaders internationally for his moral stand and for his stand on the environment and for his announcements in relation to providing power to the United States, which means jobs as well.

We have to work on a continental solution and a world solution as well. We have to do it one at a time. We are working quickly and we are working in full cooperation with leaders of other countries. For the first time in a long time they have respect for our Prime Minister. They will listen and take guidance from our Prime Minister.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Madam Speaker, part of the direction we have to take is to change people's attitudes about energy use and move people in a positive direction toward energy efficiency, all the good things to which the hon. member and his government have alluded. However, why in the last budget were all those dollars addressed toward the stimulation of the economy but there were no criteria regarding promoting green energy?

The other day I saw a sign regarding hot tub sales indicating that those who bought a hot tub could get the home renovation tax credit. How does that type of behaviour match up with any organized campaign on the part of the government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Mr. Brian Jean: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question.

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It does help because what we do is encourage investment in new technology. Today, fridges are much more energy efficient than fridges that were made 10 years ago. Vehicles today, compared to 30 years ago, are far more efficient as far as tailpipe emissions are concerned.

Not only that but we on this side of the House believe that the environment and the economy can actually work together. In fact, a recent report indicated that environmental investment actually creates more jobs than other types of investments.

We on this side of the House believe that we can save the environment at the same time as we promote the economy, but it has to be managed properly. Fortunately, we have a set of ministers here and a Prime Minister who are not just excellent environmental stewards, but good economists. They will be able to manage the economy properly while at the same time saving the environment.

I am very proud of that record. I would ask the member to come on board, join us and help this government move forward on the priorities of Canadians.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

For the past four years, the Conservative government has been saying all kinds of nice things and making all kinds of promises about the environment, and for the past four years, the Liberal Party and the other opposition parties have been wondering what the Conservatives' plan is. Where is the plan?

Instead of a plan, we get inconsequential proposals, announcements that never materialize, fancy words and promises to cooperate internationally, but no action. That is why today's discussion could yield some very good results.

[*English*]

This motion we are debating is excellent. We are not talking about the environment in general. We are not even talking about Bill C-311 in general. The motion very simply separates out from the body of Bill C-311 the clause that addresses the requirement of the government to set targets and to say where we want to be in our reduction of greenhouse gases in 2015, 2020 and 2025 so that we know what the plan is going to deliver.

This is not overly rigorous, because under the mandate, the plan will be reviewed, updated and reassessed every five years. We will ask if we made it, if it is the right thing and if we are going in the right direction. Right now, we are looking at a concrete plan. The Government of Canada should be pleased with this motion and pleased with the opportunity to share with the House and the people of Canada its plan on where we are going.

The Conservative government makes a lot of hay out of its supposedly ambitious target of a 20% reduction by 2020 from 2006 levels. We can debate whether that is actually an ambitious target or not, but at least there is a target and it intends to get there. We need the government to tell us where we are going to be halfway, too. We need the government to tell us where we are going to be in 2015 and how we are going to get to the targets that exist for 2050.

The idea that we need to respond aggressively to the realities of climate change is no longer up for debate. The only question is, with what clarity will we do that and within what framework?

I am very pleased today that the NDP demonstrated that it has been listening to the Liberal Party in the environment committee, on which I have the honour of sitting. As we have said, we need to talk about where we are going. We need to get a plan. We need to hear what the plan is from the Conservative government. We need to hear about the issues around what we are going to be negotiating in Copenhagen and what the position of the government is going to be. Yes, we need to hear that.

The NDP, the Liberals and the other parties may disagree on what exactly that position should be or which binding targets should be imposed upon the negotiators at Copenhagen, but to remove the non-contentious part of Bill C-311 and simply say that the government is proud of its plan, the government must bring forward that plan.

[*Translation*]

I would really like the Conservatives to give us some straight answers about where we are headed. What steps do they plan to take between now and 2050? What will Canada do to ensure that we take responsibility and fulfill our commitments to the international community?

Our industries need clear direction. They need to know what will be expected of them in the years to come. As a member of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, I often talk to representatives of the oil and manufacturing industries. They want us—the Liberal Party—to tell them what our plan for them will be if we form the government one day. So I ask these industry representatives what the Conservative government has told them.

• (1230)

[*English*]

How has the Conservative government reached out to industry and said specifically, “This is where we need to go”? The answer time and time again is, the government has not.

What we are discussing today is an opportunity for the Conservatives to stand up and show us how strong their plan is, how great it is, where they want to go, and to give us targets that we can all aspire to and try to reach: industry, individuals, communities.

This is a good thing that we are talking about here. For the life of me, and perhaps I am still overly naive, I cannot understand why these Conservatives are opposing it. There is no question on the issue of climate change. We are all aware of the challenges. We just have not been able to get a sense from these Conservatives of how they are going to respond to those challenges.

Time and time again the opposition parties have tried to get those answers, first by bringing forward bills such as Bill C-311 that are demanding action. Now, by more modestly pulling out a piece of this bill, we are saying, “Okay, if the government does not want to give us action, at least give us an idea of the actions that it wants to take and where we are going to go. Give us something to reassure Canadians and to show Canadians that this Parliament is capable of addressing the grand issue of our time”.

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How we get this right on the environment is going to direct the success or failure of us as a species in the 21st century. Still I hear lines like I heard about 10 minutes ago from the member opposite, where addressing the environment runs the risk of destroying our economy. I would like to think and to hope that in 2009 there is no longer any rhetoric around the fact that there has to be a choice between the environment and economy.

[*Translation*]

For so long now, the Conservatives and the Republicans have been saying that they cannot do anything about the environment because they have to deal with the economy, income and jobs. But we know that the critical thing is to combine these elements, to plan for both, to acknowledge that a healthy environment will support a strong economy and that a strong economy can and should contribute to a healthy environment. It is not magic. It is about investing intelligently in renewable energy and efficiency, about investing in the research, science, development and innovation that have always been Canada's strengths.

Unfortunately, we once again find ourselves in the position of having to beg the government to tell us its plan, to share its ideas with us, to tell us about its vision for the decades to come. That is not too much to ask.

[*English*]

We are asking for a little bit of clarity. We are asking the government to say, "This is what we want to reduce by 2015. This is where we want to be in 2020 and this is how we would like to get there by 2025". We want to know if these targets can be adjusted if they are not ambitious enough or if they need to be more ambitious, if we need to deliver in a better sense.

That is the question we are talking about today. Will the government, that is so proud of its plan, so proud of the actions that it is supposedly bringing forward, share with us how those actions are going to result in targets for 2015 and so forth? Where is the plan? What is the plan? Can somebody please tell us?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nicolas Dufour (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to the speech by the member for Papineau. I will admit that I was a little surprised and even confused about what he said.

I completely agree with part of his analysis, when he said that the Conservative government does absolutely nothing, has no plan, has no clue, and essentially has no interest in the environment.

The problem I see is that the only thing that the Liberals have ever proposed was a carbon tax. After that, they ran out of ideas. The Liberals did not give us a concrete plan, no tangible initiatives regarding their commitment to the environment. Need I remind members that it was under the Liberals that Canada had the highest increases in greenhouse gases?

I have a question for the member for Papineau. I am in no way questioning his support of environmental issues, but when I listen to him, I hear sovereignist rhetoric. Does he agree with the fact that Quebec must speak with one voice in Copenhagen, and that it must

defend its own plan because Quebec is the only province in Canada to have a plan for the environment?

● (1235)

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member.

He raised a few points that I could completely take issue with, but I will focus instead on his question.

Quebec, which indeed has some great solutions for environmental problems—and I must congratulate the Charest government for bringing forward so many proposals in that regard—can share its solutions with the rest of Canada and the Canadian government. The values espoused by Quebecers regarding the environment are not all that different from those espoused by all Canadians. As for being able to come together to say: here is our plan and here is how we differ from western reformists who do not represent our values and our reality; I completely agree that Canadian values must be conveyed by strong people from Quebec and the rest of Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague opposite for his comments and speech. I found his comments regarding a plan quite interesting.

I would like to take him back about 12 years ago to Kyoto. The government of the time went to Kyoto to sign an international agreement on the back of a napkin without a plan. Even when it came to implementation, it did not even know what it was doing.

Then we get to 2006 and we have seen emissions rise that whole time. Therefore, there was absolutely no plan.

I find it a little bit rich to be lectured on the lack of a plan from the Liberals of that time.

The parliamentary secretary gave a long list of initiatives. We talked about transmission, the east-west grid and our renewable plan.

How does the member have any credibility in talking about a plan when the Liberals did not have a plan on Kyoto?

Mr. Justin Trudeau: I will take advantage of this moment, Madam Speaker, to remind the hon. members opposite that the Liberal Party in the 2008 election, in which I was elected, had an ambitious plan regarding the environment. It was not universally accepted and we find ourselves in opposition because of it. However, the idea that we had a plan at least is not something that I am going to disagree with. Right now we are continuing to be in opposition. The Conservatives are in government. It is not so bad that an opposition party has not revealed every detail of its plan. What is bad is that the government has not revealed any details of any plan.

● (1240)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is a very important debate. It is an ongoing debate about how Canada will respond to one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century and beyond. It is also a debate about continued government inaction on the extraordinary challenge that we face as a nation and as a world.

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I would like to go back, if I may, to 2005-06 since members of the government like to bring up that time period over and over again, a bit like a broken record.

I recall that in 2005, after extensive consultations with industry and environmental groups, the same environmental groups this time around which the Conservative government has left waiting in the reception area. We have a government that seems stubbornly committed to not having any kind of dialogue with Canada's environmental groups.

After extensive consultations with Canadian civil society, the Liberal government had a regulatory package waiting to be unveiled. That regulatory package would have helped Canada meet its Kyoto targets and, more importantly, would have helped Canada spur its economy toward the kinds of investments in green technologies that would be required not only to solve environmental problems but to provide jobs for Canadians. Right before the package was unveiled, the NDP, along with the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives pulled the plug on the Liberal government at that time.

There was a plan that was ready to go. It was a plan based on consultation. In the election campaign that ensued, we heard a lot of self-righteous talk from the Conservative opposition at the time saying, "Just wait and see. Once we take over the controls of the government, there will be action. We will achieve things and produce results". Here we are four years later and there are still no climate change regulations.

The government has been somewhat fortunate that in the interim the United States elected a new president and now it can hide behind the president's climate change plan. Until the Congress of the United States puts together something on climate change, the current government will obviously not produce much on this issue.

It is very important that we act on this issue. The impact of climate change is vast. Even though we have a lot of scientific evidence, we still do not understand exactly how climate change will impact our water systems. We do not understand how climate change will impact our oceans. We have an idea, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

At this point, we should still move ahead. If the government will not move ahead, it is up to Parliament to force it to start laying out some greenhouse gas emissions objectives. It is our duty as parliamentarians to do that.

It is very unfortunate, as we know, that earlier this week there was an in camera meeting of the House of Commons environment committee on the subject of Bill C-311. The result of a vote in that in camera meeting was unveiled by the NDP in advance of when the report of that committee was tabled in the House, which obviously was a breach of trust.

It is very important that we learn to work together in trust because a committee of Parliament in this corner of the world—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): On a point of order, the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, I apologize for interrupting my friend. I think he knows full well that the—

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Debate.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I am on a point of order. I have not even said anything yet.

The House leader for the NDP quickly rose on the very subject the member is talking about. She came into the House immediately because it was an inadvertent admission as to what had happened at the subcommittee. It does not provide the House any benefit to return to something that has already been addressed by the House. It is unfortunate that the member chooses this as his line of argument on this bill today.

Mr. Mervin Tweed: Madam Speaker, it is important to note that when one makes a mistake, one owns up to it and apologizes. However, that does not correct the record in the protocol and what actually took place. It also does not give other parties carte blanche to continue to do that and then stand and apologize.

● (1245)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I believe that members have entered into debate. This does not appear to me to be a point of order.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis may resume his speech.

[*English*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, my response to my hon. colleague's objection is the following.

I sit on the environment committee and I make a point of working hard to promote environmental issues. Now I will be faced with letters from constituents. Some of them will be from British Columbia because I received many phone calls from British Columbia late last week about Bill C-311. It was obviously part of a lobby campaign but I am not sure exactly where it originated. However, I will be receiving phone calls and letters from people who will ask me why I voted against Bill C-311.

Even if I am speaking in support of Bill C-311 today, it will be very hard for me to respond to those criticisms because I will not be able to tell these people what happened during committee. I will not even be able to tell people who call my office or who write to me how I voted because it is an in camera meeting and to do that would be a breach of Parliament. Now I have been put in a compromised situation.

I accept the apology of the hon. House leader of the NDP. However, I wish to use this opportunity to set the record straight. I am in support of setting objectives that will guide the government, hopefully, toward action on climate change, but I have very little faith in the ability of the government to actually take this issue seriously.

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If we look at the United States, as part of its stimulus package the United States will be spending 14 times more per capita on renewable energy than we in Canada today. The government can try to say that it is waiting for the United States to act before it knows what to do because obviously it is at a loss and does not know what to do. Four years later, after being elected in 2006, it still has not figured out the climate change issue. It can hide behind the excuse that it must wait for our neighbours to the south to act, but they are already spending 14 times more per capita on renewable energies than we are.

The government cannot have it both ways. It cannot say that it has to wait on the one hand for action and then say that it is taking action but that it still cannot act on renewable energy.

Here is what I fear in the government's approach and what I fear if we do not prod and push the obstinate, stubborn government to take meaningful action on climate change. I fear Canada will fall behind.

The United States has the most dynamic economy in the world. It may not be performing as strongly as other economies at the moment but it is one of the most dynamic, creative and innovative countries in the world, and it is already working on the technologies of tomorrow and on the solutions to climate change. It may not have passed a bill yet in Congress or taken a position vis-à-vis Copenhagen yet, but it is working on it on the ground while we sit back and twiddle our thumbs waiting for the Americans to issue a press release.

Maybe that is a reflex of a government that governs by press releases. Maybe a press release is the only reality the government knows. I would suggest that the government should not wait for a press release from the White House. It should start investing now in the technologies of tomorrow, in the technologies that will allow us to save energy and be more competitive on the world markets. It should act now if it wants Canada to be at the forefront of economic development moving forward into the 21st century.

It is not enough to say, "Let us wait on the Americans". Otherwise we can use that argument all the way down the line. We could say that before we take any action on health care, we will wait for the Americans to sort out their problems.

Mr. Paul Szabo: There goes our sovereignty.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: There goes our sovereignty.

It is time for the government to start acting and that is one of the reasons that this party, the official opposition, has lost confidence in the government.

It is very important that we set targets. Despite what happened earlier this week, I know the committee will continue to work hard on this bill and that we will push the government to set targets and to take action on climate change.

• (1250)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to correct the record. The former chief of staff to former Prime Minister Chrétien, Eddie Goldenberg, did make the statement in his book that when the Liberals were in power they never intended to implement environmental change through Kyoto. It was only a topic of discussion to raise awareness. In fact,

the 6% below the rates previously was only to one-up the Americans when they had put in 5%.

On the other hand, this Conservative government has set firm targets with fixed measuring dates, achievable targets, and we will reduce pollution.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, all I can say is what I believe as a Liberal and as a member of Parliament. I believe we need to take strong action against climate change.

However, I would go back to the hon. member's point about raising awareness. If the hon. member understood how democracy works, how consensus building in a society works, she would understand that democracy does not work by decree. We do not decide Monday that we will tackle climate change and then on Tuesday all the measures are implemented. This is not a dictatorship in which we live. We need to have debate and we need to create consensus. It takes time to turn the ship of state around.

It has taken a number of years for societies, including the United States, Canada and the world, to really understand the severity of the problem and to become committed at the grassroots to solving the problem. It is not pejorative to say that a government is stimulating debate or discussion on an issue as important as climate change and that it requires the cooperation of many segments of civil society. This is not changed by decree. It is not changed by—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. Questions and comments, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, regarding Bill C-311 and this particular topic in general, it should be no surprise to the member or anyone in the House that the Conservative government would be in the pockets of the oil industry.

In fact, the government has ignored its own member, the Minister of State for Democratic Reform, who supports an east-west power grid, which he has spoken about before, which would send Manitoba's clean electrical power to Ontario to retire the coal plants in Ontario. The government even ignores its own member and prefers to promote a nuclear alternative which it knows could take years and years to get approval.

Why does the government not deal in concrete matters on this issue and promote the east-west power grid as a start to help push this file along?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, that is the \$64,000 question. I have been scratching my head now for four years trying to figure out what is motivating the government. Why does the government not act on so many important issues? One of the reasons, which relates to the issue of promoting an east-west power grid, is that foremost in the mind of the government is that it does not want to take any concrete action that may create a potential debate or conflict around an issue because it shuns any kind of controversy, even creative controversy aimed at finding the solution to problems.

Routine Proceedings

We sit in the House and have debates all the time. It is creative conflict, but the government is so afraid of provoking the ire of this person or that person that it will not take any action on anything. That is not leadership.

The government's approach to many issues, including water because it still has not come out with a national water strategy, is that if nobody moves, nobody gets hurt and then maybe the Conservatives can sail through the polls perhaps to electoral victory. Canadians, however, do not think that way and that is why they should really rethink their whole approach to tackling these important issues.

ROYAL ASSENT

• (1255)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows: Rideau Hall

Ottawa

October 8, 2009

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the schedule to this letter on the 8th day of October, 2009 at 11:51 a.m.

Yours sincerely,

Sheila-Marie Cook

The Secretary to the Governor General and Herald Chancellor

The schedule indicates the bill assented to was Bill C-32, An Act to amend the Tobacco Act.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

BILL C-311—CLIMATE CHANGE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to make some remarks today with regard to Bill C-311.

Based on the debate we have had so far today and what I have been able to listen to and participate in, it would suggest to me that everyone has their own vision or view of what history might have been or what history was. I would like to take a brief moment to discuss some of that before moving into my comments, and I will make them relevant to the topic we are discussing.

I found it interesting that members opposite have presented Canadians with two different environmental packages over the last several years. They signed the Kyoto agreement, which they had no intention of doing. It was a last minute thought. Then, just to confirm what one of my hon. colleagues said, it was reported by a man who was very close to those discussions and to that debate, that in reality it was to present a signature of agreement to something they had

actually no intention of following through with and no intention of implementing.

We only need to look back at the history to find out that is actually true. After signing the Kyoto accord, the government of that day did nothing to move the ball forward. The Liberals talk today about plans and directions. I recognize and our government recognizes that it takes a lot of discussion and a lot of understanding but what happened during that period was merely lip service paid to the public and to the environmentalists with actually no plan or no outcomes set to measure the success.

The Liberals also talked about plans that were presented. I can think of the Kelowna accord. They talked about an agreement they had with our aboriginal communities but there was no plan. They proposed it as a plan but it was only a news release at the last minute on the dying bed of the government of that day. We knew, and I believe the Canadian public knew, that there would be no plan or no direction following that agreement. It was just merely window dressing prior to an election call.

The member opposite talked about an environmental plan that the Liberals put forward in the last election, 2008. Again, the people of Canada rejected that plan. Why did they reject it? They rejected because they saw it purely as a tax on consumers at a time when consumers were starting to face an economic recession that the world was going through and that was moving its way slowly to Canada. It was rejected simply because it was merely an idea with no meat on the bones, no structure to what they were actually trying to do and it made it very difficult. I would challenge all the members opposite who were fortunate enough to be elected to stand up and say that they could actually explain it to the people they talked to when they were door knocking. That became their biggest issue as far as the campaign.

I do want to talk mostly today in relation to Canada's relationship with the United States. It is very easy to say that Canada can move forward on these types of international agreements without working closely with our neighbours. It needs to be understood that with over 80% of the trade that now takes place between Canada and the United States, everything that we do impacts another industry, another part of our country, just as when the Americans implement something to effect change in one area of their industry, it flows back to Canada and impacts us, not always negatively but in a lot of cases the implications are not what we anticipated or thought about. Therefore, at times we need to go back and review what was introduced, review how it was proposed and then massage it to make it work. It is important to have negotiations and it is important that we share the same economic space.

• (1300)

We are, in my mind, a North American economy. I have had the great pleasure of living within 20 minutes of the United States border. I grew up where the people in North Dakota were my neighbours and my friends. The only difference that we actually had was the difference in a dollar and a border that said this is where our country begins and the other one ends.

Routine Proceedings

Therefore, I think it is very important that we pay attention. I think the members of the Bloc have raised the issue. We cannot move forward without the co-operation and participation of every province. That again takes time.

I think we have all come to the conclusion that it is important and necessary that we move on climate change, and that we accept the facts that we all have to pull in the same direction to make it move forward. If we do not do that, people may feel better about their achievements but the actual accomplishment by the collective group is just not there. That is why we need those negotiations to take place. That is why we have spent a lot of time participating in those negotiations.

The opposition talks about the new President of the United States. I think we are all prepared to give him the time that is required to put the people whom he needs in place to move the ball forward on this particular issue but also to create and establish that relationship with their neighbours.

I would suspect that this same type of discussion is taking place within their chambers, in the sense that, "What we do we have to do as an economic partnership with Canada. We share the same environmental spaces so what we do is going to impact their economy and their environment. So why would we not sit down, make some decisions together, make some decisions and a plan that we can move forward with, develop together, and present it when the time comes to the rest of the world".

We know our dependence on each other for trade and financial markets. Again, it is something that we all have to be aware of. We have seen in this global economic recession where some economies are starting to move forward, although very slowly and very cautiously, but in the same breath, to impose something on any of these countries at this particular time, Canada along with the U.S. must be very careful about what those outcomes would bring.

Yes, we can stand up, as we have seen members opposite, and announce grandiose plans as to what we are going to do or what they would suggest we do with the environment. Even with a plan that they say they will bring forward at some point in time, we have to look at what the impacts are going to be on our economy and on our country at this particular point in time. If we do not do that we are wearing blinders and we are going to wake up a few years from now and wonder what decisions we actually took on this day and how it is impacting us into the future.

On the supply chains of food, of product and of manufactured goods back and forth with the American economy, no one knows better than I the difficulties we have with supply chains and getting them moving north and south. We have almost the same types of challenges moving them east and west in Canada with trade barriers set up by the provinces, but collectively they have started as individuals and now as groups of provinces. They have started to recognize that the benefits and the outcomes will be better simply because there is an agreement that they want to move forward with, not one moving forward and trying to drag the others through or one denying that they should not move forward and holding everyone back.

I think we have seen that very well, particularly in the western provinces. B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan have now eliminated the labour barriers for trade. People can now move from one province to the other without having any special provincial designation. I think that creates an opportunity in the economy for our workers who in certain parts of the country are under great duress through no fault of their own. It would allow them, if they choose, to move to an area where there is opportunity right now and a chance for other opportunities in their careers.

On regulation, there should be a balance in what we do to regulate Canadians and what our friends to the south do. There should be an agreement to work within certain parameters, so that one country's movements do not impact the other country's movements, particularly on environmental issues, in a negative way.

● (1305)

Within the climate change strategy, the economic reality is that we just simply cannot ignore our American neighbours. We must look at it as a North American economy, and we must ensure that it is integrated in many of the aspects of our communities, and particularly in the environmental issues that we are discussing today.

We must harmonize our principles. We all have to have a set of principles that we would agree to and work within. We would have to have a policy design that we can actually understand and have input in to changing and updating as things move together, but we cannot do that independent of the Americans, just as I suspect they are not trying to do it independent of us.

If members opposite choose to look at all of the discussions that have taken place on this issue, including the years before that were mentioned, the years of planning that I would say did not produce the results that Canadians wanted, we can see results starting to move forward. I think over time we are going to see a very unified position come forward under the North American banner. It will be Canada and U.S. leading the way, and being the example for other countries to follow.

Members opposite have criticized the government for choosing one area of the environment over the other. I do not believe that is true, but it certainly makes good fodder for the media and it certainly makes good politics. At the end of the day, the engine that drives our economy right now, although suffering as many industries are in the global economic recession, is still the engine that is driving our economy right now. We would be foolish to think that we could move forward strictly on an environmental policy that would impact it in the drastic way that the members opposite would suggest.

We must develop a policy of climate change that facilitates the move across every sector and every region. I think we are all in agreement that we are heading toward a low carbon economy. We have obviously seen that with the investments that many countries in the world, not just in North America, have moved to with more fuel efficient vehicles and more fuel efficient appliances. Everything we do now is geared to being more energy efficient and in the same breath that is the benefit for the economy.

Now, if we had a policy that was North American, it would broaden the ability of countries to become more energy efficient and more environmentally friendly in a very quick way.

Routine Proceedings

I would like to point out that a comment was made about the homeowners tax plan in the sense that if an investment is made in the home, where would that fit into the environmental policy. In my communities many people are making their homes more efficient, therefore using less energy to heat them, less energy to light them. They are benefiting from it by putting value back into their homes, but they are also benefiting all of us here and I would say all Canadians.

We can talk about the big picture and all the great things that we could do but if we all did just a little bit, it might help move that ball forward quicker. When I think of growing up, the best environmentalists I can remember were my grandparents and my aunts and uncles. They used everything to the nth degree. We have kind of fallen away from that. We have become consumers as opposed to people who perhaps should look at what they are buying, how they are using it, and what they do with it when they are finished using it. Not so long ago, and I would suggest as little as 30 years ago, very little got thrown out. Most things got used for one purpose or another in the home until it had no value. I think we can only look back sometimes to find the real leaders in protecting our environment.

● (1310)

The calls for greenhouse gas emission reductions and related measures that weigh out evenly with economic growth and prosperity is what we are all trying to do. We want to balance opportunities for economic growth and I believe there is tremendous opportunity in the economic field on environmental issues. We have seen that. We have seen organizations and companies looking at Canada and the message they get or that we have to sell them is the fact that Canada believes and is moving forward on improving our environment, and the fact that it would be a great place for them to invest and a great place to move their businesses.

Our government believes that the harmonized policy between Canada and the United States offers us, and I say that selfishly, but I mean all Canadians, the best opportunity to meet, in a consolidated and uniform way, the economic environmental challenges of our times. We all know and we all recognize that these are not simple issues.

Where Canada is concerned, we are particularly challenged because of our size. Obviously, we have a vast amount of land to cover and, traditionally, our climate plays a big role. As they say in Manitoba, we have nine months of winter and three months of construction. It is close to the truth in a lot of cases.

We talk about things that work in other countries and things that other countries are doing. While I think that is admirable and I think that is something that we should always be doing and trying to measure our successes based on others, we must recognize that there are some obstacles in our place that do not allow us to move quite as quickly or in quite the same manner as other countries might. We must also realize that because of that, our reliance on energy production and natural resources is very great.

Members opposite had talked about an electrical hydro grid east and west. While I support that, I think that we have to look at the economics and the benefits of it, and all those have to be weighed into the outcome of what we should or should not do at a particular time.

We, in Canada, account for 2% of the global greenhouse gas emissions, yet we are also the seventh largest emitter. I think that is something that we have to always be aware of and always be working to lower that number. It is simply because we are a commodity-based economy and arguably the most energy consumptive of any society in the world. I think that is obviously an opportunity for us to do things better. It is not a knock; it is just simply a reality of where we live and the geographical circumstances that we live within. Canada is large and Canada is cold. Those are two things that we just cannot change.

However, what we can do is concentrate on what we can change; that is, the key link between Canada and the United States environmental and economic policies, the supply and the use of energy. We have made great strides in working with our neighbours to the south in coming to those solutions.

Again, it has been said by everyone here, and everyone would agree, that energy is the key driver of our economies, and our future prosperity and growth depends upon it. What that energy will be, I think, has to be debated, but nonetheless, because of our size, because of our climate, it is important that our integrated economies result in energy flows across Canada and the U.S. That fact alone means that having cleaner sources of energy is imperative when it comes to taming as complex an issue as climate change.

I have many more things to suggest, but I understand that my time is wrapping up. I would just like to end by pointing out a few that we have done.

We certainly support the renewable energy technologies. We are looking at all sorts of fuels, wind and water energies. I think it is important to always keep in mind, though, that things that we do in Canada only double or grow in size if we work collectively with our neighbours to the south in developing a policy that works for North America.

● (1315)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for trying to give as much consideration as possible to the effects of man-made climate change. Being the critic for the north, I want to use this time to ask a question related to the north.

I am sure the member knows that climate change affects the north of Canada more than anywhere else in the world. There has been a far greater change in temperature degrees than anywhere else. Does he acknowledge that? That is having dramatic effects on the people, species and economy in the north.

Because of the shifting of the permafrost, the melting of ice bridges and the moving of species, we need significant funds and programs for adaptation. We have a small tax base and we cannot bear these large costs on our own. Would the member join me in supporting a call for significant program funds for adaptation to the effects of climate change in the north?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Mervin Tweed: Madam Speaker, I think that everybody here has made those comments in the sense that it is a very important issue and everyone is aware of it. Obviously, the steps that this government has taken in the past months and years recognize that fact.

As for what is needed and how much, that is going to be determined by people far more advanced in environmental policies. I would still go back to the point that when one is talking about a country as large as Canada, all things have to be taken into consideration.

Obviously, the impacts in the north are going to be great, simply because of the changes. We have to be aware of that and we have to be in an understanding and consultative mood when we are dealing with it. I take the member's comments at full value.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to go back to the government actions over the past three and a half years and their results.

The government was very big on ethanol production to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It invested billions of dollars of Canadians' money. There was a real boondoggle when it comes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is a nice subsidy for farmers, but it should not be called greenhouse gas reductions. That has been clearly outlined. The use of corn ethanol is simply not viable as a greenhouse gas reduction technique.

The next boondoggle of the government was its choice to take the path and direction of carbon capture and storage in greenhouse gas reductions. Once again, it is a nice subsidy for oil and gas. Perhaps it will be used for enhanced oil recovery, but it is not a solution in the short, medium or long term for proper greenhouse gas reductions.

We can look at the budget that came out in January and its home renovation tax credit. There was money available for all measure of things. It was great for the home renovation business, but it was not directed toward any reductions of greenhouse gases or any improvements in energy efficiency for homes. People may have used it for those reasons, but it was certainly not directed toward those purposes.

There was no consideration for green projects within the infrastructure program. There was no consideration for greenhouse gas reductions in the direction of the investment of billions of dollars in this year's budget.

Where is the hon. member's analysis of the work the government has done so far to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? Canadian taxpayers' dollars were spent ostensibly for that purpose and very little has been accomplished.

• (1320)

Mr. Mervin Tweed: Madam Speaker, the member packed a lot of questions into a very short comment.

I would point out to the member opposite that the NDP government in Manitoba has embraced the homeowners tax credit. It has made addendums through Manitoba Hydro to encourage more people to use it. Why? It creates a better environment and more efficiencies. It adds value to people's homes.

The member talked about there being no green projects in our building Canada fund. If he would check the site, he would find that many communities are improving their environment with better water systems, better sewage treatment systems.

I had the pleasure of announcing a sewage upgrade in the community of Brandon. The NDP premier of Manitoba bragged greatly—

Mr. Dennis Bevington: You mean the U.S. ambassador-designate.

Mr. Mervin Tweed: The U.S. ambassador-designate, Madam Speaker, spoke highly of the fact that the water that was going through the plant was drinkable when it came out of the plant.

These are the kinds of improvements we are talking about with our building Canada fund. These are the kinds of projects we are supporting. The member opposite has not been able to find his way to vote for these kinds of things which would support ordinary Canadians, but I would encourage him to continue to look at them and hopefully he will.

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, may I applaud the member for Brandon—Souris for his excellent balanced approach.

What a refreshing change from the days when the Liberals were in power when in 2006 the Auditor General said there was no plan to target greenhouse gas emissions.

It is laughable to hear the NDP member talk about a lack of funds for climate change when his party voted against \$4.5 billion to combat climate change.

Could the hon. member for Brandon—Souris share with the House how this incredible investment in the environment and in energy is helping his home province of Manitoba?

Mr. Mervin Tweed: Madam Speaker, the objective of programs like the building Canada fund and the green fund is to improve the quality of life for Canadians and at the same time to improve the environment.

As an example, Lake Winnipeg in Manitoba has a tremendous problem with algae in the summertime. By improving the water that moves down the streams and into that lake, that lake is going to have a better chance to improve and to survive.

These are incremental things, but at the end of the day when we add them together they make a big difference.

There are communities in my riding that have been on boiled water for years but they are now going to get a water system put in. Their environment will improve overnight. Communities will improve. Home life will improve. Imagine, having no drinkable water in our homes. This is 2009 and there are still communities that do not have clean drinking water in their homes. This is happening not only in Manitoba. It is a challenge across Canada.

We are taking steps and we are moving forward. I would hope members opposite would support that.

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•(1325)

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Madam Speaker, if I heard the member correctly, he talked about what a great thing it was that people were making their homes more energy efficient and if we all did just a little bit, life would be so much better in Canada.

I used to work with low income Nova Scotians who lived on \$6 a day on welfare. That is the cost of a CFL light bulb. People are being forced to decide between heating or eating, keeping the lights on or paying for their medications. I spoke to a woman who actually stayed with an abusive partner because he could afford to pay the power bills.

Would the member speak to the realization that the government needs to act? The government needs to help us with programs so that we can make the good choices toward energy efficiency.

Mr. Mervin Tweed: Madam Speaker, this government has done more for low income Canadians than any government in the last many years that I can count. We have reduced taxes. We have taken low income people off the tax rolls. We have provided incentives for them to be able to afford to improve their homes and their lives. We will continue to do that.

I see it day to day. A lot of people in my riding appreciate the steps we have taken. Could we do more? Obviously we could and we will continue to do more.

I would ask the member why she and her party continue to vote against benefits and improvements for low income Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today to the motion presented by my colleague from Vancouver East. The motion seeks to divide Bill C-311, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change.

A little context is needed to explain why we are looking at Bill C-311 today. I was in Kyoto in 1997. When I was elected 12 years ago to this House, that was one of the first parliamentary missions I went on in 1997 and it allowed me to better understand climate change and its impact not only on the environment, but also on future economic systems.

I remember the debates we had in the House. We had the Liberal Party on the other side of the House and on this side, the official opposition's side, we had members from the Canadian Alliance, not the Conservative Party but the Canadian Alliance, which later became the Reform Party and then the Progressive Conservative Party. It ended up dropping the word "progressive" and simply became the Conservative Party. Nonetheless, throughout all these name changes, which are just superficial changes, the fundamental political philosophy of that party's members stayed the same. In other words, the members, who are now the government, do not believe or have a hard time believing in the very existence of climate change.

I remember in 1997 the debates we had here in this House when the members of the Canadian Alliance denied the existence of climate change. They thought climate change was a natural phenomenon, that mankind was not responsible for the increased

levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and that human activity was not responsible for the chaos that was to come a few years later.

Twelve years later, the impact of climate change is omnipresent. Extreme weather events take place constantly and spontaneously and are recurrent in certain areas, Asia and Indonesia for example. Consequently, on the basis of the scientific reports of the International Panel for Climate Change, it is with confidence that we can officially state today in this House, 12 years later, that the Canadian Alliance, the Reform Party and the current government were wrong and that in 99% of cases, global warming is caused by human activity.

I am returning to that moment in time because it is the very basis for this government's political position on the fight against climate change. Today, what we are first asking this government to do is to recognize that in the next few years we must prevent temperatures from rising more than 2 °C above pre-industrial era temperatures.

According to the models and figures presented by the International Panel for Climate Change, temperatures could increase by 3 to 4%. Scientists are telling us that if temperatures rise by more than 2° C, our climate could run amok. That is at the very core of the bill being introduced. Bill C-311 clearly states in the preamble that Canadian targets, plans, policies and programs to combat climate change must be based on scientific facts and evidence. That is the first thing. There is proof that the government does not acknowledge these scientific facts. I have probably attended 10 international climate change conferences and Canada has tried to trivialize the reports of the International Panel for Climate Change. The government wants these reports to be a mere addendum; it wants to hide them. Why?

•(1330)

Quite simply because the government does not want to follow the scientists' second recommendation, which says that to limit the rise in global temperature to 2 °C above that of the pre-industrial period, industrialized nations must reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 25% to 40% relative to 1990 levels by 2020. That is the commitment Canada should make today. Instead of trying to set aside Bill C-311 on the pretext that it makes no sense, the government should first recognize the scientific evidence, then make a commitment to reduce emissions, as the scientists suggest.

But what is the government proposing to do? First, it is proposing to use 2005 or 2006 as the base year, instead of 1990. Moreover, instead of setting absolute greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, it is proposing to set targets per unit of production. But the problem with this approach is that, although we may reduce our emissions per unit of production, if production goes up, emissions will as well. It does not take a degree in math and econometrics to understand this model.

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Why does the government want to use 2005 or 2006 as the base year? Why is it refusing to set absolute targets, preferring intensity targets instead? The answer is simple: it wants to protect certain political, electoral and economic interests, primarily in western Canada. The government's measures are designed to protect the oil sands industry, which creates so much pollution that Canada ranks as one of the worst polluters on the planet in the national reports submitted to the conference of the parties on climate change.

The government believes that science-based targets would come at a disastrous economic cost, as it stated again recently. But the government does not understand one thing: the economy and the environment are connected, and any dramatic change in our ecosystems, especially fragile ones, as a result of higher temperatures will have a direct impact on our economic life.

Developing countries are often food producers; they produce many agricultural products. This morning I was again reading a study by the International Food Policy Research Institute, which estimates that climate change will have a direct impact on what we eat. The price of wheat is expected to increase by 194%, and that of rice by 121%. Yields of these two crops will decrease by 30% and 15% respectively.

So imposing strict rules to fight climate change is not what will cause an economic catastrophe, but rather inaction. Indeed, it will jeopardize our ecosystems. We risk seeing a considerable increase in the price of food. Who will pay for this price increase? It certainly will not be the oil industry; it will be the citizens of Rosemont and Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. They will be the ones to pay, because their government did not act responsibly. There are costs associated with inaction, and the government, which for years has been boasting about its economic ideas, has failed to see the models that have been presented.

What are we asking of the government today? We are asking the government to pull itself together, be a world leader, and look at what is happening to the south. The government wants to take a continental approach to fighting climate change; so be it.

•(1335)

Consider, for example, the plan proposed last week by Senator Kerry and Senator Boxer to fight climate change. They are proposing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 7% below 1990 levels, while this government is proposing reductions of 3%.

Look at the Obama and Harper plans proposed so far.

Madam Speaker, I am talking about the plan, not about the Prime Minister. I called the plan—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. Would the member please note that mentioning the name of a member of Parliament is forbidden.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Okay then, Madam Speaker, let us compare the two plans: the Obama plan and the Prime Minister's plan. How do the two stack up against each other?

The Obama plan is to invest six times more money per person in the fight against climate change, in renewable energy and in energy efficiency than the plan put forward by the Prime Minister and his Minister of Finance. The government will probably say that it is

proposing a continental plan and harmonization. On the contrary, for the past few decades, the government has decided to provide lots of support to the oil industry at the expense of value-added renewable energies that would create green jobs and make a historic contribution to the global fight against climate change.

But the government decided to keep supporting the oil industry. It decided to support the industry while our neighbours to the south give significant tax breaks to the renewable energy sector. Recently, just last week in fact, I met with representatives of wind energy companies who told me they were about to leave Canada and set up shop in Michigan because the United States understands that renewable energy is a value-added proposition.

What should we do about this? We have to turn things upside down and quit giving tax breaks to the oil industry, which pockets huge profits year after year at the expense of our citizens and pollutes our planet. We have to stop giving tax breaks to the oil industry and transfer those incentives to wind energy, geothermal energy, solar power and energy efficiency.

Home renovation is a wonderful thing, but not if all it means is new and bigger decks and patios. We would like to see home renovations improve home energy efficiency. We would like to see a proper building code, and we would like to put people to work on the ground to improve the environment and contribute to economic development.

The United States gets it, and so does China. Even though China is one of the biggest polluters on the planet, they get it, and they have put forward a recovery plan that focuses on investing in renewable energy.

How is it that these countries understand the need to invest in the future while we are still bound to a stone-age economy, a "Flintstone" economy. What we have here is a "Flintstone" economy based on old technology with no added value and no real job creation.

Consequently, the government has to get its act together. The government must show leadership and adopt a model with the means to achieve Canada's international targets. As I said earlier, I went to Kyoto in 1997 and I saw the 15 member nations of the European Union at the time arrive in Kyoto prepared. The EU members had agreed on a common target, but they had also agreed on a differentiated target. Such flexibility is key to this territorial approach, whereby Canada negotiates a greenhouse gas reduction target. But if a target that is both common and differentiated is good for Canada on the international scene, it should be just as good here at home.

This differentiated target should help companies that, since 1990, have decided to change their industrial processes and invest in sustainable development plans and that have succeeded in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by 15%. I am thinking of the manufacturing industry in Quebec, the forestry industry and the aluminum industry.

Routine Proceedings

• (1340)

Today, these industries would be told that they are on an equal footing with the oil industry and that they must make the same efforts. The government's model is not based on the polluter pays principle, but the polluter paid principle. In summary, we must support this bill and base our model and our approach on the scientific evidence.

Second, Canada must find ways to meet the deadline set for us by the scientific community, which requires that Canada reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 25% relative to 1990 levels by 2020. Third, Canada must adopt a territorial approach comparable to the one adopted in Europe, whose record will be much better than Canada's.

Lastly, developing countries must be given the means to adapt better to climate change. It is the least that industrialized countries like ours can do, given that we are responsible for the climate change occurring now. We need to make technology transfers and use the mechanisms in the Kyoto protocol so that these emerging economies can contribute to the global effort. At the same time, we need to make sure that these countries are economically sustainable in the future.

• (1345)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague from the Bloc and I have a question for him.

He has listened to the same testimony that I have been listening to at committee. We have heard that Bill C-377, now Bill C-311, is no longer relevant. It actually is a bad bill that opposition members are trying to divide and make into two bad bills. It sets targets that were before the global economic recession, targets that would be harmful to the Canadian economy. That is why the NDP leader said that it should be costed. It has not been costed yet and yet we have the Bloc members supporting these random targets that are no longer relevant.

We have also heard from testimony today from science the importance of having a harmonized, continental approach to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is not possible to do it in isolation. He should well know that because climate change is not a Canada issue, it is a global issue.

Why would the member want to do something in isolation from what the rest of the world is doing? Why does he have a history of not supporting good environmental programs? Why has he voted against carbon capture and storage in this House? Why has he voted against renewable fuels?

Why do those members just talk the talk but never walk the walk?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Madam Speaker, the member is mistaken. This side of the House is on the same page as the international community. The federal government is the one showing a serious lack of leadership and deciding to disagree with the international community.

As proof of that, last week Canada received the Fossil of the Day award, which is saying something. This is not a green award, it is a

Fossil of the Day award for how the government negotiates on the world stage, more specifically for wanting to avoid using 1990 as the reference year in future international agreements.

I am calling on the member to rise and tell the House that his government and his department are the ones seriously lacking leadership. It is not this side of the House. On the contrary, we want the bill to be passed and for the targets to be based on scientific evidence.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I must acknowledge that my Bloc colleague has a lot of experience and expertise on the issue of climate change. He has a long history in the House on this issue.

It is very clear that the government has been taking a long time—four years, in fact—to propose greenhouse gas emission regulations. It is hiding behind the excuse that it must wait for the American government, the Obama government, to act first.

But if I am not mistaken, two bills have already been introduced in the United States, one in the House of Representatives, and one in the Senate. These bills set targets. Furthermore, President Obama has said that if the House of Representatives and the Senate could not agree on these bills or on an approach, that he, as President, would impose targets using his regulatory power.

At least we have an idea of where the Americans are going with this. What is the government waiting for? We could set some targets and develop an approach, since we have an idea of the scope of the Americans' forthcoming plans.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Madam Speaker, that is exactly right.

As my hon. colleague indicated, any number of excuses can be used to justify inaction. As the member said earlier, the targets were good before the economic crisis, but apparently that is no longer the case. Why? That is the question.

The government should have listened to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, who said that, on the contrary, the economic crisis was a perfect opportunity to change our economies, create a new green agreement, and reposition our economies, sector by sector, towards sustainable development. It is not enough to invest only in concrete; we must also invest in green energy sources.

This government needs to understand that, by jumping on the American bandwagon, it has wasted a lot of time. In fact, when President Obama came into power, the government said it was scrapping its plan to fight climate change. We on this side of the House were very pleased, because that plan was going nowhere.

The government now knows very well where the Americans are headed. Since leadership is needed, we are calling on the government to introduce a bill on climate change as soon as possible, and not to wait, because as we know with this government, the longer they wait, the less likely they are to act.

Routine Proceedings

• (1350)

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to commend the member for his very thoughtful and very informed speech on Bill C-311. He is to be commended for the hard work he has done on the issue of climate change for the entire time he has been in office in this House, and I thank him.

I would like to ask the member if he could elaborate on the issue that the Conservatives keep raising, that we should be moving in sync on policy with our trading partners. If that is the case, then why are we not following the moves of our trading partner Japan, which we are inviting to our country for the G20, and our trading partner Britain, which we are inviting to our country as part of the G20?

The United Kingdom has announced a target of 26% by 2020. Japan has announced a target of 25% by 2020. Yes, indeed, it is true, the targets that were issued originally by the inter-party panel are being questioned. The inter-party panel in this year's report is saying that those targets are not strict enough. They are not deep enough. We are going to have to do more.

The International Energy Agency has said the way out of the economic recession around the world, the way to address climate change simultaneously is to shift investment towards a new green economy. What is the prime trigger? It is regulation. Where is the legislation that this House has tabled? Where are the regulations that this minister has tabled? Even Shell Canada asked yesterday, "Where are the regulations?"

I would appreciate the member's response.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Madam Speaker, there are no regulations and there is no legislation. We are only at the regulatory framework stage. The problem with the government's approach is that it might end up penalizing companies and Quebec that have made efforts in the past.

What is being discussed internationally? Other countries are talking about targets and scientific observations, but also something else. Europe is considering imposing a carbon tax, an import tax for countries that do not respect their international climate change commitments. What does that mean for companies in Quebec and for Quebec? That means that because the rest of Canada is delinquent and Canada is a delinquent country when it comes to fighting climate change, companies in Quebec that have reduced their greenhouse gas emissions by 10% or more, risk having their exports taxed because the oil industry is a polluting and delinquent industry.

We cannot allow Quebec companies to pay for the mess the oil industry has created and continues to create. We will not stand for it in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): One minute remains for a quick question or comment.

The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskinging.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskinging, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the hon. member's speech. It is true what he said about the Conservatives denying climate change

when they were the Reform Party. We also saw them deny the economic crisis. I want to know whether the hon. member agrees that we have to move forward with this motion and vote in favour of it in order to take action on climate change.

• (1355)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie has 30 seconds to respond.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Madam Speaker, the bill before us is not just about fighting climate change. It will also help our economy shift towards a green and sustainable economy. What we need to understand is that if the Conservatives—or any other party—votes against this bill, not only are they voting against our ecosystems and the environment but they are voting against a prosperous and green economy in future years.

[English]

Mr. Jeffrey Watson (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, how much time do I have for debate?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): There is about five minutes for the hon. member's comments.

Mr. Jeffrey Watson: Madam Speaker, I will do my best to say what I need to within five minutes then.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to the motion with respect to Bill C-311, which alone is a bad bill, and now the motion proposes to split it and make two bad bills from the same one.

I am very concerned for a number of reasons. One is that one of the bills that is proposed would short-circuit fulsome debate on very serious matters by restricting the amount of time available to committee members. That is a very serious thing.

Just today after the hearing opened on Bill C-311, the committee heard from Bob Page, who is the chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. He said some very important things.

Primary among them, he said that industry or manufacturing in Ontario would be particularly hard hit by a bill like Bill C-311. We can see evidence that this is a bad bill and of course that is one of the reasons we need to debate it in a fulsome measure. It is one of the reasons I will be voting against this motion.

That brings up the question, of what Bill C-311 or what these two incarnations of it ultimately mean to the auto industry, which is a very significant question and one in which, I will remind the New Democrats, the taxpayers of this country are sharing in a very critical time, through a difficult restructuring of the industry in the hopes of having a good future for that industry to the tune of \$10 billion. That is a very significant investment, one which the taxpayers deserve a return on investment for, instead of another kick to the industry, hoping to take it down, as the NDP is proposing to do.

Since the New Democrat MPs from Windsor West and Windsor—Tecumseh will not stand in their places and stand up for the auto industry by voting against this motion or against Bill C-311, I am going to have to do it.

Statements by Members

I should point out for the record I am not surprised that those two NDP members would be voting against the auto industry by supporting this motion. They have a history of voting against the priorities of the Windsor-Essex region. They voted against the historic infrastructure stimulus funding that we have just announced. They have voted against billions of dollars, potentially, for a new border crossing for our region that would be good for the auto industry and its economic competitiveness, and of course they voted against the automotive aid itself.

Why do we need to consider this? We heard Mr. Page today in committee very clearly say that harmonization is the important way to go with respect to our targets and actions. He said harmonization was important because the economic competitiveness or the cost of operating will be a serious consideration for industry and where it locates. If we take a position that is clearly isolated from not only the United States but other major industrial countries in the world, that would be horrible for industry and the future of blue collar workers in this country.

What did he say? We also need to consider this in light of the fact that we are in tough economic times. That changes the affordability question for a lot of industries moving forward. Mr. Page said that we have to consider whether appropriate technologies required to reduce emissions can be deployed quickly enough. That is a serious consideration for the auto industry.

I am surprised that the NDP, which has long pretended to stand up for blue collar workers in this country, would turn its back on them with an irresponsible and bad bill like this. It is bad. It puts the future of the auto industry in serious jeopardy in this country. Shame on it. I expect NDP members to stand in their place and vote against this motion.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to Mental Illness Awareness Week. This annual public education campaign helps to open the eyes of Canadians to the reality of mental illness.

Our government is proud of the work we have done to shed light on this important issue that affects our families, our colleagues, our neighbours and our country. People suffering from mental illness need not be burdened with a negative stigma from the general population or health care professionals. That is why our government has made mental health awareness a priority. By encouraging those affected to seek help, we can reduce the burden of mental illness on sufferers and on our society.

Last night I had the honour of speaking at the seventh annual Champions of Mental Health Awards where individuals, such as our own Minister of National Defence, received well received recognition for their tireless efforts to provide hope and relief to those who suffer from mental illness.

To all the champions of mental health awareness we congratulate them and thank them.

* * *

GLOBAL RELIEF OUTREACH

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Global Relief Outreach is a Canadian-based NGO operating in Lesotho supporting locally developed and sustainable initiatives. These are local initiatives for projects that already exist but lack the necessary resources for success. There are three major initiatives.

The family scholarship fund provides academic support to orphaned and vulnerable high school students affected by HIV, creating an environment to encourage young advocates to support each other and their communities.

The Artisans Collective provides start-up capital and supplies, facilitates training of women living with HIV and connects them with business opportunities locally and abroad.

The Grandmothers Support Group sustains a local HIV home care operation run almost exclusively by grandmothers.

G.R.O. was created in 2006 by James White and two counterparts. The volunteer board includes Dr. Megan Landes, Terry Aldebert, James White and a volunteer executive team. I applaud them for their work.

The solution to challenges in countries like Lesotho exist in those countries. Organizations like G.R.O. simply recognize this and partner with them to make a real difference.

I look forward to meeting with them here in two weeks and encourage other MPs to meet with them as well.

* * *

[Translation]

ABITIBIBOWATER WORKERS IN DOLBEAU-MISTASSINI

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Madam Speaker, today I would like to reiterate my support for the workers of AbitibiBowater in Dolbeau-Mistassini who are currently experiencing hard times. The company has announced that it will close the paper mill for an indefinite period, raising doubts about whether activities will start up again.

On behalf of my Bloc Québécois colleagues, I wish to offer my absolute support to these men and women. I am prepared to fight with them to the end in order to save their jobs.

No matter what the member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean has said in the local papers, his government is most definitely not showing forestry workers the same consideration and respect shown auto sector workers. He should give the rhetoric a rest and ensure that measures are put in place to help the forestry industry and that the employment insurance program is overhauled so that workers in this sector can qualify for benefits.

Statements by Members

[English]

COWICHAN SWEATERS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Madam Speaker, Cowichan tribe has a long and proud history of producing its Cowichan sweaters. When Vancouver won the Winter Olympics bid, knitters saw this as a perfect opportunity to showcase their work and made a bid to provide Canada's Olympians with these iconic sweaters.

An experienced knitter like Jenny Martin can finish a sweater in a day. To prove their worth, Emily Sawyer-Smith knit sweaters with the Olympic rings for the IOC president and Premier Campbell.

VANOC says that sustainable purchasing can help generate growth of businesses in aboriginal communities, but that principle was ignored when the Hudson's Bay Company decided to go with a more expensive imitation of the Cowichan sweater made by a corporation.

Once again, a first nation loses an economic development opportunity while corporate Canada makes a profit on winter games that were supposed to bring economic benefits to all aboriginal peoples in Canada. What went wrong?

* * *

[Translation]

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday, the Liberal leader was conspicuously absent when an important confidence vote was held in this House, demonstrating once again that he is not concerned about Canadians.

Today, the Liberal leader is saying he is ready to take the risk of raising our taxes. He wants to raise the GST and impose a tax on carbon, on everything in fact. He is completely out of touch with reality.

For weeks, he has done nothing but talk about a pointless election no one wants. Now, he is threatening us with tax hikes people cannot afford.

When is he going to wake up and realize that the nation is going through an economic crisis? When is he going to wake up and realize that our people are suffering? When is he going to wake up, period?

You do not need to have gone to Harvard to understand what is happening in Canada. People cannot have confidence in a Liberal leader.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of my efforts to give the people of York West a greater voice in the decisions impacting on their community, I recently held a round table in my riding. The focus of the event was the Toronto

International Airport and the impact its growth is having on the community.

While residents know the airport is a tool of economic development, tourism and jobs, they have concerns deserving of urgent attention. More flights over homes mean more noise pollution.

It is time for the community to be given a greater role in the future plans of the airport and the recognition of the challenges. The people of York West are calling on the government to make that happen. There must be more community input, more timely and effective communication to residents. We need to see real coordination between neighbourhoods, Nav Canada, Transport Canada and the GTAA.

My constituents know the airport is necessary, but in some cases its growth is causing problems. The people of York West want to help prepare for the future growth of the airport. It is time the government started listening to their concerns.

* * *

COMMUNITY FUTURES DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the work being done by community futures development corporations. My riding of Perth—Wellington is served by three CFDCs: Perth, Waterloo-Wellington and Saugeen.

Funded by Industry Canada, CFDCs provide business and community economic development services, business and community planning, and access to capital.

Our government recently provided CFDCs across southern Ontario with additional investment funds that can be loaned to entrepreneurs and growing businesses. They have also received funding that will support business planning and research, marketing and export development, training, hiring interns, and community development projects.

I have always been impressed by the knowledgeable and helpful CFDC staff members and their ability to deliver programs in our rural communities and small urban centres. I would like to thank the general managers, staff and board of directors of the Perth, Waterloo-Wellington and Saugeen CFDCs.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on September 25, Canada Post decided to deprive the citizens of an entire neighbourhood in the new City of Drummondville of the services of a post office. More than 5,000 people learned through a form letter that they will now be forced to travel several kilometres to get to a post office.

Statements by Members

Worse yet is that according to the franchisee, the contract signed with the Alain Doucet smoke shop in the Saint-Charles area of Drummondville is valid until October 2010. We have our doubts about Canada Post management's good faith when, on the orders of the minister responsible, they keep trying to cut services, despite the announcement of the Canadian Postal Service Charter on September 12.

Is that how Canada Post has decided to get around the moratorium on closing rural post offices?

* * *

[English]

CREDIT UNIONS

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Canada's credit union system in advance of International Credit Union Day on October 15.

Member owned and democratically controlled, credit unions offer services that are determined by the needs of their entire membership. Credit unions help communities drive economic growth. Despite the economic downturn, they have maintained their strong financial position and continue to seek ways to enhance services to their members. This commitment to service is evident in more than 380 communities across Canada where credit unions are the sole financial institutions.

Outside Quebec, there are 497 credit unions and caisses populaires with over 1,700 locations serving more than five million people and managing assets in excess of \$117 billion. When including Quebec caisses populaires, the total rises to 957, with one in three Canadians holding a credit union membership.

I extend my congratulations to all credit unions, vital components of Canada's economic and social life.

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●(1410)

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the motto of Rotary International is "Service Above Self". Its wide-ranging activities include the development of community service projects that address many of today's most critical issues, such as, children at risk, poverty, hunger, the environment, illiteracy and violence. It also promotes ethical behaviour.

One of the most widely quoted statements in business and professional ethics is the Rotary four-way test. The four-way test asks the following four questions: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

Today I am honoured to pay tribute to the men and women of Rotary International for their outstanding service and their ethical guidance in Canada and around the world.

[Translation]

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to today's headlines, the Liberal leader is ready to take the risk of increasing taxes as part of his hidden agenda, but he is beating a retreat yet again, claiming this was not his intention. Canadians would be taking a big risk, a very big risk, by trusting someone who contradicts himself day after day, and who hastily throws together policies.

The Liberal leader is looking more and more like an armchair quarterback who is playing a game of chicken, but who is unable to actually get up and make a single play.

When will the Liberal leader be "adult" enough to have a serious conversation with Quebeckers and to reveal his hidden agenda concerning massive and devastating tax hikes?

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH AND RURAL EXPO

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week 85,000 people visited the village of Earleton in the beautiful riding of Timmins—James Bay. They came to celebrate the 2009 International Plowing Match and Rural Expo. People came from France, the United States, all over southern Ontario and Quebec. They were amazed, of course, by the beauty of the land but in particular by the unique spirit of the people.

[Translation]

The event was a celebration of northern culture and identity. Anglophones, Franco-Ontarians, Quebeckers from Abitibi, first nations people from Quebec and Ontario; when we all work together, we are a force to be reckoned with.

[English]

I would like to give a big thanks to Darlene Bowen, Norm Koch, Albert Gauthier, Frank and Yolande Rivard, Jules Gravel, John Vanthof and the thousand-plus volunteers who made this the biggest event in the history of the north.

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TAXATION

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberal leader's office launched an adult conversation about higher taxes. This follows the Liberal leader's April statement, "We will have to raise taxes," and his December 2008 statement, "I'm not going to take a GST hike off the table". Last month he voted against the Conservative home renovation tax credit.

I respect the Liberal leader as a renowned academic theorist, but he should not turn his nose up at taxpayers.

The Conservative Prime Minister has lowered the GST, dropped income taxes and brought in tax credits for kids' sports, textbooks and tradesmen's tools. We have given child care dollars to parents and helped them invest with a tax-free savings account. We believe in hard work and the freedom to keep the fruits of that work.

Taxpayers are adults. They work hard for their money and do not need his visiting eminence to spend it for them.

* * *

[Translation]

MINISTER OF FINANCE

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, taxpayers should be worried about the award given to the Minister of Finance by *Euromoney* magazine.

In fact, that same magazine gave its 2005 award for excellence—best investment bank to Lehman Brothers. I would remind the House that that financial institution was one of the main actors behind the subprime mortgage problems that led to the worst economic crisis since the second world war. Just ask its shareholders.

This was the minister who, in the fall of 2008, refused to acknowledge the looming financial crisis and made lots of rosy predictions, claiming that he could still maintain a balanced budget. It was also this minister who underestimated the size of the deficit by 50%, once he finally admitted there would be a deficit.

I would advise the Minister of Finance and *Euromoney*—rather than boasting about this award—to try out for the Just for Laughs festival.

* * *

•(1415)

[English]

CHINA

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at an event in Montreal celebrating the 60th anniversary of the People's Republic of China on September 28, I was informed by some of my constituents that the embassy had requested permission from the Department of Foreign Affairs to open a general consulate in Montreal over one year ago. No answer has been forthcoming.

There is a very large Chinese community established in the greater Montreal area, close to 100,000 people according to Statistics Canada. It would be a terrible shame should the convenience of a general consulate be denied them.

[Translation]

The current government has been rather ambivalent about this question and it is embarrassing to think that we have not yet been able to respond to such a request from the Chinese embassy.

The Chinese embassy is not merely a small diplomatic office no one has ever heard of. On the contrary, China is now part of the G20 thanks to its dynamic economy.

[English]

They are respected members around the table and have a strong and equal voice on the future of our world's financial strength. There

Oral Questions

are consulate general offices in Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary. Why are there none in Montreal?

* * *

BILL C-25

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Liberal senators gutted Bill C-25, a key piece of anti-crime legislation that seeks to end the practice of reducing criminal sentences at a ratio of 2:1 for time served in pre-trial custody.

We have always known that the Liberal leader was soft on crime and now he has proven it. Despite overwhelming public support, the Liberals gutted the bill by passing an amendment that continues the practice for two for one sentencing.

Bill C-25 was passed unanimously by the House of Commons and this bill is supported by provincial justice ministers from all parties, as well as victims groups and police associations.

Canadians have been clear that they want criminals to be sentenced to reflect the seriousness of their crimes and yet the Liberals gutted this important piece of anti-crime legislation. This proves that the Liberal leader is not sincere in fighting crime. He is not in it for Canadians. He is in it for himself.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the United States, Australia and China are already vaccinating their populations against the H1N1 flu. Europe and Japan will begin within the next few days. Canada will not begin for another month. The health minister says that this is all according to her plan.

Could the government explain the logic of any plan that deliberately puts Canada behind the rest of the world in protecting citizens against H1N1? What is the logic of that?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the government bases its flu planning on the best advice of medical experts, including the chief medical officer.

The immediate priority is seasonal flu vaccination. Canada will ensure that there is enough vaccine for every member of our population. That vaccine will be widely available the first week of November, as the government has said all along.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is not doing the seasonal.

In the United States, officials are distributing doses of H1N1 flu vaccine to health care workers, children and people who care for babies younger than six months old. Not surprisingly, pediatric offices in Canada are already getting calls from anxious parents who want the vaccine for their children now.

Oral Questions

Could the Prime Minister justify why Canadian children, the most vulnerable among us, must wait a full month longer than American children? Will he guarantee today that they will not have to wait longer still?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is kind of amusing to see the Liberal Party now vaunting the U.S. health care system.

As has been said all along, the government will ensure that the vaccine is available in the timeframe that the medical experts have advised. That will be available to all the Canadian population.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the health minister says that this is not a race but vaccinations should be done before a disease hits.

While other countries hurry to protect their citizens, the Conservatives say that there is no rush. They say that they have a plan but it is just a very slow one. Why? Did they order too late? Is it the clinical trials?

Canada's Chief Public Health Officer yesterday said, "Waiting for that data...is no reason to delay making sure people have the first dose and provide as much immunity as possible".

Why did the government actually plan a premeditated delay?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is following the advice of the Chief Public Health Officer. What we have here is a party that stands for absolutely nothing and is therefore trying to play politics with a public health issue.

What the Liberals should do, instead of playing this two-faced game where they pretend to support tough on crime legislation but block it in the Senate, is go down to the Senate and tell their own senators to be honest with the Canadian people, to pass that legislation and stop letting criminals get away.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, confusion, confusion, and more confusion. The health minister's responses have confused the Canadian public.

Dr. Wilson, Canada Research Chair in Public Health Policy, said that there is so much confusion about the H1N1 vaccine that, when it does become available, he is not sure that Canadians will want to be vaccinated.

Why does the Minister of Health not launch an effective public information campaign to clear up all this confusion?

[*English*]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are on schedule with the vaccine. For the last three months we have said that the vaccine will be available the first week in November. The Chief Public Health Officer has advised us, as well as all Canadians, that the vaccine will be available the first week of November.

I do not know why the member cannot understand that. We have been saying the first week of November for the last three months.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, aboriginal Canadians represent 4% of Canada's population; 18% of those hospitalized due to H1N1 were aboriginal; 15% of those requiring stays in ICUs were aboriginal; and 12% of deaths were among aboriginal people.

Could the minister explain the overrepresentation of aboriginals in these sad statistics and what specific actions are being taken to save their lives?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we implemented the 2006 pandemic plan, which includes the first nations communities.

In budget 2006, we invested \$1 billion to increase our preparedness to respond to the public health issues, such as the flu pandemic, as well as planning for first nations pandemic planning.

I have spoken to Chief Atleo with regard to issues that challenge first nations communities and will continue to work with the first nations communities to address the health issues.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it was the Bloc Québécois that came up with the idea of an independent employment insurance fund. When the Prime Minister was the leader of the official opposition and we met behind closed doors, he said he agreed with our proposal. Now, in its latest economic statement, the government is forecasting a surplus of \$18.9 billion between 2012 and 2015. Yet it is the fund itself that sets EI contribution rates, so it is impossible to predict a surplus.

Either the government knows the future contribution rate in advance or there is a mistake in its forecast table. One of the two pieces of information is false. Which is it?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, employment insurance premiums will be set by an independent board, as provided in our legislation. One very important bill for unemployed Canadians is currently before this Parliament, and I encourage the Bloc to support these benefits for the employed and unemployed workers of Canada.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister can tell us how many unemployed workers will be affected and where, we will think about it. For the moment he is unable to give us that information. I would like to come back to his statement that contribution rates are set by an independent institution.

If that is true, how can he forecast that there will be a nearly \$19 billion surplus between 2012 and 2015? Where did he get these figures? What is he basing them on? Either he knows the contribution rate in advance or his table is not true. One of the two pieces of information is a lie. Which is the lie?

Oral Questions

•(1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the bill that is before the House, Quebec's benefits will be proportional to the rest of the country. The Bloc leader's position is just as irresponsible in this case as it is in the case of child trafficking. These are important benefits for the unemployed and workers in Quebec, and the Bloc leader should stop playing politics at the expense of workers and the unemployed.

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' refusal to give an honest answer proves that the government definitely intends to have the unemployed pay for the deficit by plundering the projected surplus in the employment insurance account, as the Liberals did before them. According to the government's own figures, \$18.9 billion will be picked from the pockets of the unemployed between 2012 and 2015.

Why tax employment and why have the unemployed pay down the deficit?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, for this year and next, employment insurance premiums will be frozen at \$1.73 for \$100. In difficult economic times what does a responsible government do? It creates measures to support those who lose their jobs. We have proposed four such measures in recent months and the Bloc voted against each one. The Bloc stubbornly refuses to provide assistance to the unemployed who desperately need it during this recession.

Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we know that the government is preparing to plunder the employment insurance fund because it stacked the board of directors with employer representatives carefully chosen by the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development. Not one person nominated by the commissioner representing workers was retained by the minister to sit on the employment insurance financing board.

How can the government continue to deny that it has set everything up to plunder the fund?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, with respect to the employment insurance account, premiums paid by workers will depend of course on the various services to be provided to all unemployed workers. An independent board will look at the costs associated with the services provided to those who lose their jobs. At present, that is not what Canadians are concerned about. What they really want to know is when the longstanding bill to help the unemployed will be passed. When will the Bloc stop opposing it and help those people who need it?

* * *

[English]

TAX HARMONIZATION

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a new report by the Investment Funds Institute of Canada shows the shocking impact of the HST on people's retirement savings. Let me quote: "An Ontarian saving \$5,000 each year will lose \$42,000 over a 35-year career—".

Maybe the Prime Minister thinks that imposing this new tax on Canadians is small change, but for people who are struggling these days to put some money aside for retirement, this new Conservative tax is going to eat up the equivalent of five years of savings.

Why is the Prime Minister going after retirement savings with his HST?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everybody knows the leader of the NDP is talking about a provincial tax. Why would he not talk about a provincial tax? He certainly does not want to talk about federal taxes.

When it came to the very cause he is talking about, this government lowered the GST twice. He and his party voted against it twice. It was the wrong position for Canada. He should be for lowering the GST not raising it.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister says that it is the provinces' fault that sales taxes are going up.

The government started pushing for this tax hike in 2006. The finance minister told the C.D. Howe Institute that he would be pressuring "the remaining provinces that have not harmonized their PST with the GST to work with us". That is a direct quote.

The finance minister's signature is the first one on the deals. He is dangling \$5.9 billion in front of the provinces to try to convince them to come in the door.

The paternity test is in. How can the Prime Minister—

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

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP keeps trying to run away from his own position which is, of course, to hike the GST, to hike the sales tax on ordinary people, one of the most regressive taxes in this country.

When this government lowered it, the NDP went to the wall to try and fight us every step of the way because the NDP never saw a tax it did not like and never saw a tax it did not want to hike.

•(1430)

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he should check the recent voting record.

This most regressive tax, and I am using his words, is going to hurt families.

Here is another example. In the finance minister's riding, the Whitby Minor Hockey Association is opposed to the HST. If he were to log on to the whitbyhockey.com website here is what he would read:

[The HST] will raise the cost of a list of goods and services...including minor hockey registration fees. Parents who want to register their kids for minor hockey is just one group of many that will be negatively impacted—

Why is the Prime Minister raising taxes on hockey?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only taxes the NDP seems to want to fight are taxes that are not before this Parliament. Instead, it wants to fight taxes in other jurisdictions.

The fact of the matter is this government lowered the GST for those kids. The NDP fought us. This government brought in a tax credit for kids' sports. Guess who voted against it. The NDP.

The leader of the NDP should apologize to those working families for his position on the GST.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

There is some confusion on the government's position with respect to the military mission in Afghanistan post-2011. For the second time in as many weeks the Minister of National Defence has talked about this. I would like to get the minister again on record. I tried to get him last week on this question.

Could the minister confirm that the Canadian military mission in Afghanistan will be over in 2011, yes or no?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems the only person who is confused is the hon. member on the other side of the House.

Let me be perfectly clear. Canada will end its military mission in 2011. Do I have to repeat it to him in French?

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not the one he needs to repeat it to. He needs to repeat it to his colleague, the Minister of National Defence. The problem is that when he speaks in committee or elsewhere, he says the exact opposite, and that is important.

I will ask the minister the question again. How will the government ensure that the House of Commons is consulted before any changes are made to the military mission in Afghanistan?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me quote the hon. member who said, this week, in the House:

I do not believe that Canada's commitment to Afghanistan can, in any way, shape or form, end in 2011. I do not believe our commitment to the region can end in 2011.

Then he went on to talk about development.

Our position is clear. The military combat mission will end in 2011.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the Suaad Hagi ordeal, the Prime Minister claimed on national television on August 18 that he first became aware the week before, yet ATIP documents confirmed that my letters and phone calls in

June and July had raised the file to the top of political ranks. They further show that he was in charge of the messaging from July 1.

Is the Prime Minister's position now that neither of his ministers for foreign affairs or CBSA had brought him into the loop as they piloted action against Suaad Hagi at his direction?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be perfectly clear. The decisions in this matter were made by officials on the ground, Canada Border Services Agency officials.

These were not political decisions. These were decisions made by officials who were doing the job we asked them to do, to protect the integrity of our immigration and citizenship system by ensuring that people did not attempt to use documents fraudulently to enter this country.

We had in the first eight months of this year over 4,000 cases where officials successfully prevented people from doing exactly that. They were doing the job we asked them to do, and we should thank them for their work.

● (1435)

[Translation]

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Federal Court forced the Prime Minister to authorize a DNA test, which, on August 10, proved Ms. Hagi's identity beyond any doubt.

His ministers had to drop the charges in the Kenyan courts, hand over her travel documents and allow her to return to Canada.

Now, the same ministers have launched a smear campaign against her, by releasing an affidavit from July that was invalidated by this DNA test.

What does he have against this Canadian?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the officials in question deposited a sworn affidavit laying out in evidence in a court of law the questions that they asked, the answers that they received, and the reason they made the decisions they made in this matter. That is there for everyone to see, including the hon. member. I think it will answer any questions that he has.

* * *

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the National Assembly of Quebec, the Quebec nation's supreme governing body, unanimously condemned the federal government's plan to reduce Quebec's political weight in federal institutions. The Bloc Québécois has been defending the Quebec consensus in this House, but Conservative members from Quebec have made a poor showing by scornfully dismissing our National Assembly's demand.

My question is for the Quebec ministers. Why are they incapable of standing up for the consensus expressed by the Quebec nation?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the number one objective of the Bloc is to ensure that Quebec has zero seats in the House of Commons. This government will ensure that the seat count in the House of Commons is protected for Quebec. These Quebec ministers do more in one hour each day than the Bloc has done in 18 years.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is why the Conservatives lose in Quebec every time we have an election.

Not even the Minister of Public Works, a Quebec minister, has made any attempt to block this bill. Instead, he said that Quebecers should just make more babies, and that he himself did his part by having three kids. We do not really care what the minister does at home; we care about what he does in cabinet, which is nothing.

Why did the Minister of Public Works refuse to defend the interests of the Quebec nation?

[English]

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois wants Quebec to have zero seats in the chamber. All the federalists in this chamber want to ensure that Canada and Quebec are fairly represented and that Quebec has a seat count that is protected in a united Canada. I think all federalists in this House will stand up and agree to strong representation for Quebec in the House of Commons.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is opposed to veiled voting. That is why it introduced a bill to ensure that all voters identify themselves. During the debate on the government's bill, the Liberals changed their position and stopped insisting that all voters be equal under the law. The Conservatives also backed down, claiming that there was no consensus.

Will the government take up the Bloc Québécois' challenge and accept its full support for this initiative by introducing a bill requiring voters to show their faces when voting?

[English]

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think we all agree that Canadians should have confidence in the political system. If we can get agreement from the opposition parties, including the Liberal Party, to deal with this issue, we will bring in legislation to ensure that there is integrity in the voting process when it comes to visual identification.

• (1440)

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government's bill created exceptions to the principle of the neutrality of the state. By ordering election officials to accommodate voters, the Conservatives are emulating the SAAQ, which accommodates clients who, for religious reasons, want to choose the gender of the person giving them their test.

Why are the Conservatives insisting on making the functions of the state a matter of gender instead of addressing the real problem? We have offered our support, so when will they introduce a bill?

[English]

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government did bring forward a bill in the last Parliament, but we received resistance from the opposition parties. If the opposition parties are agreeable in this minority Parliament to support the government bringing forward a bill to deal with this issue, we will bring in a bill because we believe in Canadian democracy.

I am pleased, actually, that the Bloc is starting to buy into Canadian democracy, too.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is having a great time with taxpayers' money. It is on a partisan advertising spending spree and the bill is going not to the Conservative Party but to Canadian taxpayers.

Government advertising has to be objective and informative, but that is not so here. On the contrary, they have spent tens of millions of dollars to toot their own horn for no apparent reason.

Using Canadians' money to try to win them over is not only immoral, it is illegal. Are they aware of that?

[English]

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, advertising is a key way for the government to reach a large number of Canadians on important issues of public concern, such as H1N1, elder abuse, Canadian Forces recruitment and the home renovation tax credit.

We are not surprised that the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberals do not want Canadians to know about measures like the home renovation tax credit. After all, they voted against it in their relentless pursuit for an unnecessary, opportunistic election.

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite all of their efforts to avoid this, we are witnessing an unprecedented, massive taxpayer-paid, partisan, self-serving ad campaign that pats the government on the back. It is not only unethical, it is breaking the law, in fact several laws. This is an attempt by the Conservatives to buy Canadians with their own money, an awful lot of their own money.

We ask, when will it stop?

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that comes from the party that brought us the sponsorship scandal. What a turn of events.

Oral Questions

This government has a long-standing commitment to communicate important services and benefits to Canadians. We will continue to live up to our responsibility, especially the global economic crisis.

Is the member opposite suggesting that Canadians do not deserve to know about measures like the home renovation tax credit?

* * *

FEDERAL APPOINTMENTS

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2006, all parties agreed to the creation of a public appointments commission to set standards for and oversee federal appointments. Four years later, there is no commission, no commissioner and more than \$1 million wasted on a phantom office.

Over 3,000 appointments were made without scrutiny. In the last six weeks alone, 37 Conservative insiders, donors, bagmen, candidates and campaign workers have received lucrative government jobs.

How many more rewards does the Prime Minister intend to hand out to his Conservative flock?

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the government that tried to bring in a public appointments commissioner but the Liberal Party shot it down. We are committed to accountability and transparency and we will continue to be committed to that.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, only the government would expect a crony to stamp out cronyism. How ridiculous.

[*Translation*]

The Conservatives' constant cronyism is insulting to those who believed them when they promised to put an end to partisan appointments.

The Prime Minister promised a commission "to ensure that the selection of individuals is based on merit and is done in an open and transparent way".

Four years later, there is still nothing, except for the appointment of 37 Conservative faithful.

How many Conservative cronies will get one of these rewards?

• (1445)

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to accountability and transparency and we will continue to be committed to that.

* * *

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want individuals who are convicted of serious crimes to serve sentences that correspond to the seriousness of those crimes.

That is why our government introduced a truth in sentencing bill that will end the practice of giving "2 for 1" credit for time spent in pre-sentencing custody.

I know the Government of Quebec also believes very strongly in this. Can the Minister of Public Works and Government Services explain to the House what this bill is all about?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his excellent question.

As we know, the Liberal Party has always been soft on criminals. We saw this yesterday, as Liberal senators gutted our truth in sentencing bill.

This is a bill of great importance to all Canadians, yet it was taken hostage by the Liberals because of their own infighting.

It makes no sense, and I hope the Leader of the Opposition will see reason. When will he start defending victims?

They deserve better.

* * *

[*English*]

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Federal Court of Canada has ruled that the Military Police Complaints Commission has the duty to investigate. Let us be clear. This is not a debate about legal niceties. This is about allegations of abuse, torture and extrajudicial killing.

Despite its rhetoric, the government is not following the court ruling. Instead of searching for answers, the government is blocking evidence and the minister is showing the chair of the Military Police Complaints Commission the door, telling him "to start your career planning as soon as possible".

What is the government so desperate to hide?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite the wild-eyed, woolly-headed allegations of the not-so-New Democratic Party, we are co-operating with this commission. We have provided evidence and witnesses. We have complied with the Federal Court's ruling, which confirmed the mandate of the Military Police Complaints Commission.

We have co-operated at every stage. We intend this commission to continue to do its important work. I wish the hon. member would stop trying to undermine and confuse Canadians with allegations that in fact impugn the work of the Canadian Forces.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, glib answers are not acceptable. This is a disturbing pattern of cover-ups.

*Oral Questions***FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

Despite the government's assertion that Omar Khadr is being treated fairly, Canadian press reports that muzzled foreign affairs officials have grave concerns. They say that Khadr is not getting a fair trial, that he does not have access to the evidence against him, that he has suffered long stretches in isolation, that he has severe sleep deprivation and that in his teens he was threatened with rape.

How long has the government known about these reports and just what else is the government covering up?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have repeated on many occasions, our position on this matter has not changed. Mr. Khadr still faces very serious charges. We are awaiting the due process in the United States to see what President Obama will say. Until that time, I have no further comments on this issue.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with injustices toward Quebec increasing, the government's plan to reduce Quebec's political weight within Parliament is even more worrisome. In all, the federal government is shortchanging Quebec to the tune of \$8 billion. This includes the \$2.6 billion for harmonizing the sales tax, the \$800 million for post-secondary education and the \$1 billion in equalization.

What is the government waiting for to give Quebecers the money that is rightfully theirs?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question. I have had good discussions with Quebec's finance minister on harmonization. We intend to continue those discussions.

* * *

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Nicolas Dufour (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this government claimed to be different from the Liberals, but it is acting the same way. All the provinces have to be treated equally. There is no room for difference. That is what the Prime Minister himself said in connection with harmonizing taxes. For student assistance, as with Jean Chrétien's millennium scholarships, the current government is requiring Quebec to conform with the Canadian system.

Why is this government insisting on imposing its new bursary program on Quebecers, who are calling for the unconditional right to opt out with full compensation?

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have had constructive discussions with the Government of Quebec. I have had good discussions with the minister of finance in Quebec. Quebec signed an agreement some years ago with respect to sales taxes and now there is a desire to move toward harmonization as some other governments have chosen to do in Canada. I look forward to continuing the discussion.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the Liberals received a notice of motion supported by Bloc, NDP and Conservative members of the fisheries committee asking the government for more time to consider the revised NAFO treaty.

Even Conservative members of the committee said that the government's policy on the tabling of foreign treaties in Parliament needs to be changed by extending the 21 days of House consultations to 42 sitting days.

Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell the House if he is prepared to change his policy accordingly? Is this a realistic coalition request or is this just another one out of the Conservative Party playbook: delay, deny, deceive?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government fought hard for Canadians' interests at NAFO. If opposition members were serious about discussing the amended convention, they could have used some of their opposition time.

Nevertheless, those committee members who actually care about the impacts on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and are not killing the stronger treaty for pure political opportunism, have requested more time. That is no problem.

The Liberals should stop playing games and stand up for the fishers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is not an answer from the Minister of Foreign Affairs. That is no answer at all.

What is troubling here is that NDP members are asking for more time. What is it that they need to know about this convention? What is more important is that Conservative members are about to vote against the policy established by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the House. They are about to vote non-confidence, not only of the policy but in the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Is the Minister of Foreign Affairs prepared to announce to the House that he will change his policy on the tabling of treaties before Parliament to allow a 42 day period for consultation? Is he or is he not?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some reasonable members with no political agenda have expressed a desire to call additional witnesses before the fisheries committee. This is a reasonable request and we are reasonable people. Therefore, we will delay ratification for another few weeks so that the fisheries committee can hear from more stakeholders. That is reasonable.

The Liberal Party should start standing up for fishers in Atlantic Canada and Quebec even if it is unpopular in Toronto.

*Oral Questions***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to a Conference Board of Canada report, Canadian companies are falling behind when it comes to developing emission reduction plans.

Why is Canada not a leader on alternative energy technologies and emission reductions?

The Nova Scotia government introduced hard caps this summer, and my premier, Darrell Dexter, is going to Copenhagen. Canadian premiers are filling the void left by the federal government.

When will the minister announce his long promised regulations and avoid embarrassment in Copenhagen?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the hon. member, we now have a North American target that is comprised of minus 20% by 2020.

We must continue, as North Americans, to work with our North American partners toward those targets. That is why we have been making progress on tail pipe emissions, on aviation standards, on regulations surrounding carbon capture and storage, a smart grid for North American electricity, as well as a North American approach to cap and trade.

On the other hand, we have the Bloc, the Liberals and the NDP who are in this together. They would isolate us, damage the economy and endanger the environment as well.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has misspent billions of taxpayer dollars subsidizing the production of corn ethanol and offering rebates to folks buying E85 vehicles. It claimed that it would be cutting greenhouse gas emissions but now Canadians have learned from a briefing note to the minister herself that her own department does not even believe the spin.

With only 14 E85 stations, most Canadians would need to drive hundreds of kilometres just to fill up. These vehicles are being filled with regular old gasoline. Emissions continue to rise and taxpayers are being taken along for the ride.

Could the minister explain why the government continues to pour billions into a failed idea when its own officials are telling them it does not work?

• (1455)

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at every turn the NDP has opposed every initiative that we have taken, including the things we have done for the biofuels industry that have affected producers in positive ways with respect to the industry.

We put \$1.5 billion into an eco-energy initiative for biofuels, \$500 million into next generation biofuels and \$200 million into an eco-agriculture biofuels initiative, and the NDP opposed every one of those initiatives.

TAXATION

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader has finally come clean on his plan to raise taxes. This is not surprising, as he proudly calls himself a tax and spend Liberal.

He wants to hike the GST, and he was the first Liberal out of the gate to call for a carbon tax on everything.

Could the award-winning finance minister of the year inform the House on the latest news of the Liberal leader's tax hike agenda?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, finally the Liberal leader has come clean and said that he thinks Canadians are not paying enough taxes and that they should be paying more.

Canadians do not need tax hikes and that is why our Conservative government has reduced taxes across the board: reduced the GST, personal taxes, business taxes and much more.

As the Liberal leader begins his adult conversation with Canadians, I would suggest that the Liberal leader get ready to hear some adult words.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every day this week we have asked for a national investigation into the missing and murdered aboriginal women and every day this week the government has avoided this question.

We need more than Sisters in Spirit. We need more than research. We need to move to the next step. The time for action is now. Families need justice and they need closure.

Does the government not care? Does it not believe the numbers? When will it launch a comprehensive public investigation?

Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government takes the issue of murdered and missing aboriginal women very seriously.

Sisters in Spirit is a five year project that is in its fifth year. It is a research project. It is a public awareness and education project. It is helping to inform policy recommendations, as well as identify future directions for further investigation.

I would encourage the member to support the work that is spearheaded by the Native Women's Association and allow it to finish this important work.

* * *

[Translation]

CINAR

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it was not just Claude Robinson who was duped by CINAR. According to CINAR's motion filed with the Court of Appeal, taxpayers were also cheated because CINAR now acknowledges that it lied about the extent of its participation in the *Robinson Sucroé* project in order to fraudulently increase government contributions.

Given that Telefilm is today considering taking legal action against CINAR, why does the Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State for Agriculture not take steps to recover the money fraudulently obtained by CINAR?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, this is something that took place years ago under the Liberal watch.

I have indicated to them already, and again I appreciate the fact that they are new to the justice file, that we now have a director of public prosecutions. If they have any evidence about Liberal corruption, or corruption about anyone else or any evidence of relevance, they should turn it over to the proper authorities.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on this Thanksgiving weekend the children of Attawapiskat have very little to give thanks for because we have flu and the winter season quickly approaching. Yet on the James Bay coast we have families who are living now in unheated tents without running water, tents because four months ago their homes were flooded with sewage.

Indian Affairs and the government have nicked and dimed this community over the most basic reconstruction, health and sanitary aid.

I am pleading with the minister. Will he show leadership? Will he come to Attawapiskat and see the misery that these families are living in?

• (1500)

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can report to the House that the first nation in Attawapiskat has agreed to an action plan to repair the homes damaged by the waste water backup.

It is responsible for the tendering of the projects, for the supervision of the contracts and so on. We have provided some \$700,000 to help repair that sewage problem. In the meantime, people who are in those homes have been taken out and put in safe facilities, if that is where they would like to stay.

The hon. member has nothing to offer to the House. He has voted against every single piece of assurance we can give to first nations on housing, on waste water and on water facilities across the country.

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2010 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a few months Canada will be hosting the world at the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Whistler and Vancouver.

During previous games in Montreal and Calgary, the Government of Canada purchased tickets to events, but we all know that Canadians are watching their pocketbooks during these tough economic times.

Business of the House

Could the Minister of State for Sport explain to Canadians who will be paying for these tickets and how they will be used?

Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of State (Sport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all let me be very clear, Canadian taxpayers will not be paying for a single ticket for politicians or bureaucrats to attend the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

MPs, senators and government officials will be paying from their own pockets for the tickets that were made available to the Government of Canada by the Vancouver organizing committee.

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INTERNATIONAL AID

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, study after study has criticized the ineffectiveness of Canada's foreign aid. Hence Parliament last year passed unannouncedly Bill C-293.

Bill C-293 requires three things: one, that the aid be effective in reducing poverty; two, that it take into account the perspective of the poor; and three, that it be in compliance with international human rights standards.

In the minister's report on the bill deposited last week in the House, she fails to comment on two out of the three criteria.

How could the minister possibly say that she is in compliance with this legislation?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we were very pleased to table the report as required under the new Federal Accountability Act, and in fact we do meet all the requirements.

I would point out to the House that not only do we comply but we actually report on real results that CIDA is having in the international world.

We have doubled our aid to Africa. We have untied our food aid. These actions are going to make a real difference in effectiveness and in getting real results.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the government House leader would be prepared to, in the usual tradition, provide his business program for the days immediately ahead, including the designation of any allotted days that he might have in mind in the week that follows the Thanksgiving week.

I wonder if he could also give us some indication of when the government will fulfill one of its traditional obligations of the late summer or early fall of every year; that is, the tabling in Parliament and the publication of the audited annual financial report of the Government of Canada for the 2008-09 fiscal year. When will that report be forthcoming?

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by saying that normally in response to the Thursday question, I talk about what government business we will be continuing to debate in this place.

Points of Order

However, because of the NDP House leader, we have not even gotten to government orders yet today. Instead of debating government business this morning, we debated an NDP procedural motion.

Bill C-23, the free trade agreement between Canada and Colombia, began second reading debate on May 25, five months ago. Thanks again to the NDP, we are still debating it at second reading.

We keep seeing the NDP leader on television, telling Canadians that he wants to make Parliament work. However, in this House, his main operative, his House leader, is doing everything she can to make Parliament dysfunctional.

I would suggest that he should either stop running his television ads or actually do what he is telling Canadians and make Parliament work.

However, in response to my hon. colleague's questions about the business for the remainder of this week and immediately following the break week, when we eventually, hopefully, get to orders of the day, we will be calling Bill C-13, the Canada Grain Act, followed by Bill C-44, the Canada Post Corporation Act, and then on to Bill C-23, which I mentioned earlier.

We will continue this business tomorrow.

As my hon. colleague said, next week is a constituency week.

Finally, I would like to designate October 19, the first day back, as an allotted day.

To his question about the report, it will be coming in due course.

* * *

• (1505)

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, immediately before question period, when members were making statements under Standing Order 31, the member for Beauport—Limoilou and parliamentary secretary for the status of women, when reading a statement that had been prepared for her by the Prime Minister's Office, alluded to the absence of a member in the House. I would like to quote a passage from page 522 of Marleau and Montpetit, which is very clear:

It is unacceptable to allude to the presence or absence of a Member or Minister in the Chamber.

I suggest that you ask the member to apologize and assign her to read Marleau and Montpetit so that she knows the rules.

The Speaker: I will look at the statement by the member mentioned by the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer, and I will certainly come back to the House if necessary.

The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke on another point of order.

[*English*]

COMMENTS REGARDING DELAYS IN CANCER TREATMENT

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During question period on September 16, the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine claimed, in a question to the Minister of Natural Resources, that I blamed the delays in cancer treatment in the province of Ontario on doctors.

Her party repeated the claim in a party press release issued that day. In subsequent mailings paid for by taxpayers, it further claimed the health care crisis in Ontario was somehow related to our government's considerable efforts to re-establish the Canadian supply of medical isotopes.

She also blamed the employees at Chalk River and of our government for longer wait times for cancer treatment.

At no time did I or anyone else in the Conservative Party blame doctors for the current crisis in health care in the province of Ontario. In fact, during an appearance before the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, on August 21, the former provincial minister of health admitted that the province was responsible for delays in cancer treatment. In order to correct the record, the Leader of the Opposition and his MP from Montreal owe an apology to me and to all the cancer patients and their families who are waiting for treatment.

The Speaker: I am not sure that the hon. member has raised a point of order. It sounds like a disagreement as to the facts, and as she knows, the Speaker does not get into that kind of decision making. When it comes to accuracy, the Speaker has trouble deciding between what one member says is a fact and what another says is a fact. Indeed it is not the Speaker's responsibility but I am sure the hon. members who made the statements will look at the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke's submissions and return to the House if necessary to deal with the matter.

The hon. member for Simcoe North is also rising on a point of order.

COMMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO MEMBER FOR SIMCOE NORTH

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to bring to the attention of the House and you that yesterday during question period, the member for Labrador in the course of his question attributed a quote to me which reads as follows: "what is needed is an investigation of the disappearances".

He was doing so in reference to, presumably, my support for his party and for, as he said earlier in his question, the call by aboriginal leaders for a national investigation into cases of missing aboriginal women.

Government Orders

I would just contend that it may have been an oversight on the part of the hon. member, but in fact the quote that he was referring to was from a previous day, Tuesday of this week, in the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. The reference that I made was certainly to investigations but not to an investigation. I appreciate it is a subtle difference, but in the course of my narrative at the committee, I did go on to clarify that these investigations would be of the sort that law enforcement and provincial and territorial organizations would be undertaking, as they should do, in the course of the investigations that are ongoing in this matter.

We heard today from the minister of state who said very clearly that there is in fact a framework for these kinds of investigations and her department of course is working together with aboriginal leaders and the provincial and territorial organizations to pursue those matters.

Therefore I would say that I hope the record can be corrected accordingly.

● (1510)

The Speaker: I am sure that hon. members will note what the hon. member for Simcoe North has said and bear it in mind in future deliberations in the House, but again I do not believe there is a procedural matter here requiring a decision from the chair.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé on a point of order in response to another member. I will hear him now.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons rose on a point of order to say that Bill C-395 would need royal recommendation because it would, and I quote, “requir[e] new spending”.

According to Marleau and Montpetit, the rule regarding royal assent is as follows, “Bills that involve the expenditure of public funds must have a Royal Recommendation.”

I would remind members that the aim of Bill C-395 is to give a very specific group of people, those who have lost their jobs after a long labour dispute, access to the EI system into which they paid. It is an insurance-based system funded by contributions from workers and their employers.

I want to reiterate some of the comments made to me by hon. members.

How can they claim that we need royal assent to spend money that the workers contributed to the EI fund in order to be able to receive benefits if they were to lose their jobs? The very purpose of the bill is to make it possible to pay benefits to those workers who have contributed to the fund.

The money in the EI fund does not belong to the government. It belongs to the workers who contributed to it.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé for his suggestions regarding the point of order. I will consider his suggestions when I give my ruling on the point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I must have missed presentation of petitions. Am I in the wrong spot at this time of the day?

The Speaker: We do not have any petitions today because there was a motion moved this morning and the debate finished at 2:00 p. m. My understanding is that once that happens the rest of routine proceedings are scrapped for the day.

The hon. member will have to show his usual patience and wait until tomorrow when we have petitions presented at 12:00 noon or shortly thereafter, if that is satisfactory.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1515)

[*English*]

CANADA GRAIN ACT

The House resumed from April 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Canada Grain Act, chapter 22 of the Statutes of Canada, 1998 and chapter 25 of the Statutes of Canada, 2004, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in support of Bill C-13, an act to amend the Canada Grain Act. However, I am upset that the opposition has moved to hoist this amendment. It is hijacking this bill which is essential to the grain farmers in western Canada, and I cannot support this hoist amendment because I support changes to the Canada Grain Act.

It is simple. Canadian farm families deserve to be treated equally across the country, but the current legislation forces western Canadian producers to pay costs that are not imposed in other regions. Bill C-13 would contribute to building a lower cost, more effective and innovative grain sector. The legislation is based on the agriculture committee report the opposition parties helped write.

Conservative MPs are ready and willing to roll up our sleeves and work on Bill C-13 at the agriculture committee. It is too bad the opposition parties are not willing to do that work and treat all regions fairly. This bill illustrates the government's ongoing commitment to putting farmers first, by eliminating costly regulations and unnecessary mandatory programming in Canada's grain sector.

For some years now, the western Canadian grain sector has been undergoing significant transformations. Indeed, the marketplace for grains has evolved, with increased emphasis on niche markets, livestock feed and biofuels, as well as other value-added marketing opportunities.

Despite this ever-changing environment, the Canada Grain Act has not been substantially amended for close to 40 years. As such, the operations of the Canadian Grain Commission, the agency that maintains the standards of quality for grain and regulates grain handling in our country, do not reflect the needs of today's farmers or the industry.

Government Orders

Before I provide additional explanation regarding the proposed changes to the Canada Grain Act, I will provide some brief background.

In 2005 an amendment to the Canada Grain Act was passed that required an independent review of the act and the Canadian Grain Commission. COMPAS Inc. was hired by the Department of Agriculture to conduct this independent review in 2005. Let me point out it was the Liberal government that hired COMPAS to do this.

Its recommendations were presented to Parliament in 2006. The COMPAS report was referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, which consulted stakeholders and recognized the need for changes to the Canada Grain Act and the Canadian Grain Commission. The amendments are based on recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food in its report to the government in 2006.

Throughout these reviews, stakeholders were consulted extensively, including eight public meetings held across the country by COMPAS Inc. Hence, these proposed changes reflect the needs and the will of grain producers and of the industry.

This government is proposing to clarify the mandate of the Canadian Grain Commission in the Canada Grain Act. The clarification will stress that the Canadian Grain Commission protects the interests of producers with respect to deliveries to licensees, determinations of grade and dockage and allocation of producer cars.

That said, there have been extensive changes within the Canadian grain industry over the years and the Canadian Grain Commission must reflect that evolution. The number of primary elevators in western Canada has dwindled. Grain companies have consolidated their operations and now much of our grain is shipped from primary elevators to port terminals owned by the same company.

Currently, the Canadian Grain Commission must inspect and weigh all grain received by terminal and transfer elevators. To keep up with the changing environment, the government strongly believes that producer interests are best served by limiting costs and fostering a competitive, efficient grain handling system. Consequently, the government proposes to eliminate mandatory inward inspections and weighing requirements.

The bill would reduce unnecessary mandatory costs from the grain handling system and would work to build a lower-cost, more effective and innovative grain sector. We are reducing the regulatory burden as all costs in the system eventually work their way down to the farmers. This will again result in a less costly system for farmers' benefit.

Nevertheless, inward inspection and weighing do provide value to some producers in some circumstances. The government has proposed amendments to the Canada Grain Act that will facilitate private sector delivery of inward services when they are requested. Thus, eliminating the inward inspection and weighing will create business opportunities for private sector providers. It is best left to the shippers themselves to determine when and at what level these services are provided.

As an important and ongoing check on this new arrangement, producers and industry will be able to apply to the Canadian Grain Commission for binding grade arbitration when they are not sure that the right grade has been assigned. The proposed changes will not reduce the capacity to ensure a dependable commodity to buyers of Canadian grain. What is more, international buyers of Canadian grain can rest assured that every overseas vessel will continue to receive the Canadian Grain Commission's certification of grade and weight.

● (1520)

On another topic, the Canadian Grain Commission's producer payment security program has been the subject of debate in the grain sector. Currently, all licensed grain handlers must provide financial security to the Canadian Grain Commission. If licensed grain handlers fail to pay for the grain they have purchased, the Canadian Grain Commission steps in to compensate producers.

Unfortunately, this security program is flawed as it is not 100% effective and adds costs to Canadian grain handling system. These costs negatively affect the competitiveness of Canada's grain sector. We are reducing the regulatory burden. As all costs in the system eventually work their way to farmers, this will result in a less costly system for farmers too.

However, we do recognize that inward inspection provides transactional value in certain circumstances. That is why we are proposing provisions to facilitate private sector delivery of these services when the shipper believes they would add value. Furthermore, producers and industry would have the ability to apply to the Canadian Grain Commission for binding grade arbitration when requested.

To address issues of non-compliance, the Canadian Grain Commission needs additional, simpler means to enforce the Canada Grain Act. That is why this government proposes that the Canada Grain Act be brought under the Agriculture and Agri-Food Administrative Monetary Penalties Act. This proposed reform follows a recommendation by the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food to use monetary penalties to help enforce a grain delivery declaration system.

The bill would provide these tools by allowing for the development of regulations to require grain delivery declarations and the ability to assess penalties against those who declare the content of grain deliveries falsely. These measures will ensure that wheat is properly identified as it moves through the grain handling system and, as such, uphold the grain quality assurance system.

In this environment of change, the Canada Grain Act and the Canadian Grain Commission must be modernized. With these proposed amendments, the Canadian Grain Commission will be better able to provide producers with a more cost effective grain quality assurance system. These amendments are essential to eliminating unnecessary costly regulations to Canada's grain sector.

Government Orders

The government is committed to putting farmers first. The integrity of the Canadian grain quality assurance system and the reliability of Canada brand will be maintained.

The proposed changes to the Canada Grain Act and the Canadian Grain Commission are part of an ongoing modernization of western Canadian grain sector. While historically Canadian grain has been exported as a commodity, it is now increasingly marketed to niche markets and domestic value-added enterprises such as biofuels.

The Canada Grain Act needs to evolve to reflect the changes taking place in the grain sector. The grain sector evolution was accelerated when subsidies for rail transportation, known as the Crow rate, were ended in the 1990s. Since then, prairie agriculture has diversified into a wider variety of crops and has expanded into livestock production. Also, the recent end to KVD has removed a regulatory barrier that prevented western Canadian farmers from accessing high yielding wheats that improve productivity.

In this innovative environment, changes to the Canada Grain Act and Canadian Grain Commission will provide producers with a more cost effective grain quality assurance system. These changes will also help the grain industry to meet the challenges of a more competitive market oriented 21st century.

This government is proposing to clarify the mandate of the Canadian Grain Commission in the Canada Grain Act. With a clarification in mandate, the Canada Grain Act will clearly show that the Canadian Grain Commission acts in the interest of grain producers in the specific areas of: delivery access to elevators and grain dealers; access to binding grain grading; and allocation of producer cars.

However, the proposed reforms do not end there.

Over time, there have been extensive changes within the Canadian grain industry. The number of primary elevators in western Canada has decreased significantly. We have seen company consolidations and now much of our grain is shipped from primary elevators to terminal or transfer elevators owned by the same company.

Currently, the Canadian Grain Commission must inspect and weigh all grain received by terminal and transfer elevators. These services are not essential to the grain quality assurance system and impose unnecessary costs.

Hence, the government proposes to remove mandatory requirements for inward inspection and weighing of grain shipments. In so doing, the bill will reduce unnecessary mandatory costs from the grain handling system and work to build a lower cost, more effective and innovative grain sector.

When I talk to farmers in my riding about the Canadian Grain Commission and the Canada Grain Act, they always wonder why things are done in the manner they are done. They have always ask why we cannot change this or do that. There are a lot of the changes that farmers have asked for and require in the bill in order for them to be profitable in their operations.

What we see happening today is just deplorable. The hoisting of this bill just does not do it for western Canadian farmers. It creates an unfair reality for them. We have asked the opposition parties in good

faith to work with the bill in committee. We would like to see the bill move forward into committee.

● (1525)

In conclusion, this bill is very important to western Canadian farmers. I expect this bill to go forward.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this issue has been before the House for quite a while. When I was the chair of the agriculture committee in the last Parliament, we did this study and came forward with recommendations to make the changes to the Canada Grain Act.

There is no question that producers across the country spoke out loud and clear that the system was not working as well as it could. We have to be more productive. We have to be more competitive. We have to make sure that farmers are more profitable. This is essentially what this bill would accomplish.

The member talked about the issue of producer security. The commission has not been able to keep up with the rapidly evolving changes in the industry. In Manitoba, a major grain buyer just went bankrupt and left a number of producers out in the cold without proper compensation. The ones who did get compensation only got pennies on the dollar. The bonding process in place today cannot move fast enough when grain buyers are getting bigger and bigger all the time.

We have to move to a new producer security system, whether it is through an insurance fund or other forms of security such as a check-off or clearing house to be able to address the needs of the grain farmers across the country more effectively. We want to make sure that producers receive money for the goods that they deliver to grain buyers, especially those grain buyers which unfortunately get into difficulty from time to time.

I wonder if the member could comment on some of the things he has heard from producers in Saskatchewan and across this great country on what we need to do from the standpoint of producer security, as well as the things that we need to do to move forward on grading and the things that are so important to making sure that we are selling the best product in the world.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, one thing about the bonding system that we presently have is it creates the false sense of security that farmers who deliver their grain will get paid no matter what. It has been shown in some of the previous failures of certain companies that that did not happen. Farmers found out too late that they did not receive their full payment and in fact they only received pennies on the dollar.

That is one thing in the Canada Grain Act that needs to be changed. Again, if the opposition members have ideas, they have the opportunity in committee to bring forward those suggestions to negotiate and work our way through what is best for the industry.

As far as the grading of grain is concerned, it shows the changes in the industry when grain companies are shipping to their own terminals. Right now, farmers pay to have that grain inspected both at the inland terminal and at the outward terminal. When the grain is loaded into the hopper car in Portage, Manitoba, it is inspected. When it is dumped in Thunder Bay by the same terminal, it is inspected again. Farmers are asking why.

Government Orders

Historically, there was a reason for doing that, but in the current environment it is no longer relevant. Those are the types of changes that are needed. They would definitely pull costs out of the system and also improve the effectiveness of the system to deliver the product that farmers need to get to port.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing here is the continued desire on the part of the Conservative government to try to continue its program of deregulation. It is the old philosophy of pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps. That can work in a good market, but there are cycles in business and farming. Eventually, the good market turns into a bad market. For that reason, we have to protect our farmers.

As a matter of fact, what the Canadian farmers have that works in their favour is the terrific quality of product that they produce. There is a concern that we might destabilize that quality by lowering the standards. We all saw what happened when lead was discovered in the toys coming in from China and what that did to the reputation of that country and that particular industry.

I do not think that we want to do anything here that would damage the very strong reputation we have in the world market for producing top quality grain. That is one advantage we have over the Americans and I would think we would want to keep it that way.

I also want to point out that what we are proposing is a hoist motion. It is a democratic process in this House. The government should have patience. It has already been waiting a long time. It has introduced this bill more than once. Hoisting the bill for six months is not going to do irreparable damage to the grain economy in Canada.

• (1530)

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I would like to educate my colleague about some of the changes that have happened in the grain industry in the last 20 years that make the act no longer relevant.

The member talked about the lowering of standards. There is nothing in this bill or the changes that would have any impact on lowering the standards of the good quality grain we grow in western Canada. In fact, it is just modernizing the system to reflect today's modern technology. It would probably provide a better analysis of how that grain is going to be shipped and what is actually shipped. Nothing is changing in that area.

As far as deregulation is concerned, I find that kind of amusing. When we look at the grain trade, we need to be efficient and lean. We need to figure out ways to do that.

Mr. Peter Julian: Tell that to Maple Leaf.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the grain trade and not the beef trade or something else.

We are looking at ways to pull costs out of the system for farmers and still provide the safe product shipped around the world.

Everything that is proposed in this bill has been worked on together with the opposition members to do that, so, why they would hoist the bill is beyond me.

He also said it was only for six months, but for farmers six months is a long time. They have been waiting for 30 years to see this

change. Why would we wait another six months? The member should tell me what will change in six months that would make the hon. member more comfortable with this bill.

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important conversation that we are having. We are talking about a hoist motion. Essentially, the opposition members, led by the NDP, have said that they do not even want to discuss this bill. They do not want the bill in committee. They do not want to work toward streamlining and making a better process for our grain farmers.

The member is a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. Is this something that is habitual with the opposition when it comes to this committee? Why would they not want to work in committee to make some real changes and work out the process?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, that is one thing that puzzles me. It seemed as though we had such a good working relationship in committee, and now it seems to have been poisoned through the actions of certain members.

This is something the committee worked on jointly. We sat down and we came out with a report that everybody voted in favour of.

Why would they now say they want to hoist the bill? What has changed? The only thing that has changed is politics. For a party whose leader goes on television and says to quit playing politics, I wish those members would listen to their own leader and quit playing politics.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, of course New Democrats are here to make Parliament work, but we also have a responsibility to our constituents to ensure that legislation that is brought before the House is good legislation.

I would challenge the government. What we have actually heard from members opposite is that there was an agriculture committee report. Many of those recommendations were supported by all parties. Yet the piece of legislation that came forward blatantly disregards some of the critical elements of that report. I want to reference a couple of them.

The committee recommended clearly that protecting the interests of grain producers should continue to be the job of the Canadian Grain Commission. It also recommended that the committee look at increased funding for the Canadian Grain Commission to ensure long-term sustainability. This proposal is silent on that. There are a number of other recommendations that this piece of legislation disregards.

• (1535)

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, again, members can address those questions in committee. I would be happy to work with them in committee on some of the issues they have brought up.

I have to represent my constituents. I represent western Canadian farmers. They need changes to the act. They cannot afford a delay. Let us get the bill to committee and then make the changes as we see fit. What the members are proposing will not even get it to committee. The losers in this will be the farmers.

Government Orders

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I start the formal part of my remarks, I would like to acknowledge the comments by the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan and the member for Burnaby—New Westminster. It is nice to have these well thought out agriculture minds looking at this. Maybe they would like to come to committee and start talking about some of these issues, and perhaps the loyal opposition as well, which has only asked three questions in this entire session on agriculture. I can see that this is going to be a lively debate.

It is my pleasure to support the proposed amendments to the Canada Grain Act; however, the same cannot be said with regard to the NDP hoist amendment. Clearly this amendment is a transparent attempt by the NDP to continue its attack on western Canadian farmers. The opposition has nothing positive to offer on this bill. So, what does it do? It attacks the very essence of the legislation. Members should work to make constructive changes to this legislation in committee, not hoist a bill so that we cannot even work with it.

This is a piece of legislation which the Canadian Grain Commission is asking for, and which shippers, producers and farmers in my area are asking for. All they are asking is for us to at least bring this to committee so that we can talk about it and have some freedom to make some changes to streamline an act that is 30 years old. Unlike the opposition, our government puts a high priority on this proposed legislation because farmers have asked for it and we agree it is high time this act was brought into the 21st century.

The Canadian grain sector stands out as a huge success story among the considerable accomplishments of the Canadian agriculture and food industry over the last 100 years. This is especially true in the area of Westlock—St. Paul.

Canadian wheat, barley and other grains are known by our customers all over the world for their unequalled consistency, cleanliness and quality. On a yearly basis Canadian grain farmers generate about \$10 billion. That money helps to keep the economies of both rural and urban Canada growing. It sustains employment throughout the grain production chain from farm input suppliers to elevators, to transporters and processors. Those dollars support our rural communities which contribute so much to Canada's economy.

To put it in more concrete terms, Canada's grain growers sustain our health and well-being as Canadians by putting the very bread we eat every day on our tables. This government has taken concrete action in support of this vital sector for our economy, not just in this particular legislation, but in other legislation in regard to transportation and food safety. We are putting farmers and Canadians first.

Three years ago our first act as a new government was in the interests of grain producers when we accelerated the grains and oilseeds payment program. We are investing \$2.2 billion in the development of biofuels to open up new markets for our grains and oilseeds producers, to create new jobs for our rural communities and to create a better environment for Canadians. Those dollars have helped with the planning of new biofuel projects across Canada and will help build biofuels and biodiesel plants.

We have improved cash advance programming by doubling the interest-free portion for producers. We are helping the transfer of

family farms to young farmers by boosting the capital gains exemption and doubling the amount of government-backed credit available to young farmers.

While this is something that can be captured in one paragraph of a speech, it is important that each one of these changes have critical effects on our producers and farmers not only in western Canada, but across the country. These are changes that farmers have been asking for, for 20 years. Finally, in the first three years our government has not only moved forward but has accomplished many of these.

The new agriculture loans act would guarantee an additional \$1 billion in loans over the next five years to Canadian farm families and cooperatives. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is working hard to open new markets for our grain and pulse farmers around the world. The minister is also delivering real action for our farmers so that they can continue to fuel our economy and remain competitive both at home and abroad.

● (1540)

At the WTO agriculture negotiations, we remain committed to pursuing an ambitious outcome that benefits Canada's entire agriculture sector, not pitting one aspect of our Canadian agricultural economy against another as has happened in the past.

New marketing opportunities will help Canada get through the current economic uncertainty and come out stronger than ever. Stable, bankable farm programs will also help farmers weather the storm and continue to drive the Canadian economy. That is what the growing forward framework is all about, making Canadian agriculture stable in the present day and building a strong agriculture future not only for current farmers but for our future farmers.

Business risk management programs are a key part of growing forward. We have replaced CAIS with programs that are more predictable, more responsive and more bankable. I can assure members that this was a major platform plank in my first election to Parliament. The producers in the areas that I represent, whether they be grains and oilseeds producers, whether they be cattle producers, whether they be supply management producers, wanted a more bankable, more stable, and more predictable system.

We promised to eliminate the CAIS program. We did that. We replaced it with growing forward. We went across this country to hold round-table consultations, not just myself and members on this side of the House but also the Minister of Agriculture. We made unprecedented stops all across this country. Unlike former governments, he did not just get off the plane and stop at the nearby airport to host a meeting. He went out into farm communities, held those consultations and listened to farmers. We came forward to separate agriculture stability from disaster relief, putting in the top tier of our growing forward program. These are programs that our producers have been asking for, and we are delivering.

Government Orders

Business risk management programs are a key part of growing forward. We have replaced CAIS with programs that are more predictable, more responsible and, as I said, more bankable. Those programs have delivered \$1.5 billion to our livestock producers in their time of need.

We have worked with pork producers to deliver a \$75 million transition program, government-backed loans and international market development. Producers want to make their living in the marketplace. We have delivered \$17 million for pork marketing to get more buyers bidding on our products.

Canada's economic action plan is making sure the agricultural industry emerges stronger than ever from the current economic crisis.

We announced a \$500 million agricultural flexibility plan aimed at helping farmers with regional market challenges and opportunities. These funds are helping farmers cope with cost of production pressures, promote innovation and ensure environmental sustainability. This money is already supporting action on traceability for our livestock sector.

We also set aside \$50 million to strengthen our slaughter and meat processing capacity.

The amendments the government is proposing to the Canada Grain Act and the Canadian Grain Commission are evidence of our commitment to grain producers.

Canada's quality assurance system for grain provides a key competitive advantage for our farmers. The amendments we are proposing build on that competitive advantage.

When our global customers choose Canadian grain for processing, they count on consistent quality and cleanliness with every delivery. This world-class reputation that our Canadian grains enjoy around the globe has been hard-earned. First and foremost, it has been earned through the hard work of our farmers. Grain handling companies, research scientists and the Canadian Grain Commission have also played a key role in building that golden reputation that truly enhances the amount of financial recovery that our producers receive at the end of the day.

Our edge in the marketplace is all about quality, and much of the responsibility for the quality of Canadian grain resides with the Canadian Grain Commission and the quality assurance system it administers under the Canada Grain Act.

The grain industry is changing and the legislative tools required to keep the industry competitive need to change along with it. The current Canada Grain Act has not changed substantially in almost 40 years, but the marketplace has evolved.

We have a major new customer for grains in the form of the biofuels industry, supported by initiatives put in place by this government.

We have quality management systems to allow parcels of grain with specific qualities wanted by buyers to be kept separate through the handling system.

We have niche marketing and processing of grains in Canada, and we have a broader range of crops in western Canada than ever seen before.

● (1545)

In the mid-1990s, the reform of the Western Grain Transportation Act triggered a wholesale diversification as producers opted to market their grain through livestock or switch to other crops: oilseeds, pulse crops or horticultural crops. Today, wheat accounts for only one-third of the crop land. In the 1950s, three-quarters of that land was wheat. I know many of my opposition colleagues have never actually seen many of the crop lands in western Canada and they may be surprised to hear that wheat now actually only accounts for one-third, but that is actually a fact.

We are proposing these amendments to the Canada Grain Act to help keep our grain producers competitive by improving the regulatory environment for Canada's grain sector.

The proposed changes to the Canada Grain Act and the Canadian Grain Commission will help the grain sector to meet the challenges of a more competitive and more oriented sector for the 21st century. By removing unnecessary mandatory costs from the grain handling system, the bill works to build a lower cost, more effective and innovative grain sector. We are modernizing the regulatory environment. As all costs in the system eventually work their way to farmers, this will result in a less costly and more effective system for our farmers.

This is an important point. All excess costs in the system are always downloaded on to the backs of our farmers. These amendments will help streamline this act and make our system better for western Canadian farmers. These amendments are amendments that were asked for by our farmers.

The amendments reflect the direction of both the Compas report and the good work done by the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food of which I am proud to be a member. Both reports reflect extensive consultations held with the sector in preparing those reports.

The fact is that this package is built on the standing committee's recommendations. I have these recommendations if any of my opposition colleagues would like to take the time to actually read them. In short, these amendments speak to the will and needs of the Canadian grain industry.

Let me talk a little about the amendments that are actually being proposed. First, inward inspection and weighing of grains will no longer be mandatory. There is no reason to require something that is not necessary, particularly when the cost comes out of the bottom line of farmers in the grain industry.

Currently the Grain Commission is required to inspect and weigh each railcar or truck lot of western grain that is received by licensed terminal elevators. The industry has been calling for change in this area for some years now because mandatory inspections impose costs and are not essential to grain quality.

Government Orders

Therefore, inward inspection and weighing will no longer be mandatory. Instead, shippers of grain will be able to request an inspection at their discretion when they feel the benefit justifies the cost.

Elevators will also be required to allow access to private inspectors when an inspection is requested. The Canadian Grain Commission would be authorized to provide grade arbitration if the parties to a transaction request it. This means if there is a dispute about the grade, the Canadian Grain Commission will be available to impartially determine the grade.

However, as my colleagues in the NDP like to point out, and let us be clear, this does not mean grain would go through the system without inspection. This means that our government will stand up and put safeguards in place for Canadian farmers when they request it. Outward inspection would still be required when grain is loaded into vessels for export. Export vessel shipments would continue to require certification by the Canadian Grain Commission based on the inspection and weighing by CGC personnel.

With this bill in place, our customers will be assured that they can continue to have confidence in Canada's grain quality assurance system.

The Canadian Grain Commission would continue to regulate the grain handling system for the benefit of producers. It would continue to license grain handlers and dealers. It would continue to require them to have proper grading and weighing equipment, and to properly document purchases and continue to ensure that producers have access to arbitration by CGC.

In fact, the bill would actually enhance farmer protection by extending the Canadian Grain Commission grade and dockage arbitration to farmers delivering to process elevators and grain dealers. Currently, if a producer disagrees with the grade or dockage received for a grain delivery at a licensed primary elevator, the producer can ask the CGC to determine the grade and dockage and make a binding decision.

• (1550)

The grain producer is paid according to this decision. This bill proposes to extend this service to deliveries to all licensed grain handlers, including process elevators and grain dealers. Farmers have never had this protection before. Canadians have never had this protection before.

More broadly speaking, these amendments would improve the clarity, application and enforcement of existing provisions; reflect current practices; enhance producer protection; and eliminate some provisions that are no longer used.

The proposed amendments to the Canada Grain Act would help the grain sector continue to evolve in a direction of greater competitiveness, greater freedom for farmers to manage risks, and effective regulatory oversight where it is needed.

While in committee, there were ample opportunities to work on this bill. However, the opposition has now decided to collude together to hoist this bill, which will kill the bill to the detriment of not only Canadians but our Canadian grain farmers. With the

amendments this government has made, it is clear that we have put farmers first.

With the strong work ethic and the strong desire that our government has shown in committee to work with the opposition on a number of bills to ensure that we craft legislation that is more effective and more responsible for Canadians and Canadian producers, I find it astonishing that some of the opposition members would not want to bring this to committee, where they still have the majority of the votes, to talk about some of these amendments.

At the end of the day, they have clearly shown time and again that they truly do not care about Canadian farmers.

I believe that the amendments proposed in this bill would help build a competitive and innovative grain sector by reducing costs, improving competitiveness, improving regulation, and providing choice for our producers and others in the grain sector.

I know I only have a few minutes left, but I would be remiss if I did not talk a bit about one of the major aspects of the grain economy in my riding, in my area of Alberta and Saskatchewan, where we were hit by a terrible year this year. We had a late spring. We had frost through almost every month of the year. It has been a tough year for our hay farmers. It has been a tough year for our grains and oilseeds producers. They are not asking for bills. What they are asking for is for the government to get off its back, stand out of their way and give them access to the tools that they need, and to make the changes on their behalf that they are asking for.

One of those examples that I am proud to have worked on with the Minister of Agriculture and the Prime Minister was the tax deferrals that were given earlier than ever this year to our Canadian farmers. In my area, this was a major issue. In the months of July and August they needed to know that they had access and certainty of these tax deferrals. To my dismay, I came back to the House of Commons and watched the opposition vote against tax deferrals for my farmers.

I hope we can continue to work together and work for the betterment of Canadian producers. However, at the end of the day, the opposition needs to do more than talk about it; it needs to actually get to work and help us make the system better and more effective.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I was just so shocked while I was in my office, watching and listening to the member for Westlock—St. Paul's remarks, that I had to come over.

He talked about the minister's hog plan. Instead of blowing about it, he should hang his head in shame because of the Minister of Agriculture's record of failure. He should hang his head in shame over that program instead of talking about it.

I submit to the President of the Treasury Board that the hog crisis proposal by the minister is probably one of the best disguised Ponzi schemes that this country has ever—

• (1555)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake is rising on a point of order.

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Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, we are here, speaking about Bill C-23 and the amendment made by the NDP—

Some hon. members: Bill C-13.

Mr. James Bezan: Bill C-13. I missed it by 10, Mr. Speaker.

We are debating Bill C-13, the Canada Grain Act, and the hoist amendment proposed by the NDP. This member is up, speaking about something completely unrelated. Call him out of order and tell him to ask a question on the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I am not sure that is a point of order, but if the member for Malpeque will come to his question on Bill C-13, please.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Yes I will, Mr. Speaker, but the member spoke at great lengths about the hog plan and, as I said, it is the best disguised Ponzi scheme in the country.

What really happens here is that when farmers get unsecured money from the Government of Canada, which has very few ways to collect, they are now being asked to go to the credit institutions, such as Farm Credit Canada, credit unions and chartered banks, and take a secure loan that is, yes, guaranteed by the government, but the first thing they need to do is pay off the Government of Canada.

This is really a transfer of money from farmers who are now indebted to the banks, to Treasury Board and to the Department of Finance. Would the member not call that a Ponzi scheme?

The bottom—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. member for Westlock—St. Paul.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see the member for Malpeque actually here working, supposedly on behalf of Canadian farmers. It is important that we have the ability to have the debates between our government's policy and the socialist policy that the member opposite often puts forward on behalf of the NFU.

I am very familiar with the hog program that he talks about because the president of the Canadian Pork Council comes from my own community. I talked to him just this week and we took two of the three main platforms that they were asking for.

What we have actually done is we have stood up for Canadian farmers. We recognized that there was a problem but we did not just talk about it for 13 years like the former government opposite used to do. We actually did something about it.

I would like to raise another point that the member talked about. He talked about involving western Canada in the Liberal platform. People in my office did a little research. The Liberals have asked three questions on agriculture in the 130 questions that they have asked in the last couple of weeks. They have no care about Canadian agriculture or western Canadian farmers.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to sit in this House and hear members of the Conservative Party go on and on about everything they are doing for farmers and rural Canadians.

I represent one of the largest rural ridings in Canada and a lot of questions are being asked as to where the federal government is when it comes to supporting communities and people who are

working hard in industries, such as farming or resource extraction, or in relation to the port in my home riding of Churchill that is shipping out Canadian grain. Not only is the federal government not there to support these people working in all of these areas of the industry, but when it comes to legislation it is actually wanting to take away.

There has been a lot of talk about this move to voluntary inspection, something which I think Canadians, as they hear more and more about it, will feel increasingly uncomfortable.

How does the government feel about putting forward legislation that would take away valuable jobs in communities like the one I represent? People in my riding of Churchill, like Joe Stover who works day in and day out to ensure Canadian grain is of the best quality, would lose their jobs thanks to this legislation.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear that the hon. member represents a large rural riding. I look forward to seeing her first attendance at the agriculture committee. It would be a delight to work with her.

I have worked with the hon. member from Burnaby. I know what he is referring to when he talks about transport legislation. This is not the same thing. This not moving to voluntary inspection. There is still outward inspection. We are still maintaining the quality and assurance of our grain handling system. To say otherwise is contemptuous of our entire system and of grain farmers and Canadian farmers across the country.

If she would like to forward Joe's email contact to me, I would love to talk to him about it.

I can assure the member that through my revisions of this bill, he would keep his job. In fact, this would enhance more jobs and make it easier for more farmers to make a profit so that we could have more farm families in this country, something that has eroded over the last 13 years of Liberal mismanagement.

• (1600)

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we are talking about is supporting our agricultural community and all the other supports that go with them, which is exactly what the bill wants to do.

When I look around this august place, I ask myself which party in this Parliament best represents the interests of farmers. I look at the number of members of Parliament who belong to this party and I see that there are over 25 members of Parliament whose very livelihood depended on agriculture. I again ask myself which party best stands up for farmers.

I heard some questions from the member for Selkirk—Interlake who is a farmer, and the member for Prince Albert, who gave an impassioned speech here today and who is also a farmer. My seatmate was a dairy farmer. Who best represents the farmers' interests?

Which party does the member for Westlock—St. Paul think best represents the interests of farmers in western Canada and who will benefit best by the changes to this regulation?

Government Orders

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the hard work that he does on behalf of the farmers and producers in his area and in Ontario. It is with members like him who I work with every day. The member for Wild Rose, the member for Prince Albert and other members on this side of the government put in countless hours and are dedicated to crafting legislation such as we have before us, legislation that helps to reform a system that is over 40 years old without any major changes.

In the past, the former Liberal parliamentary secretary for the minister of agriculture did not like to see any changes. The Liberals liked seeing things the way they were. At the end of the day, when I was elected, my farmers asked me to come forward, take a brave stance and make some of the changes they were asking for. They do not want to get their livelihood from the post office. They want to get their livelihood from the marketplace, and that is why Canadian farmers, time and time again, and rural Canadians as a whole, elect Conservatives to represent them.

The other point is that nobody I talked to in this country wants an election, except for the opposition members. If the Liberals do not think the legislation is perfect, then let us sit down and work with it. At the end of the day, however, the Liberals refuse to even work with us on legislation that is important to rural Canadians. They insist on getting rid of it and putting concurrence motions forward day in and day out so they can avoid talking about rural Canadians, and avoid talking about the criminal justice legislation and the changes we need to make to that system.

Quite frankly, I am hoping that today, with a little bit of back and forth, we can bring the member for Malpeque back to the table to work on behalf of Canadian farmers.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Science and Technology; the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina, Citizenship and Immigration.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand and talk about these kinds of issues.

In this corner of the House, the NDP takes no lessons from federal Conservatives about defending western Canadians and western Canadian farmers. In fact, in a very real sense, by putting forward this hoist motion, what we are doing, inadvertently, is saving the Conservatives from themselves because they have taken for granted the support of western farmers over the last few years.

The Conservatives said that when they became government they would move forward with an agenda that would actually help western farmers. Instead, it is fair to say that the reason more and more New Democrats are being elected in western Canada is because western Canadian farmers are seeing that the Conservative agenda has been very ideological and meanspirited.

Let us look at the record. Since they have come to power, farm receipts now for western Canadian farmers are at the lowest level since the Great Depression. In fact, many farmers in rural communities across western Canada are actually in a negative income situation. We are looking at the highest level of debt for farmers than we have seen since the Great Depression, in real terms of course. It is important to note that the lowest level of farm receipts in the entire country is in the province of Alberta, which has been dominated by provincial Conservatives for the last 30 years. So what is wrong with this picture?

In places like British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba where New Democrats have come to power and had positive, forward looking policies that actually helped western farmers, we have seen that the income crash has not been nearly as significant. Of course farmers in Manitoba are doing the best of all, but in Alberta, where the Conservatives have been in power, farm receipts are the lowest in the country. There is strike one against the Conservatives on how they managed the agricultural file.

Strike two was their meanspirited and ideological attack on the Canadian Wheat Board. What they liked to say was that they would tell farmers in the west what to think and they would tell farmers what they think. What happened? Western farmers had a chance to vote on the Conservative proposals.

There was a straight slate of rabid Conservatives just waiting to dismantle the Wheat Board. They could hardly wait to rip up the Wheat Board, attack the institution, and western farmers overwhelmingly voted for a pro Wheat Board slate and pushed the Conservatives back. That was strike two for Conservatives in western Canada.

Now we have strike three. Even before we talk about Bill C-13, we see that they are not standing up for supply management. I mentioned earlier the whole issue of western farm receipts, that they are at the lowest level since the Great Depression, particularly low where Conservatives are governing because they do not seem to understand agricultural issues or perhaps it is their own ideological bent that means that they mess up the agricultural file.

Supply management and the Wheat Board are now going forward in WTO negotiations. Have they said unequivocally that supply management and the Wheat Board are not on the table? No. We heard today, in fact, that they have missed every opportunity to stand up for supply management, every opportunity to strike back on the working group, that fifth paper that undermines supply management and the Wheat Board. New Zealand was able to get its state trading corporation excluded and the Conservative government was not able to do that.

Let us talk about Bill C-13 or, as the member for Selkirk—Interlake said, Bill C-23.

● (1605)

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We are talking about the NDP amendment to Bill C-13. I would ask that the member get back on track rather than going through all the options of the agriculture policy.

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He knows very well that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of International Trade have been very clear that supply management will be protected by the government and that the Canadian Wheat Board is a domestic issue and will be decided by the farmers of this country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I am not sure that is a point of order. I give the floor back to the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster to discuss Bill C-13.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I am confused. The member for Selkirk—Interlake said it was Bill C-23. I am not sure which bill the Conservatives are debating over there. Nor am sure what record they are debating. They seem very confused, which would explain their record. The record has been lamentable when it comes to western farmers. In the next election campaign in Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba and British Columbia, we will see a record number of New Democrats return because, quite frankly, western farmers have said enough of this rigid ideological agenda.

This brings me to Bill C-13, and I thank the member for Selkirk—Interlake for raising the issue of supply management. He is obviously wrong about this idea that somehow Conservatives are defending supply management. In testimony before the international trade committee today, we heard that they had missed on three occasions the opportunity to get the Wheat Board and to get supply management out of the WTO sellout, which is being foisted on Canada, with Conservative collusion.

Let us talk about the provisions of Bill C-13. This is why I say we are saving the Conservatives from themselves. They are pushing forward this meanspirited attempt to attack the Canadian Grain Commission, but let us look at what exactly they are trying to do. The NDP has put in a hoist motion because we disagree with what they are trying to do. They are telling farmers what is good for them and what they are supposed to think, just like the Wheat Board. I think farmers told them they were wrong on the Wheat Board and farmers are saying they are wrong on the Canadian Grain Commission. What are they wrong with? They are killing the Canadian Grain Commission's inward inspection and weighing service. Why is that bad? Because it leaves grain producers disadvantaged in their dealings with grain companies.

Anyone who has grown up in western Canada, like myself, knows full well that there often has been an abuse of power from the grain companies over grain producers in western Canada. In fact, if we go back to the history of how the Grain Commission developed, it was to set up some balance, a level playing field for producers so grain companies, mainly foreign, could not run roughshod over our grain producers.

The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, predecessor of the NDP, sprang up in western Canada because grain producers wanted a level playing field. Obviously Conservatives and Liberals were not listening to them, they were only listening to Bay Street. The NDP has always listened to grain producers. That is why we say to kill the commission's inward inspection and weighing service, to kill that opportunity for producers to have an impartial and independent inspection that allows them to offset what the grain companies tell them they will pay for that grain is not a good idea. It is not a good idea to get away from that. It is not a good idea to kill that. It certainly is not in the interests of grain producers to do that.

Bill C-13 would do that. It would away that level playing field for which grain producers have been fighting for decades, with the support of the CCF and now the NDP. Essentially that is the first strike against the bill.

What is the second strike? What else would Bill C-13 do that the Conservatives are so hot to adopt? It would dismantle the grain appeal tribunal. This protects producers and protects the Canadian Wheat Board from unscrupulous behaviour on the part of grain companies. This is the very historic roots of western Canadian farming, establishing a balanced system, establishing a system of checks and balances.

We have a Grain Appeal Tribunal and essentially the Conservatives want to rub that out. That is why we are bringing forward the hoist motion. We are actually listening to western producers. We know that having the ability to appeal these decisions of grain companies is a good thing. How a Conservative could feel otherwise, I do not know. I am sure the members on the other side are well-intentioned. I am sure they are reading their speaking notes diligently from the Prime Minister's Office, but policy on western farmers should not be set by the Prime Minister's Office or by a bunch of Ottawa bureaucrats. It should be set by what is fair for producers. That is why producers across the country said yes to the Wheat Board despite the Conservatives' mean-spirited attacks on it.

● (1610)

What else would it do? The other problem with Bill C-13 is that it essentially would eliminate the obligation by these grain companies, some of which are offshore, to post security bonds and ensure that producers would be paid for the product they produced. That absolutely makes sense. That payment security program is absolutely a fundamental part of fairness. If the company does not pay, there needs to be protection in place for grain producers.

Strike three on Bill C-13 is that it would do away with all that. It would do away with that fairness for western producers. It would do away with that fairness for those farmers who have been producing their crops and essentially may not be paid for it.

One might say that the Minister of Agriculture has surely thought of this. There has been some reference to the agriculture committee report that the agriculture minister completely ignored. However, the reality is the agriculture minister, for all his public statements, clearly does not understand how important the payment security program has been.

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The minister was publicly quoted as saying that it would only give 30¢ on the dollar. From some reason, 30¢ on the dollar, if that were right, is somehow worse than zero cents, which the Conservatives proposed. It clearly is not right and I will come back to that in a moment because it is important to correct the record. There were no security bonds. If western farmers cannot pay as a big multinational grain company, they are out of luck. They are going to get zero cents on the dollar.

The Minister of Agriculture justified this by saying that the payment security program only gave 30¢ on the dollar, so somehow 30¢ on the dollar is not as good as zero cents on the dollar, which is the offer from the Conservative Party. The trouble is that the agriculture minister is dead wrong. Over the past 10 years, the payment security program has met issuing payments to producers in nine cases of default by grain companies.

Recall that on Bill C-13, the Conservatives do not want any payments or security any more. In those nine cases, producers would be completely out of luck. That is what the Conservatives are bringing to the floor of the House. I see some surprised looks on the other side. Obviously Conservatives were not told this in the prepared speaking notes from the Prime Minister's Office. I hope that means many Conservatives at the end of this debate will vote for the hoist motion and join the NDP in defending western farmers over the course of Parliament.

In nine cases of default by grain companies, payments were issued. In six of the nine, the payment was 100% of claims. It is important, especially for the Conservatives who are getting new information that they obviously did not get from the Prime Minister's Office, to note that. In one to seven, it was 99.8% of claims.

We are now looking at virtually 100% in seven of the nine cases of default by grain companies. A company that went bankrupt in 2002, payment reached 51.4% of claims. Another company that went bankrupt in 2004, payment was just under 30%. I think it is fair to say that Conservatives are sometimes arithmetically challenged, particularly on this file.

Despite the fact that there was one case where it was 30% of claims, if all nine cases are taken together, the total payment is 77.15%. In 77.15% of cases, grain producers who had worked hard to produce their crop, did their due diligence, did all of their work and saw the grain companies default were compensated because of the security bond. The Conservatives want to get rid of that protection that has supported western producers nine times in the last decade.

• (1615)

Let us just look at this for a moment. The government wants to get rid of the security bond so in the next nine or ten cases western producers would get nothing. The government wants to eliminate the Grain Appeal Tribunal.

Vancouver gets a lot of the grain that is shipped across the country. The member for Churchill spoke of the Port of Churchill. She defends and represents northern Manitoba very ably and effectively in the House. Vancouver, which receives the bulk of grain shipments going to Asia, gets up to 100 appeals in a day during peak season. The Conservatives want to get rid of that.

The Conservatives want to get rid of security bonds and protection for grain producers. They want to get rid of the Grain Appeals Tribunal. They want to kill the commission's inward inspection and weighing service, which provides a balanced playing field for producers who deal with grain companies. However, it is not just that.

The inward inspection service also provides Canada with the highest level of quality in the world. Bill C-13 would do away with that service, which would allow for potential mixing with less high quality American wheat. It would diminish our international standing of having the best grain system in the world.

Why would the Conservatives want to mess with something that works? Why would they, in such a ham-fisted way, do away with the institutions that historically were developed to protect western producers and western farmers? The Conservatives will have to answer for that.

That is why we in this corner of the House proposed the hoist motion. Bill C-13 was not well thought out. It was not done in consultation with farmers. It was not done in farmers' interests. It was not done following the agricultural committee report.

Despite what we have heard from Conservatives, the consensus report did not talk about gutting the Canadian Grain Commission. In fact, the consensus report talked about increasing funding. The Conservatives have said nothing about that. They will gut, they will take away, they will rip apart. They will not try to build a better system, and that is the fundamental problem.

I have another minute to go, and I do want to mention something that is important to farmers in British Columbia, and that is the harmonized sales tax, the HST.

The government is forcing the average British Columbia farmer to pay about \$500 more in taxes through the HST because of this deal with the devil, which was done with the federal Conservatives working with provincial Liberals. A farming family of four people will pay \$2,000 more a year because of the HST, imposed by the federal Conservatives with no consultation.

The Conservatives try to distance themselves and claim they are not responsible, but British Columbians know better. They know the Conservatives are responsible for bringing in the HST. If they want to provide their voice, urban British Columbians will be able to vote in the New Westminster—Coquitlam byelection. All British Columbians will be able to vote shortly in a federal election, whether it is held in the next few months or early 2010. British Columbians will have the final word on whether they support the Conservative HST.

We have no apologies to make to anyone with respect to Bill C-13. It is a bad bill for western farmers and western producers. It does not follow on the agricultural committee recommendations. That is why the NDP has moved this hoist motion to set this off so we can actually get smart agricultural policies to help western producers in the grain trade.

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• (1620)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hon. members will know there is probably not a lot of grain producers in my neck of the woods, although they should know we have some grain production, corn production and even some experimental wheat.

I have been told that one of the criticisms of the bill is that the changes would threaten the quality advantage that Canadian producers now enjoy over their competitors. I am interested in that. To me that seems to be a fabulous advantage Canadian producers apparently have.

Could the member elaborate on that? What is the advantage of the quality that Canadians now possess, in terms of reputation? How would this be harmed?

• (1625)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for St. John's East for his very cogent question.

The reality is, the inward inspection services help provide the best quality of grain in the world. In fact, the Canadian Grain Commission has even been able to differentiate the grain by protein levels. What we have is a very smart system that works very effectively, and it has developed an international reputation.

It is the same with the Canadian Wheat Board. We have managed, through the NDP putting pressure on successive governments, to put in place a structure that protects the best quality wheat in the world, the best quality grains in the world, the most respected system in the world. Why the Conservatives would want to mess with that, take away all the protections that western grain farmers have enjoyed and ensure a very uneven playing field with the grain companies just defies imagination. However, grain producers will be able to judge them on their record in the next election.

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the conversations have gone all around today, but I just wonder if I could ask the member, if he is so supportive of farmers, why he wants to turn farmers into criminals by supporting the long gun registry.

The NDP members said before the election that they would not support the long gun registry, but now they are voting against the elimination of the long gun registry. That does not sound like support for farmers.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, that is hardly in order. He is asking me personally what I will do, and I will of course tell him, as an urban resident, and people in my riding feel very strongly, I will be voting one way on the bill. I know that there are other members in the House who may be feeling differently and be voting another way on the bill, but the important thing is that we stop the division that the Conservatives are deliberately trying to foment between rural areas and urban areas.

That is why urban MPs are standing up and doing something the Conservatives are unwilling to do, and that is to defend western grain producers, actually defend them in a way that Conservatives have been unwilling to do. They have not listened to the western grain producers or western farmers on the Wheat Board. They have

not listened to them on supply management. That is their record, the lowest farm receipts since the Great Depression. That is the Conservative legacy for western farmers, for western grain producers. They should be ashamed of themselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Questions and comments? We seem to have wandered away a little bit from the bill at hand, Bill C-13. The hon. member for York South—Weston, a question.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been suggested that urban Canada is not as interested perhaps in the regulatory framework which in fact protects the quality of food that we eat. I would suggest, after recent episodes with disease that has resulted from bad food and in fact a collapse of the regulatory framework, that urban Canada is even more interested in the regulatory implications.

I wonder if the member could just outline the inward inspections. Could he explain how that capacity to be able to carry on those inspections, which the bill tampers with, affects the quality of food, and how that would allay fears that urban Canada might have that the quality of food we are getting from our producers is not up to what they expect?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, it is fair to say, in terms of inspection generally, that the Conservatives have a lamentable record. We look at how the quality of food has declined and the crisis with voluntary inspection systems. The quality of food that Canadians consume has very clearly declined under the Conservatives.

We are talking about the Canadian Grain Commission, and inward inspection is much more important for the producers. The producers are producing a very high quality product, but the reality is, currently the Canadian Grain Commission intervenes regularly when grain companies are trying to give producers the shaft. Grain companies try to pretend that it is a lower quality of product, and it is the Canadian Grain Commission that steps in, and generally it routinely revises grain grades upwards and corrects quantity measurements, resulting in fair payments to producers.

That is really the point here as far as inward inspection goes. We are saying there has to be a level playing field. The grain producers should get their due and Conservatives are saying, "No, let us throw the inward inspection out, and let grain companies be predatory to any western producer".

We will stand between them and what they are trying to do, because we believe in western farmers. We believe in western producers. We believe in the grain growers of Canada, and we are the ones standing up in the House and defending them.

• (1630)

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have a question for my colleague.

I find it a little offensive, to say the least, the suggestion of Conservative members that those of us who live in urban ridings do not have a particular interest in what happens to the grain industry in Canada.

Government Orders

We know because we are consumers of that product, but we also know that in Vancouver and Burnaby there are many people who earn their living in the industries that support the grain industry. The people who work in transportation and the people who work at the elevators live in our communities and know the importance of this industry and they know the importance of the Canadian Grain Commission.

Could the member comment on the fact that some people in our communities are going to lose their jobs because of the bill, people who provide an excellent service as inspectors, who are professional and well trained and who have done the quality assurance on this product? People in my community know the importance of grain to the Canadian economy. They know that high-quality grain is important to our economy, and they know that there are people in our communities who do that work to assure that quality.

Why would the Conservatives be moving to get rid of them?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the member for Burnaby—Douglas is one of the foremost members of the House in standing up for jobs in his community and standing up for the residents of Burnaby—Douglas. Therefore I am not surprised that he asked that question, because he is always present in the House and speaking up for the residents of his constituency.

He is absolutely right. Residents of Burnaby—Douglas, Burnaby—New Westminster, the city of Vancouver, the north shore, Coquitlam, the south Fraser area, Surrey and Delta have been providing a quality service that enhances Canada's international reputation and builds as well on that level playing field that grain producers need to have with the big multinational grain companies.

If Conservatives do not understand that, they do not understand the first thing about western Canada. They simply do not. To ignore that reality, they simply have forgotten roots in western Canada.

It is absolutely true that it is western Canadians doing those inspections in support of western farmers and western grain growers. Western Canadians are solidly saying that the bill needs to be hoisted because it is a mean-spirited attack on the fundamentals that have allowed western grain farmers to do better than other farmers may have in what has been a catastrophic economic approach by Conservatives to farm incomes generally as well as to agricultural issues.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with a reception like that from my hon. colleague across the floor, I might decide to run in politics some day.

I do want to thank the House for allowing me to speak on this issue. Certainly at the eastern end of the country, it is not as large an industry as it is in places such as western Canada, but there is a multi-million dollar industry for agriculture in Newfoundland and Labrador. We are affectionately nicknamed the rock, so if we can grow it on the rock, my goodness, it just says how good our farmers actually are.

To a great degree, that certainly does put me in a unique position, to say the least, so I would like to thank again all my hon. colleagues for allowing me this time.

I would also like to say that the principle reason for supporting a hoist motion which will effectively remove Bill C-13 from the order paper for this session is that the government has known for more than a year that all three opposition parties have expressed strong opposition not to reforming and improving the Canada Grain Commission, but to being complicit in its undermining and ineffectiveness. Therein lies the gist of the hoist motion to take this from the order paper.

There is a history of that type of mechanism here in the House that we have used on occasion. As a matter of fact, a couple of years ago we moved it during the introduction of the Fisheries Act. There was a tremendous amount of opposition toward it, and not only opposition but questions as to how it would affect each and every person. Instead this thing was rammed down the fishermen's throats in much the same way that we are seeing a pattern that continues with this particular situation now with Bill C-13.

In this particular situation, we see a similar pattern occurring here, because what the hoist motion does is take it away for a while. We can then consult with it and bring it across the country as a good starting point for the type of effective changes that we need. In this particular case, that is why we support the hoist motion.

Our concerns with the legislation are these.

The government has to date shown no inclination to amend the legislation, in spite of the fact that during debate on Bill C-13's predecessor bill, Bill C-39 in February 2008, the official opposition as well as the Bloc and the NDP raised the concerns referred to above, indicating clearly the need for consequential amendments.

On the issue of the producer payment security program, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, who is responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, told this House that while the government is eliminating the practice of CGC holding security deposits from grain dealers, under the producer payment program, he confirmed that the government has developed an alternative:

We understand and we know that there are concerns across the country with regard to these proposals.

The issue remains that the legislation, as it stands, will eliminate this provision without any alternative being established to replace it.

The Minister of Agriculture himself, according to a broadcast news wire story from March 5, is reported to have stated that the government will only remove the producer payment protection program when a better alternative is in place. That is interesting.

In fact the Minister of Agriculture was quoted directly in *The Western Producer* from March 12, when he answered a direct question as to whether farmers would be protected in relation to the bonding issue. He said:

Absolutely. We're not going to leave you hanging with nothing. We'll keep the program that's existing in place until something new comes along.

Government Orders

Here is what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture acknowledged as the flawed nature of the legislation. This is from page 1214:

We understand and we know that there are concerns across the country with regard to these proposals, and we are certainly more than willing to work with the opposition at committee.

That is what is interesting, “at committee”. What the minister has said is not that Bill C-13 needs amending, but that a key element in this bill cannot proceed given the failure of the government to develop an alternative.

The question is this. Can the minister and the government be trusted not to implement the removal of the bonding issue until a better alternative is in place?

Hon. Wayne Easter: No.

Mr. Scott Simms: I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Malpeque for providing that answer, and indeed I agree, it is no.

An hon. member: And he wins.

Mr. Scott Simms: Yes, he wins hopefully some day good governance.

The government had the opportunity to make the changes to the legislation a year ago when we called for it, and it has failed to do so. As a matter of fact, I think the term is miserably.

• (1635)

Remember that this is the same government that violated the law in its effort to undermine the Canadian Wheat Board. It has refused to allow western grain farmers to have a vote, a plebiscite, to determine the future of the CWB. Trust is not something that we have in the current government, especially on this specific issue.

The minister is already claiming he is about to amend his own legislation, although, if the bill is passed, this so-called commitment will not be contained in the legislation. On the issue of inward inspections, the government has indicated it is removing the role of the CGC.

The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, in a unanimous report, acknowledged that mandatory inward inspection is not a universal requirement, while outward inspection and weighing is. The committee stated in its report, again one supported unanimously, that:

...several strong factors seem to support optional inward inspection; the inward inspection requirement is already not universal; optional inspection would not affect producer rights of access to the terminal and [for emphasis] producers and the Canadian Wheat Board should not be unduly affected financially if a proper publicly supported infrastructure and pricing system are put into place in light of the public benefits of maintaining an inward inspection capability.

The fact is that while the government is removing the inward inspection provision, the work called for by the committee has never been done, despite what has been happening.

A recent study of the Canadian Grain Commission found the following issues with respect to the loss of the inward inspection. I would point out to my hon. colleagues that this is a very important point.

Inward weighing and inspection that would still be required would be less trustworthy and more expensive.

The grain system would lose an important early detection system for contaminated grain. Eliminating inward inspection by public officials would increase the likelihood of contaminated grain being co-mingled with larger quantities of clean grain. Shipments to Canadian and U.S. markets would lose an important level of protection against contamination. Grain shipped to these markets could bypass official inspection.

Inward inspection provides quality assurance information that makes outward inspection more efficient and certainly more cost effective, in this particular case.

Replacing public sector inspectors with private contractors—which is quite prevalent nowadays, some to the positive and certainly some to the negative, but at this point I will stick to the negative—many of whom would be reliant upon private grain companies for business, would undermine the perceived reliability of the information derived from inward inspection.

With respect to the diminished role of the CGC, the study prepared by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found, for example, with respect to the port of Vancouver, the following problem, bearing in mind Vancouver and Prince Rupert, as of December 2007, moved almost 1.2 million tonnes of grain through its facilities.

At a typical Vancouver elevator, CGC weighers routinely process the unloading of 5 to 100 rail cars during a shift. Documentation on these cars, the parcels, weights and anomalies, and other relevant information, is provided by the weigher to the elevator at the end of each day. Such information is very important, not just in the event of disagreements, but in the routine operations of the elevators. It is unclear how this data would be gathered, and by whom, if public inward inspection were eliminated.

The government has to explain why it has decided, prior to the legislation to downgrade, as expressed in the estimates for the commission under the section which describes the activity as providing “consistent and reliable grain quality”, as we talked about before, “and grain safety assurance to meet the needs of domestic and international markets”, the forecast spending for 2011-12 will be \$23.4 million. In 2007, the planned spending was \$50.2 million. By the CGC's own records, the government will reduce the ability of the CGC to do its job by a whopping \$26.8 million.

• (1640)

The staffing at CGC will be reduced from 664 in 2007-08 to 421 in 2009-10.

Bill C-13 would remove the ability of producers who appeal through the grain appeal tribunal. According to a recent Library of Parliament study, under the provisions of the Canada Grain Act, a person dissatisfied with the initial grading may have up to three appeals under the act. Under the scheme which is proposed now in Bill C-13, a person dissatisfied with the grade, an inspector assigned, would have just one appeal and that, of course, would be to the chief grain inspector or his or her delegate.

Government Orders

These are the fundamental reasons the Liberals agree in principle with what is happening with the hoist amendment.

Indeed, under the provisions of the bill, the chief commissioner or any person delegated by the chief commissioner, which is an indication of the ability to possibly contract out that particular responsibility, will have the authority on any appeal. At the same time, Bill C-13 would remove the ability of farmers to have recourse to the courts.

However, according to a Library of Parliament analysis of the use of provisions such as those we talked about that are contained in Bill C-13 which attempt to remove the ability of farmers to have recourse to the courts, the issue is not that clear cut.

According to the Library of Parliament report, the wording of the privative clause in Bill C-13 appears on its face to preclude any appeal or review of a decision of the chief grain inspector. However, that is not the effect the clause would have.

The Library of Parliament states, based upon its research that Parliament and the provinces may not, through legislation, preclude the superior courts from exercising their supervisory jurisdiction. At a minimum, the government must carefully reconsider its attempt to restrict the ability of Canadians, the courts in the face of clear evidence that it might not be able to legitimately do so.

The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food called for a comprehensive cost benefit report from the government on the proposed changes the government was suggesting, and that was in 2006, with respect to the changes in service for grain inspection. To date, no such report has been produced by the government as to the real impacts of their changes on the primary producers specifically.

The government has indeed failed to produce that report. Yet again this is more evidence why more information and consultation is needed, which belies the true spirit of what we normally call a hoist amendment or, as some people from the east coast of the country would call affectionately, giving it the boot.

Even though this legislation has not received even second reading, the chief commissioner of the CGC, according to a report in *The Western Producer*, published February 23, 2009, sent a letter to industry indicating that it would end inspection services at prairie primary elevators this summer and would close three service centres and reduce staff.

The transition away from on-site inspection services means that the CGC will no longer provide official grading and weighing on grain shipments from the Prairies to terminal facilities nor for export shipments to the United States or domestic mills.

In essence, before Bill C-13 has been approved by Parliament, the CGC has decided to begin implementing the reduction in services it provides to western grain producers. That is very important. If nothing else, this is a demonstration of contempt for the legislative process by the chief commissioner of the CGC.

As a final point of concern, the minister announced that as of August 1 KVD will be removed. That is kernel visual distinguishability. It will be removed, according to what the minister announced on August 1. The minister was warned in January by senior officials, just weeks before his announcement of February 11, that farmers could suffer a negative impact of this removal and Canada's reputation for quality grain could indeed be undermined. The reason

given by the officials, including his own deputy minister, was that no adequate system has been developed to replace the KVD.

• (1645)

The western grain industry needs a strong CGC. What is currently proposed in Bill C-13 is a worst case scenario. Removing the CGC from both inward and outward inspections is next to worst because it considerably weakens the role that the CGC plays.

Therefore, the following amendments should be made to Bill C-13: one, CGC-administered producer security should be reinstated; and two, if inward inspection becomes optional, the CGC should accredit and audit private service providers who would be responsible for inward inspection. A key part of this accreditation and audit process will be to institute clear CGC accountability for differences between inward and outward risk.

Therefore, I conclude that part of my speech by outlining three essential elements.

One, our support for the hoist motion is a signal to the government that it cannot simply bring in legislation which it is well aware does not enjoy the support of the House without any effort made at all to amend it.

Two, Bill C-13 is Bill C-39 from the previous Parliament. Remember that legislation was debated more than a year ago and the debate clearly indicated the government should reconsider its direction on undermining the CGC. It had a year to do so and it has failed to take that opportunity. This particular vote is not a vote against reform of the CGC, but it is indeed a vote against the arrogance of the government.

Let me illustrate that by bringing up a point about a particular case with the hoist amendment and what we did prior to this, about two years ago. I will go back to an example that we use. The lack of consultation was so pervasive. It became abundantly clear upon introduction in the House, as producers in the case of this bill, or fishermen in the case of the Fisheries Act, called us time and time again with questions and concerns. We were inundated at the time. The big thing was that the Conservatives insisted that consultation was taking place. We called the people whose names were provided to us and they said that was not necessarily the case; all they had received was a letter informing them what to do. Therein lies the arrogance.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: It's getting serious.

Mr. Scott Simms: It is getting serious, as my hon. colleague across the way can attest to. This is a serious issue.

The problem with this and I commend the NDP, the fourth party in the House, as I have affectionately called it before, for doing this. We agree with it. During the talk about the new Fisheries Act, the NDP members too were with us so it was a re-run of *Kill Bill* volume one and *Kill Bill* volume two, I suppose.

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I would implore the House to do the most responsible thing which is to take this piece of legislation, Bill C-13, not much change since Bill C-39, off the order paper. Bring it to the producers and the stakeholders involved. They will certainly give it a good vetting. In that way we will have the confidence when returning to the House that we do have the support of the vast majority of the producers and the industry. That way the amendments that the Conservatives so earnestly seek to achieve would be done with a broad consultation. They may complain it may take a little more time and it may cause a few headaches among the bureaucrats in Ottawa, but certainly at the end of the day we can hold it up as a gem, something that is going to be crystal clear, something that is going to be used for the benefit of all agricultural interests across this country.

• (1650)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently as my friend from Newfoundland talked about a bill that largely affects western Canada.

As a farmer myself and former chair of the agriculture committee that studied this issue originally, I find it rather absurd to suggest shelving the bill for the next six months with the hoist amendment proposed by the NDP. It is even more troubling to hear him suggest that we need to go through a whole round of hearings again.

That is exactly why we have committees. We already had a whole process of hearings, talking to stakeholders and talking to producers. We already had the solid recommendations supported by all parties in the House to move forward with the recommendations that are in Bill C-13.

Now the member is suggesting that was not good enough. If he actually lets the bill come to full debate at second reading and send it off to committee, then we can do a fulsome study as we do with all legislation when it comes before committee.

Then the stakeholders can again be called forward to talk about the bill. There are always a few that are out there who are concerned about it, but largely it is time to get moving on this legislation, making the changes and modernizing the Canadian Grain Commission.

The only way we can do that is if Bill C-13, which industry, producers and stakeholders want to see, moves forward so that we can have that debate, make the necessary amendments that are needed rather than playing games which the member suggested.

• (1655)

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, why does it bother my colleague so much that he just seems to want to get things done in an expedient fashion and not the right way? He started out by saying that this is as a result of all the consultations the government had done. The government never even followed the recommendations that were made by the standing committee several years ago.

Now we are in the House and I do not know what it is he wants. I do not think this legislation reflects that. It certainly does not reflect what the farmers want or agricultural interests.

I sit here and I am listening to this, and I am thinking it is a rerun of what we went through in the fisheries industry. It is the same sort of thing. This sense of arrogance starts from the top. It goes right through the entire bureaucracy which exists here in the city of

Ottawa. It pushes it forward. It is almost like there is this tinge of arrogance that says, "No doubt about it we've got the answer for you".

Therefore, the people who are the stakeholders, and I say stakeholders and not just the people involved at the top industry levels, but also the people who work on the individual farms themselves, these are the people who sit there and say, "At what point is my voice heard in all of this?" Again, it becomes a rerun.

I want to say this before I stop on that point. What we have here is this. It changes the mandate from being in the interests of producers to being in the interests of the industry. That is essentially the real part of this particular issue.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was amused by the outraged Conservatives earlier today in their speeches, when they were referring to the hoist and the idea that somehow we were putting farmers at risk by trying to hoist the bill.

I looked at the date on which the hoist motion was made and it was April 2. When I look at my calendar, it is six months and six days to the day that the hoist motion was made. As far as I know the government House leader is the one who sets the House business. He could have called the bill at any time in the last six months but chose to wait a full six months and six days before he even called the bill. So much for the urgency of the government to get the bill passed.

There have been some very important points brought out in the debate today by members in my party and members in the Liberal Party. A big issue is the elimination of the requirement for grain buyers to post the security bonds and it would expose the grain producers to financial harm or bankruptcy.

I ask, what could go wrong? We are in an economy right now where the big companies are going bankrupt. We have General Motors and Nortel going bankrupt. When we take away bonding requirements, it is a safety feature to have grain companies bonded to protect the producers. I see nothing but trouble in leaving the grain companies operating without a bond, exposing all the producers to enormous losses.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague certainly has a valid point when it comes to the issue of bonding. There is no doubt about it. There are many mid-level and smaller producers in that particular situation. In my case, they are mostly harvesters in the fishing industry. Many of them become exposed to all of the losses at the upper levels. That is an unfortunate part about it.

In his speech, my hon. colleague for Malpeque said that it changes the mandate from being in the interests of producers to being in the interests of the industry. He talked about one other thing and this will add some credence to what my hon. colleague from the NDP is talking about. He did mention that the hoist amendment came in several months ago. In that period of time, the message was that we needed some fundamental changes, more so than what the government was considering. Nothing was done. It is a pattern that has been going on for three years now.

The reason why the opposition is taking such a strong stand against the bill is the government's failure when it comes to primary producers. Nowhere is that evidence of failure more clear than this particular bill, which is a rehash of the last one, going from Bill C-13 to Bill C-39.

• (1700)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed my hon. friend's remarks. I had forgotten about this quotation from the minister. He was quoted in *The Western Producer*, saying, "We're not going to leave you hanging with nothing".

As the NDP member has said, it has now been six months. We still see no proposals from the minister on what the government would replace bonding with. If the bill takes away bonding, all kinds of companies will go broke. There is only one person who bears the burden of a company going broke and that is the producer who shipped the grain. Without bonding, it is an absolute disaster.

We do know that there are all kinds of other cases where the minister has left producers with nothing. In fact, they were left with less than nothing. As I mentioned earlier, the hog plan leaves producers with no security and more debt. The CAIS program it replaced with AgriStability leaves them with even less returns than CAIS provided. Now, on its exit program for hogs, farmers have to bid against each other for who will sell the lowest to get out of the business. That is really a race to the bottom by producers so that the government can get the lowest cost possible.

When the minister said, "We're not going to leave you hanging with nothing", there are all kinds of examples out there where this minister has left producers with less than nothing.

I would ask the member this question. He mentioned the fact that in the bill, deleted from the original Canada Grain Act, is "in the interests of producers". He has worked with the fisheries. Who would ever believe that a minister would introduce a bill for an area that he is responsible for and drop the producer interest from that bill? Is that not crazy?

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is probably an expression that ties along with that. Upon making any move to downgrade the ability and function of, and in the fisheries case it would be a harvester, the minister would certainly be thrown in among the harbour upon visiting the wharf.

In this particular situation, he is certainly correct in his remarks. I just want to put back on the record what the minister stated. In *The Western Producer* on March 12, 2009, he was answering a direct question as to whether farmers would be protected in relation to the bonding issue that we have just discussed. He said:

Absolutely. We're not going to leave you hanging with nothing. We'll keep the program that's existing in place until something new comes along.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture acknowledged the flawed nature of the legislation. He said:

We understand and we know that there are concerns across the country with regard to these proposals, and we are certainly more than willing to work with the opposition at committee—

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Apparently, the hoist amendment is one way of doing it. Let us all support it. I think it will be unanimous, according to the remarks made here by the parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Canada Grain Act.

However, it is a sad day, in fact, a very sad day when the opposition plays games once again with the livelihood of western grain farmers with this motion to hoist this very important bill.

The facts are simple, Canadian farm families deserve to be treated equally across the country, but the current legislation forces western Canadian producers to pay costs that are not imposed in other regions. It sounds kind of like the Wheat Board, which also applies only to western Canadian farmers, but yet the opposition seems so intent on forcing it on western Canadian farmers.

Bill C-13 would contribute to building a lower cost, more effective and innovative grain sector. This legislation is based on the agriculture committee report the opposition parties helped to write.

Conservative MPs on the agriculture committee, including myself, are ready and willing to get down to work, to roll up our sleeves, and work on Bill C-13 at the agriculture committee. It is just too bad the opposition parties are not willing to do that work and treat all regions equally. It is what our farmers would expect.

In committee there will be ample opportunities to work on this bill, but the opposition has decided to collude to hoist this bill which will essentially kill the bill to the detriment of our western grain farmers.

The amendments the government is proposing to the Canada Grain Act and the Canadian Grain Commission are evidence of our commitment to grain producers. Canada's quality assurance system for grain provides a key competitive advantage for our farmers. The amendments we are proposing would build on that competitive advantage.

When our global customers choose Canadian grain for processing, they count on consistent quality and cleanliness with every delivery. This world-class reputation that our Canadian grains enjoy around the globe has been earned. First and foremost it has been earned through the hard work of our farmers, but grain handling companies, research scientists and the Canadian Grain Commission have also played a role in building that golden reputation.

Our edge in the marketplace is all about quality. Much of the responsibility for the quality of Canadian grain resides with the Canadian Grain Commission and the quality assurance system it administers under the Canada Grain Act.

The grain industry is changing, and the legislative tools required to keep the industry competitive need to change along with that. The Canada Grain Act has not changed substantially in almost 40 years, but the marketplace has certainly evolved.

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We have a major new customer for grains in the form of the biofuels industry, supported by initiatives put in place by this Conservative government. We have quality management systems to allow parcels of grain with specific qualities wanted by buyers to be kept separate through the handling system. We have niche marketing and processing of grains in Canada, and we now have a broader range, in fact, a much broader range of crops in western Canada.

In the mid-1990s, the reform of the Western Grain Transportation Act triggered a wholesale diversification as some producers opted to switch to other crops, such as oilseeds, pulse crops and horticultural crops. Today, wheat accounts for only one-third of our crop land. In the 1950s, three-quarters of our land was in wheat.

Some of the changes being proposed include: inward inspection and weighing of grains will no longer be mandatory. There is no reason to require something that is not necessary, particularly when the cost comes out of the bottom line of farmers in the grain industry.

Currently, the Grain Commission is required to inspect and weigh each railcar or truck lot of western grain that is received by licensed terminal elevators. The industry has been calling for change in this area for some years now because the mandatory inspections impose costs and they are not essential to ensure grain quality.

Inward inspection and weighing will no longer be mandatory. Instead, shippers of grain will be able to request an inspection at their discretion, letting them choose when they feel the benefit justifies the cost.

• (1705)

Elevators would also be required to allow access to private inspectors when an inspection is requested, and the Canadian Grain Commission would be authorized to provide grade arbitration if the parties to a transaction request it. This means that if there is a dispute about the grade, the Canadian Grain Commission would be available to impartially determine the grade.

Let us be clear. This does not mean grain would go through the system without inspection. Outward inspection would still be required when grain is loaded into vessels for overseas export. Export vessel shipments would continue to require certification by the Canadian Grain Commission based on inspection and weighing by Canadian Grain Commission personnel.

With the bill in place, our customers will be assured that they can continue to have confidence in Canada's grain quality assurance system. The Canadian Grain Commission would continue to regulate the grain handling system for the benefit of our producers. It would continue to license grain handlers and dealers. It would continue to require them to have proper grading and weighing equipment and to properly document purchases, and continue to ensure that producers have access to grade arbitration by the Canadian Grain Commission.

The bill would actually enhance farmer protection by extending Canadian Grain Commission grade and dockage arbitration to farmers delivering to process elevators and grain dealers. Currently, if a producer disagrees with the grade or dockage for a grain delivery at a licensed primary elevator, the producer can ask the Canadian Grain Commission to determine the grade and dockage and make a binding decision. The grain producer is paid according to this decision. The bill before us proposes to extend this service to

deliveries to all licensed grain handlers, including process elevators and grain dealers.

Farmers have never had this protection before and with these amendments we have put farmers first, which I would call the opposition parties to do as well. It is simply shameful that the three opposition parties will not consider the interests of farmers first. They have shown time and time again that they just do not care about the concerns, wants or needs of western farmers.

Let me delve into a few other examples. The opposition members had the opportunity to stand up for farmers but, once again, failed to do so. I want to talk about a vote we had just this week on Bill C-51 and an element contained in that bill. It has been a brutal year for producers in parts of Saskatchewan and Alberta particularly. Producers in west central Saskatchewan got off to a very poor start due to a dry fall and very low snow coverage. This was compounded by a cool, dry spring, resulting in low water supplies and poor pasture and hay growth. Things were certainly no better in my part of the world, in central Alberta, where producers faced seeding without any significant rainfall since the summer of 2008.

There is no denying that the risks and unpredictability of farming will always be there. The last thing a producer who is battling drought needs is a bill from the taxman. That is why the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of Finance worked together on provisions to allow those producers, forced to sell off their breeding animals due to the drought, to defer the tax on that income for one year. In 2009, we proposed to expand the program to include areas hard hit by excess moisture.

For 2009, the ministers have already announced tax deferrals for producers and some of the municipalities hardest hit by the drought in Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and areas where excess moisture is a big problem in Manitoba. This will help producers in these areas replenish breeding stock in the following year. However, yet again, the opposition Liberals voted against the best interests of western Canadian farmers.

Let me talk about one other area where this is the case, and that is the Wheat Board. Again, this only applies to western farmers and yet we have members from other parts of the country who seem to have decided that they know better and they know what is best for western Canadian grain farmers. They think they know better than the farmers what they should do with their products and the choices that they should be able to make for the market, and they want to limit those choices.

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•(1710)

Our government wants to see farmers choose how they market their products, whether they choose to use the Wheat Board to market their products or whether they choose to sell those products on their own. That is a fundamental right that everybody in this country should enjoy and yet opposition parties tell us that western farmers just cannot decide for themselves.

Hon. Wayne Easter: No, no. Producers voted. Be honest.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, no amount of braying and shouting and hollering by the member for Malpeque will change that.

Western Canadian farmers deserve the right to market their own wheat and barley.

This is yet again another example of the opposition parties colluding and working together against the best interests of our western Canadian farmers. It is a real shame.

Let me give the House an example of how far opposition members will go in trying to ensure western farmers do not have the right to make these choices for themselves and do not even have the information they need.

I think it was back in May when Canadian Wheat Board officials appeared at the agriculture committee, on which I am a member. We were simply requesting that the Wheat Board share a report outlining the significant losses that it had incurred in the last crop year. Opposition members did everything they could procedurally to ensure that the motion could not be voted on so that western Canadian farmers could actually have the information that would allow them to open up those books and see what actually happened to their money, to see the money that the Wheat Board had lost, which was farmers' money.

I cannot imagine for the life of me why anyone would oppose such a democratic thing as allowing farmers the opportunity to see what has happened to their money. However, yet again the opposition parties colluded to ensure that western farmers' interests were put on the back burner. That is a terrible shame.

I will come back to the bill before us now and share some quotes from several different affected parties, stakeholders and others about this particular bill and showing their support for the need for these changes. I will start with a few quotes directly from the Canadian Grain Commission itself.

The first quote is from a spokesman at the Canadian Grain Commission back in February 2008, which reads:

Eliminating mandatory weighing and inspection would not impact grain quality. In the past, about 30 or 40 years ago, you had a lot more players in western Canada handling grain and there was a higher risk of co-mingling between different classes of grain. But now, because there have been significant consolidations within the grain industry, and there are only a few players...that service is no longer required.

I have another quote from the chief commissioner of the Canadian Grain Commission back in March of this year which reads:

The transition away from on-site inspection will not affect producers negatively. He says it's more of a service for the elevators and buyers, than the producers. It will result in a more effective allocation of the commission's resources.

Let me also quote from the *Manitoba Co-operator* back in March 2008 as well. It reads:

The CGC estimates security now costs grain companies and the CGC around \$5 million a year, which is ultimately passed back to farmers.

Imagine that. I did not hear any opposition complaints about that.

I will now quote from the people who this legislation is most important for and that is producers. I will quote from several producer groups, some very glowing comments on the legislation. I will start first with Richard Phillips, who is the executive director of the Canadian Grain Growers, who said, "We agree with the federal government that the legislation needs an upgrade...". That sounds pretty clear to me. I do not know what part of that the opposition cannot seem to understand.

I will also quote from a news release of April 7, 2009, put out by the Grain Growers of Canada. It reads:

The Grain Growers were hoping the bill would proceed to the standing committee on agriculture where all stakeholders, including the government members, could have analyzed the alternatives to the current mandatory bonding system.

•(1715)

In April, the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association said:

We are disappointed with a delay in reforms to the Canada Grain Act and the Canadian Grain Commission. Last week, the federal Liberals vowed to kill the proposals, saying they favoured grain companies and the railways over farmers. Association president Kevin Bender says the regulatory system needs to fit the marketplace and reduce farm costs. The wheat growers advocate the implementation of an optional inspection and grading system on prairie grain shipments.

Again, those are very clear comments and I cannot understand why the opposition members just cannot seem to get it through their heads that this is what western Canadian farmers want.

The Western Barley Growers Association has been particularly condemning in its comments on this amendment and the political opportunism that is behind it. I will read a few quotes from the president, Brian Otto, who states:

This delaying tactic is not acceptable. The Act is thirty years old and in critical need of updating. In today's fragile economic conditions, producers cannot continue to be encumbered by an archaic Act that increases our costs and affects our ability to compete in the world marketplace. The WBGA, along with other producers organizations, were looking forward to offering our grassroots input to the discussions concerning the proposed changes to modernize this Act.

Brian Otto also had this to say:

We encourage all parties to defeat this hoist motion and allow the bill to proceed to Committee so that producer groups and the grain industry can contribute to the debate. This will allow all of us to work towards a Bill that best benefits farmers and the industry. If we don't do it now, it will just have to be done all over again with a new Bill later and meantime farmers will continue to pay the costs of waiting for change.

Finally, he says:

If the bill is hoisted, the opportunity for debate and discussion will be lost. The WBGA has to ask the opposition parties why they are unwilling to allow this discussion to proceed. This appears to be political opportunism and an attempt to embarrass the Conservatives and promote their own party images, all at the expense of Western Canadian Producers.

Government Orders

That is very condemning of the opposition and its terrible tactics in this regard.

I believe that the amendments proposed in the bill would build a more competitive and innovative grain sector by reducing costs, improving competitiveness, improving regulation and providing choice for our producers in the grain sector. We are delivering real action for farmers so that they can continue to fuel our economy and remain competitive both at home and abroad.

However, given the spirit of debate that we have had here and that we had when this legislation was proposed and introduced a year ago, I also recognize that there are certainly some issues that the opposition does have and which we may want to discuss at the standing committee. We are more than open to that. I welcome that discussion and I welcome the standing committee's input into helping to make this legislation the best that it can be.

However, this bill will never make it to the standing committee with the current hoist amendment, so I would urge all members to vote for western Canadian grain farmers, defeat this hoist amendment and support the bill going forward to committee where we can have some good, solid discussion.

• (1725)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. member for Wild Rose.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member is confused, but I certainly appreciate the kind words and his encouragement for my comments. He was so confused he believed I may be the minister. I certainly appreciate that. He recognizes and understands that a lot of stuff is being done on this side of the House, which is very important for our farmers, and that the minister should be on the Conservative side.

No matter how much the member chooses to raise his voice, nothing will change in the fact that I have shared several quotes from our western producers, who tell us that they want to see these changes, that they feel it is in their best interests. I am here to stand up for farmers, particularly my western Canadian farmers. Unfortunately, it is too bad the opposition parties, including the member for Malpeque especially, do not want to see those interests of farmers protected. However, I am here to do just that. I want to see the bill go forward to committee where we can have some good, solid discussions, where we can bring in our producers, hear from them and allow them to contribute to this debate too.

Our farmers are demanding that and are asking for that. This Conservative government wants to deliver that for our farmers. It is really too bad and a shame that the opposition parties refuse to allow that opportunity for our producers. I am here to stand up for farmers. I wish they would too.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are looking at the difference between two visions of agriculture, one vision that supports the big corporations, the big agribusiness and the other one that wants to support farmers. There is a saying in the English language, if something works, why fix it? The Grain Commission is not an outmoded institution. It plays a role as relevant as it did a century ago. It has tough regulations in force that gives it good competition with foreign purchasers. The bill would benefit the powerful private interests that control the grain

industry and a minority of farmers opposed to government regulation who wish to sell privately into the current high priced commodity markets.

I will ask one specific question. If the inward inspection were eliminated, would it mean that Canada would have difficulty in meeting its obligation under the international planned protection convention? For example, the government must certify health status of grain prior to shipment, in other words so there are no pests. This is done with inward inspection. The samples go to the CFIA and then there is certification. If there were no samples, would it be very possible that this contamination would take place? Has anyone in government talked to the CFIA about who will be providing the samples if there is no certification?

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question. I appreciate the way he tries to work together with members on the agriculture committee. I find the hon. member to be a very reasonable and fair person. Unfortunately, when it comes to his ideology, he is dead wrong.

I look forward to the opportunity, at the agriculture committee, to debate and discuss this and to bring in producers and hear from them as well. If the member were to withdraw this motion, we could have that debate at the agriculture committee. I would welcome that opportunity. I know farmers would welcome that opportunity as well.

It is very unfortunate that he has chosen to bring this motion forward. I would love to have that opportunity to debate this with him at the agriculture committee and to have our producers come in and share their thoughts as well. I would encourage that.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member for Wild Rose drew attention to the work that the government has been doing in tax deferrals for farmers who have been dealing with drought and, in my area, flooding. He mentioned the Manitoba areas that would get the tax deferral because of the excess of moisture and how helpful that would be for farmers in my area.

Unfortunately, when this came before the House, the Liberals, who stood today and said that they were fighting for farmers, voted against that measure, which I think is deplorable. It reeks of the double-talk that happens in the House, unfortunately.

Would the member talk a bit more about this whole issue of bonding? It has come up a few times, that bonding is the only way to protect producers. Having gone through this a number of times when I worked for the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association and watching bonds fail to provide adequate protection to farmers, there is a better way.

In Alberta they are using a clearing house to ensure dollars are in bank accounts to cover cheques being written by companies. I know in other areas of the country they use assurance funds to build up a surety to cover producers in case there is a default by a corporation or a company buying their goods.

• (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Wild Rose has maybe 30 seconds, unfortunately, to respond to a much longer question.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do not know how I could possibly begin to even address that in 30 seconds.

I thank the hon. member for his good work on behalf of farmers. I know many of my colleagues on this side have the best interests of farmers in mind.

He gave one example of the opposition parties choosing to not have the best interests of farmers in mind. I wish they would follow the example of this Conservative government, show what is in the best interests of farmers and do what is right for them.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

SEARCH AND RESCUE HELICOPTER

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, it is imperative the government move expeditiously to allocate the necessary resources to put in place a full-time dedicated helicopter fully equipped to search and rescue standards at the airport nearest to offshore oil activity and that it be available on a 24-hour basis with a crew trained in all aspects of search and rescue.

She said: Madam Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak to the need for additional search and rescue services in Newfoundland and Labrador. I thank the member for Brossard—La Prairie for seconding the motion.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are no strangers to tragedies at sea. In fact, our history is such that in small fishing communities there were so many men lost at sea that it was common that numerous women were left to raise large families without the support of a spouse.

I grew up in a historic fishing community where there were many homes that had at the very top something called a widow's walk. When boats went to sea, they were gone for extended periods of time and no one really knew when they would be returning because it was usually when there was no more room to put the fish they had caught.

More often than not, wives would go up to the widow's walk and look out to the ocean to see if there were any boats returning. When a boat was spotted, the women would watch in fear that a flag would be flying at half-mast, indicating someone had died while at sea, and hoping it was not their husband, son or brother because members of families often fished together. A boat returning was a good sign because many boats had been lost at sea with all hands, as the local papers would say.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have a hate/love relationship with the sea, hate because of how dangerous it can be and love because it has provided a livelihood for thousands of years to the fishery. Now, in addition to the fishery, many Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians are earning a living from the most recent industry we associate with the sea, and that is the oil industry.

Contrary to Alberta, where the oil is located on land, the oil resources that Newfoundland and Labrador is known for are located as far away as 350 kilometres offshore. This means that the method of travel for those who work offshore in the oil industry is usually by helicopter. To fly from St. John's, where the helicopter company is located, to the offshore oil platform takes approximately three hours.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are no strangers to work. In fact, they are proud, productive people who want nothing more than to earn a living and provide for their families. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have travelled in search of work for many years. Many went to work building high rises in New York, more went to Boston and of course we all know about the out migration of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to provinces like Alberta and Ontario.

Always in search of work, is it any wonder that when oil was discovered offshore Newfoundland and Labrador, it was considered a godsend. Not only did it mean employment, but it meant being able to live and work at home, to spend time with their families. It was not long before the comfort and satisfaction turned to worry and fear.

Prior to the use of floating production platforms offshore Newfoundland and Labrador, there was a fixed production platform called the *Ocean Ranger*, which was drilling in the Hibernia oil field. The *Ocean Ranger* commenced drilling on November 26, 1981 and on February 14, 1982 the it sank, claiming 84 lives.

I do not have to say how devastating that was, not just for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, where the majority of those who worked on the *Ocean Ranger* were from, but for others throughout the country, North America and Europe, where some of the workers lived and were experienced in the oil industry. They were from Alberta, Texas, Norway and Scotland.

● (1735)

Following the loss of the *Ocean Ranger*, with everyone on board, a royal commission was put in place to look into the tragedy and to make recommendations to ensure, to the extent humanly possible, that such a tragedy would never occur again.

One of the recommendations was that a full-time search and rescue-dedicated helicopter be stationed at the airport nearest to ongoing offshore drilling operations and that it be readily available, with a trained crew able to perform all aspects of the rescue.

Does that sound familiar?

My motion is almost word for word that recommended 24 years ago, following the sinking of the *Ocean Ranger* which claimed 84 lives, twenty-four years ago, and we are still waiting to have the recommendation enacted.

Private Members' Business

The fact that the recommendation has not been acted upon was particularly upsetting when, on March 12, a helicopter carrying workers to the Hibernia offshore oil platform and the *SeaRose* floating production storage and offloading vessel crashed into the sea, taking all but one life. Of the 18 people on-board the helicopter, two survived the crash; however, only one survived the ordeal. Of the two who survived the crash, one, a young woman, drowned.

Needless to say, in the wake of yet another tragedy associated with the offshore oil industry, many questions have been raised about the adequacy of military search and rescue services in Newfoundland and Labrador.

At the time of the tragedy, search and rescue helicopters located in Newfoundland and Labrador were involved in training exercises in Nova Scotia. As a result, nearly two hours passed before they were able to get to the crash site.

While we will never know if any of the victims would have survived the crash if search and rescue had arrived at the site earlier, loved ones who lost family and friends in the tragedy will always have questions. I know because two of the men who lost their lives were from my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's.

While I do not know the father of the young woman who drowned, I have heard him speak and wonder if his daughter could have been saved. He has said the question will remain with him forever.

Those who work in the industry refer to the "golden hour". It is that first hour after an accident or a sinking at sea. They say if people are not spotted or rescued in that first hour, their situation will begin to deteriorate very quickly.

I have complete confidence in the capabilities, knowledge and commitment of the people who serve at the 103 Search and Rescue Squadron, in Gander, Newfoundland.

Let me be clear. The purpose of my motion is to expand search and rescue services in Newfoundland and Labrador, not to reallocate or relocate existing equipment and personnel. The intent of my motion is as it says, to establish a fully-equipped, long-range helicopter service that is closer to the offshore oil activity.

It would also be prudent of the government to upgrade the present search and rescue service in Gander to a 24/7 operation, in light of the tragedy that occurred just six short months ago.

What is required is an infusion of money to make the level of search and rescue services adequate to meet the needs that exist, not just in the fishing, export and tourism industries in Newfoundland and Labrador, but in the oil industry as well.

Response time to tragedies at sea must be improved if we are to avoid, as much as it is possible to do so, more loss of life in what can be a very dangerous working environment.

Safety, not money, must be the issue in responding to this motion.

The federal government has an 8.5% stake in Hibernia alone. So, think of the revenue that accrues to the government. It is more than enough to enhance the search and rescue services in Newfoundland

and Labrador if the government does indeed consider money to be an issue.

● (1740)

I am hoping that is not the case. I am hoping that the government will indeed see the common sense approach of doing what is right, under the circumstances. When I think of the families who lost loved ones, the tragedies I mentioned and, probably more important today, those who work offshore in whatever industry, I had no choice but to bring forward this motion and try once again after 24 years to get a helicopter station closer to the offshore.

We do not know, had the recommendation of the Royal Commission on the *Ocean Ranger* marine disaster been acted on 24 years ago, whether more recent tragedies would have had different outcomes. I prefer to not have to wonder about that should future tragedies occur. I am sure that those who work offshore feel the same way.

I am told that fear is not uncommon among those who work offshore and certainly not among their families. They are living with the fear of losing a loved one whenever they leave to board a helicopter to take them offshore. They are living with fear whenever they hear of a circumstance that could mean the loss of a life. They are living with fear when they hear and remember what has happened in other circumstances.

Unfortunately, our history has taught them to be fearful. We have an opportunity to do what is right. I would say that now is the time, but really, it is long past the right time. It must be done and it must be done now. It is imperative that the government respond to this motion in the affirmative.

Twenty-four years is a long time to wait to have search and rescue services enhanced as a result of a tragedy that took 84 lives at that time. Just six short months ago, we saw the loss of another 17 lives. How many lives must we lose? How many lives must we lose to the sea? While it is our history, it is not something that we should have to continue to experience.

The very dangerous environment of the offshore, whether one works on a fishing vessel, on a tourism boat, on a freighter importing or exporting product to or from the province, or in the oil industry offshore, is not a good environment to work in when someone is on a sea that becomes so volatile that they fear for their life. It is not a good environment when the winds are so high that one really does fear for their life.

It is important that all of these circumstances are taken into account. It is important that the government consider each and every one of them. More important, it is important that the government consider every individual who works offshore in an environment that is dangerous.

We have to respond in the affirmative. We have to recognize that this is important. We have to recognize that it is not about money. It is about safety and saving lives. Who would want to risk the loss of more life? We have an opportunity with this motion to make sure, to the extent it is humanly possible, that we never again face the tragedies that we have faced in the past number of years and, in particular, the past six months.

Private Members' Business

• (1745)

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments of my hon. colleague and the obvious sincerity behind them. She said that cost is not an object, but the reality is that costs need to be factored in. I am wondering if she has costed out the bill for equipment and people that it would take to do that.

Is she aware of the service provided by Cougar Helicopters in St. John's? Is she aware of the assessment of the investigation boards that said that the crash of that helicopter was non-survivable in the first place and that it would not have mattered even if there had been aircraft overhead?

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his questions and I thank him for recognizing the sincerity of the request.

Gander is not a 24/7 operation. That is one of the issues that we face. It requires ramp-up time, and it is not a 24/7 operation. If a call goes into Gander, into 103 SAR squadron, and they are not on call or on duty, then of course they have to ramp up, so it takes time. It takes a couple of hours to get to where they need to go.

This is not a fault of the 103 SAR squadron in Gander. The problem is that it needs to be a 24/7 operation.

In terms of costing the service, my objective and my goal are to ensure that lives are not at risk. That is what this motion is about.

I want to make sure that the service is there for everyone who works offshore in whatever industry.

It is really important that we recognize that we need the service because of the tragedies that have occurred.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for an excellent speech.

I think it is about time that we took preventive action. Why do we always wait until there is a death and an accident before we do things? It seems to me that we should not be worrying about cost. We should just move ahead and get this job done.

Ms. Judy Foote: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his insight into what the situation is. He is absolutely right.

When we talk about cost, let me go back to the fact that the government has an 8.5% stake in Hibernia. If we are going to talk about money, let us look to the revenues that accrue to the province as a result of that particular benefit.

• (1750)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will make this a short question indeed. I would like to thank my hon. colleague for a wonderful speech. I know she has spoken to the Mayor of Gander, as I am the member for Gander. The 103 search and rescue outfit is the greatest that this world can ever offer.

I would like for her to share her comments with the mayor of Gander as Gander has some concerns, whenever we talk about this in the House, that they will indeed lose some resources, in spite of the fact that the 103 search and rescue squadron is the busiest operation in the country.

I would like for her to share some of the comments she had with Mayor Claude Elliott.

Ms. Judy Foote: Madam Speaker, certainly my colleague and I have had discussions on this particular issue, and we all recognize that what we need is to enhance the search and rescue services in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is always an issue for a community, if there is any suggestion at any time of losing something from that community. It is important, I think, for the community to recognize, as I assured the mayor in my discussion with him last night, that this is not about reallocating or relocating. This is about additional services in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member would be familiar with the fact that there are often agreements in place by the service provider, in this case Cougar, to in fact provide search and rescue capacity.

Would her proposal not be in fact replicating what is already on the ground in St. John's?

Ms. Judy Foote: Madam Speaker, I am well aware of the service with Cougar.

My understanding is that it is not fully equipped to search and rescue standards. What we need is a helicopter that is equipped just as we would find within any search and rescue operation.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this very serious matter, and I do appreciate the member's sincerity and emotion, but I cannot support the motion.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Canada is an expansive and geographically complex nation, and if members would just listen, it might actually make some sense.

Our search and rescue system is second to none. Nevertheless, our resources are limited. That is the reality. The motion ignores the complex considerations that go into determining the basing and deployment of these finite search and rescue resources.

Let me begin by assuring the House that search and rescue is a priority mission for the Canadian Forces. It is what they call a no fail mission. They are not allowed to fail, and they do not. The crews and equipment are absolutely dedicated to this, and their record stands second to none.

Our men and women in uniform, in cooperation with other government departments, including the RCMP and the Coast Guard, as well as the provinces and territories are on duty 24/7, 365 days a year. I do not think my hon. colleague understands what 24/7 means. It does not mean that there is no response time. It takes time to get into an airplane. It takes time to get there. They are on 30 minute standby during the week. They are on two hour standby on the weekends. That is what 24/7 means.

They are prepared and ready to respond to incidents of distress wherever and whenever they occur in Canada and our territorial waters, and they have saved countless lives. This has not happened by chance.

Private Members' Business

Canadian Forces search and rescue squadrons have been strategically located throughout the country.

[Translation]

A close look at the historic distribution of distress incidents has enabled us to choose the best locations for our limited resources. Our goal has always been to respond as quickly and effectively as possible to the greatest possible number of search and rescue calls.

Regardless of whether the incident takes place on a mountainside in British Columbia or on the blustery sea off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, trained men and women equipped for search and rescue are ready to help. To cover Newfoundland and Labrador, we have stationed Cormorant search and rescue helicopters in Gander.

• (1755)

[English]

Why not St. John's, the airport nearest the offshore oil activity in Newfoundland and Labrador? Because Gander offers optimal coverage to the demands of the entire region, not just the demands of the offshore petroleum industry.

Two separate studies, one in 2003 and another in 2005, support the decision to locate our search and rescue assets at Gander; studies, by the way, carried out by the former government. Yes, the positioning of Canadian Forces helicopters at St. John's may improve the Canadian Forces response time for a subset of incidents occurring near or en route to the oil fields, but doing so would result in slower response times to incidents in other parts of the region.

[Translation]

Today's motion proposes an overly simplified solution to a complex problem. Search and rescue operations are often very complex, demanding excellent coordination of land, air and sea resources. There is more to it than just deploying a Canadian Forces search and rescue helicopter to St. John's.

What if the machine needs maintenance or its crew needs training or even just a little rest?

The Gander search and rescue squadron has specialized search and rescue helicopters, crew and infrastructure, as well as sufficient base workers and maintenance staff to ensure that there is always at least one helicopter ready to respond immediately.

Furthermore, we cannot simply relocate a resource as important as a helicopter without considering how other resources will be used. If we try to put the pieces of such a complex puzzle together from scratch, some areas may well be left out.

[English]

Where would she take the resources from and who would she deem to be unworthy of SAR coverage?

She talks about additional resources and that is a fair suggestion; however, to duplicate what we have in Gander and St. John's requires three Cormorant helicopters, six and a half aircrew, fifty-three Canadian Forces personnel for flying and maintaining the airplanes and the administration, thirty-five contract maintenance personnel, infrastructure including a hangar, several years to

establish, and approximately \$2 billion over twenty years for all of that to happen.

She says money is not a factor. The reality is that money is a factor.

There are also other elements at play here and the weather is a big one. Critical weather conditions tend to occur more frequently in St. John's. A 2003 study conducted by Defence Research and Development Canada by the previous government examined weather conditions in the years 1995 through 1999. It found that in Gander, the weather would have adversely affected Cormorant operations about 7% of the time, but in St. John's that number jumped to 17%. That means a much higher likelihood that Cormorants could not take off from St. John's than Gander.

There are three times as many fog days in St. John's than there are in Gander. It does not matter how close the aircraft is based to potential distress locations if the weather keeps it on the ground.

I want to emphasize once more that a great deal of effort, study and consideration goes into a decision on where to base our assets and no decision is taken in isolation.

In 1986 the royal commission on the tragic *Ocean Ranger* marine disaster recommended that either government or industry maintain a full-time helicopter for the purposes of search and rescue at the airport nearest offshore drilling operations.

In keeping with that recommendation and in compliance with the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board safety guidelines, the offshore oil industry in Newfoundland and Labrador currently has a contract with Cougar Helicopters. This company, which has experience from a reputable core of former Canadian Forces SAR personnel, provides a first-response helicopter and crew to support offshore oil industry operations based out of St. John's 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Further, an informal arrangement exists between the Canadian Forces and Cougar Helicopters to assist in responding to emergencies. In fact, following a March 12 crash of one of its own helicopters, Cougar Helicopters was among the first responders. It was their response helicopter that rescued the sole survivor in what was deemed to be a non-survivable impact. Arguably, they were in a position to rescue more had this tragic incident yielded more survivors.

I submit that this is exactly what was intended by the royal commission recommendation.

The Canadian Forces response included an Aurora aircraft that happened to be on nearby patrol, followed by Canadian Forces SAR assets including a Hercules aircraft and Cormorant helicopter. There was no delay in response to this tragic accident and there was nothing more that anyone could have done to alter its unfortunate outcome. Indeed, this is a good example of how the Canadian Forces works closely with its search and rescue partners from both government and industry to ensure the most effective and efficient search and rescue service to Canadians across the country.

In effect, the intent of this motion has already been satisfied for over two decades.

The logic here is really straightforward. Our goal is to provide Canadians with an effective search and rescue system. Resources are finite and the territory it must serve is immense. This is not an easy challenge to contend with, so we have strategically placed our assets according to the historical distribution of incidents across the country.

There are several aspects of Atlantic Canada's geography, its climate and the increased risk of incidents related to resource extraction that make this challenge even more daunting. The situation in Atlantic Canada has been extensively studied. These studies have concluded that Gander is the optimal base from which the CF can respond to all of the search and rescue demands in that region, not simply demands related to the offshore petroleum industry.

For three reasons we cannot support this understandably emotional but impractical and unnecessary motion: the best use of finite resources; the incredibly high cost, which is reality and still a factor; and the fact that we are already covering a requirement for the offshore oil industry, and have been doing so under the terms of the report that came out over two decades ago.

This government does care, obviously, about the welfare of all Canadians. The Canadian Forces search and rescue assets, the search and rescue people and equipment, do a tremendous job for Canadians and for other non-Canadians who are in our waters and on land.

However, for the reasons I have outlined, we simply must oppose this motion.

● (1800)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of Motion M-346 proposed by the Newfoundland member from Random—Burin—St. George's.

Motion M-346 states that “it is imperative the government move expeditiously to allocate the necessary resources to put in place a full-time dedicated helicopter fully equipped to search and rescue standards at the airport nearest to offshore oil activity and that it be available on a 24-hour basis with a crew trained in all aspects of search and rescue.”

The Bloc Québécois is obviously in favour of increasing security for those working at sea. The Bloc Québécois believes that the government must carry out its mandate of providing a search and rescue service for marine industries and the general public.

Private Members' Business

Let us not forget the tragic case of the Ocean Ranger, the semi-submersible mobile drilling platform that sank off the coast of Newfoundland on February 15, 1982. It was exploring the ocean floor in the Grand Banks area, 267 kilometres from St. John's, Newfoundland. All 84 crew members on board lost their lives.

Following this catastrophe, a royal commission was established, chaired by Justice Alex Hickman. After two years, it submitted its findings and recommendations, which included:

[*English*]

That there be required a full-time search and rescue dedicated helicopter, provided by either government or industry, fully equipped to search and rescue standards, at the airport nearest to the ongoing offshore drilling operations, and that it be readily available with a trained crew able to perform all aspects of the rescue.

[*Translation*]

Government or industry should provide a full-time search and rescue dedicated helicopter that is fully equipped and based at the airport nearest the drilling platforms. For reasons that are unknown, that recommendation was not implemented.

Look at the tragedy that ensued during the Cougar helicopter accident. On March 12, 2009, a Sikorsky S-92 helicopter with 18 crew members on board, crashed into the ocean following a technical problem. That helicopter shuttled workers between land and various oil platforms off the coast of Newfoundland. Only one passenger survived. Following that tragedy, Tom Hann, a St. John's city councillor, introduced a motion calling on the federal government to review its search and rescue services, to base a Cormorant helicopter in St. John's, Newfoundland, and to provide Goose Bay and Gander with a search and rescue unit.

Another sad accident comes to mind, the one involving Robert Keough. During the weekend of September 12, 2009, less than a month ago, a 58-year-old fisherman, Robert Keough, died when the boat he was working on sank. This tragedy occurred roughly 120 kilometres from St. John's, Newfoundland.

The boat owner said that this tragedy could have been avoided if there had been a rescue helicopter based in St. John's, Newfoundland, closer than the one that came from Gander.

As we have heard, maritime trades are very dangerous. The men and women who risk their lives every day to earn a living are tied to their ships, their platforms, or worse, become trapped in them when they founder. They cannot escape as easily as they could on land. That is clear.

This is why response times are even more important at sea. It makes sense to try to make these jobs safer, so it makes sense to move rescue services closer to the areas where they will, unfortunately, be called upon to respond.

Private Members' Business

It is also important that the new helicopters remain in good condition. We must be careful not to spread resources too thin, and to ensure that they are being used to optimum effect. Thus, we must consider the comments of the mayor of Gander, who said that before sending new helicopters elsewhere in Newfoundland, we should be upgrading the ones in his city.

Furthermore, this new service must not be an excuse for the oil companies to shirk their own obligations to see to the safety of their employees.

For all of those lost at sea, and to act on the recommendations of the royal commission chaired by Justice Alex Hickman in the mid-1980s, the House of Commons must approve this motion.

Helicopters must be available year-round to perform search and rescue operations at sea. They must be provided by either government or industry, equipped with the latest in lifesaving technology, stationed at an airport close to offshore drilling platforms, and ready to respond to all distress calls with a crew trained to rescue persons in distress.

We hope that Motion M-346 will be adopted and acted upon without delay.

● (1805)

Thanks to technology, we have been able to orbit the earth and put astronauts on the moon for 40 years. It does not make sense that we cannot save lives at sea with helicopters right here on the surface of the planet. Out of respect for those lost off the coast of Newfoundland, and to ensure that their tragic disappearances are not in vain, let us act to prevent similar losses of human lives. Let us vote for Motion M-346.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to rise in support of this very important motion brought by my colleague in the House, the member for Random—Burin—St. George's. This is an extremely important issue in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador for many, many reasons. It has to do with our history and our attachment to the sea and our way of life and also to the many tragedies that we have suffered over the last centuries, really, when it comes to fishing, but even in the offshore, we have seen two significant tragedies that were mentioned by the member for Random—Burin—St. George's, that of the *Ocean Ranger* and recently the Cougar Helicopter crash in March of this year.

I fully support this recommendation. I would like to put on the record the fact that I also have a motion before the House with respect to search and rescue, on the order paper, and I will read it into the record:

That, in the opinion of the House, given both the increasing air and marine traffic and increased industrial activity off the east coast of Newfoundland, as well as previous recommendations by independent investigations of Search and Rescue (SAR), the Department of National Defense should upgrade Search and Rescue capabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador by providing for at least one fully equipped and fully staffed SAR helicopter at St. John's in addition to the existing SAR capability at Gander and Goose Bay and further that the Gander SAR crewing should be increased to permit 24-hour per day on-duty coverage and thereby provide improved response times.

The improved response time is really what this is all about. The *Ocean Ranger* recommendation that has been referred to by my colleague and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence reads as follows:

That there be required a full-time search and rescue dedicated helicopter, provided by either government or industry, fully equipped to search and rescue standards, at the airport nearest to the ongoing offshore drilling operations, and that it be readily available with a trained crew able to perform all aspects of rescue.

The parliamentary secretary asserted to the House that this was in fact in place. Anyone who has looked closely at this knows that this is not the case. When the Cougar Helicopter went down in March of this year and the Cougar base in St. John's was notified, before they could respond to the crash, the first thing they had to do after they mustered their crew was to take the seats out of the helicopter and then try to put equipment on-board before they could even take off. That is not a search and rescue-dedicated helicopter fully equipped to search and rescue standards. In fact one of the criticisms of the Cougar ability or Cougar industry-provided standards is that it is not fully equipped. They do not have the same level of search and rescue capability as our DND SAR techs.

I join with the parliamentary secretary in praising the work of our SAR techs. They are magnificent men and women who are extremely dedicated and well trained, and they do a great job. I do not think anyone who has spoken in favour of this has anything to take away from them. They are terrific at their job. In fact, according to DND statistics, they are active across the country in some 8,000 missions per year and save on average 1,200 lives per year. We are very proud of them and proud of the work that they do.

We are so proud of them in fact that we want to see this work being done closer to where the greatest risk is present in Newfoundland and Labrador, off our east coast where at any one time there are 600-plus workers living more than 100 miles offshore, 24 hours a day, working 12-hour shifts on three-week rotations. They are there day and night doing the work that it takes to produce offshore oil and gas for the benefit of Newfoundland and Labrador, for the benefit of Canada and as my colleague said, to the benefit of the treasury of the Government of Canada.

● (1810)

The request was that there be a dedicated service in St. John's, although the member did not say St. John's but that is obviously the closest to where the action is required.

Response times have been mentioned here. We need to put on the record that response times out of Gander on a 24 hour basis differ considerably. During regular hours, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., the standard is 30 minutes. The response team is in the air 30 minutes after being tasked with the job.

Some documentation says that during quiet hours and on statutory holidays, the response time is standby two hours. What makes any time after 4 o'clock in the afternoon or a statutory holiday any different from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. during business hours? The sea does not calm down at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. The risk of danger at sea does not disappear because it is a statutory holiday.

Private Members' Business

The *Sea Gypsy* sank in July of this year on a Saturday morning at 11 o'clock. The people on the boat did not say that the boat will not sink and a fast response will not be needed because it was 11 o'clock on a Saturday morning. The times have not been given out accurately yet. We have reports that a mayday was sent out at 11 o'clock. People were being rescued at 4:30 in the afternoon. This is obviously not a serious rescue time. If a helicopter had been stationed in St. John's, it could have been there in 45 minutes to an hour. One of the individuals on board that ship was lost and could not be found even though he was wearing a survival suit. There are a number of details which are too numerous to mention in the short time I have available.

A series of tragedies at sea have happened in Newfoundland over the last several years that raise the question of whether more lives could have been saved if the response time in Gander had been better. That is not the fault of the individuals. That is a question of crewing.

My resolution is a little more broad but it encompasses the resolution of my colleague from Random—Burin—St. George's, and I commend her for bringing it forward to the House.

There is one other matter that should be put on the record in terms of response times. It deals with the SAR operations out of Gander.

The Hibernia, Sea Rose and White Rose platforms are located in that part of the ocean. Supply boats go back and forth all the time. Fishermen work in that part of the ocean. International traffic goes back and forth all the time in the sea lanes. International fishing boats are out in that part of the ocean, 200 miles from the St. John's area out on the Grand Banks.

When a search and rescue aircraft leaves Gander to head in that direction to go out to sea, the first thing it has to do before it leaves for the eastern part of the waters is land in St. John's and refuel. Why is that? There are standards that if a search and rescue helicopter is going to be leaving land to go out to sea, it has to have enough fuel to get where it is going. For operational reasons that helicopter has to be able to hover for a period of up to an hour to be able to conduct any rescue operations or anything it has to do, and then get back to land.

Gander is about 200 miles by road and 100 miles or so by air from St. John's, so additional time is required for the helicopter to get to where it has to be. This is extremely important. A map is available on the Internet under the Department of National Defence which shows the vast area of ocean for which the Gander operations is responsible. I invite members to look at that map.

I am delighted to hear that the Bloc Québécois will be supporting this motion. The Bloc members understand the problems fishermen face at sea and obviously appreciate the dangers and the need for fast response times. I am glad that the Bloc is supporting this motion, as are the New Democrats.

• (1815)

We in the NDP believe this motion is timely. The cost really has not been assessed. I do not think the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence has given it justice by suggesting that we would have to duplicate the cost from Gander. There are ways of doing it.

We would like this motion to be taken seriously and I hope the House will fully support it.

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the topic of this debate is an issue which is very close to the hearts of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and Canadians. For hundreds of years people from my province have worked the dangerous waters off our coast. It has shaped our character and our connection to the sea has had a profound influence in the development of our literature and music.

One such example is a poem by the renowned poet from Newfoundland and Labrador, E.J. Pratt:

It took the seas a thousand years,
A thousand years to trace
The granite features of this cliff,
In crag and scarp and base.
It took the sea an hour one night,
An hour of storm to place
The sculpture of these granite seams
Upon a woman's face.

It is because this connection with the sea runs so deep in our province that we feel so strongly about these issues. There are many tragedies which have left a mark on our culture. The sealing disaster, for example, as told by Cassie Brown in the novel "Death on the Ice" is just another example.

The *Ocean Ranger* disaster on Valentine's Day in 1982 saw 84 people lost to the sea, yet another reminder of the power of the ocean. It was Canada's worst tragedy at sea since the second world war.

In March of this year, 15 offshore workers and two crew members were lost when a Cougar helicopter crashed into the ocean. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador were shocked not just with the crash but also with the fact that the search and rescue aircraft that responded to the crash had to be dispatched from Nova Scotia because no local crews were available.

The helicopter crews normally stationed at 9 Wing Gander in central Newfoundland and Labrador were in Cape Breton on a training mission. Search and rescue officials estimate that the fact the choppers were sent from Nova Scotia added over an hour to the response time. The circumstances around this incident demonstrate the types of problems which can occur. It demonstrates the need for increased resources in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Throughout our history there have been many tragedies at sea, many of them small boats with crews of four or five people such as the *Sea Gypsy*, which was lost off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador less than a month ago. These were people working hard in dangerous conditions to make a living for themselves and their families.

Like most families in our province, mine has also been touched by tragedy at sea. The issue is very personal to me. My father-in-law was lost to the sea while on a fishing vessel in 1994. I know the anguish individuals and families experience when a tragedy occurs.

Private Members' Business

These disasters have not only shown us the power of the sea but they have also led us to changes in the way our society regulates those who work offshore. For example, the *Ocean Ranger* inquiry led to a series of recommendations related to those who work in the offshore oil industry in our country but, sadly, some of the recommended changes have not yet occurred.

One of the recommendations of the royal commission that studied the sinking of the *Ocean Ranger* was to put a search and rescue team in St. John's that would provide 24 hour coverage. Yet, here we are some 27 years later and we are debating a motion that calls for the very same thing.

I and other members from Newfoundland and Labrador have raised this issue in the House of Commons in the past and will continue to do so until our voices are heard and action is taken. The tragedy of the *Sea Gypsy* just weeks ago emphasizes the importance of getting swift action from the government, but the response from the Minister of National Defence up to this point has been very disappointing and is far from what is required.

In my question recently, I asked the minister if he would conduct a total review of search and rescue services in the province given the concerns that were raised with the response time to the tragedy. In his response, the minister would make no commitment to conduct such a review and only said:

This particular issue around the placement of search and rescue assets has been one that has required a great deal of attention.

He went on to say:

I assure the member opposite that one Hercules aircraft is on standby in Sydney now.

That is Sydney, Nova Scotia

• (1820)

I am not sure if the minister really realizes how inadequate his answer was to that question. To say resources are available in Nova Scotia, hundreds of miles away, is a solution that is just not good enough. We need increased search and rescue resources in Newfoundland and Labrador. I am very disappointed with the minister's response and have been very disappointed in the way this issue has been dealt with.

Another reason I have been disappointed has been the attempt by some to confuse the issue and to play one region of the province off against another. The claim is that if additional resources are allocated to St. John's or surrounding area, then resources will be taken away from Gander. This is not the request which we have, on this side of the House, been requesting. We recognize the need to have a solid presence in Gander. We realize the huge area that is covered by that station.

Let me make this clear. Our request of additional resources for our province does not take anything away from Gander.

Also, there have been outrageous claims about how much it would cost to expand and put in place a 24-hour service in St. John's. I want to challenge the government to provide detailed information on the costs involved in expanding the service.

Another point that I would like to make clear is that our comments are in no way an attack on the hard work and good work of those

involved in search and rescue. Nothing could be further from the truth. We recognize the professionalism and bravery of the people who work in this field and we applaud their efforts. We also recognize and applaud the efforts of the volunteers of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. We know how they risk their lives to save others in very difficult circumstances.

What we are saying is that we need to give these professionals, these trained and highly dedicated individuals, those people who are responsible for our health and our safety when we are on the ocean, more resources to do this very difficult job.

I am not under any delusions of how easy it is to provide search and rescue services in a country such as Canada. The size of our country is a major factor. We know we have a huge land mass. We know that we have coastal waters off the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Arctic oceans. We know the Canadian armed forces have been in charge of coordinating search and rescue since 1947. It is often assisted by the Coast Guard, the RCMP, local police, and civilian volunteers who help coordinate efforts, depending on the details of the rescue.

In outlining these difficulties in providing the service, I certainly want to highlight the important role played by volunteers and volunteer associations.

I earlier mentioned the Coast Guard Auxiliary. However, to illustrate the role of these volunteers, I want to make mention of a group that I met with recently in my riding: the Rovers Search and Rescue. It is a volunteer, not for profit organization that has been active in the northeast Avalon area of our province since 1972. The team is comprised of 65 volunteer men and women who, in the year 2008, contributed over 7,500 hours of service in our local community. The group provides auxiliary support to authorities in emergency situations and is very active in our community. It does a lot of profiling and activities such as promotions for safe boating, for example.

There are organizations such as these all across our country, working hard to provide an important service to this country. The Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada has a national voice.

The parliamentary secretary rose earlier and mentioned that we were asking to replicate the services that are currently in Gander. Again, I emphasize that is not the case. We are asking for a 24-hour/7-day-a-week service to ensure safety and security. He also noted that search and rescue is a no-fail mission. I agree with him. It is a no-fail. The trained professionals and brave men and women do not want to fail.

However, the government fails when we do not provide adequate and substantial resources to ensure the safety of the men and women who make their living on the sea. I am very pleased to hear the New Democratic Party offer its support and the Bloc Québécois offer its support.

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1825)

However, I am asking all members of this House to recognize the importance of this issue, to recognize that we can provide better search and rescue services to the people who work in very dangerous waters off the coast. I ask for their support. I ask for additional resources to be allocated to ensure 24/7 search and rescue service.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

•(1830)

[*English*]

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Madam Speaker, tonight I participate in this adjournment debate to raise issues relating back to a question regarding the value of research which I asked the government during the spring session.

At the time, true to form, the minister denied that his government cut funds to research and tried to pass off infrastructure money as investments in technology.

I would like to take us back to that time, but first I want to highlight a major breakthrough made by Canadian researchers this week in British Columbia which may finally help the government see the value of investing in research.

Today's announcement details major new findings from the landmark study about the way cancer spreads. Using next generation technology to decode the genetic sequence of mutations made by cancer cells as cancer cells reappear, these scientists have been able to pinpoint the specific changes occurring in an individual's battle with cancer. These findings will serve as the building blocks of an encyclopedia of breast cancer research, compiling knowledge that will point scientists in the right direction to further breakthroughs, understanding, treatment and ultimately prevention.

Let us keep in mind the possibilities brought on by this new understanding as we go back to May 2009 when I raised the subject with the government. Just a few weeks earlier, 2,000 Canadian scientists wrote a letter to the Prime Minister expressing concerns about cuts to basic research in this country.

The granting councils, Canada's major funders of discovery and basic research, were forced to cut over \$145 million from their budgets. Then, the following week, the lack of government commitment and investment in basic research in this country caused us to lose one of the world's leading human immunologists, along with several highly trained, talented members of his research team to a fully funded, highly competitive lab in the United States.

A month before that, extensive cuts to the National Research Council were laid out by the government as part of its strategic review of the NRC, which has led to a greater than 50% reduction to the budget of Canada's national science library, the CISTI.

Government money here in Canada, when it is directed to science and research at all, continues to overlook vital areas. A Conservative budget provided \$2 billion to Canadian universities to improve aging infrastructure, a good initiative, but neglected to provide any additional money to fund the scientists and researchers to work in those spaces. Add to that the budget cuts to CIHR, to NSERC, and the lack of inclusion of Genome Canada in the government's budget, and we get a pretty clear picture of the refusal of the government to recognize the importance of science.

The Liberals understand the importance and the value of science and research, and so do Canadians. Recent polling data from the national study commissioned by BIOTECANADA indicated 9 out of 10 Canadians saw biotech as important to Canada's future economic prosperity. The majority of Canadians, over two-thirds, were also concerned about Canada's global competitiveness in science and technology, and four out of five Canadians were concerned about the loss of emerging biotech companies to Canada.

Clearly, Canadians see the value of investing in science and technology, health research and the knowledge economy. It is equally clear that the government does not. I will ask the minister again, does everyone else understand the value of science except the government?

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member wants to ask the minister but, unfortunately, today she has me, the lowly parliamentary secretary.

As the hon. member indicated, Canada continues to be a world leader in terms of its support for post-secondary research. We rank first in the G7 and second after Sweden among the 30 OECD countries in terms of higher education R and D expenditures as a percentage of GDP.

Last year, the granting councils underwent strategic review, which is an ongoing, important tool used by government to ensure that all spending is used as efficiently and effectively as possible. As part of the review process, the granting council presidents identified a number of areas where funding from what they determined to be low performing programs could be reallocated to higher priorities.

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It is also important to put the review in context. The overall budget for the three granting councils is about \$2.5 billion per year, so the cut of \$150 million over three years through strategic review represents a very small part of their budget.

In addition, through the federal S and T strategy announced by the Prime Minister on May 17, 2007, the government has continued to demonstrate a strong commitment to S and T. Specifically, through the last three budgets, the government has invested over \$7 billion in additional new S and T funding.

From budgets 2006 to 2009, this government provided significant increases in funding to the granting councils, including the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, for their core programming.

Budget 2006 provided additional funding of \$40 million per year to the three granting councils. Budget 2007 invested a further \$85 million per year. In last year's budget, the granting councils received another increase of \$80 million per year of funding in areas of benefit to Canadians.

These funding increases, \$205 million per year in total, are cumulative. They represent ongoing permanent increases in core funding for the granting councils.

Our most recent budget, budget 2009, provided over \$5 billion in new S and T investments, one of the most substantial budget investments in S and T in Canadian history. Of this over \$5 billion investment, Canada will spend \$3.8 billion by 2010. Per capita, that is more than what the United States government has earmarked for science and technology in its own stimulus package for the same period.

Given that much of the focus of this budget was on stimulus, we provided a massive \$2 billion investment to enhance university and college infrastructure. This initiative, which was part of the government's economic action plan to stimulate economic activity, was in response to the number one priority expressed by university and college presidents.

Budget 2009 and our past investments underscore our understanding of the tremendous importance and value of S and T for our country.

● (1835)

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Madam Speaker, the government continues to use the \$5.1 billion figure as the amount it has invested in science and research. I think that it is really a game of charades and a house of cards.

The funding commitments that the government cites to support this are not dedicated toward actual research projects, nor will the money necessarily even go toward infrastructure to create such projects. The Conservatives have barely maintained federal funding for science and technology research projects. Canada's three granting councils are undergoing \$148 million in cuts.

According to Statistics Canada, the total federal funding for science and technology in 2008 was \$365 million less than in 2005 when adjusted for inflation. Universities have borne the brunt of a

drop in funding. When adjusted for inflation, federal funding for university research in 2008 was \$187 million less than in 2005.

I think that demonstrates that it is not the government's priority to invest in science and technology. As a result, we are falling behind our international competitors when it comes to research and innovation. In terms of investing in research and development, U.S. stimulus allocated six times more funding per capita.

Mr. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, we can debate the numbers all day long. It seems to me that the hon. member might be pulling numbers out of the air.

We do rank first in the G7 and second after Sweden among the 30 OECD countries in terms of higher education R and D expenditures as a percentage of GDP. As I noted, our per capita spending on the stimulus package as it relates to S and T is actually higher than the United States for this year.

Of note, in regard to the three granting councils, they received successive increases of \$40 million per year, \$85 million per year and \$80 million per year in the budgets of 2006, 2007 and 2008 respectively. As I noted earlier, these increases were cumulative, ongoing and permanent.

I trust that my remarks have helped to reinforce this government's ongoing communication of our S and T strategy.

● (1840)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canada was built by immigrants, from the Irish refugees fleeing the potato famine at the turn of the century to the Chinese workers who helped build the Canadian railway that united Canada.

These immigrants built Canada because they were able to establish roots in Canada, they were able to stay here permanently. Some got married, had children and grandchildren. They had a future in Canada. They built the nation.

Now, in 2009, the Conservatives treat migrant workers as economic units, not as nation builders. Here and now, across the country, we have over 364,000 temporary foreign workers who have little future in Canada. Last year alone, 192,519 were brought into Canada as migrant workers. They toil year after year but most of their children and their parents will not have a chance to come to Canada and join them. This is unfair, unjust and un-Canadian. If foreign workers are good enough to work here, these workers should be good enough to stay here permanently.

Through the exploitation of tens of thousands of migrant workers and their families, the Conservative government is driving down wages and working conditions for Canadian workers.

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The Conservatives promised to fix it, but they did not deliver. They said they would fix the live-in caregivers program, yet today no action. There is nothing temporary about live-in caregivers. As long as we do not have a national universal child care program or a home care program for seniors, these caregivers are needed in Canada permanently.

By offering the chance of permanent status to these workers, we can eliminate unfair conditions and wages, just as the rest of Canadians expect for themselves.

All workers should have access to employment insurance and Canada pension plan since they contribute to it, but right now migrant workers cannot get it. They should have access to the health care system because they pay for it through their taxes, but most of them cannot get it in the first few months. The same holds true for all health and safety protection and workers compensation if they are injured at the job. They should have the right to join a union. Temporary foreign workers deserve the same rights as Canadians take advantage of every day.

Families are the foundation for healthy and strong communities and every individual should be afforded the same rights.

The citizenship and immigration committee spent two years and formulated two reports with many recommendations to stop the exploitation of temporary foreign workers and welcome them as nation builders, not just economic units.

When will the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism heed the call of his colleagues and stem the flow of migrant workers into this country, improve the working conditions for those who are here, provide them with hope so they can stay here permanently to help build communities that are harmonious, healthy, diverse and vibrant?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate some of the comments made by the member for Trinity—Spadina, and in particular, those at the beginning of her comments, with respect to immigrants. I can only think about my parents who immigrated to this country: my father, who landed in Quebec by boat in 1950 and my mother, who arrived by ship in Halifax in 1952. I certainly know of what she speaks as a first-generation Canadian in terms of understanding how much opportunity there is in this country for those of us, either ourselves or our parents, who have come to this country as immigrants, only to then be able to call ourselves Canadians.

I am pleased to rise to address the hon. member's question with respect to the temporary foreign worker program, and more specifically with regard to live-in caregivers. Obviously, the health, safety and well-being of all temporary foreign workers in Canada is very important to the government.

The live-in caregiver program is important as it helps meet caregiving needs in Canada. It also provides the possibility of permanent residence to foreign live-in caregivers. Our government is committed to ensuring that this program remains fair and equitable to both workers and employers while protecting potentially vulnerable caregivers. The federal government is working with the provinces and territories to ensure that workers receive full protection of the

law. All levels of government are working to improve the situation of live-in caregivers.

I know I was personally shocked, and so was the member who sits with me on the committee for citizenship and immigration, by some of the testimony we have heard at the immigration committee about the poor working conditions and the treatment, and I am confident that having heard from the witnesses that we all heard from, the committee members left the room even more committed to protecting vulnerable workers from people in positions of power.

Provincial and territorial labour laws establish employment standards such as minimum wage, overtime payment for additional hours worked, vacation pay and maximum amounts for room and board. These labour laws also provide a complaint mechanism for employees. We have consulted with caregivers and other stakeholders, including employers, to hear how we can better ensure their protection. We are also looking at intermediaries and recruiting agencies and the role they play in Canada's immigration system.

To ensure worker protection, there is a legal requirement for signed employment contracts between employers and their employees, and these contracts are subject to provincial employment standards. Our government has been developing regulatory amendments that would help ensure that employers of temporary foreign workers, including live-in caregivers, provide the workers the wages, the working conditions and the jobs that were promised.

We are taking action to achieve our goal of ensuring worker protection, and we are informing workers of their rights and their options for recourse if they are mistreated. I can assure the House that our government is committed to ensuring that the live-in caregiver program remains fair and equitable to workers and employers.

In fact, as the minister has already indicated to the standing committee, improvements are planned for the live-in caregiver program and work is already under way, as the member for Trinity—Spadina knows. We voted together on it to move it forward.

• (1845)

Ms. Olivia Chow: Madam Speaker, fair and equitable treatment of live-in caregivers means the end of exploitation. As long as the live-in caregivers come in as temporary foreign workers, many of them will be exploited by people who have power and money. We have seen it, yes, and we have heard their testimony, and some of those stories are tragic.

The best way to solve the problem is to allow them to come in as permanent residents with the condition that they have to work in Canada for two or three years and then the condition can be removed.

Coming in as permanent residents means that they could walk away from a job without fearing deportation. It means that they could speak up if they have been told to work in unfair living conditions, and that is the kind of action that needs to take place now.

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Mr. Rick Dykstra: Madam Speaker, as I have indicated, our government is committed to ensuring that this program remains fair and equitable so that employers receive the services that they need, and that our vulnerable workers are not exploited by the unscrupulous.

The fact remains, employers and their employees are required under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations to sign employment contracts, and the terms of these contracts cannot violate provincial employment standards.

These standards include minimum wage overtime payment for additional hours worked and vacation pay. All decent people expect these standards to be respected, and we cannot accept instances

where employers violate these standards. If employers fail to measure up to these standards, employees can take their complaints up with provincial labour departments, just as all Canadians can.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada has also distributed information about their rights to caregivers. This information is also available to all.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The motion to adjourn the House is 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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