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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, October 21, 2009

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 21, 2009

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[*English*]

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

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

RILEY DENNEHY

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to mark a tragedy suffered by a family in the riding I represent and to pay them tribute.

Riley Dennehy was an outgoing, talented 23-year-old who passed away earlier this month. She was also an avid snowboarder and a hockey player, representing Vancouver at the B.C. Winter Games.

Riley's family and large community of friends loved her dearly. Riley's family is no stranger to grief. Nine years ago, the Dennehys' only other child, Kelty, then a popular, academically successful hockey player, took his own life after battling depression.

Riley and Kelty's parents, Ginny and Kerry, responded to Kelty's death by creating the Kelty Dennehy Foundation. That foundation has inspired thousands of Canadians to fight against depression.

As the Whistler community pays tribute to Riley's life today, I ask my colleagues in this House to join me in that tribute. We are sorry Riley and Kelty are gone. Ginny and Kerry have led Canadians with their courage. May their courage continue in the face of losing their beloved daughter.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my condolences to the family.

Mr. Speaker, today the Liberal women's caucus released the third volume of The Pink Book, the Liberal action plan for Canadian women, which outlines our approach for a compassionate Canada.

The sad fact is that women in Canada still make up a disproportionate share of low-income Canadians. They still earn only 70% as much as their male colleagues do. They are still more financially vulnerable than men are because they make up seven out of 10 part-time employees, have fewer benefits and often are responsible for caregiving of children and elderly parents.

There is violence against women, particularly aboriginal women. More than 500 aboriginal women and girls have gone missing or have been murdered in Canada and still the Conservative government refuses to undertake an inquiry and help prevent more victims of violence.

Volume III of The Pink Book offers a series of recommendations to improve the lives of women. Liberals want a Canada that provides a strong, secure future for all Canadians.

* * *

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by closing the post office at 1275 Sainte-Foy in Quebec City on November 1, Canada Post will be depriving many residents of the Saint-Sacrement neighbourhood—including seniors, business owners, organizations and institutions—of their only postal outlet.

That is why I will soon present a petition in this House signed by close to 1,400 people who are calling for the post office in that neighbourhood to remain open.

Because of the short deadline, the minister responsible for Canada Post must declare a moratorium on this closing in order to avoid interrupting services, which would affect many customers, and to allow talks to continue in order to maintain a postal outlet in the Saint-Sacrement neighbourhood, where I live.

Statements by Members

[English]

ABORIGINAL WOMEN

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since 1992, October has been marked as Women's History Month in Canada. It is a time to celebrate women's achievements and the advancement of women's equality. However, it is also a time to reflect on how much more work there is to be done. For many women in Canada, aboriginal women in particular, equality is still far off.

This month, many of my colleagues have spoken passionately about justice for murdered and missing aboriginal women and in support of the invaluable work of the Sisters in Spirit initiative.

Today I would like to draw attention to the sad and ongoing history of sexual exploitation and sexualized violence perpetrated against aboriginal women in Canada. This violence is a grave injustice and it must stop.

With our fairness for women action plan, New Democrats are working to end violence against aboriginal women. I urge all members of this House to join with us in this goal. We must work together with aboriginal women and their communities, and take meaningful action to end this violence and to move forward for aboriginal women's equality.

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CANADIAN PARALYMPIC SKI TEAM

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an avid skier and member of the Canadian para-alpine ski team from my riding of Okanagan—Shuswap, Josh Dueck.

Josh, one of the top skiers in the world and the reigning 2007-08 Canadian champion, started skiing at age 13. At 23, while doing a test jump, he overshot the landing hill, leaving him paralyzed from the waist down. This did not stop John from doing what he loves: skiing. In just nine months, Josh was back on the ski hill.

In 2005, he was named to the provincial disabled alpine ski team and, in 2006, to the national development team.

Josh is an international gold medal winner for the Canadian para-alpine ski team, winning the world championships in 2009.

An RBC Olympian, the sit-skier extraordinaire, Josh is representing Canada at the 2010 Winter Paralympics in Vancouver. He will be speeding down the ski hill with one goal in mind: winning gold for Canada.

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[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, the Liberal Party of Canada's women's caucus released *The Pink Book, Volume III*. It outlines initiatives that the next Liberal government plans to introduce to make things better for women in Canada.

The book focuses on three major themes that affect all Canadian women: the economy, health and safety, and gender equality.

In Canada, women represent a disproportionate number of low-income Canadians. Our plan will help them by implementing a true pay equity system and by fighting poverty.

Under health and safety, we propose over a dozen measures, including a plan to combat violence against women and a national caregiving strategy.

Lastly, the next Liberal government will prove that it really cares about gender equality, unlike the current government, which has not done anything about this issue. We will establish a commissioner for gender equality and analyze all federal legislation and policies to ensure that women and men are treated fairly in Canada.

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[English]

PETER KENNEDY

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, you and I and our 306 colleagues are very privileged ordinary Canadians working at what most consider to be an extraordinary job. What we might sometimes forget is that there are thousands of other ordinary Canadians doing ordinary jobs that allow us to do ours.

Two days ago, outside our windows in the Justice Building, one of those ordinary Canadians was caught in the blast of an exploding steam boiler and yesterday he passed away. Peter Kennedy was a 50-year-old husband, father, grandfather, brother and friend to many.

I never knew Peter and I do not know his family or friends, but I think that we should all pause to reflect on what is really important in this life. That is doing the best job we can at whatever we have been asked or tasked to do.

We should all remember that we could not do our jobs without the thousands of Peter Kennedys doing theirs. Life is also about family and friends and living it to the fullest every day because no one knows what tomorrow brings.

I want to express on behalf of all members of the House our sincere condolences and gratitude to Peter Kennedy's family and friends for his too-short life and for his service as an ordinary and hard-working Canadian in making this country work.

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● (1410)

[Translation]

QUEBEC PUBLIC LIBRARY WEEK

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the saying goes, "Tell me what you read and I will tell you who you are." That could be the slogan for the Semaine des bibliothèques publiques du Québec, which is taking place this week.

Statements by Members

Knowing what someone is reading gives insight into what he or she knows, as well as what influences, inspires and moves that person. That is why Yann Martel, a very well known writer—a Booker Prize winner—has written to the Prime Minister 60 times since 2007, each time sending him a different book and describing the book and the author.

The Prime Minister cannot even be bothered to reply to his letters or personally thank him, probably because he has not read any of the books he has received. This attitude only confirms the disdain this Prime Minister and the Conservatives feel for artists and their work.

We in the Bloc Québécois, however, would like to offer our sincere congratulations to everyone committed to promoting the pleasure and benefits associated with reading within Quebec's libraries, and to Yann Martel in particular. The slogan for Quebec public library week is "Become a borrower and change your life", a good piece of advice for the Prime Minister.

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[English]

JUSTICE

Ms. Dona Cadman (Surrey North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Police Association is concerned that the Liberals will side with convicted criminals and provide them with a "get out of jail free" card.

CPA President Charles Momy has urged Liberals to listen to the concerns raised by victims groups and front-line officers and to decisions made by elected representatives on the issue of credit for time served rather than protecting the interests of convicted felons.

Our four western premiers are demanding that the Senate reject the Liberal amendments that will gut Bill C-25. In blatant disregard of the pleas of police associations, western premiers and all attorneys general across Canada, Liberals voted again yesterday to gut the bill.

When will the Liberals stand up for the rights of victims and their families instead of criminals?

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NORTEL

Mrs. Michelle Simson (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today Nortel pensioners, devastated about what is happening to their pension and disability benefits, have come to Parliament Hill to demand action from the government.

Every day we are reading in the papers that Canada's pension system is in crisis. I am hearing from Canadians all across the country, including constituents from your riding of Kingston and the Islands, Mr. Speaker, about their concern for the Nortel pensioners and the safety of their pensions in the future.

If retirees are fortunate, they may receive 60¢ on the dollar from their pension. More likely, they will receive less. Retirees on disability benefits will receive next to nothing.

The government must take action now to secure the pension and disability benefits for the Nortel pensioners and take steps to ensure that this will never happen to the pensions of countless other Canadians in the future.

[Translation]

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader seems to be blowing with the wind. Now that he has given up and no longer seems keen to trigger an opportunistic election, it would be interesting to know what his intentions are when it comes to protecting victims of economic crimes. We know that the Liberal senators have gutted Bill C-25, so it would not be surprising if the Liberal leader were to use white-collar criminals for partisan purposes.

Our government believes that it is better to keep criminals in prison, not in their living rooms. We want a judicial system with minimum sentences for fraud, where aggravating factors lead to stiffer sentences and victims can be compensated.

Now that he claims to have his mind on his work instead of on his campaign bus, we will know once and for all whether he is shirking his responsibilities when it comes time to get tough on white-collar criminals.

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SVEND ROBINSON

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that the 2009 Grand Prix of the Conseil québécois des gais et lesbiennes has been awarded to Svend Robinson for his unshakeable commitment to human rights activism. He is the second person to receive this award.

● (1415)

[English]

Svend spent his entire political career and most of his active life fighting to ensure equality for minorities and battling oppression. He worked here in Canada as a parliamentarian, as we all know, tirelessly on many committees, including justice and human rights, and was a founding member of the subcommittee on international human rights and democratic development.

[Translation]

Svend has also received numerous international awards, including the title of Chevalier of the Ordre de la Pléiade. Earlier this year he served as co-chair of the International Conference on LGBT Human Rights in Copenhagen. He is currently working with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, coordinating the fund's relations with governments.

[English]

I hope all members will join me in congratulating this dedicated New Democrat and former member of this House who is with us on the Hill today. I hope his work promoting human rights will inspire generations to come.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, drug trafficking and drug production is, without a doubt, the most significant source of illicit money for organized crime groups.

Oral Questions

Our government is aware of the immense role illicit drugs play in gang violence across this country. Canadians from coast to coast to support our government's legislation that will ensure mandatory jail time for serious drug offences that involve organized crime, violence or preying on youth.

Despite the support from members in this House, Liberals continue to drag their feet and delay this bill in the Senate. When will the Liberal leader show some leadership and tell his Liberal colleagues to pass this important piece of legislation?

This is yet another example of the Liberal leader's soft on crime approach.

Let us get this bill passed. Canadians deserve better.

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[Translation]

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute today to the Cirque du Soleil and its directors, who have never stopped dreaming and who are celebrating the Cirque's 25th anniversary this year.

This magnificent epic debuted in the 1980s in Baie-Saint-Paul. A group of young buskers had a dream of creating a unique, artistic circus in Quebec.

In 1984, the Cirque du Soleil was born with a new show-business concept that is a wonderful blend of the talents of street performers and circus artists. In the meantime, the Cirque du Soleil just keeps expanding and is now internationally renowned, which makes the people of Charlevoix and all Quebecers very proud.

Today, 25 years later, the Cirque du Soleil has taken nearly 90 million spectators in over 200 cities across five continents along on its adventure.

I have to congratulate those big dreamers who went after their goal and created what is now the largest circus in the world: the Cirque du Soleil. They are the pride of Quebec.

May the dream continue for many years.

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[English]

ORDER OF MERIT

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, at Buckingham Palace, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II awarded former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien the rare and prestigious Order of Merit, one of Great Britain's highest honours. He is only the fourth Canadian in history accorded this distinction.

Other recipients are former Liberal Prime Ministers Mackenzie King and Lester Pearson, Winston Churchill, Nelson Mandela and Mother Teresa.

This award is about merit and Jean Chrétien has given outstanding service to the people of Canada, especially to the women of Canada.

As Trudeau's justice minister, he gave Canadians the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, enshrining within it gender equality.

As a prime minister, he doubled the number of women in his caucus and cabinet; appointed a 50% female Senate; and named the first female chief justice, the first female deputy prime minister and the first female visible minority governor general. He listened to his women's caucus and did not go to Iraq; increased aid to the poorest continent, Africa; negotiated the UN landmines treaty; and fought for gender equality at every international forum—

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member but her time has expired.

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THE ECONOMY

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on the economy, which is why the Prime Minister is speaking today at a Canadian Chamber of Commerce conference in Toronto to discuss a variety of economic issues.

The Liberal leader was also supposed to attend. He had been confirmed for weeks. However, earlier this week his name was removed from the program. It seems he had a better place to be. He was also scheduled to go back to Harvard for a little talk.

Since the Liberal leader was double-booked, he sent his economic adviser, the former NDP premier of Ontario and current Liberal member for Toronto Centre. As premier, the member for Toronto Centre increased income taxes, gas taxes, business taxes and insurance premiums while overseeing the biggest job losses Ontario had seen since the 1930s.

Yes, the one thing that unites the Liberal Party members is the failed economic policies of the past; a desire to tax more so they can spend more.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister finally admitted that it had been a mistake to put Conservative Party logos on taxpayer cheques. But this unbelievable partisan spending is still going on. For example, 75% of the money from a training program for young unemployed workers is being spent in Conservative ridings.

Now that he has admitted he was wrong to put logos on the cheques, will the Prime Minister admit that this partisan spending needs to stop right now?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our priority is the economy. That is our government's priority. We are creating jobs and stimulating the economy. And we are doing exactly what Canadians want.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

We are on the side of Canadians. We are producing these projects because they mean jobs and opportunity. They mean getting behind and beyond the recession to a better and more prosperous economy through economic recovery.

That is our message to Canadians and that is what Canadians want of us.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister admitted that it was not correct to put those logos on top of government cheques. However, that is not the only thing that was not correct.

There is overwhelming evidence of Conservative partisanship in this spending. I have one particularly shocking example. Over 90% of an accessibility fund destined for disabled Canadians went to Conservative ridings.

Is it not time that the Prime Minister admitted that is not correct either? When will he put a stop to it?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the evidence is clear and incontrovertible. We are engaged in economic stimulus to the economy—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Industry has the floor and we will have some order.

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, we are engaged in helping the economy. We are focused on the serious issues that Canadians care about: jobs, helping those who need help through our EI reform, and ensuring infrastructure is there now and for the future.

The hon. member fails to mention all the money that went to his own city for the Spadina subway line, the Sheppard subway line, Union Station and the northwest transmission line.

We can go on and on, but the point is that every part of this country must be part of the solution and that is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for once I agree with the minister. The figures are incontrovertible. I have another example. Sixty-six per cent of recreational infrastructure projects in this country have been allocated to Conservative ridings and the minister in charge directly opposite gets the lion's share of the projects.

Therefore, if people vote Conservative, they get the rink. A lot of Canadians think that is wrong. When will the Prime Minister begin to understand that it is wrong and will he put a stop to it?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the Leader of the Opposition, who aspires to be prime minister one day, to get his facts so wrong is, quite frankly, shocking.

In Ontario, 29 out of the 57 \$1 million maximum allocation went to projects in opposition ridings, while 28 went to government-held ridings. Of the total of 136 eligible projects, the city of Toronto received 118 of them, which is 86%.

We are being fair to all ridings and to all Canadians. That is what people would like us to do and that is exactly what we are doing.

● (1425)

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ethics commissioner has opened at least 50 investigations into the conduct of the Conservative members of Parliament who tried to pass off taxpayer dollars as gifts of the Conservative Party. What is worse, the phony cheques themselves were produced using taxpayer money.

With over one-third of the Conservative caucus now under investigation, how can the Prime Minister claim that the cheque scandal did not come from his office?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are focused on something that very clearly Canadians want. They want a government that is focused on the economy, on more jobs, on more economic recovery, and on helping those most in need. That is what we are focused on.

We are focused on economic stimulus measures that are being shared across the country to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to get out of this recession to have a more prosperous country. That is what we are focused on. Members opposite should focus on the same thing.

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians want is a government that focuses on the truth.

Not only does the Conservative government like to use taxpayers' money as Conservative gifts, it is also wasting untold millions on propaganda. The Conservatives replace doorknobs, install humidifiers, change drain pans, all as an excuse to put up Conservative signs that cost more than the actual repairs themselves.

Could the Prime Minister tell us how many taxpayers' dollars he is wasting to advertise routine maintenance?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are working with our municipal and provincial counterparts in the hon. member's province and every province in this country, whether it is a Conservative government, a Liberal government or an NDP government. We are working with them to make sure that stimulus works in their province, works in their territory, and works in every one of their municipalities.

I defy the hon. member to say that somehow there was some closed cabal somewhere in her province, where we sat down with the provincial government, to allocate money only to Conservative ridings. That simply did not happen. We are there for each province. We are there for the country because it is simply the right thing to do.

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*[Translation]***JUSTICE**

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with the government's proposed new legislation to eliminate conditional sentences, an individual found guilty of perjury, for example—which is unfortunately what happened to Guy Lafleur—would be required to serve his sentence in prison, regardless of the circumstances, unless the sentence were suspended.

Oral Questions

In his ideological stubbornness, does the Prime Minister realize that he is removing any leeway judges have to impose fair, humane sentences that reflect the circumstances of the case?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the crimes committed by white-collar criminals are outrageous. People have had enough. This is very serious. As a government, we decided to finally tackle this issue, and we hope that the Bloc will support us. There is nothing outrageous about the legislator deciding to draw a line, show leadership and say that enough is enough.

If the opposition members go out and talk to the victims, they will see that everyone has had enough. We are going to face the situation and deal with the problem.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I talked about conditional sentences, but he did not respond, and I know why.

Now, the minister is talking about economic crimes. In fact, we have talked to the victims.

The Conservatives are saying that they want to eliminate parole after one-sixth of a sentence has been served. But as for the two-year minimum sentence he is proposing for fraud over \$1 million, the minister has not been able to cite a single case, because there are none. That is not the problem. The problem is offenders who get parole after serving one-sixth of their sentence.

I challenge him to include parole after one-sixth of a sentence in his bill. Otherwise, it is all talk and no action.

• (1430)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know what the Bloc's opposition to conditional sentences means. It means that when a serious crime such as theft or fraud over \$5,000 is committed, the criminal can serve his sentence at home, in the comfort of his living room. That is the Bloc's approach to crime.

We now have a bill that tackles white-collar crime. Victims called on us to take action so that this never happens again. That is what we are doing. I hope that finally, for once, the Bloc will walk the talk and support us.

As for release after one-sixth of a sentence has been served, we will not propose an ad hoc, ill-considered reform.

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice's bill on white-collar crime is an exercise in futility. This bill will only hide the government's lack of action. If the government's real intention is to force white-collar criminals to serve their sentence, he need only abolish the measure that allows criminals to be released after serving one-sixth of their sentences.

If the government wants to prove that it is serious about fighting white-collar crime, why not have the bill include the outright abolition of release after serving one-sixth of the sentence?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the extent and the seriousness of this situation. We know that the Bloc members went out one morning, checked which way the wind was

blowing and decided to come back with an ad hoc and ill-considered measure.

There is nothing new about wanting to change the one-sixth of the sentence provision. Our government has always said that it is an aberration and we are working on it.

Reform will be introduced shortly but we will not be proposing measures based on magical thinking, as our colleagues opposite have just done.

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this has been part of the Bloc Québécois platform since 2007. There is no need for magic; all they have to do is introduce a bill in this House and we will vote for it.

If people like Vincent Lacroix take risks it is because there are tax havens where they can hide their money and get away with it. They know that after serving one-sixth of their sentence they are free to recover their loot.

The government says that it wants criminals to make restitution to investors but does it realize that as long as there are tax havens the likelihood of this happening is virtually nil?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can say that we announced good news yesterday. There were victims present. The public in general is very pleased with what was announced: minimum sentences of two years for fraud over \$1 million, no matter the number of victims. I challenge the opposition members to look the victims in the eyes and tell them that they will oppose the bill because it goes against their narrow ideology to impose minimum sentences. That is shameful. It gives inappropriate and undesirable results, as we have just seen.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the climate change crisis is the greatest challenge humanity has ever faced. For the past three years, the bill to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities with respect to climate change has been slowly making its way through Parliament. It got as far as the Senate, but the election put it right back at square one. The bill has been with the committee since April. It proposes aggressive science-based targets.

Does the Prime Minister realize how urgent it is that we take action?

[*English*]

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our position is very clear on this matter.

It is important for Canada to go to Copenhagen to the International Conference on Climate Change. We are working obviously with all of our international partners, including the United States of America, and also China, India and other major emitters to make sure that we have a comprehensive climate change policy for the entire world.

That is what my hon. colleague, the Minister of the Environment, is doing, and that is why it is important for the NDP to get outside with what we can accomplish for not only Canada but the rest of the world as well.

Oral Questions

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are less than 50 days away from the global conference on climate change in Copenhagen and the government is proposing to go empty-handed. It is an irresponsible position.

There are no clear objectives. There are no firm targets and the uncertainty is stalling the green investments that we could be taking advantage of. It is preventing Canada from becoming a leader on the green technologies of the future.

Instead of counting on another flip-flop from the Liberal Party to stop progress on the climate change crisis, why will the Prime Minister not have the courage to take the climate change accountability legislation to Copenhagen and say we are ready to be world leaders?

• (1435)

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the important thing is to have a coherent position going into Copenhagen, which we do have. We are working with the United States on a comprehensive North American approach to this issue as well.

The hon. member mentioned green investment. The Prime Minister last week was in Edmonton to announce an investment of hundreds of millions of dollars in the province of Alberta for carbon capture and storage. We are also involved in investments in renewables. We are also involved in investments in cleaner energy and hydrocarbons as well.

That is our position. We are not only talking about it in Parliament, we are actually doing it for the people of Canada.

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PENSIONS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was just outside with pensioners, long-term disabled employees and former Nortel employees. They are calling on the federal government to act by changing our bankruptcy laws to help them. They have lost their pensions. They have lost their severance pay, their disability pensions, and their medical payments.

They want justice and they want action from the government now. They have worked hard. They played by the rules, the way they were supposed to. They built wealth in a company that was then squandered by the people who were running it, and they got cheated by the system.

Is the Prime Minister content to stand by and say this is what the provinces should take care of, or is he willing to roll up his sleeves and take action for the Nortel workers and the other pensioners who are losing their—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Industry.

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the economic turmoil around the world has put enormous pressure on all kinds of pension plans and all kinds of investors. Nortel pensioners have had the particularly cruel situation of their entire company being put into bankruptcy.

The fact of the matter is though that these pensions were registered with the province of Ontario. The province of Ontario is the only body that has the right and responsibility to cover those pensions.

On the other hand, the finance minister and I are working with the provinces to make sure that we have better pension systems in this country in the future.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clearly there is no limit to the depths to which the Conservatives will sink in order to buy-off taxpayers with their own money. Kids playing hockey in Ontario are being denied improvements to their rinks simply because they do not live in Conservative ridings.

Could the Prime Minister explain why two-thirds of all RInC funds will only help the one-third of Canadians who voted Conservative?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really do not know where the hon. member gets her facts.

The city of Mississauga submitted seven projects and six were approved. The city of Windsor submitted seven projects and six were approved. The city of Ottawa submitted 34 applications and 25 were approved. The city of Toronto submitted 136 eligible projects and 118 were approved. We are doing this for all of Ontario and for all of Canada. The statistics are the same across the entire country.

If the hon. member has evidence that I conspired with Liberal cabinet minister George Smitherman to make sure all of the money in Ontario went to Conservative ridings, she should table that right now.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister buys his own propaganda.

The Prime Minister falsely claimed that nearly half of all projects, including the largest one in the RInC fund, have gone to opposition ridings. Yet, the government's own propaganda shows that this is simply not true. In fact, the top five ridings that received infrastructure funding are held by, guess who, the Conservatives.

Is this discrimination what the Prime Minister meant in Sault Ste. Marie when he said he was going to teach Canadians a lesson?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would really encourage Liberal researchers to do their research a little bit better.

Actually, the number one riding in Ontario that received the most, 67 projects totalling \$13 million, was the NDP held riding of Trinity—Spadina. Those are the facts.

If the hon. member has evidence that the member for Trinity—Spadina has suddenly become a Conservative MP, she should table that information in the House as well.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cross the Champlain bridge in Montreal several times a week. It is a major thoroughfare in my riding. The government has come up with a program to patch it up over a ten-year period. Ten years. And it just recently awarded a million dollar contract that reeks of corruption.

When will the government stop thinking only of what it stands to gain and start thinking about maintaining this critical piece of infrastructure?

• (1440)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member that in our budget—which she herself supported—we allocated \$212 million to the Champlain bridge. An independent corporation—The Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated—took it from there and issued a fair, open and transparent call for tenders. There was no political interference, and no minister's office was involved.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Christian Paradis: If the opposition members find that so funny, they should level their accusations outside of the House.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a senator got his hands dirty. Instead of punishing him, the government removed all traces of dirt from its website and pretended that nothing ever happened.

Why is the government spending its time politicking instead of governing?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is unbelievable. Finally there is a government showing some political leadership with respect to the Champlain bridge. The government rolled up its sleeves and said it would take care of things. The opposition is trying to undermine our work with all kinds of baseless accusations. Once again, I dare the opposition to raise these accusations outside of the House.

* * *

CINAR

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the CINAR affair is one of the largest financial scandals in Canadian history. But even though CINAR acknowledged that it lied regarding its actual participation in the *Robinson Sucroe* series, in a document filed with the court of appeal on September 25, the government refuses to recover the money fraudulently obtained by the company.

How can the Prime Minister claim to be going after white-collar crime, and yet refuse to recover the money fraudulently obtained by CINAR?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is talking about something that happened under the Liberal watch. I have indicated on a number of occasions that we are committed to transparency and accountability. I urge the hon. member that if he

has any information of any criminal or other wrongdoing, he should turn it over to the appropriate authorities.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I just gave him the information. That was filed with the court of appeal on September 25.

But, like the Liberals, the Conservatives refuse to go after white-collar crime and tax havens. On the contrary, they even recently signed an agreement to ease trade barriers with Panama, a notorious tax haven. This is a perfect example of the Conservatives talking out of both sides of their mouths. On the one hand, they hold a press conference, putting on a big show, to say that they are getting tough on white-collar crime, and on the other hand, they are signing agreements that make this crime easier.

Why claim to go after white-collar crime, when in reality, they are doing quite the opposite?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to sign free trade agreements with other countries because we want to continue to create opportunities for Canadian workers, investors and businesses. That is in our plan.

Our economy will continue to grow because we will be signing free trade agreements with many more countries.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by voting yesterday against the Bloc Québécois motion for emergency assistance for the forestry sector, the Conservatives demonstrated that they have no intention of helping the workers of that industry, like those in Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, and in my region, which has been going through a major crisis for several years now.

Will the government respect the decision of this House and implement emergency measures for the forestry industry and its workers, as called for by the majority of parliamentarians in this House?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is very proud of what it has done to support the forestry industry throughout Canada. We recently put together a Canada-Quebec task force. I would remind the House that the committee, formed last spring, has achieved some excellent results, which have been commended by the forestry industry throughout Quebec. In the coming weeks, we will announce what has come out of the committee's work. We will continue to keep our promises.

Oral Questions

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois and a majority of parliamentarians are calling for an assistance plan for the forest industry similar to the funding provided to the auto sector, which is concentrated in Ontario. For example, we are proposing assistance for private woodlot owners, many of whom are concentrated in the Lower St. Lawrence and south shore regions. A majority of parliamentarians supported the Bloc Québécois motion for private woodlot owners.

Does the government plan to adopt those measures as quickly as possible?

• (1445)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have had the pleasure of meeting with representatives of Quebec's private woodlots on many occasions. As a result of the committee's work last spring, we and the Government of Quebec have invested \$30 million in Quebec's private woodlots for silviculture and forest resources management.

We will continue to work with that government. Everyone is familiar with the tactic of trying to win votes on the backs of workers who are unfortunately affected by the forestry crisis. We will continue to work for them and represent them.

* * *

[English]

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the incompetence of the government is stunning. The issue of detainees brought down the last minister of defence. Now we are supposed to believe that, after watching his colleague be demoted, the new minister did not bother to be briefed on something as serious as allegations of torture.

When will the minister come up with an answer that has even a shred of credibility?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the member opposite and her government, our government acted decisively. We improved a transfer agreement that would ensure visits. In fact, as recently as today I understand there have been 175 visits to Afghan prisons with respect to ensuring that conditions are proper.

We have invested in its justice system, in policing, in correction facilities. In fact, we met last night to talk about Afghanistan and there is now a program to train female Afghan prison guards.

These are the steps that we took two and a half years ago to improve the human rights situation in that country, something her government failed to do abysmally.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Another avoidance, Mr. Speaker.

After the previous defence minister lost his job over this issue, surely someone would have ensured that the current minister was

well briefed so he did not follow the same path. Therefore, why does the minister keep avoiding the question?

Who got Mr. Colvin's reports, what was in those reports and when did the minister first hear about them? Those are clear questions.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): And clear answers, Mr. Speaker. We received thousands of documents with respect to many files and, as a result, we acted. We took decisive action to improve the situation in Afghanistan. We have plused up our ability to go and visit these detention facilities. We have improved our ability to work with police, to mentor corrections officers. We have invested over \$132 million in improving the justice system of the country. These are things that her government failed to do.

We can be very proud of the work of CIDA, the Department of Foreign Affairs and particularly the hard work of the men and women of the Canadian Forces.

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence just said that he was not aware of Richard Colvin's reports on the questionable treatment of the Afghan detainees. He said that these reports were among thousands of others. Honestly.

Would he have us believe that a report presented by a Canadian diplomat and containing such dramatic revelations was not brought to the minister's attention?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): One thing we know for sure, Mr. Speaker, that member has no idea what is in any of those reports. On the contrary, we receive these reports, we act responsibly as a result—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: We will have some order, please. The Minister of National Defence has the floor.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we receive thousands of documents with respect to the treatment of detainees. We act responsibly. We improve conditions within prisons. We invest in its justice system. We continue to train prison officials, including women prison guards in the country.

These are the important actions that began over two and a half years ago. These are the actions that have improved the human rights situation in Afghanistan. Those members continue to just stir the pot, and try to cast aspersions. There is nothing there.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister just said he did not receive the reports. It was one report among thousands of others. If he does not know what is in the report, how is the opposition supposed to know? That is the question. When did those reports get to that minister, what is in those reports and why is the minister denying ever having seen them?

Oral Questions

The chief of defence staff knew what was in the report. General Hillier would have attended cabinet meetings. When did the Conservatives know, what—

• (1450)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): The old saying goes, Mr. Speaker, more sound, more fury, no substance.

We have never denied that there were unproven allegations with respect to detainees. We never denied that we had received information. That is why we acted. That is why, importantly, Canadians should understand that we acted decisively, improving the justice system.

It is very important that the member and all members understand there has never been a proven allegation of abuse by Canadian Forces personnel in Afghanistan, not one.

I spoke to General Hillier this morning. I commend the book for the member's reading. What General Hillier has been quoted as saying he did not say.

* * *

JUSTICE

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday a number of Liberals voted in favour of gutting Bill C-25. They voted in favour of giving criminals double credit for time served in pre-sentencing custody.

Liberals are defying the wishes of attorneys general from across the country. They are defying the wishes of premiers of all political stripes. Liberal senators are defying the wishes of the elected representatives of the House, who voted unanimously to pass Bill C-25.

My question is for the Minister of Justice. Why have attorneys general been so supportive of this truth in sentencing bill?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was an excellent question. It is absolutely true that since 2006, provincial attorneys general right across the country have wanted to get rid of the practice of giving double credit for time served. They want the same thing that we want, which is truth in sentencing.

It is absolutely shameful what is taking place among Liberal senators who disrespect and defy the wishes of the provinces and the House of Commons.

This week a Liberal MP in the House of Commons said that the Liberals in the House of Commons were spooked into supporting the bill. I have some advice for them. They should go spook their friends in the Senate and get this bill passed.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the defence minister was first asked about Afghan prisoner abuse, he said that the allegations were baseless. Then when we learned that

Richard Colvin had widely distributed reports on the matter, he said that he was not aware of them.

Now that it is clear that everyone from the chief of defence staff right on down received the reports, the minister says that he receives thousands of reports and he cannot be expected to keep up. I am sorry, but that is just unacceptable. Torture is not something to be taken lightly.

Will the minister recognize that he should have paid attention to these reports and apologize for being delinquent in his duties?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is a barrister. He should also know that evidence and proof of evidence in a forum is also an important factor when discussing important issues such as abuse.

What we have done, importantly, is to understand that we acted decisively. We have improved upon an inadequate transfer arrangement. We have invested in the prisons where Afghan terrorist detainees were kept. We have invested in training correctional officers. We have invested in police officers. We have invested heavily in the justice system and the human rights of Afghanistan.

I would hope the hon. member would support what we have done in the last two and a half years.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister has said that those allegations were baseless.

Now we want to get to the truth. If the minister is truly interested in getting to the bottom of this, my question for him is very simple. Today, right after question period, the special committee on Afghanistan will vote on a motion submitted by my colleague, the member for Ottawa Centre, to have Mr. Colvin and all relevant senior officials appear before the committee.

I am asking a direct question and I want a direct answer. Will the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence commit to not putting any obstacles and allow Mr. Colvin and other witnesses to fully discuss what they know?

• (1455)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will let the committee do its work, of course.

The member says that he stands up for the Canadian Forces and he questions what we are doing. What I really wish is the member could explain why he voted against children of deceased veterans education assistance, grants for military disability awards and allowances, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, money for funding for Canadian mission in Afghanistan, money to increase pay and allowances for Canadian Forces personnel.

He spins a good story. He pedals hard, but he is getting further and further from the truth. I wish, when he said he stood for Canadian Forces, that he would stand in the House and vote for them.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***NORTEL**

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the trials and tribulations of Nortel, which was placed under court protection at the beginning of the year, are worrisome to the 117,000 retirees. While Nortel's most attractive assets are being liquidated and the former CEO is submitting a claim in court for over \$12 million from the company, the retirees here on the Hill today are wondering what will become of their pensions. Pensioners from a number of troubled companies are in the same boat today.

What concrete action does the government intend to take to protect the pensions of these workers?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, this is a provincial jurisdiction. This pension is registered in the province of Ontario.

[English]

We are working within our own level of competency and within our own jurisdiction to double the time required for solvency payments of federally regulated plans. We have also done cross-Canada consultations. We are looking at the federal pension framework because that is in our realm of responsibility. That is certainly our commitment to the people of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has made several responsible proposals to protect pensioners in the private sector. We are proposing that the federal government take trusteeship over the pension plans in federal jurisdiction to prevent these funds from being liquidated while the markets are at their lowest. The solutions are there. The only thing lacking is the political will to help these retirees.

Why is the government refusing to protect private sector pensioners?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is rich coming from the Bloc Québécois. The Bloc is asking that pensions, which are a provincial responsibility, now become a federal jurisdiction. That is just terrible.

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that minister is clearly out of touch with the reality of Canadians who are suffering today.

Earlier today the leader of the Liberal Party stood on the front lawn of Parliament Hill in solidarity with the former employees of Nortel. This group of Canadians worked for years and contributed to their pensions, but now when they need them the most, their pension and benefit packages are being stripped away.

Why was the Prime Minister the only leader who chose not to show up at the rally today and how could he possibly say that pensions are not his problem?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was on his way to Toronto to fulfill a speaking engagement that the hon. Leader of the Opposition cancelled with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. He is talking about the

economy. He is talking about jobs. He is talking about how economic stimulus is important for the future of our country.

Let me say again to the hon. member that we take these matters seriously in our own level of competency and jurisdiction. We have acted and we will act. However, that particular pension was registered with the province of Ontario. It has carriage of this file, which is why those protesters were at Queen's Park the week before.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is about leadership. It is about the role of the federal government, which is to show leadership and to show that it cares. Clearly it is something that the minister does not do.

There are 409 Nortel employees who are on long term disability. Without government action, these individuals may lose as much as 85% of their benefits, as well as most of their funding for drug costs.

Let me tell the House about Arlene. She had a workplace injury. She began receiving long term disability payments. Now she knows that she will lose the great bulk of her benefits and her pension by the time she reaches the age of 65.

Why is it that the Conservatives will not stand up and fight for disabled Canadians?

● (1500)

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is exactly the opposite. When it comes to pension reform, again in federally regulated plans, we have already made some changes. We have drafted some ideas for the federal-provincial conference that the finance minister will be conducting in December.

We understand that this is an issue that is beyond the Nortel pensioners. It involves Canadians who perhaps invested in Nortel shares 10 years ago and saw all of those savings disappear because of the mismanagement in that particular company.

We understand that, but at the same time we respect the provincial jurisdiction just as we have to act in the federal jurisdiction.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development told the children of Attawapiskat to their faces that building them a school was not a priority. However, his government has made a priority of funnelling money to two private schools in Tory ridings.

There are pork-barrel cheques for private school recreation and meanwhile, kids in Attawapiskat are in makeshift portables on one of the most toxic sites in Canada. They do not even have a lousy set of playground swings. They have been shovel ready for nine years.

When will the minister tell these children that they are a priority for the Government of Canada?

Oral Questions

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 feel sorry for the children in Attawapiskat who have that member of Parliament who continues to misrepresent the facts day after day in the House of Commons.

We announced this summer 18 schools in ridings, many of them in New Democrat ridings. When we put forward proposals to help children, the member votes against them. He votes against housing allocations. He votes against training and skills development. He votes against matrimonial real property rights that would finally bring property rights to aboriginal women on reserve, so they could have the rights of every other woman in Canada. He votes against that too.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, had the government followed our suggestion on infrastructure stimulus through the gas tax, the money would have flowed almost instantly, but of course, that would have meant no big cheque photo ops.

Instead, as the mayors in Atlantic Canada recently pointed out, much of the promised stimulus money still has not made it to the communities that need it. We have missed an entire construction season and the clock is ticking.

Will the government extend the March 31, 2011 deadline, or will local communities be left paying the price for the government's mismanagement?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously that is a serious question, but I want to put before the House that when it comes to recreational infrastructure, for example in Atlantic Canada, 85 projects were allocated in opposition ridings. That is our record.

Why are we doing that? Because it is important for all Canadians, regardless of where they live, to have more jobs, more opportunity, an opportunity to get away from the recession and toward the recovery. That is what we are focused on. Why are those members not focused on the same thing?

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, rather than acting like the Liberal senators, who are blocking and gutting our bill to ensure that criminals serve their sentences, or the Bloc members, who for purely ideological reasons vote against minimum sentences that would end the exploitation of children, the opposition parties should follow our example by looking after the victims of crime and putting criminals behind bars instead of sending them home to put their feet up cosily in front of the TV with a case of beer.

Can the Minister of Public Works and Government Services tell us what we are going to do to bring justice to victims of white-collar crime?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the opposition could explain why it is only offering half measures to victims of crime. We will be looking after the victims of crime. We announced some good news yesterday: a bill with minimum sentences of two years imprisonment for fraud in excess of \$1 million no matter the number of victims. It will include aggravating factors and prohibition orders. We will introduce reforms with respect to release after serving one-sixth of a sentence, reforms that will be much more comprehensive than those presented by the Bloc. We listen to the victims, we listen to the people and we take action.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pregnant women with H1N1 influenza have higher rates of hospitalization and death than does the general population.

Yesterday, the American Society for Reproductive Medicine and the Centers for Disease Control issued a joint statement giving detailed information regarding vaccinations for U.S. women.

The Conservative government's information for pregnant women is now months out of date. When are Canadian women going to get current accurate and reliable information?

● (1505)

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Canada, the chief medical officers and the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada have advised women in Canada who are pregnant that an unadjuvanted vaccine is safe.

I have every confidence in the expert advice that I am receiving from the Chief Public Health Officer of this country, and the opposition members should as well.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to ethics, the Liberals and the Conservatives are cut from the same cloth. Like the Liberals with their sponsorship program, the Conservatives are quick to use public money to promote their partisan interests. By making taxpayers foot the bill for their partisan advertising, handing out a slew of dummy cheques with the Conservative Party logo and awarding a contract to a firm that employed Senator Housakos, the Conservatives are behaving as though the government belonged to them.

When will this Conservative government stop trying to buy voters with their own money, like the Liberals before them?

Oral Questions

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are going through an unprecedented economic crisis. We made a commitment to stimulate the economy, and that is what we are doing. We have an economic action plan that will be in effect for the next two years, until March 31, 2011. That is good news.

The municipalities and the provincial governments are all happy about that. I was in Bromont again recently, in the riding of Brome—Missisquoi, an opposition riding, to announce a major knowledge infrastructure project. Do you know what? If we took the logic of the member for that riding to the extreme, there never would have been any announcement, because they voted against these investments.

* * *

[English]

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a special tribute has been arranged between all four of the parties, if you would indulge us.

I believe that the House will want to suspend its usual practices to mark a unique moment in our parliamentary history. All members and certainly you yourself, Mr. Speaker, would know that you are now the longest serving Speaker in the history of Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I think that representatives of all parties want to add a few more words than those, but you can see the warmth of the tribute that is about to come.

Your tenure has now surpassed Speaker Lamoureux's record of 3,177 days in the chair of the House. That alone is remarkable. However, it should also be noted that unlike the previous record holders, you were not placed in the chair as a result of a motion moved by the prime minister. You have held office as a result of three elections by secret ballot and one acclamation by the membership of the House.

I would further submit that what truly makes your long tenure all the more extraordinary is that you were elected the last two times from the opposition benches. More specifically, so far, you have occupied the chair 57% of the time while your party was in government and 43% of the time while in opposition. Obviously, you are viewed by the vast majority of members as both unbiased and objective.

If I might take a moment to share a personal observation with the House along with the House officers of other parties, I have had the opportunity to travel with you to foreign parliaments as we moved forward Canada's international relationships. Sir, you have been a model representative for this House and for our country. You have always made us proud to be Canadians abroad and because of your warm personality and hospitality, Canada's reputation is stronger for it.

Since you will have many more days in the chair and doubtless many more significant rulings to formulate and deliver, this is not the day to summarize your career or judgments, nor to eulogize. That

will have to wait for another time. You may have broken the endurance record, but the ordeal is not over.

I do not want to be accused of trying to influence the referee. However, I believe that it is appropriate to express the thanks of those of us on this side of the House for the courtesy, wisdom, patience, neutrality and good humour our Speaker has demonstrated in the high office that he holds. Given that this record has included five years of minority government and five tie votes requiring the use of the casting vote, it is clear that your speakership will resonate into the history of the House.

Sir, we and the people that we represent take this opportunity to say a sincere thank you and congratulations.

● (1510)

[Translation]

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to add a few words from this side of the House, in recognition of your public service and your work as Speaker of the House.

[English]

You have commanded the respect and affection of the whole House. Despite the divisions that are obvious in this chamber, I think it is easy for this side of the House to subscribe in its entirety to the kind words offered by the government House leader.

I want to add a few personal notes. One of the things that I noticed about your biography is that you began to subscribe to *Hansard* at the age of 16. In many other people this would be regarded as an alarming propensity, but that propensity has been only to the good of this House. Your knowledge, love and affection for the traditions of this House have guided you well and you obviously began your understanding of them at a very early age.

You left a very prestigious legal career to enter politics. You entered the House in 1988, defeating Flora MacDonald, the former member for Kingston and the Islands, who also commands universal respect.

[Translation]

You were elected Speaker of the House in 2001, and re-elected in 2004, 2006 and 2008.

[English]

As the government House leader said, it is an important fact that you were elected by members of the House, which is a very clear sign of the respect in which you are held.

[Translation]

Last week, you became Canada's longest-serving Speaker of the House.

[English]

Ten deciding votes have been cast by Speakers since 1867 and you, sir, have cast five of them, which is an extraordinary historical achievement.

Oral Questions

I know that this side of the House would share with you one particular regret that in the gallery today there will not be the presence of one of your oldest friends, a man who loved the House as much as you did, Jerry Yanover. I am sure you will miss his presence in the gallery as much as we do.

You command the universal respect of the House for your rulings, for your judgment, but above all, for your sense of humour. All of us know that you combined a very particular equilibrium, eye-rolling disbelief at the follies and antics of this chamber, combined with a deep respect for its institutions and its traditions.

[Translation]

I salute you, Mr. Speaker; you do us all proud.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, speaking for myself and for all of my Bloc Québécois colleagues, congratulations.

After eight years, eight months and twenty-two days in the Speaker's chair, you have become the longest-serving speaker in the history of the House of Commons. This longevity shows just how much the members of this House value your work, because they elected you to this position on January 29, 2001, and have re-elected you since.

Your conscientious and impartial work, your fair decisions and your constant desire to serve the best interests of members from all parties are some of the characteristics that qualify you for this highly valued role in parliamentary democracy.

I can say that in the past eight years, eight months and twenty-two days, it has not always been easy. Far from it. Everyone here knows that. There have been many confrontations, arguments and heated exchanges. I can imagine what that has been like for you.

You have had to make decisions that are sometimes difficult, sometimes sensitive and sometimes firm, but they are always important. What is remarkable is that you are always able to get everyone to accept them. We are grateful for your good judgment, your tact and your sense of humour.

You have also had to ensure that debates are orderly and respectful. You have applied these two basic principles consistently in this House.

Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. You have proven to be a great referee in these ongoing debates.

In conclusion, I wish you success as you continue your important role. With a minority government, it is hard to know how much longer your term will last. Good luck.

• (1515)

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honour a man who embodies integrity, skill and tradition, someone with whom my colleagues and I have had the distinct privilege of working over so many years. Of course I am talking about you, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate this opportunity to express our support, encouragement and thanks for all of your work.

[Translation]

All NDP members of Parliament from across Canada would like to take a moment to thank you for your ceaseless work as Canada's longest-serving Speaker.

[English]

Speakers have an integral role in our parliamentary system, one that is very deeply rooted in history as you know. Since first being elected to the post in 2001, you have fulfilled your duties with dedication and prestige. It did not take long for you to make your mark. As Deputy Speaker, you managed to curtail the misuse of Governor General's warrants and to provide greater accountability financially to government.

As Speaker, you fought hard to preserve decorum and civility. We have not always made that particularly easy for you but you have never given up. You have seen it all, really, the controversies, the occasional collaboration, the first and last, the majorities and the minorities. You have seen the best of Parliament and perhaps even the worst of it as well.

However, I would have to say that as far as we are concerned, throughout it all you have demonstrated fairness. You have been dignified with all of us. You have used your good sense of humour, sometimes to particularly good effect, to calm things down.

Perhaps this success is no surprise to people who know that you did subscribe to *Hansard*. It was a great way to get mail every day and for \$3 a year, as I recall. You also wrote a thesis about question period, which perhaps we should go back and read again.

Regardless, your career is one that will leave an unmistakable mark on this chamber and on Canada.

[Translation]

We are all here in Ottawa because we want to do our best for this country and its citizens, and that is exactly what you have done. You have now joined the ranks of Lucien Lamoureux and the other distinguished Speakers who, like you, have been more than worthy of the title.

[English]

I speak for all my New Democrat colleagues in thanking you for your years of service. We wish you good luck. We will do our best to make your job perhaps a little easier as time goes forward.

[Translation]

The Speaker: I would like to thank all of the hon. members who have shared their remarks on the subject. I appreciate your comments, just as I appreciate the support of all members of the House who voted for me to be their Speaker, the servant of the House.

[English]

I appreciate very much the pleasure of working in this job. I guess I have since I first became the Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole House in 1996 or so. It is always fun presiding but I do miss the opportunity to heckle. I also miss the opportunity to make speeches and encourage heckling from others to help make the speech more exciting, but I enjoy watching it too.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

• (1520)

[Translation]

I would like to thank each and every one of you for your support and your adherence to the Standing Orders.

[English]

I hope that the question periods for the rest of the week will be a little more tranquil than today's was. It is always entertaining being here and working with you and I appreciate it very much.

I must also thank the people of Kingston and the Islands, who elected me to be their member of Parliament, for allowing me to serve them in this House for so long. I thank them very much for their support and I am sure they appreciate yours for me here in the House.

I have two constituencies and it is always a pleasure to work with both.

[Translation]

Thank you very much, and I hope to see you all later today.

* * *

*[English]***PRIVILEGE**

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, the member for Mississauga South rose in the House and accused me of intimidation. I was not in the chamber when he raised the issue so I would like to take a moment now to respond.

I want to make it clear that I did not make the gesture alleged by the member opposite, nor did I in any way intimidate the member opposite. Indeed, I am very cognizant of the fact that my two children, who are eight and five, watch question period and I would not make that gesture as a result of that, and not only that but also because I have respect for the House.

Accordingly, there is nothing for which I can apologize to the House or its members.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to address the incident. I regret that we have to take the House's time to respond in this way. We should be debating and facing the real issues of Canadians: crime, criminal sentencing, stimulating the financial recovery of industry, protecting jobs and protecting the environment. Those are the things that actually matter to the people of Canada from coast to coast to coast.

The Speaker: I thank the minister for her intervention on this matter and I suspect I will need to consider the matter closed at this point, having no other information on it at this stage.

*[English]***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my role as the parliamentary secretary, let me convey, on a personal note, from one who interacts with you on a daily basis during routine proceedings, my personal thanks to you for not only your tutelage but for your generosity and tolerance of some of my mistakes from time to time. I just want to say, on behalf of all of my colleagues, you are a great mentor to all of the MPs who come here before you. We learn much and we are grateful for that.

With respect to the routine proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to five petitions.

The Speaker: I thank the parliamentary secretary.

* * *

RETRIBUTION ON BEHALF OF VICTIMS OF WHITE COLLAR CRIME ACT

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-52, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sentencing for fraud).

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

* * *

PROHIBITION ON IMPORTING GOODS PRODUCED BY SWEATSHOP LABOUR ACT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-463, An Act to prohibit sweatshop labour goods.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank my seconder from Sault Ste. Marie.

More and more people around the world are calling for fair trade policy, a major item that was discussed in the latest election in the United States that elected Barack Obama.

This particular bill would establish a list of prohibited imports when the good is produced, manufactured or assembled in contravention of the labour standards of the International Labour Organization, including the right of association, the right to bargain collectively, the use of forced or compulsory labour, a minimum age for employment of children, and established and acceptable conditions of work.

The WTO had discussions in 1996 in Singapore and in 2001 in Doha and endorsed the ILO standards and endorsed the ILO as the standard setting agency for trade standards when it comes to labour standards.

This is the second in the series of fair trade legislation that I am bringing forward. We are trying to get the job done here in Parliament by bringing forward legislation we know most Canadians will support.

Routine Proceedings

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

• (1525)

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for unanimous consent of the House for the following motion:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should award citizenship retroactively to the remaining "Lost Canadians", as well as to each and any of their offspring, including to: (a) Peter Brammah, Jackie Scott, and Marion Vermeersch (born respectively in the United Kingdom; combined file Nos. 2742137 and 3430359); (b) Brian Clark (born in the United Kingdom; file No. 3279141); (c) May Lin DeHaan (born in the United States in 1961); (d) Paul Diekleman (born in the United States on October 6, 1932; file No. 52837664); (e) Lisa Evans (born in the United States); (f) Arch Ford (born in the United States in 1945); (g) Marcel Gélinas (born in Montreal in 1922); (h) Kyle Lopez (born on April 12, 1983); (i) Jan Makins (file No. 2613315); (j) Ian Monroe (born in Scotland); (k) Kasey Elisabeth Neal (file No. 87669792); (l) Holly Marie Rabagliati and Lucy Isabelle Rabagliati (born respectively in the United Kingdom on May 24, 1973 and October 9, 2008; combined file No. 2331328); (m) Elizabeth Elaine Raichle (née McCreedy; born on July 4, 1994; file No. 1707304CRS); (n) Bob Russell (born in the United States in 1960); and (o) posthumously, Guy Vallière, who died in February 2009 and to whom the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration had publicly promised to grant citizenship retroactively.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. Jay Hill: That's bullshit.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The government House leader has just used profane language in characterizing my attempt to get unanimous consent of the House to have the government grant citizenship.

The government House leader can be in disagreement; I have no problem with that. However, to use profane language to characterize the motion is simply unacceptable. I would simply ask him to apologize and retract his statement.

• (1530)

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to apologize for the word that I just used and withdraw it. I offer my apologies specifically to the member. I was not directing it at the motion that she made. I was directing it at the repeated misuse of process in this chamber, a subject that I have raised on previous occasions.

The hon. member was there yesterday during the meeting of the House leaders and whips. This issue was before us for discussion—

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Yeah. She just keeps jabbering on.

Hon. Jay Hill: Exactly. Mr. Speaker, now they want to interrupt after we have sat here and listened to her lengthy motion.

The issue of lost Canadians is a serious one, but the reality is that this matter was under discussion by the House leaders, and she is, I believe, the deputy House leader for the official opposition. She knows better than to try this grandstanding on such an important, serious issue instead of negotiating it among all four parties in this place, along with the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, which is how the discussions have been taking place. So of course we have to refuse acceptance of the motion.

The other point I want to make is that during the discussion yesterday, it was not revealed that the hon. member's motion actually sits before the House as a private member's motion. She and her party know very well that my position is that no member of this chamber has the right to suggest that his or her particular motion should supersede the order of precedence, and I will stay with that in respect of the traditions of the House.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the context of the remarks that have just been made, there may indeed be matters here that you need to take under advisement.

I would point out that one of the things the government House leader has just done, something that was criticized by members of his party not long ago, was to discuss publicly the details of an in camera meeting.

If we are now going to be examining what was done or not done by the deputy House leader for the opposition, we need to examine the issue of revealing confidential details of an in camera meeting as well.

If we are going to talk about misuse of the rules of the House, we need to examine two incidents that occurred recently in the House in which ministers of the crown used statements by ministers in complete violation of the rules and traditions for which that provision is on the order paper. It is not there simply to make a political commercial. It is there for the purpose of making an announcement. Neither of the two ministers who have made ministerial statements recently has ever had an announcement to make. They simply used that provision for a political commercial.

These matters may well benefit from your wit and your wisdom and your good humour, Mr. Speaker. Maybe they should be taken up again at the next meeting of the House leaders where they could do with a little further ventilation.

The Speaker: If more ventilation is required in the room where the House leaders meet, I am sure that the House administration could provide it.

I assure the hon. member that I do not think it is for the Speaker to adjudicate on things that go on at House leaders' meetings. Technically the Speaker is invited to be there to assist, if necessary, but mainly to find out what is going on so as not to be caught by surprise if something happens here in the House.

Obviously, members do sometimes request consent for motions. We have had such a request today, and consent was denied. That is that.

We had better move on to the next item which is another motion from the hon. chief government whip.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find agreement among all parties to adopt the following motion. I move:

Routine Proceedings

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, the motion to concur in the Seventh Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (extension of time, pursuant to Standing Order 97.1, to consider Bill C-300, An Act respecting Corporate Accountability for the Activities of Mining, Oil or Gas in Developing Countries) be deemed adopted.

The Speaker: Does the hon. chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have another motion. There has been agreement among the parties of the House for the following motion. I move:

That, since the matter expressed in the Third Report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, presented to the House on Monday, October 19, 2009, has been addressed, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the said Report be withdrawn and that no subsequent proceeding may take place in relation thereto.

• (1535)

The Speaker: Does the hon. chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

NORTEL

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we know, there are many former and current Nortel employees who are presently on LTD.

They have petitioned this Parliament, and I am presenting their petition, to have the government amend the CCAA and the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to protect their rights and the rights of all employees when companies become insolvent and protected under bankruptcy protection, to make sure that their rights are not lost and that this government will protect not only their interests but their long-term disability payments and their pensions.

Finally, I want to say that these petitions are from people right across the national capital region.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of a group of former Nortel employees who continue their fight for their pensions.

A 1,400-page petition has been split into four books, and I am honoured to present a 350-page book of signatures on their behalf.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the constituents in my riding of Ottawa South for bringing this critically

important issue to my attention, and in particular those Nortel long-term disability recipients whose benefits are at serious risk.

These petitioners are calling upon Parliament to amend the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act and the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to protect the rights of all Canadian employees and to ensure that employees laid off by a company who are receiving a pension or long-term disability benefits during bankruptcy proceedings obtain preferred creditor status over other unsecured creditors.

They are also asking that the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act be amended to ensure that employee-related claims are paid from the proceeds of Canadian asset sales before funds are permitted to leave the country.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to present, along with other members of the House, a petition from hundreds of Canadians concerned with the Conservative government's response to the announced sale of Nortel.

As members are surely aware, thousands of Nortel employees and supporters joined us in Ottawa today for a demonstration on Parliament Hill to present this important issue to all of us.

This petition calls for necessary changes to the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Investment Canada Act. These changes will require us to protect the rights of all Canadians, especially those who are facing employment difficulties as companies go through restructuring. They will ensure that during bankruptcy, employees who are receiving pensions or long-term disability benefits obtain preferred-creditor status.

Furthermore, the petitioners ask that any employee-related claims be paid from the proceeds of Canadian asset sales before those funds are permitted to leave the country.

It is a privilege to present this petition today and to honour those members of Nortel who are in the gallery today.

PAY EQUITY

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my petition is a call to stop the wage rollbacks and restore pay equity for public service workers.

The budget implementation bill, Bill C-10 empowers the government to roll back negotiated wages and arbitral awards retroactively, as well as radically change the rules governing pay equity in the federal public sector.

Bill C-10 infringes on the right of civil servants to freely and fairly negotiate wage increases and collective agreements with their employers, and adversely affects the rights of public sector workers, particularly women, to equal pay for work of equal value.

Bill C-10 would prevent civil servants from filing and adjudicating gender-based wage discrimination claims through the Canadian Human Rights Commission and would trade away their human rights at the bargaining table.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to support Motion No. 384 and rescind the provisions of Bill C-10 that violate workers' rights to collective bargaining, including arbitral awards and equal pay for work of equal value.

Routine Proceedings

● (1540)

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. The first is signed by constituents of my riding of Dufferin—Caledon asking members of Parliament to support Bill C-391 which will abolish the long gun registry system, because it is a costly and ineffective program.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed mainly by members of the constituency that I represent, Dufferin—Caledon.

People are concerned about animal cruelty. They petition the government to support a universal declaration on animal welfare.

NEGATIVE PRINT MEDIA

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table in the House a petition signed by the residents of Abbotsford.

The petitioners bring to the attention of the House the lack of equal rights, the lack of protection of Canadian citizens from negative print media in public places. They call upon members of Parliament to request that laws be amended to include the rights of all citizens including children to protect them from negative print media.

The petitioners ask that the federal government enable municipalities to change city bylaws and business licence requirements to better suit the needs of children and youth in our community. They refer to hundreds of studies that have shown the negative effects of harmful negative print media on children and youth.

The petitioners also ask that there be amendments to these laws to include a more detailed definition of adult publication or perhaps a requirement that all forms of profanity, discrimination and sexual innuendo be away from the eye level of children and youth.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions. The first one is regarding Miss Birtukan Mideksa, President of the Unity for Democracy and Justice party of Ethiopia. She has been held in prison by the Government of Ethiopia since December 2008, without charge, on a politically motivated life sentence.

Human rights organizations such as Amnesty International are extremely concerned that she has not had any formal hearing and has not been given full access to her lawyer. She is held in solitary confinement in unhygienic, life-threatening conditions and is subjected to arbitrary sleep deprivation.

These petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to petition the Government of Ethiopia to immediately and unconditionally release Miss Mideksa and allow her to participate fully in her position as the leader of a political party.

CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is regarding the Canada free trade deal with Colombia. The House has discussed this matter for a while now.

The petitioners are asking us not to sign a free trade agreement, and they are concerned because Colombia continues to violate human rights laws; its environmental record has not been very good, and many trade unionists and others who oppose the government are subjected to harsh treatment.

NORTEL

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of many of the constituents who have come into my office over many months, who are concerned about their future and their security.

Many of these Brampton residents and other Canadian families have been affected by the closure and the bankruptcy of Nortel. Their future is at stake with regard to both their long-term disability benefits and their pensions.

I have before me petitions signed by thousands of Canadians requesting that the government act immediately to amend the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act and the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to ensure that the rights of all Canadian employees are protected and also to ensure that employees who are either laid off or working at companies that go bankrupt continue to receive their pension or long-term disability benefits and obtain preferred-creditor status over other unsecured creditors, something that has certainly not been the case for Nortel employees.

Second, the petitioners are also requesting an amendment of the Investment Canada Act to ensure that employee-related claims are paid from the proceeds of Canadian asset sales before funds are permitted to leave the country.

Many of these constituents and thousands of other Canadians gathered today on Parliament Hill to voice their concerns and the urgency for immediate action to ensure that their future can be secure and that their pensions are protected.

● (1545)

TAX HARMONIZATION

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the anti-HST petitions are pouring in. This one comes in with about 100 signatures, from residents of Burnaby—New Westminster.

These citizens say that the Liberal-Conservative HST should be rescinded because at a time of economic crisis it is ridiculous to force ordinary B.C. consumers to pay \$500 more while big companies in British Columbia get that same corporate tax break. The petitioners are opposing the tax shift that goes on the backs of ordinary British Columbians, the \$500 a year additional that each British Columbian will have to pay. Therefore, these petitioners from British Columbia call on the Government of Canada to rescind the Liberal-Conservative HST.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 and as certified by the Clerk of Petitions, I am pleased to present a petition concerning cruelty to animals and animal welfare.

The petitioners want to raise with Parliament the fact that there is scientific consensus and public acknowledgement that animals can feel pain and that all efforts should be made to prevent animal cruelty and to reduce animal suffering.

The petitioners also indicate that over a billion people around the world rely on animals for their livelihoods, that many others rely on animals for companionship and, finally, that animals are often significantly affected by natural disasters yet seldom get considered during relief efforts or emergency planning, despite their recognized importance to human beings.

The petitioners ask Parliament to petition the Government of Canada to support a universal declaration on animal welfare.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in this House to present a petition from citizens all across our country asking to release Ms. Birtukan Mideksa from arbitrary imprisonment in Ethiopia.

Ms. Mideksa is the president of the unity for democracy and justice party of Ethiopia. She has been held by the government of Ethiopia since December 2008, without charge, for a politically-motivated sentence. Ms. Mideksa is a confirmed prisoner of conscience, according to international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International. She was pardoned of all charges against her before being arrested again for no reason. Contrary to Ethiopian law, Ms. Mideksa was imprisoned without any formal hearing and has not been given full access to her lawyer.

This is the kind of action that shocks the conscience of Canadians and, in fact, all countries of the world that believe in justice and political freedom.

We look forward to helping the petitioners with their goal by passing private member's Motion No. 334, which requests our government to use every means at our disposal to exert pressure on the government of Ethiopia to unconditionally release this democratic leader.

SRI LANKA

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the arrival of Tamil refugees on our shores in British Columbia gives even more importance to the following petition that is signed by almost 200 residents from Vancouver and Burnaby in British Columbia.

These petitioners call on the Government of Canada to use every diplomatic means at its disposal to seek an immediate end to the violence that is happening in Sri Lanka, to respect the human rights of the civilian Tamil population, to end the embargo on food, medicine and other essential items, to restore unequivocal freedom of the press and freedom of movement for the UN and international aid organizations throughout the whole of Sri Lanka, to begin the

Routine Proceedings

process of working toward lasting peace and reconciliation, and to seek full respect of human rights of all Sri Lankans.

These residents of Vancouver are very concerned about the situation in Sri Lanka and the human rights violations that are taking place against the Tamil population. That is why I present this petition today.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 401 and 410 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is it the pleasure of the House that Questions Nos. 401 and 410 be made orders for returns and that they be tabled immediately?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 401—**Mrs. Carol Hughes:**

With respect to the Canada Account managed by Export Development Canada, on an annual basis for the last five fiscal years: (a) what is the total value of loans granted by the Account; (b) (i) what are the eligibility criteria needed to be approved for a loan, (ii) who has final authority in approving loans, (iii) which loans were approved at the recommendation of a cabinet minister; (c) which companies received loans for foreign ventures, (i) in which countries were these ventures located, (ii) what is the value, interest rate, and term of each loan, (iii) what was the purpose of each loan, (iv) what conditions were attached; (d) how many loans have defaulted, (i) which loans defaulted and what is the outstanding amount owed; (e) which companies were granted loans to finance operations within Canada, (i) what is the value, interest rate, and term of each loan, (ii) what was the purpose of each loan, (iii) what conditions were attached; and (f) with specific reference to expanded financing offered to domestic lenders in Budget 2009, for how long does the government intend to extend financing to them and when and how does the government intend to scale back such financing?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 410—**Ms. Raymonde Folco:**

With regards to Canadian International Development Agency's funding and programming: (a) what programs and initiatives has the Agency undertaken specifically around conflict management in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and what were the total costs associated with each for the last three fiscal years; (b) what equipment and resources were purchased through the Agency's budget for conflict management initiatives in the CARICOM; (c) what programs has the Agency undertaken specifically designed for development aid in the CARICOM on a per country basis and what are the total costs associated for each; (d) what programs has the Agency put in place and how much funding has been reserved for emergency relief aid to the CARICOM; (e) what is the total bilateral aid funding for the CARICOM, including Guyana, in last three fiscal years; and (f) what is the total multilateral funding for the CARICOM, including Guyana, in the last three fiscal years?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

*Government Orders***MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call the Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-10, in the name of the hon. member for Scarborough Southwest.

That an Order of the House do issue for a copy of the communication sent to the High Commission of Canada in Colombo instructing them to expedite family class applications.

• (1550)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-10, in the name of the hon. member for Scarborough Southwest is acceptable to the government and the documents are tabled immediately.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ENDING CONDITIONAL SENTENCES FOR PROPERTY AND OTHER SERIOUS CRIMES ACT

The House resumed from October 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Abbotsford has 14 minutes remaining.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for this additional opportunity to speak to Bill C-42. When I began my remarks yesterday, I was explaining that this bill will eliminate conditional sentences for all serious criminal offences, not just those that result in serious personal injury.

Presently, the courts are able to sentence offenders to a period of confinement, but allow that sentence to be served at home and in the community. I want to be very clear about this. In some cases where minor offences are involved, conditional sentences might be appropriate to allow the offender to reflect on his actions and rehabilitate himself. However, in most cases, conditional sentences or house arrests, as they are often referred to, are quite inappropriate.

The sad fact is that under the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, there are many very serious offences for which house arrest still remains available as a sentencing option.

Let me give some examples. It will shock Canadians that these kinds of offences can still draw a sentence served in the comfort of one's home. They include: criminal harassment; sexual assault; kidnapping; human trafficking, including the trafficking of young children; theft over \$5,000; breaking and entering with intent; arson for a fraudulent purpose; and of course luring a child.

I want to briefly touch on that last one: luring a child. Yesterday, I talked about arson. An arsonist could burn down a family's home. The family would not be able to go back for many months if ever at all. The arsonist could return to his home and sit in front of his big screen TV.

Today, I would like to talk about the luring offence. Let me explain what that is. The sexual luring of children is when a sexual predator goes on the Internet and establishes contact with a young child. That child may come from a challenged home. That child may be lonely or have other challenges in his or her life.

The predator starts communicating with that child and develops a level of trust with that child. Of course, the predator does not tell the child how old he is. He communicates that he is perhaps 13 or 14 years of age, so the child has no way of knowing that he or she is actually dealing with an adult. As this conversation continues, it becomes sexual in nature and eventually that child is lured out of the home and exploited sexually.

That is something that Canadians clearly understand should not draw a house arrest type of sentence. I had the opportunity in the previous Parliament to introduce a private member's bill, which doubled the maximum sentence that could be levied against someone who attempted to lure children over the Internet for sexual purposes from five to 10 years. That bill was initially opposed by the Bloc, but thankfully the rest of the House did support it. It went to committee and we eventually did get unanimous support for the bill.

The reason the bill was so necessary is that when this offence was compared to other offences in the Criminal Code at that time, the maximum sentence was five years, yet one could steal a neighbour's cow and be liable to a maximum sentence of 10 years. One could defraud a person of more than \$5,000 and be sentenced to 10 years in jail. Yet, if one lured a vulnerable child over the Internet, the maximum one could get was five years in prison. Fortunately, the House did deem that bill to be worthy of support. It did pass and it is now the law of Canada.

Should these child molesters who use the Internet to lure children qualify to serve their sentences in the comforts of their home? Canadians would be shocked to hear that they still do at this time. More shockingly, the NDP still supports house arrest for these kinds of serious crimes. In fact, yesterday I had a dialogue in the House with the member for Vancouver Kingsway, who comes from my area of the country. It is an area that has had serious drug-related and violent crime problems.

• (1555)

He should know the challenges that we face trying to get a handle on serious crime. Yet, he suggested that crimes such as luring children over the Internet would not attract a conditional sentence, in other words, a sentence served in the comforts of one's home. In fact, he challenged me specifically to provide him with some cases. That is what I have done.

Government Orders

I want to point out to him a number of cases that have occurred since 2002. The first one is Regina v. Folino. This was a case of luring a child over the Internet. The result was house arrest of 18 months. In other words, the person served the sentence in the comfort of his home.

In Regina v. Pritchard, a 19-year-old man lured a girl he knew to be 13 years of age. What did he get? He got two years less a day to be served in the community, house arrest. In Regina v. Burke, a teacher, who lured a boy over the Internet, received a house arrest sentence and that was in 2007.

Another one was an Edmonton father who got a conditional sentence for Internet luring, Regina v. MacIntyre. That was in June of 2009. An Antigonish man received a conditional sentence for Internet luring. That was this year.

It is true that there are serious crimes that are still qualifying for house arrest and it is something that shocks Canadians. Bill C-42 would eliminate the use of house arrest for virtually all serious crimes, including those I specifically mentioned.

That is what Canadians have asked us to do and our Conservative government is listening and acting. What is more, we are finishing the job that the Liberals and the NDP refused to allow us to do during the previous Parliament. Let me explain.

As I mentioned yesterday, during the 39th Parliament our government tabled a bill which would have eliminated house arrest for all serious crimes, as we have done under Bill C-42. Sadly, the Liberal, NDP and Bloc members of the House gutted the bill and removed serious crimes, such as kidnapping, arson, sexual assault and the luring of children for sexual purposes. Shame on them. That is why this bill is before us again.

I am relieved to see that the Liberal Party has finally indicated that it may support the bill this time around. However, my question to Liberal members is this. What miraculous conversion did they undergo between the last Parliament and this one to finally understand that serious crime deserves serious time in jail? Something happened along the way. They certainly did not get it a year and a half ago.

Crimes such as kidnapping, arson, robbery and luring children, although not always involving direct physical injury, usually result in serious trauma for the victim and often change the victim's life forever. Why should these crimes not be punished with time in jail? Canadians are asking that very question.

These are crimes which very clearly should not qualify for a sentence to be served at home. Yet, the NDP and Bloc continue to fight our efforts to protect Canadians and to denounce criminal conduct appropriately. The opposition parties truly are soft on crime. They try to deny it in the House. They pretend that they are standing up for Canadians, but when we put them to the test, they fail it miserably. Canadians, rightfully, are angry with such a state of affairs.

Need I remind the opposition parties of the extent of the fraud cases reported in the media recently? These are some of Canada's largest financial frauds. They have occurred in Quebec, they have occurred in Alberta recently, and they have occurred in British

Columbia. They have occurred in virtually every province of this great country of ours and they have been perpetrated against some of the most vulnerable citizens, especially our seniors.

These are swindlers who know exactly who they are swindling and yet under the current law they could very well be sentenced to, guess what, a time out at home. That is what the NDP is asking for. That is what the Bloc is still asking for.

Bill C-42 would change that. It is time for change. If the opposition parties do not want to help us protect Canadians, they should get out of the way and let us get the job done.

• (1600)

The long and short of it is this. Bill C-42 does exactly what victims across the country have been demanding. It ensures that serious crimes, such as serious fraud, robbery, kidnapping, sexual assault, arson and the sexual luring of children, receive real jail sentences, not time outs at home. No more serious criminals serving their sentences in the comfort of their homes, in front of their big screen TVs and computer sets. If they do serious crime, they will do serious time, not at home but in jail.

Our government is listening to Canadians and we are acting accordingly. I urge my colleagues in the House to put aside the partisanship, put aside the rancour, put aside these ideological straightjackets that confine them to taking positions that are against the interests of Canadians, to do what is right and take notice of some of the challenges we face in our criminal justice system.

Being from the west coast, I know very well some of the recent challenges we have had with violent crime and drug related crime. I want to point out that Bill C-42 will actually also remove conditional sentences for the most serious drug trafficking crimes. Why should a convicted drug dealer, who in most cases is a repeat offender and represents a danger to our communities, serve his or her sentence in the comfort of home? Often that home has been purchased from the proceeds of crime. That is even more shocking.

I encourage my colleagues to put aside the partisanship and give the bill unanimous support in order to speed its passage. I can assure the House that as chair of the justice committee, I will do my part to assure swift passage of this very important bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I know my hon. colleague will not listen, but I would like to ask him a question. I also know he may unfortunately not be available to listen to my speech in a few minutes, but I have a question to ask him—a few questions, in fact.

First of all, has he ever argued cases before a criminal court in which conditional sentences have been requested?

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Second, between 13,000 and 15,000 people in Canada are serving conditional sentences. Does he have any statistics to suggest that these 13,000 to 15,000 people will reoffend while serving a conditional sentence?

[English]

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, first, I want to commend the member for his work at the justice committee. He and I both serve on that committee and I have enjoyed his input. We often do not agree on the issues facing Canadians, but I do know he comes there with a wealth of knowledge, being himself a lawyer.

Bill C-42 very clearly is targeted toward serious crimes. There is a general consensus in Canadian society that these kinds of crimes should not call for conditional sentences, time in the safety of one's home.

As members know, I referred to specific cases. He obviously was not listening.

• (1605)

Mr. Marc Lemay: Less two years.

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, if he would not heckle, as he is doing right now, and actually listen to my response, as I did to his, he would actually learn something.

I quoted from some six or seven cases which point out that people who exploit children and make efforts to use the Internet to do the same are still getting sentences which are not serious enough when compared to the crime involved. These are individuals who are luring our children with the intent to hurt them and to change their lives forever, yet they get the opportunity to serve their sentences in the comfort of their homes, when in many cases the children they impact will be affected forever or will need therapy for many years to come.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats want safe communities in our country. New Democrats want to protect victims of crime. New Democrats want to ensure there is a proper justice system in the country. One of the big myths of politics right now is that the Conservatives think that they are the only party in the country that cares about people who are hurt by crime. That is simply not true. I wish the member opposite would quit repeating that because he knows it to be false.

That is why the New Democratic Party voted to toughen up gun crimes. We have voted to add more police officers in the country. Those are our votes for which I do not hear him give us any credit. In fact, many members in our party want to stand up for a gun registry that his party wants to eliminate, a gun registry that the Canadian chiefs of police do not want eliminated.

I agree with my friend that there are serious crimes for which condition sentences are not appropriate. However, theft over \$5,000, swearing a false testamentary instrument are also crimes in his bill that would not qualify for a conditional sentence. Does he think that swearing a false testamentary instrument is never an appropriate crime for which a conditional sentence would be appropriate?

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, first, he has his facts all wrong. I will quote from his testimony yesterday in the House where he suggested that crimes such as luring and other serious crimes, which are listed specifically in Bill C-42, would never draw conditional sentences.

He said, "I would challenge him", referring to me, "to come up with some data that shows that those are the sentences that judges are giving conditional sentences on. I highly doubt it". He should be doubting it now.

Then he goes on to say, "I would challenge my friend to make good law by going back to the drafting table and coming back with a bill that targets certain kinds of offences that he would like to take out of conditional sentencing". That is exactly what the bill does. He obviously has not read the bill. There is a long list of serious offences that are outlined in the bill for which house arrest and conditional sentence will no longer be available.

The member claims that his party supports making safer and more secure communities in Canada. In fact, the NDP record does not support that statement. When we look at the NDP's record in the House, consistently those members have voted against our criminal justice reforms that have one focus, and that is to make our communities and our neighbourhoods safer for Canadians.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague for his passionate plea to the members of parties opposite because this is a very serious situation in Canada. I spent almost 19 years policing and dealt with many cases involving children who were lured on the Internet, by people I deemed to be a severe danger to the public safety and to safety of our children.

I know one of the members opposite asked for some clarification, and I intend to give it to him, with regard to repeat offenders who serve conditional sentences, which I call house arrest. I will clarify for his benefit because it was a question that was asked. I personally have chased a number of these repeat offenders who were sentenced to house arrest and it was terribly offensive to the victims and terribly time-consuming for police officers across the country to have this revolving justice door of continual, perpetual injustice.

When we are talking about the luring of children, could the member describe what victims have said about wanting this to be made law to prevent house arrest?

• (1610)

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has been a welcome addition to our Conservative government since her election in 2008. She has a policing background and is highly knowledgeable in that area, so she knows of what she speaks. She is absolutely correct. It is the victims of sexual crimes, especially children who have been lured out of their homes and sexually molested. Those are the cries to which that the Conservative government is listening. Those victims are contacting us.

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When I was tabling and debating my luring bill in the House, which thankfully received unanimous support, victims groups from across Canada were contacting me and asking how quickly the bill could be passed.

There is another aspect to this. Bill C-42 includes human trafficking. No longer will conditional sentences and house arrest be available for those who traffic in human beings. I am shocked the NDP would oppose tougher sentences for human traffickers. The Bloc, most shockingly, actually voted against a private member's bill introduced by my colleague from Winnipeg, which would impose a mandatory minimum prison sentence of five years for those who traffic in children. The Bloc had the gall to vote against protecting the most vulnerable within our society, our precious children. Shame on them.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue for a very brief question.

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question will be very brief. There are two basic philosophies that clash with one another regarding Bill C-42, and in a few moments I will have the opportunity to explain our philosophy here on this side of the House.

I have a question for my colleague. Has he ever argued cases in which conditional sentences have been requested?

I asked him earlier. Has he ever litigated such cases in his career?

[*English*]

Mr. Ed Fast: First, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member prefaced his question by suggesting this is a case of two philosophies. This is not about two philosophies. It is about protecting our children, the most vulnerable in our society.

To get to the hon. member's question, he very well knows, because we are both on the justice committee, that I served 24 years as a lawyer in my community, doing commercial and corporate law. Obviously I never prosecuted a case, but I certainly kept on top of the issue.

Thank goodness we have a government in Canada that takes the claims of victims seriously and does something about them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Mr. Speaker, personally—

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The member for Elmwood—Transcona on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, I thought I heard the member from the government side make reference to the fact that the NDP did not support the human trafficking bill of the member for Kildonan—St. Paul. I want to point out to him that is totally inaccurate. Almost the entire caucus of the NDP supported that government member's bill.

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker. In fact, the member for Elmwood—Transcona is incorrect. I referred to the NDP opposing our criminal justice legislation on a regular basis, but I specifically referred to the

Bloc when talking about my colleague from Winnipeg's bill on child trafficking, which it did oppose.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise here today to speak to this issue. The issue before us—

• (1615)

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I will go back to the hon. member's previous question. I was in this chamber eight minutes ago when I heard the member for Abbotsford distinctly say, before he talked about the Bloc, that members of the New Democratic Party voted against—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. On this point of order and the previous one, I believe the member for Abbotsford has clarified his point of view.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for the third time, thank you. I hope I can finally begin.

In 1996, I was practising as a criminal lawyer, and when the conditional sentencing concept that our colleagues across the floor so desperately want to abolish was first introduced—

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There is no translation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): If the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue could recommence, we will see that the translation is fixed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to recommence, especially since interpretation is so important. What I am about to say is important for a number of my colleagues in this House to hear. I want to thank you for giving me the floor to speak to this issue.

In 1996, I was a criminal lawyer when the famous conditional sentencing concept was introduced. This concept did not come out of thin air. It was not invented by some gnome who philosophized on the development of criminal law. It came after lengthy studies and an analysis of the situation and upon the realization that many inmates were being given very short prison sentences. Let us be clear. Someone who was sentenced say to one month or six months in prison with eligibility for early parole from the provincial prisons was immediately released.

What happened in a number of cases is that the judge sentenced an individual to two years less a day. I hope the members opposite are listening. The individual would arrive at the provincial prison and because of overcrowding, suddenly a month or so later, that individual would be released without any conditions. Provincial prisons were overcrowded. They are still overcrowded.

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I am not saying, and I would never say that everyone should be released or that everyone should have longer sentences. That is not what I am saying. I am saying that when the conditional sentencing concept—that is what we are talking about—was introduced, judges, lawyers, crown attorneys, police officers, and all the correctional services were consulted. Then, contrary to what the hon. member for Saint Boniface might think, we very carefully, and in agreement with the RCMP, put in place this conditional sentencing with very strict rules.

What are those rules? I would like my colleagues opposite to listen up. First, the offender has to be sentenced to less than two years. They have to stop trying to take us for a ride like that. The government is trying to make us swallow all kinds of garbage that has nothing to do with reality, like saying that someone convicted of trafficking in narcotics would end up serving time at home, taking it easy. That is not true, and I will say more about it shortly. I know that for purely ideological reasons, they will not do it, but some of my colleagues opposite should maybe read and reread parts of the Criminal Code that deal with conditional sentencing, beginning with section 742, and they should also read and reread sections 718 to 718.2, which address principles of sentencing. I will come back to that.

Before a judge imposes a conditional sentence, the offender must be found guilty of an offence not punishable by a minimum sentence. I wish they would quit harping on about that. The moment an offender gets a minimum prison sentence, it is over. They take him away, and he is not eligible for a conditional sentence. The judge has to find that the offence merits a jail term of less than two years. So what does the judge do? He talks to the offender and tells him that he deserves jail time, and that it can be two years less a day, and that he has decided to impose that sentence, but the offender is going to serve it in the community. I will come back to that.

And that brings us to what our Conservative friends find so exasperating.

●(1620)

The judge must be convinced that serving the sentence in the community would not pose a threat to public safety. Therefore they want to take away from the judge the possibility of saying to an individual before him that he is convinced that he does not and will not pose a threat to public safety. I will come back to this.

The judge must be convinced that the conditional sentence meets the criteria of the principles of sentencing set out in sections 718 to 718.2 of the Criminal Code.

Allow me to explain. We will read a few sections. Section 718 was included in the Criminal Code at the request of police forces, crown attorneys, defence lawyers and judges, not just anyone.

718. The fundamental purpose of sentencing is to contribute, along with crime prevention initiatives, to respect for the law and the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by imposing just sanctions that have one or more of the following objectives:

- (a) to denounce unlawful conduct;
- (b) to deter the offender and other persons from committing offences;
- (c) to separate offenders from society, where necessary;
- (d) to assist in rehabilitating offenders;

I will repeat this because the Conservatives do not understand it:

(d) to assist in rehabilitating offenders;

(e) to provide reparations for harm done to victims or to the community; and

(f) to promote a sense of responsibility in offenders, and acknowledgment of the harm done to victims and to the community.

In 2005—and not a century or more ago—subsections 718.01, 718.1 and 718.2 were added.

718.2 A court that imposes a sentence shall also take into consideration the following principles:

I did not make this up, it is in the Criminal Code. The Conservatives should amend section 718 of the Criminal Code if they wish to remove it.

(a) a sentence should be increased or reduced to account for any relevant aggravating or mitigating circumstances relating to the offence or the offender, and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing,

(i) evidence that the offence was motivated by bias, prejudice or hate...

What I am trying to show is that there is a fundamental difference between this side of the House and the other side. We believe in rehabilitation, not incarceration and repression by every means possible. Getting tough on crime does not work. We asked the hon. Minister of Justice to give us figures, but he did not. All the studies show the benefits of individualized sentencing. This is not something I made up. The Supreme Court said in a ruling that one of the objectives of a sentence was individualization. Individualized sentencing is very important.

Consequently, in addressing the individual before him, a judge must explain the reasons for the sentence.

We asked the minister whether he had any proof that this did not work. There was none. Even the justice minister's own department proved that conditional sentencing worked very well. The program was monitored regularly and worked extremely well.

What is happening? There is a fundamental problem, and it has to do with the vision of society.

●(1625)

I do not know whether anyone has ever argued cases involving conditional sentences, but I have. Some people think that a conditional sentence is easy.

During question period today, in response to clear questions, I heard that someone could serve his sentence sitting with his feet up or relaxing in his living room in front of his 42-inch television, as my colleague said 10 minutes ago. I have bad news for him, because it does not really work that way. My colleague should read the sections of the Criminal Code that have to do with conditional sentences. Section 742 covers the compulsory conditions of a conditional sentence. Let us look at what the court does.

I have argued such cases, and I can explain what the court does. When we request a conditional sentence, the court has the individual appear. We present our arguments and explain the case. We tell the judge that a conditional sentence is warranted. First, is a sentence of more than two years warranted, yes or no? No. Then the individual is eligible for a conditional sentence.

So what does the court do then? All the numbers and all the stats show that if the court has to impose jail time—take, for example, a case involving impaired driving causing bodily harm—the court will generally decide that a prison sentence of less than two years is appropriate.

The court considers the seriousness of the situation, the potential for rehabilitation and the offence. Then it tells the offender that it believes he deserves an eight-month sentence. But because the judge is imposing a conditional sentence, he gives the offender 12 or even 14 months.

The Conservatives have never understood and will never understand why this happens. Judges know that a guy who violates the terms of his conditional sentence when he should be sitting at home all comfy and cozy watching his 42-inch TV will go to jail for the rest of his sentence with no chance of parole.

So what do the Conservatives want? They do not want to talk about rehabilitation. They only want to talk about repression.

Let us talk about the mandatory conditions. Anyone on the other side of the House who thinks that people are sent home to watch their 42-inch TVs is mistaken. Some of the mandatory conditions are keeping the peace—that is clear—being of good behaviour—that is clear—appearing before the court when required to do so and reporting to a supervisor with correctional services.

This is what really happens. The court imposes conditions. For example, if an offender has a drinking problem, he has to go to therapy, fix his alcohol problem and not leave his house between 8 p. m. and 6 a.m. except to go to church. What do corrections officers do? We have seen this happen plenty of times, so I know that they call at one, two or three o'clock in the morning to make sure the offender is complying with the conditions. That is how it works.

Release conditions for conditional sentences are monitored more closely, and I hope that the members opposite will understand that. Offenders are under closer supervision now. That means that right now, they are monitored more closely than offenders in jails that handle sentences of less than two years. That means that parole services officers supervise offenders serving conditional sentences much more closely.

•(1630)

Furthermore, as if that were not enough, a judge can assign volunteer hours or community service, or require an offender to make restitution. Courts will very often do this. One has to have been to court. It is too bad that my colleagues opposite did not do that before introducing this bill. They need to have a look at the document that a person signs when they are released under supervision or receive a conditional sentence. Generally, this document is two 8.5x14 pages. The individual has to sign it. The consequences are that if he does not respect the conditions set out in the document, he will be sent to prison to serve the rest of his sentence.

There is another very serious phenomenon. The figures from 2003 and 2004—and my colleagues across the floor do not dispute this—reveal certain things about crime rates. During those two years, many conditional sentences were imposed, in fact, about 18,000 or 19,000. Statistics from 1996 to 2003 and 2004 were assessed. Whether my

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Conservative friends like it or not, the crime rate dropped by 2%. They will say that this is a small drop, and I agree, but at least it did not increase. Two percent means a lot of people. That means between 15,000 and 18,000 fewer people before the courts. Yes, we see some mistakes. I know this, because I have argued many cases. I have had to defend clients who did not deserve conditional sentences.

I have told several clients in the past that it would be easier for them to serve a prison sentence than a conditional sentence. The individual will see what it is like to have someone call him at home at 2:00 a.m., someone who checks to make sure he went to the doctor or to his AA meetings, or whether he paid back his debt by paying a set amount every week or every month, and who monitors him even during working hours. That is what people seem to forget.

Perhaps this does not work in western Canada; I am not sure. However, personally, I can say that conditional sentences work very well in Quebec. Yes, some people fail. It is unfortunate that my colleague was unable to give us the figures, but I will give them to him at our next committee meeting.

One thing is certain: the Bloc Québécois members of Parliament think that conditional sentences are a good way to allow someone to be rehabilitated. There is no doubt. I hope they will remember this. These are not career criminals. Not everyone deserves a conditional sentence.

I know for a fact that judges are extremely cautious. That is why we cannot support this bill. It does not respect Quebec's wishes, that is, the possibility of rehabilitation and reintegration, which are two fundamental principles of our criminal justice system.

•(1635)

[*English*]

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his dissertation but I must entirely disagree with a couple of comments he made. I will address them very quickly before I ask him for some clarity. I want to address what he said about tough on crime not working.

I would propose that being soft on crime never works and never will work. Not only that, he addressed some crime rates and he should be corrected because he is talking about reported crime rates not crime rates. It is a fact that most police officers only deal with a portion of the crime that is going on in our communities. We already know that people do not report crime anymore because they are fed up with the system. They want some tough on crime.

I would like to propose several offences that will be addressed under our new bill and I would like the member to tell me, very clearly, whether he agrees that these should be ineligible for house arrest.

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[*Translation*]

I will list them clearly for the hon. member: street racing causing bodily harm, human trafficking, criminal negligence causing bodily harm, criminal negligence causing death, passport forgery, incest, perjury, arson, counselling or assisting suicide, discharge of a pistol or air pistol causing bodily harm.

I would just like to know whether the member agrees that people who commit these offences should not receive a conditional sentence.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Mr. Speaker, the answer is quite simple. Yes, they can receive a conditional sentence.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Marc Lemay: Stop. Calm down or you will have a heart attack.

They can, if and only if the judge who hears the case is free to decide whether or not this sentence should be more or less than two years.

What I mean by that is that the judge must be allowed to do his job. If they do not trust the judge, that is their problem. I trust the judge. In my 30-year career, I never saw someone found guilty of procuring get a conditional sentence. If it happened in your region, that is your problem, but I never saw it.

We should let the courts and the judges decide who deserves a conditional sentence. Not everyone is entitled to a conditional sentence. We have to keep in mind that we are talking about sentences of less than two years. A judge will never hand down a sentence of less than two years to an individual who is found guilty of luring or pedophilia or someone who engages in street racing and injures someone. They should stop dreaming in Technicolor. We are talking about petty criminals, people who commit very minor crimes and whom we want to have a chance to return to society after making a mistake. I am not talking about crimes where there is a sentence of more than two years; you are.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and passionate defence of the judiciary because all too often in this place there are cheap shots taken against judges and the excellent work they do for our communities across the country. I want to ask him about something else, some of which I know he discussed in his speech.

Statistics Canada did a study of conditional sentencing and community supervision and it showed that it was much less likely for people who have served conditional sentences to become re-involved in crime upon their release. They are far less likely, within the 12 months after their release, to become involved in crime again as opposed to someone who served a sentence in prison. It was actually found that in four provinces, 11% of people who were under community supervision on a conditional sentence became re-involved with correctional authorities within 12 months but among those who had actually been in prison, 30%, more than double, became re-involved with the criminal justice system.

I wonder if he might again address the whole issue of recidivism and the more positive outcomes that we are seeing from people who had conditional sentences and community supervision than those who actually go to prison.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question, but I can say, in my experience with the courts—the experience that I had previously, because I have been here since 2004—the judges I argued before in every jurisdiction, even at the Quebec Court of Appeal or the superior court—sentences are not argued at the Supreme Court—will be very cautious about giving conditional sentences to repeat offenders. The term repeat offender speaks for itself.

What I want to tell the members opposite is to leave the jurisdiction to the courts. Judges are in a better position to talk about rehabilitation. If the members opposite do not trust judges, that is a different kettle of fish. We can certainly get down to business, but let them not do indirectly what they cannot do directly. We will get the figures in committee because this bill will be studied in committee, that is clear. We will have the figures and they will show a success rate. I am not saying it is out of this world, but I am saying there has been less recidivism, or nearly a 2% decrease in the crime rate over the years since 1996. A 2% annual drop means a lot of people who are not reoffending. Let us not forget that a conditional sentence gives an individual a second chance. I can tell you that I have never seen any individuals who have had a second opportunity for a conditional sentence. That does not happen.

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for his vision in this matter.

I would like to share a thought with him. In my riding, and I would like him to tell me if this is the case in other ridings, I have often seen people serving conditional sentences, especially women. Sometimes they are rather serious cases. At some point when a woman is sentenced, her children have to be placed in care. Often she loses her housing because she is in prison for 12, 13 or 15 months; she loses her job; she loses everything. When she gets out, her ties with her children have been severed. It is difficult for her to start over.

I would like to know if my colleague has come across such cases where going to prison has prevented these people from easily reintegrating into society and their community.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Mr. Speaker, I am not allowed to do it, and I would not want to make a distinction between men and women who receive conditional sentences. Of course, it happens that someone with a job commits a blunder. That is the only word I can think of. A person makes a mistake, a mistake that he acknowledges by pleading guilty. It is rare that this would happen after the trial. I think that both men and women could end up staying at the crime hotel or going to crime school in prison.

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Members must realize—and I hope it will be clear—that this measure applies only to crimes that carry sentences of less than two years, so two years less a day, or sentences of one, two, three, four, five or six months. When we talk about sentences of two years or more, we are not talking about the same thing, we are talking about a penitentiary. For example, I could say that if a male truck driver loses his job, it is over. It would be the same thing for a woman; it does not matter who you are talking about. What I want, what I am asking this House to do, is to give the judges a chance to do their jobs, even if we set some limits.

However, there is one thing we have not yet debated, and we will be talking about it over the next few days: parole after one-sixth of the sentence has been served. It makes no sense. All the judges I have met at bar association meetings in recent months have said the same thing. Offenders are not serving their sentences. We must make them serve out their sentences. We must not impose minimum sentences. That accomplishes nothing; it fixes nothing. We must make them serve out their sentences. That is what we want and that is what we are asking this House to vote on.

•(1645)

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 London—Fanshawe, Status of Women; the hon. member for St. John's East, Search and Rescue.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am here today to debate Bill C-42, ending conditional sentences for property and other serious crimes act. As the name of the bill indicates, further reforms are needed to ensure that conditional sentences are not imposed for serious crimes.

Conditional sentences of imprisonment came into force over 13 years ago, with the proclamation in 1996 of Bill C-41, Sentencing Reform, Chapter 22 of the Statutes of Canada, 1995.

Bill C-41 created a new sentencing part of the Criminal Code. Among its key elements were the creation of conditional sentences as a new sentencing option, the first ever parliamentary statement of the purpose and principles of sentencing, referred to as section 718 to section 718.2, and increased emphasis on the interest of crime victims, including the recognition that the harm done to victims should be considered at sentencing.

A conditional sentence of imprisonment is a sentence of imprisonment of less than two years that a court may permit an offender to serve in the community under conditions and supervision. Originally a conditional sentence was available to sentencing courts provided that the following prerequisites were present: the sentence was less than two years; the court was satisfied that allowing the offender to serve the sentence of imprisonment in the community would not endanger the safety of the community; and the offence could not be punishable by a mandatory minimum term of imprisonment.

Shortly after implementation, a requirement was added that the court be satisfied that sentencing the offender to serve a conditional sentence of imprisonment was consistent with the fundamental

purpose and principles of sentencing set out in the Criminal Code. This was designed to respond to concerns that courts were awarding conditional sentence orders for quite serious offences.

In 2000 the Supreme Court of Canada held, in *Regina v. Proulx*, that the conditional sentencing regime did not exclude any category of offences other than those with a minimum period of incarceration. Nor was there a presumption for or against its use for any category of offence. The court stated, however, that it was open to Parliament to introduce such limitations.

Conditional sentences were never intended for very violent or serious crimes, but rather for less serious offences. The problem has been that not all sentencing courts have interpreted the availability of conditional sentences in the same manner, no consistency. Consequently many, including some provinces and territories became increasingly concerned with the wide array of offences that resulted in conditional sentences of imprisonment.

Over the years questionable conditional sentencing decisions have contributed to a loss of public confidence in the sanction and therefore in the administration of justice.

This government responded to these concerns when it tabled Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conditional sentence of imprisonment) on May 4, 2006. Bill C-9 was referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on June 6, 2006.

Bill C-9 in its original form proposed a new criterion that would have eliminated the availability of conditional sentences for offences punishable by a maximum sentence of 10 years or more and prosecuted by indictment. This would have caught serious crimes, including designated violent and sexual offences, weapons offences, offences committed against children and serious property crimes such as fraud and theft over \$5,000.

However, opposition members of the justice committee thought that the scope of Bill C-9 was too broad. The opposition voted to amend this legislation to only capture terrorism offences, organized crime offences and serious personal injury offences, as defined in section 752 of the Criminal Code, which are punishable by a maximum sentence of 10 years or more and prosecuted by indictment. This was similar to the approach in Bill C-70, which the previous government had tabled in the fall of 2005, but which died on the order paper with the call of the general election. Our government's attempt at report stage to reinstate Bill C-9 to its original form was defeated by the three opposition parties.

As is the case with other sentencing options, a conditional sentence must be considered in the context of the entire sentencing regime and especially the principles of sentencing.

•(1650)

Section 718 of the code states:

The fundamental purpose of sentencing is to contribute, along with crime prevention initiatives, to respect for the law and the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by imposing just sanctions that have one or more of the following objectives:

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- (a) to denounce unlawful conduct;
- (b) to deter the offender and other persons from committing offences;
- (c) to separate offenders from society, where necessary;
- (d) to assist in rehabilitating offenders;
- (e) to provide reparations for harm done to victims or to the community; and
- (f) to promote a sense of responsibility in offenders, and acknowledgment of the harm done to victims and to the community.

The preconditions for a conditional sentence, along with the deemed aggravating factors added to the Criminal Code by Bill C-42, such as evidence that the offender abused a position of trust, for example, were designed to screen out serious offences committed in circumstances for which denunciation, general deterrence and incapacitation should be considered the primary sentencing objectives.

In addition, the fundamental principal of sentencing is that a sentence must be proportionate to the gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender. I find it hard to believe that this fundamental principle is being properly observed when a conditional sentence is imposed for serious violent or serious property offences.

Accordingly it is my view that the current conditional sentencing regime still fails to categorically make conditional sentences ineligible for many serious crimes. In addition to excluding terrorism and criminal organization offences prosecuted by indictment and punishable by 10 years or more, the Criminal Code also excludes serious personal injury offences from the availability of a conditional sentence.

The term “serious personal injury offence” was designed for dangerous and long-term offenders. It was borrowed to serve as a limit to the availability of conditional sentences by the amendments of the opposition parties to Bill C-9. A serious personal injury offence is defined in section 752 of the Criminal Code as:

- (a) an indictable offence, other than high treason, treason, first degree murder or second degree murder, involving
 - (i) the use or attempted use of violence against another person, or
 - (ii) conduct endangering or likely to endanger the life or safety of another person or inflicting or likely to inflict severe psychological damage on another person,
 and for which the offender may be sentenced to imprisonment for ten years or more, or
- (b) an offence or attempt to commit an offence mentioned in section 271 (sexual assault), 272 (sexual assault with a weapon, threats to a third party or causing bodily harm) or 273 (aggravated sexual assault).

Only the sexual assault offences referred to in paragraph 752(b) of the Criminal Code are explicitly ineligible for a conditional sentence order if prosecuted by indictment. A finding that other offences fit the definition of serious personal injury offence will depend on the circumstances of each case.

Up until the coming into force of Bill C-9 on December 1, 2007, sentencing courts had only to interpret serious personal injury offence for the purpose of determining whether the threshold for a dangerous or long-term offender application had been met according to part 24 of the Criminal Code, because that term was defined only for the dangerous and long-term offender provisions.

Since Bill C-9 came into force, courts have wrestled with the interpretation of serious personal injury offences in the context of

conditional sentences. The Alberta Court of Appeal in *Ponticorvo*, 2009 reviewed its decision in *Neve*, 1999, where it had considered the definition of serious personal injury offence in the context of dangerous offender provisions.

In that context, the court concluded that section 752 required that the offence considered be objectively serious. However, in the context of conditional sentences, the Court of Appeal found that the use or attempted use of violence sufficed and did not require any overlay of objective seriousness. In other words, it ruled that it should be easier for the Crown to establish that an offence was a serious personal injury offence, or SPIO, in the context of a conditional sentence than it was in the context of a dangerous offender.

The Bill C-9 case law only deals with crimes committed after December 1, 2007, when the legislation came into force, so there is really not a large number of reported cases commenting on the serious personal injury offences in the conditional sentencing context.

● (1655)

The decision of the Alberta Court of Appeal should have resulted in a more consistent application of the definition of serious personal injury offence within the conditional sentencing regime, which would have ensured that similar offences be treated as serious personal injury offences and therefore ineligible for house arrest or conditional sentencing.

While this approach has been followed in a majority of cases, unfortunately this has not always been the case. For instance, in both *R. v. Becker*, 2009, a decision of the Alberta Provincial Court, and in *R. v. Thompson*, 2009, a decision of the Ontario Court of Justice, courts were asked to determine whether robbery was a serious personal injury offence in the context of the availability of conditional sentences. In both cases, threats were made, yet in only one of the two cases did the court find that robbery met the definition of serious personal injury offences.

I can tell the House from my personal experience, having been involved with victims of robbery, that it is a serious offence every time it occurs to a person who is in the position of victim.

In *R. v. Grewal and Grewal*, 2009, a decision of the British Columbia Provincial Court, the court sentenced two accused to conditional sentence orders for the offences of assault with a weapon and assault causing bodily harm. The accused ambushed the victim on his front lawn, hitting him with a shovel and a fireplace poker. The victim required 10 to 20 stitches in his head, suffered broken teeth and neck, arm, thigh and hip pain. What happened? We have already seen in that case how it was not consistent with the rest of the sentencing principles.

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In *R. v. Prakash*, 2009, a decision of the Ontario Court of Justice, the offender was convicted of unlawfully being in a dwelling house, uttering a threat, mischief under \$5,000, criminal harassment, impaired driving and breach of a probation order. To me these are serious offences. After taking into account credit for pre-sentencing custody at a two-for-one rate, the offender was sentenced to one day in prison for the offences of impaired driving and breach of a probation order. He then got an additional 12 month conditional sentence on the remaining offences.

I cannot even imagine what the victims were thinking upon hearing those kinds of sentences.

Another concern with only barring serious personal injury offences from the conditional sentence option is that serious property crime such as fraud could still be eligible for a conditional sentence. We are well aware of recent examples of the devastating impact of fraud. Victims who have lost their life savings have called very recently for strengthened sentences for these types of crimes. It is hard to disagree with these concerns, especially considering the fact that fraud, which is punishable by a maximum sentence of 14 years, is still technically eligible for a conditional sentence, despite the amendments brought forward by our government's previous Bill C-9.

Our government intends to address this in Bill C-42 and in future legislation dealing with sentences for fraud.

Another consequence to the opposition's amendments to Bill C-9, our earlier bill to restrict conditional sentences, is that offences contained in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act were not excluded unless committed as part of a criminal organization. Consequently, the production, importation and trafficking of a schedule 1 drug such as heroin would not be caught and would be eligible for a conditional sentence of imprisonment.

However, as hon. members would know, the government has proposed mandatory minimum penalties for serious drug offences in Bill C-15. I therefore expect that when that legislation is passed and enacted into law, as I hope will soon be the case, these offences would be ineligible for a conditional sentence.

It is clear to me, and I suggest to many Canadians, that greater clarity and consistency is needed as to the availability of conditional sentences for serious, violent and serious property offences. For these reasons, Bill C-42 proposes to eliminate the reference to serious personal injury offences in subsection 742.1 and make all offences punishable by 14 years or life ineligible for a conditional sentence. This would make the offence of fraud and many other crimes ineligible for a conditional sentence.

• (1700)

Bill C-42 would also clearly make offences prosecuted by indictment; those punishable by 10 years' imprisonment; those that result in bodily harm; those that involve import, export, trafficking or production of drugs, or those that involve the use of a weapon ineligible for a conditional sentence.

While this element of the legislation will significantly limit the ambit of the conditional sentence regime, the addition of these categories would not capture all serious offences prosecuted by indictment and punishable by a maximum of 10 years. Therefore,

Bill C-42 also proposes a list of 11 specific offences prosecuted by indictment and punishable by a maximum sentence of 10 years that would be ineligible for a conditional sentence.

These offences are prison breach, luring a child, criminal harassment, sexual assault, kidnapping, trafficking in persons, abduction, theft over \$5,000, breaking and entering a place other than a dwelling house, being unlawfully in a dwelling house, and arson for fraudulent purposes.

Conditional sentences are an appropriate sentencing tool in many cases, but they do need to be restricted when it comes to serious property offences and serious violent offences. The prudent use of conditional sentence orders should strengthen confidence in the sanction and in the administration of justice.

I hope that all hon. members in the House will support Bill C-42 in its entirety.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously we need minimum sentences in cases of serious crime. I do not think there is any dispute about that. I am not a criminologist, but it seems that the criminology community, the academic community repeatedly through studies and analyses cast into doubt the effectiveness of minimum sentences. I am wondering if the member could tell us why that is. Is there a bias in the academic community? Is she aware of studies that show the effectiveness of minimum sentences?

My second question is somewhat related. The hon. member and many of her colleagues continually bring forth examples of inadequate sentences by judges. I am wondering if she also believes there is a bias in the legal system whereby judges as a matter of routine, as a pattern within the system are simply not capable of making sound judgments.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member's party for recently taking the step of suggesting that they plan to vote with us on the approval of Bill C-42. I understand the member has asked two questions. I am going to deal with the second question first which is about judges. I must say very clearly I have a tremendous amount of respect for judges across this country. I have personally testified in thousands of cases before our judges at different levels, at different courts, and I have the utmost faith in what our judges are attempting to do.

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However, I must say very clearly that I personally have spoken with judges who have stated that they are also bound by the rules and they are not necessarily happy with the rules. They must always look at previous offences to make a determination in sentencing. They must look to the past. They must look at precedents. When I have spoken with these judges, they have said that sometimes they would like a new starting point. We intend to try to bring about the new starting point for those judges who really want to do the right thing with regard to sentencing and protecting the interests of the public.

It appears my time is almost up. Perhaps I will answer the second part of the member's question in the next round.

• (1705)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, assuming that there are some very serious crimes for which conditional sentences may not appropriately be considered, let us put that aside for a moment. My mind is focused on the broad-brush approach whereby the bill lumps together every single crime for which a maximum sentence of 14 years to life exists. Here are some of those crimes: drawing a document without authority, forging a passport, making a false testamentary instrument, public servants refusing to deliver property, stopping the mail with intent, and possession of counterfeit money. The hon. colleague's grandmother might be in possession of counterfeit money for all we know.

I am asking my friend whether or not she thinks there are any circumstances under which a conviction under one of those offences that I read out would properly qualify for a conditional sentence. I would like her to specifically address those offences.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, first I ask indulgence to answer my Liberal colleague's second question. He asked about the effectiveness of minimum sentences.

I would say that I believe they are effective. The reason I believe not only that minimum sentences are effective but also that conditional sentences need to be restricted is that we have to take into consideration the victims. We have to start balancing this process. We have gotten to the point where offenders are receiving much more consideration than are victims and the impacts on victims.

That is why I believe that minimum sentences are effective, and I believe that restricting conditional sentences is also effective.

I will go back to the question from my hon. colleague from the NDP with regard to offences that have a maximum sentence of 14 years or life. Many of these are very serious offences. He has touched on a few of them. Without knowing the history or the details of an offence, and having only a simple statement of what the offence is, I do not have enough to make a determination, nor would I take the position that I am the judge or jury.

It is not my job to decide what sentence is to be given. My job is to say that I believe conditional sentences should be restricted for those crimes that have maximum sentences of 14 years or life.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Saint Boniface for her great intervention today. We are really lucky to have a woman of her calibre here, with her experience in the field, working with the police

forces, working with victims and having an understanding of why we need to have tougher sentencing in this country.

In my riding people are always appalled at the idea that somebody could break into and enter a person's house, violate that person's home and then get a condition whereby they can go and return to their own home to live out their sentence in the comfort of their home while the other person's place has been violated and gutted.

We just went through an experience in my riding where one person went out and committed a whole series of acts of arson, burned down about three houses, attempted to burn down a couple of others and then got to spend time in conditional sentencing.

The victims of those crimes are saying that they do not have a house anymore but that individual gets to go back and serve out their sentence in the comfort of their own home. That is so wrong on so many levels.

I am asking the hon. member for Saint Boniface to talk about how she sees this coming into effect and actually providing the victims with some retribution and feeling that they have that ability.

We are getting a lot of questions from the NDP, and yet in Manitoba the NDP provincial government supports this type of legislation. The Minister of Justice there is very much in support of being tougher on crime. I wonder why his federal cousins are not on the same page.

• (1710)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for such kind words. It is a pleasure and a privilege for me to be working with this party on the government side. I hope to be here for a long time to see justice come about through legislation such as we are talking about here today.

I want to echo my appreciation of our Attorney General in the province of Manitoba, an NDP Attorney General who is very much on the same page with regard to our attempts to see that justice issues are dealt with as we are trying to do here today with Bill C-42.

I am pleased to talk about victims because I have dealt with, as I said before, thousands of victims who have been asking for changes so that they feel that justice is being done. I believe that Bill C-42 will help to address the concerns of our victims.

I will give an example of a couple of cases that were absolutely atrocious to the victims, which dealt with conditional sentences. We had a situation in the city of Winnipeg where a babysitter became enraged with a two-year-old child and did not have the ability to deal with this child. As a result, the babysitter decided to punish the child, took this small baby's hands, went to a pot of boiling water and inserted the baby's hands into this boiling water and inflicted severe burns on this child's hands.

This child will never, ever be the same. What did this offender receive as a sentence? It was an 18-month conditional sentence in the comfort of her home, watching her television, and the victims felt betrayed. They felt as if they had done nothing to help prevent this from happening to another child.

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I side with the victims here who want to make sure that this is prevented, that no more children are harmed and that we as a society are doing the right thing in the interest and the administration of justice.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also rise to speak to this legislation from the perspective of the context in which we have to address it and the attempt by the government, in a very undemocratic fashion, to do an end run around a vote that took place in the House approximately three years ago on the precursor bill, Bill C-9, which the government brought in shortly after it was elected in 2006. It was the first crime bill that the Conservatives brought in.

In the 2006 election, both the Conservatives and the NDP ran their platform around the issue of eliminating the use of conditional sentences for serious violent crimes. That was the terminology, and it was almost identical in both party platforms.

Bill C-9 came forward, but that was not what it attempted to do. As so often happens with the Conservative Party, it was a huge over-reach.

Bill C-9 would have eliminated the use of conditional sentences for 40 or 45 sections of the Criminal Code. Were these sections all dealing with serious violent crime? We have to remember that the Conservatives promised Canadians in their platform to eliminate conditional sentences.

There were sections in there about altering data in a computer. That was an offence and the conditional sentence would no longer be used after that kind of conviction. There were sections about forging a testamentary document. It was the same thing. That is not a violent crime. There was a whole list of these.

Accurately, as was described by some members who spoke earlier, the combined opposition parties moved to bring the bill to committee. We in the NDP told Canadians that we would remove the use of conditional sentences for serious violent crimes, and we did that, and then we eliminated the other sections. We complied with what we had said to Canadians. We were quite happy to do that because it was what we had promised. We accomplished one of the promises we had made to the electorate.

Bill C-9 came back to the House and a substantial majority voted for it. I think the Conservatives might even have voted for it, but I cannot remember. I should have checked that. The bill went on to the Senate where it was approved and became law and is law to this day. That was a promise made and a promise kept, as opposed to what the Conservatives would have wanted to do.

Following the way of their straight partisan politics, the Conservatives have now decided to bring Bill C-42 forward, along with many other bills, and are attempting to convince the Canadian people that they are tough on crime. I would like to emphasize toughness not smartness.

It was interesting to note the evidence that came out in the course of the debate in committee on Bill C-9 and to a lesser degree when it came back to the House. I remember both the justice minister and the minister for public safety and national security appeared before committee. In both cases they were asked if they knew how many

more people were going to be incarcerated and if they knew how much that was going to cost.

Let me digress on this point and explain how conditional sentences work. A judge has to determine that he or she would not sentence a person eligible for a conditional sentence to incarceration in an institution for more than two years. In effect, they would be sentenced, if they were going to be incarcerated, to a period of time of two years less a day. If anybody understands the system in this country, all of those sentences of two years less a day are served in provincial prisons.

• (1715)

Let me go back to the two questions of whether they knew how much it was going to cost and did they know how many were going to be put in? In both cases, the ministers did not know.

I and some of my colleagues from the other parties dug out that information regarding that long list of 45 offences that may no longer be eligible for conditional sentences. All those people would then go to jail for two years less a day. I want to be clear on this. This was information that came from within the Department of Justice. Let me repeat that. The source of this information in writing was the Department of Justice. It turns out that 5,000 more people would be put in provincial jails. Of course, the ministers did not have to worry about that, did they? Not a dime of that was coming out of the federal coffers. They were just dumping this problem of 5,000 more inmates on the provincial system.

Knowing how much it costs per year for an inmate, we estimated that those 5,000 additional inmates in our prisons at the provincial level would cost the provinces in the range of \$250 million to \$500 million a year. There are many provinces that would like to be able to spend that money.

Because there was no way that the provincial systems could accommodate 5,000 additional inmates with their existing number of beds, there would have to be additions built on to the existing provincial institutions or new ones built. The estimate of what it would cost for capital was in the order of \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion. Is the federal government going to contribute any of that? Were those two ministers going to have to take it out of their budgets? Absolutely not.

It is important to understand that context because we are faced with the same situation with this bill. If I asked the Minister of Justice or the Minister of Public Safety, who is responsible for corrections, they would not be able to tell me. They would not be able to give me an answer. I am absolutely convinced of that. In fact, last week in the *Globe and Mail* we saw the article and the editorial attacking the government for refusing to disclose what information it has and what analysis it has done.

I want to be very clear. The analysis that the Minister of Public Safety has done has not taken into account the drug bill that has gone through the House and is sitting in the other place waiting for passage. If that bill and this one pass, he has not done an analysis of how many more inmates there would be. He has not done that.

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In spite of the fact that we hear constantly from the Minister of Justice that he keeps being reassured by the Minister of Public Safety that we have lots of space in our federal prisons, it does not matter. He is wrong, by the way, and I am going to come back to that in a second. It does not matter because these people, under Bill C-42, are all going to go into the provincial system.

It was interesting to hear two of my colleagues, one from my party in Quebec and one from the Liberal Party in New Brunswick in the last couple of days tell me that the judges at the provincial level have been told not to send people to jail for weekends because the provincial institutions no longer have space for any of them. They have to put them on probation. That is the reality of what we are faced with at the provincial level and it is true in every single province and territory in this country.

We have signed international protocols that require us to have one inmate per cell. We are breaching that international protocol as much as 50% of the time, particularly at the provincial level but also at the federal level.

Let us go back to the federal system and the assurances—I wanted to use a term that is unparliamentary and I am looking for a synonym—that lack credibility from the Minister of Public Safety.

● (1720)

The head of Correctional Service of Canada, Mr. Don Head, has made it very clear at committee hearings and in the public press in the last month that we do not have the capacity at the federal level, that we are regularly double-bunking, and triple-bunking in some cases, per cell. We are not meeting our international requirements and promises we have made. We do not have that capacity.

Last week the *Globe and Mail* attacked the minister and the government, because the minister is refusing to disclose the analysis he had done and how much it will cost. That does not take into account these two bills, the one that is before us today and the drug bill that is before the other place right now.

Because of the information we do have up to this point and we will get more, and with the support of the Liberals the bill will obviously go to committee, we will be voting against it. I am quite comfortable in saying that we will see similar numbers, 5,000-plus inmates being incarcerated in our prisons, if this legislation and the drug bill go through. Let me repeat that it will cost the provinces hundreds of millions of dollars a year. It will cost the provinces a huge amount of capital dollars.

It will depend on what our judges do with it. They may say that they cannot send convicts to provincial jails any more, so they may move the sentence up to two years plus a day, or two and a half years or three years and they would then go into the federal system. That would severely impact on the number of inmates at the federal level. It is a realistic possibility, if not a probability, that our judges will start to do that.

I want to make one more point about the cost issue. We always hear from the Conservatives, which is partly why the Liberals run scared on it, that we are soft on crime. I want to use an example in the United States. I think we could argue that most of the states, and Texas and a couple of other southern states in the U.S. may be ahead

of them, but California has led the way in throwing people into prison in huge numbers.

Just so we are clear on that, our incarceration rate in Canada is about one-seventh of what it is in the United States. However, it is also the highest of the western democracies after the United States. Japan has an incarceration rate of roughly 60 per 100,000 population. Ours right now is running at about 110 to 120, in those ratios, which is almost double that of Japan. Western democracies in Europe, Australia and New Zealand are running 80 to 90 per 100,000. The United States is running 700-plus per 100,000.

California was one of the states that led the way in getting tough on crime, with the right-wing Reagan-Bush type of agenda, followed very closely by the Conservative Party in this country. In the last few months, Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Governor of California, that person who is really soft on crime, has been compelled to begin to release—he is doing it himself; he has to sign each one of them—thousands of inmates on early parole, including a large number who had been convicted and were serving time for serious violent crime, because the state can no longer afford to pay for it. The prison costs in California exceed what the state spends on post-secondary education. It is part of the bankruptcy with which that state is confronted right now. In order to deal with that, he is having to release thousands of inmates on early parole.

That is a very clear model of what would happen if we follow the agenda followed by the United States and the State of California, which the governing party wants us to follow. I want to juxtapose that with the use of conditional sentences. What came out very clearly in the review of Bill C-9 two and a half years ago was that it is working.

● (1725)

The Conservatives come up with these individual cases where our courts clearly can be said to have overused the conditional sentence. We can always find those cases.

I am a great defender of our judiciary. Having practised law all those years, having analyzed our judges and having analyzed judges in a whole bunch of other countries, I firmly believe that we have the best judges in the world. However, they are human. They make mistakes. We should not be deriving from those mistakes principles that guide us on how we are going to pass legislation around convictions, around sentencing. That should not be the way we do it.

What we should do is look at what has happened since we brought in conditional sentences. It was very clear from the evidence that we took in the review of Bill C-9 that it is working. The recidivism rate is about one-third what it is versus those we incarcerate, 30-plus per cent of those we incarcerate, down around 10% and in some cases, depending on what the charges are and what the convictions are for, as low as 8% and up to 12%, but on average, around 10% or 11% is the recidivism rate.

We hear the anecdotal stories and we hear people say that they are standing up for the victims. What they are standing up for is a system that is going to victimize more people down the road because 30% of the inmates are going to become recidivists and are going to go back and commit oftentimes more serious crimes than the ones they first went in for. We know that prisons train people to do that. Where are they in terms of defending those victims, the future ones who inevitably are going to be a result of these types of policies?

We are going to be voting against this bill at second reading. If the bill gets through the committee and comes back to the House, we are going to be voting against it at third reading. This legislation is the wrong approach. It is going to victimize a large number of additional Canadians as opposed to the alternative of what we have now. It is very clear that as our violent crime rate continues to drop, a good deal of that is because we began using a number of principles around restorative justice, including conditional sentences. Our system is working.

It is interesting. I sat for a number of years on the public safety and national security committee. People from all over the world came to look at what we were doing because our system was working. They were seeing us drop our violent crime rate. They were seeing that we were moving quite dramatically away from the U.S. experience and that it was working. Conditional sentencing was one of the things they would come to take a close look at to see how it worked. In many cases, I understand, they are beginning to look at implementing it in other countries that were not using it before they saw ours.

It is a system that works. Is it perfect? Absolutely not. Are our judges human? Yes, they are. Do they make mistakes? Absolutely, they make mistakes. However, it is still the best system, and it is far superior to what is being proposed under this legislation.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The House resumed from October 8 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the second report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

Call in the members.

● (1755)

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

(*Division No. 115*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq

Ablonczy
Albrecht

Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Bagnell
Bemier
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Byrne
Calandra
Cannis
Casson
Clarke
Coady
Cummins
D'Amours
Day
Devolin
Dion
Dryden
Dykstra
Fast
Flaherty
Folco
Fry
Gallant
Goldring
Goodyear
Grewal
Guergis
Hawn
Hill
Hoepfner
Jean
Karygiannis
Kennedy
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Lemieux
Lukiwski
MacAulay
Malhi
McColeman
McLeod
Merrifield
Minna
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Paradis
Payne
Poilievre
Proulx
Ratansi
Regan
Richards
Rickford
Rota
Saxton
Scheer
Sgro
Shipley
Simms
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Thompson
Toews
Trudeau
Uppal
Van Loan
Verner
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wong
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Routine Proceedings

Allison
Anders
Ashfield
Bains
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brison
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Cadman
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Coderre
Cuzner
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dhalla
Dreesen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Easter
Finley
Fletcher
Foote
Galipeau
Glover
Goodale
Gourde
Guarnieri
Hall Findlay
Hiebert
Hoback
Holland
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lee
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McGuinty
McTeague
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Patry
Petit
Preston
Raitt
Rathgeber
Reid
Richardson
Ritz
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Smith
Stanton
Strahl
Szabo
Tilson
Trost
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Volpe
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilfert
Woodworth
Young

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Beaudin	Bellavance
Bevington	Bigras
Blais	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brunelle
Cardin	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crowder
Cullen	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Dorion
Duceppe	Dufour
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Faille	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Godin	Gravelle
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	
Hughes	Hyer
Julian	Kania
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lavallée	Layton
LeBlanc	Lemay
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Ménard
Mendes	Mourani
Mulcair	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau	Neville
Oliphant	Ouellet
Paillé	Paquette
Pearson	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Rafferty
Roy	Savoie
Siksay	Silva
Simson	St-Cyr
Stoffer	Thi Lac
Thibeault	Tonks
Valeriotte	Vincent
Wasylycia-Leis— 93	

PAIRED

Members

Benoit	Bonsant
Carrier	DeBellefeuille
Dechert	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Holder	Lalonde — 8

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-306.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 116*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Blais
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Coderre
Comartin	Crowder
Cullen	D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dorion	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter	Faille
Folco	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godin
Gravelle	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	Hughes
Hyer	Julian
Karygiannis	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	LeBlanc
Lemay	Leslie
Lessard	Lévesque
MacAulay	Malhi
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Ménard	Minna
Mourani	Mulcair
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Nadeau
Neville	Ouellet
Paillé	Paquette
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Proulx	Rafferty
Roy	Savoie
Siksay	St-Cyr
Stoffer	Szabo
Thi Lac	Thibeault
Tonks	Vincent
Volpe	Wasylycia-Leis
Wilfert— 97	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Ashfield	Bagnell
Bains	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boucher	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

CANADIAN PRODUCTS PROMOTION ACT

The House resumed from October 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-306, An Act respecting the use of government contracts to promote economic development, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Private Members' Business

Brison	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Byrne
Cadman	Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Carrie	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Coady
Cummins	Cuzner
Davidson	Day
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dhalla	Dion
Dreeshen	Dryden
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra	Fast
Finley	Flaherty
Fletcher	Foote
Galipeau	Gallant
Glover	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guarnieri	Guergis
Hall Findlay	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holland	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kennedy
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Lee	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McGuinty	McLeod
McTeague	Mendes
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Norlock
Nicholson	O'Neill-Gordon
O'Connor	Oliphant
Oda	Payne
Paradis	Petit
Pearson	Preston
Poillievre	Ratansi
Raitt	Regan
Rathgeber	Richards
Reid	Rickford
Richardson	Rota
Ritz	Saxton
Savage	Scheer
Scarpaleggia	Sgro
Schellenberger	Shiple
Shea	Silva
Shory	Simson
Simms	Sorenson
Smith	Storseth
Stanton	Sweet
Strahl	Tilson
Thompson	Trost
Toews	Tweed
Trudeau	Valeriot
Uppal	Van Loan
Van Kesteren	Verner
Vellacott	Warkentin
Warawa	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Watson	Wong
Sky Country)	Yelich
Weston (Saint John)	Zarac — 164
Woodworth	
Young	

PAIRED

Members

Benoit	Bonsant
Carrier	DeBellefeuille
Dechert	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Holder	Laforest — 8

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

[English]

It being 6:05 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

HUNTINGDON PORT OF ENTRY

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should direct the Canada Border Services Agency to change the name of the Huntingdon Port of Entry to "Abbotsford-Huntingdon Port of Entry".

He said: Mr. Speaker, let me be the next one to congratulate you on becoming the longest-serving Speaker in Canadian history. I think that is a measure of the esteem in which you are held by this House. I have also appreciated the friendship we have developed over the last several years. I know you are a great connoisseur of music, as am I. I think that is also a measure of a great gentleman.

I have the pleasure of sponsoring a motion that is dedicated to building the economy and profile of Canada's most dynamic community, the city of Abbotsford.

I have had the privilege of serving as Abbotsford's member of Parliament for some four years. During my first term in office I was exceedingly fortunate to introduce and pass a private member's bill, Bill C-277, which doubled from 5 to 10 years in prison the maximum sentence for those convicted of luring or attempting to lure children over the Internet for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

It was a bill of national scope and import. I was deeply moved to see all members of this House support my bill, which extends and improves the ability of our justice system to protect our children, the most vulnerable of Canadians against sexual predators.

Today I have a similar opportunity, but this time I am proposing a motion which focuses more specifically on the needs and aspirations of my community, the vibrant city of Abbotsford.

The motion before us simply directs the Canada Border Services Agency to amend the name of the Huntingdon border crossing to Abbotsford-Huntingdon port of entry.

Now, why the change? Abbotsford lies directly on the border with Canada's largest trading partner and closest ally, the United States. Our respective countries share a port of entry, the Huntingdon border crossing, which for so many years has facilitated trade and commerce between us and has contributed to the building of bridges of friendship and understanding between our respective peoples.

The motion before us addresses that particular port of entry. Like many other members of this House, I am extremely proud of my constituency. Abbotsford has been my home for almost 28 years. My wife Annette and I have raised four beautiful daughters in that community.

Private Members' Business

I have had the privilege to represent Abbotsford as a school trustee, as a member of city council, as deputy mayor and now as its member of Parliament. I can assure members Abbotsford is a wonderful place, and I count it a special blessing to have been selected by the voters of this community to represent their interests right here in Ottawa.

Abbotsford is British Columbia's fifth-largest city and has for several decades been one of the fastest-growing communities in the country. Its strong agricultural sector, university, new hospital, international airport and vibrant economy attract thousands of families who decide to make Abbotsford their home.

As a host for the world-famous Abbotsford International Air Show, our city draws some 250,000 to 300,000 visitors every year to watch performing acts, such as Canada's own Snowbirds and also the U.S. navy's Blue Angels. Of course, recently Abbotsford welcomed its own American hockey league team, the Abbotsford Heat.

Statistics Canada each year reports that Abbotsford is by far and away the most generous community in the country, and a business magazine has named Abbotsford as the best place to do business in western Canada. We are truly blessed to call Abbotsford home.

Over the years Abbotsford has also survived a number of identity crises, due at least in part to the many smaller communities which make up our city. The former district of Sumas, the communities of Clearbrook, Bradner, Mt. Lehman, Clayburn, Arnold, Barrowtown and, yes, historic Huntingdon have all played important roles in Abbotsford's history and subsequent coming of age.

We continue to celebrate their contributions to the Abbotsford we know today. However, in 1996 when the former districts of Abbotsford and Matsqui were amalgamated under the name Abbotsford, this momentous decision finally cleared up much of the confusion surrounding civic boundaries and the location of the community and its facilities and services.

• (1810)

It would surprise everyone to learn that the Abbotsford airport had actually been located in Matsqui, not Abbotsford, as had Abbotsford Nissan, South Abbotsford Church and Abbotsford Collision. Although Matsqui had a significantly larger population, it was the district of Abbotsford's smaller population numbers that for some time proved to be a disincentive for retail businesses to set up shop in our area.

All of this confusion came to an end with the decision of local residents to choose Abbotsford as the name for the amalgamated city. Today, Abbotsford flourishes under its strengthened identity while still valuing the many individual communities that form an integral part of the city.

That brings me to one notable exception. As a vibrant border community, Abbotsford has become one of Canada's important border crossings. With 75% to 80% of Canada's trade being with the United States, it will not surprise anyone that Abbotsford's port of entry, called Huntingdon, has become extremely busy with truck and passenger vehicle traffic. Yet, the term "Huntingdon" on its own severely limits the ability to capitalize on the role that the border crossing plays in the economic prosperity of the city.

The current name has little brand recognition and struggles to enhance the North American public's awareness of this burgeoning city. As everyone knows, Abbotsford is on the west coast. It is only an hour away from Vancouver. It is a dynamic city and its residents want to ensure that its identity is preserved and enhanced.

It is for that reason that my motion proposes to direct the federal government to change the name of our border crossing to Abbotsford-Huntingdon port of entry. By doing so, it achieves two things. First, travellers and commercial enterprises alike will have a much better idea of where Abbotsford is located, highlighting the presence of a major international crossing within the city limits. In short, the name change reinforces the higher profile that the city of Abbotsford deserves.

Second, by retaining reference to Huntingdon, it honours and preserves the historical significance of the present community of Huntingdon and the role that the railway played in the settlement of the Fraser Valley.

I want to assure the House that this motion has the full support of the city council of Abbotsford, the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Abbotsford, as well as many other residents. The motion before the House makes a very simple request of our government. It states:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should direct the Canada Border Services Agency to change the name of the Huntingdon Port of Entry to "Abbotsford-Huntingdon Port of Entry".

This will honour the wishes of the large majority of my constituents and add the name Abbotsford to our one and only port of entry. The support of my colleagues in the House is greatly appreciated.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague from Abbotsford why he moved a motion that is, we believe, completely insignificant. This motion concerns a name change, at a time when there are so many pressing needs and problems at border crossings.

I would like to know why the Conservatives have not yet honoured an election promise made in 2006 to maintain an RCMP presence and increase the number of customs officers at border crossings, and why they will not take this opportunity to introduce a bill that is much more substantial.

[*English*]

Mr. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, I am really surprised at this question. Here we have a member of the Bloc Québécois referring to something that is very important to the city of Abbotsford as being insignificant. It may be insignificant to him and to the Bloc, but I can say that to the residents of Abbotsford this is a very important issue, one that I have been lobbied on for many years by the chamber of commerce, by the city of Abbotsford, and by Tourism Abbotsford.

I want to ask him a question. When we deal with those issues, which I am sure he would consider significant, such as imposing mandatory minimum prison sentences of five years on those who traffic in children, why would he then vote against that? Why would he vote against protecting the most vulnerable in our society?

Private Members' Business

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, what is unfortunate is it has to come to the House through a bill.

What has been CBSA's opposition to preventing this from happening without the House of Commons having to actually intervene? That is the level of we are at and I would like to hear the reasons why. I have seen some of the documents and they do not seem to make a lot of sense in why this cannot happen.

Mr. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, the member asked a good question and it is one that is worthy of response.

The CBSA has raised a legitimate concern in the communications we have received back, and that is about the cost of changing the name of a border crossing port of entry. The name of that port of entry will show up on maps. All kinds of stationary would need to be changed. Signage would have to change. These things can be overcome quite reasonably, and I will tell the House why.

We are talking about a hybrid name. We would simply be adding the name Abbotsford to the existing name Huntingdon Port of Entry. By doing so, it would give CBSA the opportunity, for example, to exhaust its current supply of stationary. It says Huntingdon Port of Entry and the new name would still include that.

I think it is a reasonable response. I am glad the minister has agreed to move forward with this, and I hope I will have the support of the NDP.

• (1820)

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Madam Speaker, would the member willing to consider a phase-in period on that basis? If so, what is contemplated? Does he have the specific costs? Is the municipality of Abbotsford, which is obviously supporting this, willing to contribute to any of those costs?

Mr. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for pledging his support for the motion. This is an example of the kind of work we can do in the House by collaborating with each other and avoiding some of the partisanship that characterizes some of our other debates.

To answer his question, I do not have an exact figure on the costs. I am sure CBSA could come up with some.

Our city has lobbied for this for quite some time. The fact that we have agreed to provide a hybrid name, rather than disposing of Huntingdon and simply replacing it with Abbotsford, allows cost savings as we transition from the one name to the other.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will not speak for a long time. The motion is self-explanatory. It simply adds the word Abbotsford to the border crossing. We will be supporting the motion.

I do have some questions of the member. I would encourage him, as we move forward in this process, to perhaps get more information, specifically on what the costs would be and what the economic advantage would be.

It is sufficient to say that we will support the motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am glad to have this opportunity to comment on Motion M-391 moved by the member for Abbotsford.

The Bloc Québécois will certainly support this motion. It is very clear to us that residents of the municipality support the idea of a name that more accurately reflects the reality of this border crossing that they think is more Abbotsford than Huntingdon. We support it because the municipal council seems to support it, as do the Abbotsford tourism centre and chambers of commerce. Residents probably all support it too.

However, I would like to repeat my question for the member from Abbotsford, who did not want to understand, or perhaps the translation was really bad. I did not say that changing the name was insignificant. I said that this motion was insignificant given the needs, I repeat, the needs of our border crossings. However, my colleague hears only what he wants to hear, unless the translation was really atrocious, which I doubt.

Even though we support the name change and the motion, the Bloc thinks it would have been nice if the Conservative Party, which claims to be tough on crime, had taken advantage of the opportunity to keep its 2006 election promise and put the nine RCMP detachments back where they used to be on the Canadian border.

These RCMP detachments were cut by the Liberals. The Conservatives cried foul. They said that it was terrible and rightly so. During the 2006 election campaign, the Conservatives said they would reinstate the detachments. It was during that election, in fact, that the hon. member for Abbotsford was elected. It was one of the Conservative Party's promises. We still do not have those detachments even though the mayors have been consulted and have expressed just how much they are needed.

My riding is on the border and I am well aware of the needs, which go beyond a name change. We need more security at our borders because criminals, specifically drug traffickers, are currently entering Canada with no trouble at all. The customs officers alert the RCMP that criminals are entering at Lacolle, which is one of the major entry points, at Frelighsburg or elsewhere, but the RCMP is in Montreal. Either it does not respond at all, or it arrives a few hours later. There might as well be no RCMP.

It is important for the Granby crossing and a nearby crossing, the Coaticook crossing, which is even closer to the border, to be able to react quickly when someone crosses the border. Year after year, the number of customs officers keeps going down at the respective crossings. When people arrive at the border, they see one customs officer and that is it.

The lack of customs officers and RCMP officers is not just felt at the land crossings, but also on the boundary waters between the United States and Canada. In my riding, with Baie Missisquoi and Lake Champlain, when you cross the border into Canada, all you see is a small sign that directs you to a beach much further away. Once you arrive, you are already in Canada, but you have to phone. A telephone is available, but not to call a nearby border crossing—to call Toronto. It is a direct line to Toronto. You are required to identify yourself and then you can enter.

Private Members' Business

It happens that people go straight through. There is no surveillance from the border crossing. It would be so easy to build a quay roughly 500 feet from the border crossing to allow the customs officers to keep an eye on what is happening on the water.

• (1825)

But this responsibility was taken away from them. There is no RCMP detachment in the area to ensure that the law is enforced. Thus, it is easy to imagine what goes on. This is also the case for Memphrémagog Lake, which borders the United States. There are really no patrols. People know very well that during certain hours there are no patrols. People can go by boat. We hear about this regularly in my riding.

Thus, it is surprising to see them putting forward a motion like this. It could have included security measures to reduce the number of criminals who freely enter Canada, particularly through Quebec. And yet, laws are enacted to punish them once they arrive here. It would be much easier to prevent them from entering our country. In that way, we would be focusing on the safety of communities and society and not just making a name change.

I would like to come back to the fact that it was the Conservatives who did not agree and were against the Martin government closing RCMP detachments. They were vehemently against it. And yet they closed them. We are not making this up. On January 17, 2005, a CBC investigation showed motorists driving through the Lacolle border crossing without stopping and without the RCMP being notified. If they were notified, as I was saying earlier, they would not be able to catch anyone because they were not there. They arrived much too late.

Even the customs union has stated that criminals, such as drug traffickers, must be prevented from entering Quebec, that the safety of Quebecers has been compromised and that RCMP detachments are needed at border crossings. The Conservative government is following in the footsteps of the Liberals. In our advertising we state that the Conservatives now hold the same views as the Liberals; in this case, we are right again. In fact, they were against this and now that they are in power, they have completely forgotten about that. In any case, this changes nothing with regard to crime. We are talking about major criminals, people who are real traffickers. It is up to those responsible to decide if money will be freed up for this.

I remember that in April 2006, we had just returned to the House after the election. The government had made a promise in January. The minister responsible at the time, who is now the Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, had said this in the House:

It will be up to RCMP officials to decide where officers will be posted, but I think that when the mayors of these areas see where the detachments are, they will be happy.

The mayors met, and they all said that it was impossible to monitor the borders and provide a minimal level of security if the RCMP detachments were not near the borders. In any event, in my riding, it is clear that the minister at the time made a huge mistake when he moved the RCMP detachment from Granby to Montreal. But this motion does not say that we are going to come back to the fact that the RCMP detachments must be reopened.

As I said, the Bloc Québécois will certainly support this motion, even though it is only about changing a single name. But we are going to keep on fighting for RCMP detachments in our regions, even if it takes 10 years, because we feel these posts are necessary so that criminals from the United States, or even Canadian criminals who have gone the United States and are coming back with drugs, cannot cross the border into Quebec, at least.

• (1830)

Currently, the border posts, which are about 15 miles from where I live, are not equipped to stop criminals. The RCMP, which really was equipped to do so, is not doing so.

We will vote in favour of this motion, but we still demand that the RCMP return.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to join in the debate on the motion from the member for Abbotsford requesting a name change of the Huntingdon port of entry to the Abbotsford-Huntingdon port of entry.

There is probably not as much interest as there should be from those with the most vested interests in this, and there could be reasons for that, but I am a little bit surprised because it is a very important issue for the community. I have done some research on it. The people of Abbotsford should know that I live on the busiest border crossing between Canada and the United States and that I am the critic for the New Democrats on Canada-U.S. border relations.

I agree with the name change. I saw the CBSA letter to the member and he was very generous in his comments about the suggestion that it would cost a lot of money. Quite frankly, that is an irrelevant and irresponsible response from the department. The people there should be very upset because they have changed their name and the reality of the geography has changed.

It would affect their economy. It does affect other border crossings, with confusion over where people are crossing and making that choice. We know it is very difficult these days, especially with tourism. With the WHTI and a whole series of other initiatives that the United States has put in place, we are losing our border traffic and our connection to the United States.

I need to do some more research because I do not know the exact answer to this. However, I do know that motions in the House of Commons have no standing. The Prime Minister went to great lengths talking about the moral responsibility of enacting motions in the House of Commons when he was in opposition but when we pass motions in the House of Commons that deal with issues ranging from child poverty to unemployment insurance improvements, the government has failed to move.

Private Members' Business

Motions reflect the spirit of the House but they do not mandate things. I am surprised this motion would not be a bill because if it were a bill then it would be a law. I also do not think the ministers can change the name themselves. This could be a whole ruse on the people of Abbotsford in terms of how to get their name changed. That will require some investigation, because if these are the types of things that are happening, then why do we not just move ahead and change the name?

I think the minister has the capability to do that. However, to do it through this means is rather suspicious because, as we in the chamber all know, a motion is not binding legislation. I have private member's legislation, for example, on the automotive aftermarket and that is done through amending Canadian law. It is the same thing with this issue. We need to do a little more research to find out but I do not know how a motion here will get the end result because once again it is not binding.

I do want to talk about the importance of the crossing. The community has grown, has chosen a new name and has adopted to move away from the past. At the same time, the suggestion of having the combination is a balanced one that respects the history while also showing the importance of the crossing to the community.

I can say that from living on the border and crossing at many locations across Canada, we have seen a dramatic shift away from the past policies with the United States. In fact, since 9/11, there has been an excuse to tighten the border. The previous government and the current government have not done enough to address those issues.

A number of different things have been added, including the militarization of the Canada-U.S. border. Where I live on the Great Lakes, the previous and current administrations changed the law going back to the War of 1812 that banned gun boats and vessels with heavy armaments on the Great Lakes. That has been changed and the U.S. coast guard now has the zodiacs with Browning M-120 machine guns that fire up to 1,400 bullets a minute.

Those machine guns have been used in the Cambodian, Afghan and Iraq wars. These are the types of armaments that are now operating on the Great Lakes. In fact, we were part of a team from across Canada and the United States who opposed the creation of firing ranges that they were going to create in the Great Lakes to practice with this equipment. There was a proposal for 40 different types of firing ranges. These bullets have lead casings that go under the radar of bass fishermen.

Ironically, the government missed the deadline for submission. As New Democrats, we filed a petition against that and worked with groups and organizations in the United States to stop that from happening. We are talking about the most treasured freshwater source in the world and it could not even get its paperwork in on time. The submission that it made was weak-kneed as well.

• (1835)

We have had a series of new measures put on the border that have not only hurt the economy but have also hurt the civil relationship we as individuals, business partners and family members have had with American citizens.

The introduction of the western hemisphere travel initiative requires all Canadians to have a passport to enter into the United States and for Americans who need to get back home after visiting Canada. This has been a significant problem for our communities and our cultures. We have seen tourism and visitations drop off significantly. In fact, just this last year alone, even though we had already retreated, we lost another 10%. Our tourism industries are reeling across the board because of this and the lack of attention to this policy.

We also have the militarization of the border, as I mentioned, which does not just involve what is on the water, but what is in the air, as well as the watchtowers and spy towers that have actually been erected. I was recently in Sarnia where the Port Huron Hindenburg was launched. It is a spy camera that is actually spying on Canadians and the border crossing. It is part of a government contract that was awarded where the company is trying to secure the border through this type of an operation.

The operation of drone planes, Black Hawk helicopters and a number of different operations are unnecessary on the Canada-U.S. border. We should be looking to surveillance and other types of measures that are not intrusive but can be done more cheaply and effectively than the actual hard military equipment.

This has been an irresponsible response from our government because it has not objected to this. In fact, it has signed programs and other types of initiatives that I can tell the House the boating community and others do not like. Canadians and Americans are disengaging from the border on both sides. They are saying that they do not want to go through that type of a process, that type of intimidation. They do not mind having accountability and having the checks and so forth, but it is at a point where people do not even bother to go over the border to visit friends, families or neighbours anymore. That is what hurts and that is why the Canadian economy has been slipping.

One of the issues we have been facing is the extra costs at the border crossing. Many studies from chambers of commerce provincially as well as federally show the billions of dollars lost in trade because of many of these measures that are unnecessary, such as the APHS fees that the U.S. has imposed on Canadian goods and agriculture, another tax on top of the shipping process that has been increased to such a level that the trucks need to stop more often and pay more.

I can tell the House that the Mexican government retaliated when new fees and procedures were imposed upon it and it actually charged the Americans back for that. Our government, interestingly enough, actually gives the Americans money for some of the fees that happen to go back and we rebate that to their crossings. It does not make any sense.

I want to make sure this is clear. The people of Abbotsford should know that the border crossing improvements that are happening need to be done with accountability. We also need to ensure that when we lose these types of relationships we should be measuring results on what we can do to improve them.

Private Members' Business

I have approached the Canadian Tourism Commission about how we can create a pilot project or put a system in place to measure whether the Americans are getting passports and how we can encourage them to get passports because the acquisition of passports by U.S. citizens is down to around 30%. Canadians are around 50%. We need to get over a lot of obstacles to get them to purchase passports. Some will not do it because they do not want their private information in the hands of government. Others do not want to do it because of the cost. Others do not want to do it because they simply do not want to go through the process that is imposed upon them.

When we start to look at what we do next, we need an organized tourism strategy, and that is something we as New Democrats want to see happen because the challenges we face are unique and they are also increasing. That needs to stop because the quality of so many people's lives is being lessened because of it.

● (1840)

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to support the motion of the member for Abbotsford on the need to change the name of the port of entry from Huntingdon to Abbotsford-Huntingdon. It is a logical and overdue development, in my opinion.

Before I had the honour of being elected to represent my home, the beautiful constituency of Langley, I had the pleasure of serving for almost 14 years on Abbotsford city council with my good friend, the member for Abbotsford.

I want to begin by acknowledging his hard work. As I said, I worked with him for many years on Abbotsford council. He was a hard-working city councillor and, as he reminded us, he was the deputy mayor. He is now in the House of Commons and is one of the hardest working people in Ottawa. He is also a very talented musician and a very talented man. It is a real honour to work with him not only years ago in Abbotsford, but now in Ottawa. We are neighbours. My home of Langley is to the west of Abbotsford, so I am very familiar with the issues.

During my time on the Abbotsford council, I became well acquainted with the issues of tourists and, for that matter, local residents being confused about where in the world the Huntingdon border crossing was. I can say with certainty that changing the name of the border crossing will have a positive effect on local economic development by encouraging tourism. It will eliminate the confusion of travellers and help the community of Abbotsford to prosper in the years to come by letting people know that Huntingdon and Sumas are really part of the city of Abbotsford.

It was in the nineties that the community of Matsqui and the city of Abbotsford amalgamated. At that time, when the vote came to whether the communities should be amalgamated, residents were asked what they would like the city to be called. Should it be called Abbotsford or Matsqui? There was input about what the airport should be called. Should it be called the Clearbrook airport, the Matsqui airport or the Abbotsford airport? Over the years there has been tremendous support for the name of Abbotsford because people in the area know the airport. The Abbotsford Airport is famous for the air show, but the area is known as Abbotsford, and to call it anything else would cause some confusion.

This is a continuation. The member is working hard and listening to his community. He has brought it before the House and he is looking for support. I am glad to hear that it appears we have support from the Liberal members, we hope from the Bloc members and also from the NDP members. I am not quite sure about the Bloc, but I hope so.

We heard a lot about the importance of the RCMP working with CBSA, and in most communities, including Quebec, that is the situation. Abbotsford has its own police force. If there is a border issue, the policy is to contact the RCMP because that is the national police force dealing with a national border.

I listened intently and want to thank the Bloc member. I have had a lot of good times and discussions with him over the years. I appreciate what he had to say today. I did not hear it, but I hope he supports the motion because it is a good motion. I am getting a nod. I want to thank him. I had the pleasure of working with the member at the environment committee, and we had a lot of important issues.

I want to share a little of the importance of the member for Abbotsford and how, over the years, he has worked on the environment too.

I also want to say a few words about the local support on the motion. There is broad consensus among the civic politicians and among the business community that changing the name from Huntingdon to Abbotsford-Huntingdon is long overdue. Letters of support have been provided by the Abbotsford chamber of commerce and Abbotsford city council to make the needed change.

The economy of the eastern Fraser Valley has changed in the last couple of decades. The importance of marketing Abbotsford to people outside the community has grown. That is why it has very strong support locally for making this important change

● (1845)

Changing the name of Huntingdon port of entry fits also into a broader picture of events. The arrival of the Winter Olympics in a few short months will provide an outstanding opportunity for international tourists to experience winter in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

Our international friends will discover that winter in Vancouver, Whistler, my beautiful home of Langley, and Abbotsford is not unlike that of their hometowns. The temperature and climate provide the communities of metro Vancouver and Fraser Valley with an opportunity to market themselves in winter to tourists who are not used to the vigour of the prairie snowfalls. Indeed, the Winter Olympics will provide an amazing opportunity for the entire world to get a glimpse of what Canada and British Columbia are like up close. We should expand the post-Olympics benefits of increased international exposure to communities like Abbotsford to promote Abbotsford's tourism potential for the long term.

Private Members' Business

Our friends across the border are simply confused about why the border crossing is called Huntingdon but the city is called Abbotsford. Why is that? Such confusion simply does not help Abbotsford's effort to capitalize on the Olympics experience to create long-term economic benefits. There are opportunities if the name is clear and understandable, so why is the crossing called Huntingdon if it is part of Abbotsford? Again with the history of the name being changed over the years and the amalgamation, this is a continuation to provide clarity now to the border crossing with this important Olympics coming.

Names have meanings and names have a significance that goes well beyond providing just a label. They provide identity. They give a sense of recognition and branding to particular regions of the country. In today's economy, corporations and governments give very careful consideration to the impact of a name on public consciousness because of the economic impacts that names will have.

I know that other border communities in Canada are interested in this debate because the name of their port of entry has an important impact on their economy.

What the people of Abbotsford are seeking is simply a logical change so that people driving through this particular port of entry will know that they have arrived in Abbotsford. It is as simple as that.

The other thing I would like to acknowledge is the hard work of the member for Abbotsford on the environment.

We well know the importance of fighting climate change. Canada has a plan with an aggressive target of 20% reduction by 2020. We have worked very hard. Our government is in consultation with the Obama administration on a clean energy dialogue. We are moving forward on a North American target of 20% by 2020. The Waxman-Markey bill went through the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. President Obama is working with us on a clean energy dialogue, and now the bill is before the U.S. Senate.

The targets that are being presented by the U.S. are very similar; ours are 20% by 2020 and the Americans' are 20% by 2020. What is the advantage of that? It is very important that there be a common approach in North America as we go to Copenhagen to come up with an international agreement that will truly tackle the issue of climate change.

My friend from the Bloc was at the environment committee where we heard the importance of having a coordinated North American approach. That is what we now see being developed with the United States having similar targets.

I know that the member for Abbotsford supports that aggressive target of 20% by 2020. I hope my friend from the Bloc will also support that aggressive target. Together, we will fight climate change. We will come up with an international agreement that really will do something to fight climate change. The days of the Liberals doing nothing are over. We need the Bloc to support us and to get something done on climate change.

● (1850)

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in response to the motion put forward by my caucus colleague, the hon. member for Abbotsford. I, too, have a great affection for Abbotsford. In fact, I have spent many happy days there at Abbotsford air shows, either attending or performing and visiting friends. Abbotsford is a real jewel in the crown of Canadian cities.

I would like to provide some sense of the role that the Canada Border Services Agency will provide and what is behind the sign that will read "Canada Border Services Agency—Agence des services frontaliers du Canada—Abbotsford, B.C."

The CBSA has one of the most challenging responsibilities in government today, managing the border access of people and goods to defend Canada's sovereignty, security, health and prosperity. The smart administration of national borders is a critical element of the security continuum that must be linked with overseas and domestic efforts and that can be successful only through effective partnerships with other government departments, our counterparts in the U.S., and other countries in the trade and travel industries.

Since its inception in 2003, the CBSA has made a top priority of forging strong working relationships with its counterparts in the U.S., the U.S. Customs and Border Protection service. The long-standing cooperation between Canada and the U.S. has led to numerous key achievements with respect to border management including joint pre-approval programs for low-risk people and goods, such as the NEXUS trust and travel program and the FAST program, not the member for Abbotsford but the free and secure trade program.

We also share information on national security threats, jointly target marine containers, and continually look for ways to harmonize programs, systems and procedures. Some of the greatest progress has been made in daily cooperation across individual border crossings such as that between Abbotsford, B.C. and Sumas, Washington. A significant bilateral challenge over the past few years has been the U.S. western hemisphere travel initiative, WHTI, which is now fully implemented at locations including Sumas, Washington across the border from Abbotsford.

The Canadian government has stressed its support for the security objectives underlying the U.S. WHTI, while conveying its concern that WHTI be implemented in a manner that does not needlessly interrupt legitimate tourism and travel or undermine the Canada-U.S. relationship.

Private Members' Business

The CBSA has been part of the overall federal effort on the WHTI file to ensure Canadians are well informed and prepared for new requirements and that WHTI is implemented as smoothly as possible. The government has also been supportive of provincial efforts to develop WHTI-compliant enhanced driver's licences. CBSA risk management is multi-layered based on pre-approval programs to facilitate low-risk people and goods, on advance information on people and goods coming to Canada, and on risk-based intelligence.

The border is traditionally the first opportunity to interdict many threats on which the CBSA increasingly focuses its enforcement resources at the continental perimeter and overseas, through, for example, the use of migration integrity officers at 45 overseas locations for immigration enforcement and risk-assessment of shipping containers at their port of loading in countries such as Japan, Panama and South Africa. The idea is to push the border out to the extent possible, to extend the enforcement of border policy to ports of departure around the world rather than strictly at ports of arrival in Canada.

These efforts enhance the safety profile of people and goods once they reach ports such as Abbotsford. I would like to provide a few examples of some other programs implemented by the Canada Border Services Agency to improve border security and to facilitate the flow of people and goods. Partners in protection, PIP, is a voluntary government-to-business initiative designed to enlist the cooperation of private industry to enhance border and supply-chain security.

On June 30, 2008, the CBSA implemented a modernized PIP program with strict security requirements that give additional credibility to members as low-risk traders. PIP is compatible and mutually recognized by the custom trade partnership against terrorism program of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection service.

The CBSA is harmonizing these requirements with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection service to create increased border security without imposing competing sets of requirements on the North American trading community. Over the past two years the agency has implemented radiation detection systems at ports in Saint John, Montreal, Halifax, Prince Rupert and Vancouver. This provides a tight radiation detection net at marine ports and thus helps to ensure the safety of containers that move inland and cross at land border ports such as Abbotsford.

This government is also committed to protecting those who protect our border by arming 4,800 border services officers by March 2016, including 200 new officers being hired so far to eliminate work-alone situations at 69 locations. Implementation of this initiative is on schedule. The CBSA has trained and deployed more than 900 armed officers across the country thereby enhancing the security of communities such as Abbotsford.

Technology has also become a critical CBSA tool. In addition to its use for receiving electronic shipment data, identifying travellers from biometrics, and searching cargo, technology is also being put to use for searching and acquiring evidence of criminal offences.

As international commerce and communications are now conducted largely through the use of computers and other electronic devices, a specialized group of investigators are trained in computer searching and evidence recovery to support investigations of commercial fraud.

● (1855)

Since child pornography has evolved from magazines and videotapes to computer files and DVDs, this also supports interdiction efforts by examining computers and other electronic devices at ports of entry, and it protects communities like Abbotsford.

Budget 2009 continues our strong track record of investment in border management with \$80 million allocated to modernize and expand border facilities at four locations in Ontario and British Columbia, including Abbotsford.

Border security is a complex objective that is subject to the shifting tides of geopolitical tensions, international trade, travel and migration, advances in technology, and the increasing sophistication of criminal and terrorist elements.

We must continue to capitalize on the technology and risk management strategies that minimize border security risks while facilitating the efficient movement of goods and services and people.

The past several years have seen a tremendous change in how our border operates. The attacks of September 11, 2001 have had many consequences. They set the free world in pursuit of enhanced civic security that is sustainable in the context of our treasured liberties and economic prosperity.

In the face of unprecedented chaos and violence, the government has recognized the need for new strategies, new approaches and new tools with a palpable sense of urgency. That sense of urgency has not gone away for this government.

Too much is at stake if we do not get the border right. Smart border management is good business. It is good for Canada, it is good for Canadians, it is good for the people of Abbotsford, and it is good for the city of Abbotsford.

I am happy to support this motion by my colleague from Abbotsford. I urge the rest of our colleagues on all sides of the House to support this motion as well.

● (1900)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on debate on the changing of the name of the entry port of Huntingdon to Abbotsford-Huntingdon.

What we have here is an issue of a name and a place that simply have not caught up with the times. My hon. colleague, the member for Langley, was telling me that there are really only a few places and individuals who use the place name Huntingdon these days. It has been replaced with Abbotsford. That is why the member for Abbotsford brought this motion forward.

This is a pretty straightforward name change that reflects the changing times, the changing of place names and a changing society, quite frankly, in Canada. The intent is not simply to change the name entirely. The intent is a matter-of-fact practical solution to an issue that has become worrisome.

It is a town on the border between Canada and the United States. It is a port of entry and a border crossing. Tourists, friends and neighbours in the United States come north into Canada through that border point, and all of a sudden the signage they see says Abbotsford. When they go back to the U.S., all the signage they see says Abbotsford. Using the name Huntingdon for the entry port is no longer reasonable or practical for any reason.

The motion is a timely one and it speaks to some greater issues. There are a number of ports of entry into Canada from mainland United States and there are a number of ports of entry from the ocean.

On the east coast of Canada, in my home province of Nova Scotia, the port of Halifax is not dissimilar, although it is a seaport, one of the largest ice-free seaports and deepest harbours in North America. It is classified as one of the top five harbours in the world.

Halifax has the ability to be the gateway from eastern Canada to central Canada and the central United States in the same way that the port of entry for Abbotsford-Huntingdon has the ability to be the gateway into southeastern British Columbia and on into Langley, Vancouver Island, and certainly other areas.

The other issue that we should recognize is that particularly in Halifax there is opportunity. There is opportunity for increased trade and there is opportunity for increased traffic.

My hon. colleague talked about climate change. It should be clearly recognized that intermodal traffic by container ship is the least polluting form of traffic in the world. More freight can be moved more cheaply by container ship with fewer pollutants and less greenhouse gas production than by any other mode of travel in the world. Although we are talking about a specific issue on the west coast, it has a connection to the east coast.

The port of Halifax and the new port that has been discussed in the Strait of Canso, the port of Melford, are the two closest ports to continental Europe in North America. As well, through the Suez Canal, the port of Melford or the port of Halifax is closer to the Indian subcontinent than is the port of Vancouver. If one were to travel through the Suez Canal and across the North Atlantic, the closest port of entry into Canada from the Indian subcontinent would be Halifax. There is tremendous potential.

I made this argument years ago in this place. At that time we were looking at the beginning of the post-Panamax ships. These were the biggest container ships in the world that would no longer fit through the Suez Canal.

● (1905)

The previous government did not act on that. It allowed the bid for the post-Panamax ships to go to the city of New York. Halifax did not even bid on it. Nor did other ports in eastern Canada bid on it. It was a missed opportunity.

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We do not want to miss this opportunity, going from British Columbia into the United States. We want to keep that border open. We want to ensure that it is marked appropriately. Signage and the ability for travellers to know exactly where they are going and the time it is going to take to get there is important not just for visitors but for trade.

If I could just go back to the port of Halifax and compare that. The ability for us to trade with the European common market, with the EU, the European Union as it is called today, with new markets, such as India, and the ability for Eastern Canada to become that same hub and gateway that western Canada, Vancouver and the port of Prince Rupert, is significant. We are 36 hours closer to the American heartland than any other port of entry in Eastern North America.

It has been pleasure for me to speak on this.

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.

[*English*]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for taking time to further answer questions about the dramatic increase in the number of women accessing shelters in Canada.

On May 14, I asked the Minister of State for Status of Women what her government would do about the staggering increase in the number of women seeking shelters in our country. I would like to review some of the statistics that I mentioned in May and highlight some additional numbers that have come out since then. Unfortunately, things are now worse, not better across Canada.

Since May, in my home town of London, Ontario, the London Abused Women's Centre has seen a staggering 105% increase in service demands over last year. That is up from a 79% increase earlier this year. The director of the agency still managed to find a positive in the numbers and was pleased that at least women were seeking help.

This past May, Ottawa women's shelters released a report entitled "Hidden from Sight: A Look at the Prevalence of Violence Against Women in Ottawa". The report showed the desperate state of many women in this city. It states:

Ottawa shelters are almost always full and frequently over their capacity. On average, most shelters report turning away 1-3 women daily as there are simply no beds available. In 2007, 3,281 requests for emergency shelter were turned away. Local shelters are forced to turn away 6 times more women than they are able to house. Most women requesting shelter space are fleeing a violent partner with their children. Almost 450 children were living in shelters in 2007 and many more were turned away.

Adjournment Proceedings

In Calgary a women's emergency shelter help line had a 300% increase in calls.

According to Statistics Canada, nearly 200,000 women reported that they had been assaulted or sexually assaulted by a spouse in 2003.

Intimate partner violence can be found in every province, territory, city and community within Canada. Police reported over 38,000 incidents of intimate partner violence nationwide, representing approximately 15% of all violent incidents reported to police. Eighty-three per cent of victims of spousal abuse are women.

A YWCA policy paper, released in January of this year makes it clear that recessions, like the one that we are in now, hit women hard.

Women make up a disproportionate share of low income Canadians and are particularly vulnerable in any economic crisis. Women account for 70% of part-time employees and two-thirds of Canadians working for minimum wage. Income statistics show women of colour, aboriginal women and women with disabilities are even more at risk than other women.

The YWCA report makes it very clear:

When women flee abuse, they leave homes, networks and communities behind. Lack of affordable housing and the other multiple challenges make them vulnerable to the recurrence of violence. Studies show that economic downturns have the potential to escalate domestic violence as stresses mount on families.

Domestic violence not only has a physical and emotional effect on families but also costs Canadian taxpayers. According to the United Nations, in Canada, a 1995 study estimated the annual direct costs of violence against women to be \$684 million for the criminal justice system, \$187 million for police and \$294 million for the cost of counselling and training, totalling more than \$1 billion a year.

The minister is hiding behind her action plan. There is no action plan. We need responsibility from the government.

●(1910)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Madam Speaker, violence against women is unacceptable in all communities across Canada, yet it remains a serious problem.

Our government committed to eliminate it, and to provide assistance and solutions to people affected by this violence. In order to achieve those goals, our government is maintaining its support of the family violence initiative or FVI, a horizontal collaboration involving 15 departments and partner organizations.

The long-term goal of the FVI is to reduce the occurrence of family violence in Canada and to promote partnerships with the provinces, territories and non-governmental organizations. The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics produces an annual report entitled *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*, which provides the most current data on the nature and extent of family violence in Canada.

Our government is taking action to address the problem of violence against women and children. For example, the shelter enhancement program provides assistance to shelters and transition

homes for victims of family violence, including those in first nations communities. In 2007, our government announced \$52 million in funding over four years to fund programs and services, to provide support to victims of crime, and to intervene regarding a number of new problems that affect these victims.

Our government also supports a broad range of programs through Status of Women Canada's women's program. This program provides funding to community groups fighting to end violence against women across Canada.

In 2007-08 alone, the women's program approved funding for 91 projects to fight violence, representing an investment of \$19,212,012 over three years. The following year, 39 projects were approved and another \$5,334,017 invested over three years. Here are some examples of the projects that received funding.

In Victoria, a project is helping women and girls who are victims of sexual exploitation escape situations that expose them to violence and poverty.

Support services to combat family violence are being provided to aboriginal and immigrant women in Edmonton.

A national on-line counselling service will be set up.

An intervention program in the Montreal region will focus on girls who are victims of sexual abuse.

A project in New Brunswick is helping women recover from the effects of dating violence.

Our government is also concerned about the disproportionately high incidence of violence affecting aboriginal women and girls. That is why we gave the Sisters in Spirit initiative \$5 million in funding for the 2005-2010 period and signed a partnership with the Native Women's Association of Canada. The Sisters in Spirit initiative is attacking the roots of racial and sexual violence against aboriginal women.

In March 2008, to help fight violence against aboriginal women and children, our government announced five new shelters in five provinces.

Our government cares about women—

●(1915)

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

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary certainly has high praise for her minister and her government, but the truth of the matter is that her party and the minister responsible for the status of women have been ignoring and continue to ignore the challenges faced by women in this country.

Adjournment Proceedings

I would ask, where is the affordable child care? Where is the affordable housing for women needing to escape violence? Where is pay equity? They destroyed pay equity. It is no more. This country has a system now in place where men get 100¢ dollars and women get 70¢ dollars. It is simply not acceptable.

All of this was made crystal clear just this month. This is Women's History Month and the minister has chosen to focus on women in winter sports. Celebrating our athletes is important, but the violence, the poverty and the lack of equality that women face is simply horrendous, and the government needs to respond.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Madam Speaker, our government unequivocally supports the renewed mandate of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women.

As I was saying earlier, our government has invested over \$24 million in three years. The NDP has always voted against the measures to help women in Canada escape the violence they are suffering. The NDP has always voted against the measures put in place by Canada and by our government. I have no lessons to learn from that hon. member.

[English]

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise to follow-up on a question that I raised in the House on May 13 of this year concerning the search and rescue facilities available in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The question was raised in the wake of a Cougar helicopter crash off the east coast of Newfoundland on March 12, 2009, with the loss of 17 lives. This took place while all three of the Department of National Defence search and rescue helicopters stationed at Gander were in Nova Scotia at the time on training.

It was also raised following a decision by the Department of National Defence to send the search and rescue 444 Squadron stationed in Goose Bay, Labrador to Cold Lake, Alberta for six weeks training, leaving the Labrador residents very concerned. They were worried about their situation because of the ice conditions at that time of the year.

This only compounded the public perception in Newfoundland and Labrador that the Department of National Defence was not providing first-rate service, and was failing to understand and meet the search and rescue needs of the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore fishery and oil and gas industry and, in the case of Labrador, address the vulnerability of the residents to the ice conditions in the break-up months of May and June.

I am glad to say that decision on Labrador was reversed a couple of days after I raised the question in the House on May 13. I was very glad to see that happen two days later. Of course, the government did not say why it did it, but I hope that it was because it listened to what I had to say and certainly listened to what the residents of Labrador had to say about their concerns.

In terms of search and rescue capability, particularly in St. John's, there was a Cougar helicopter that provided back-up service to do the search and rescue because of the presence of the helicopters in

Nova Scotia. Major McGuire of search and rescue indicated that it took an extra hour for the Cormorants to get to the site because of their distance from it, but there was supposedly a standby Cougar helicopter available to go.

In fact, it was the first responder. However, it was a helicopter station at St. John's that was not configured for search and rescue purposes. The first thing that the crew had to do was take the passenger seats out of the helicopter, install rescue gear, and do that configuration before they could take off to conduct the mission. It was obviously not on standby.

I referred my question to the royal commission back in 1984. It made a significant recommendation in the wake of the *Ocean Ranger* disaster, which claimed 84 lives. The recommendation stated:

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.

That recommendation has never been implemented. The evidence of that is very clear considering what happened on March 12 of this year, when there were no Cormorants available. There was no fully equipped, full-time dedicated helicopter available for this purpose. We believe that the government has failed in its obligations to the people who are working offshore and need the kind of—

• (1920)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for St. John's East has asked for clarification of the availability of search and rescue assets in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is my pleasure to provide him with that additional clarification.

Let me first say that the Canadian Forces finite search and rescue assets are carefully managed and strategically located across the country. Our men and women in uniform, in co-operation with other government agencies, including the RCMP and Coast Guard, as well as the provinces and territories are on duty 24/7, 365 days a year.

This is a no-fail mission for the Canadian Forces and they treat it that way. Over the many years that we have been providing that service, they have saved literally thousands of lives. It is always a tragedy when life is lost.

They are prepared to respond to incidents wherever and whenever they occur in Canada and our territorial waters. Their location is based upon experience and studies that determine where search and rescue incidents are concentrated, and where the need is greatest.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Canadian Forces conducted comprehensive studies in 2003 and 2005 on the location of search and rescue assets. Those studies are based on the assessment of historical patterns and data, and they represent the most accurate information to date on basing our assets and reaffirmed that they are optimally positioned to respond to search and rescue incidents.

They also showed that regionally Gander has the best weather conditions, making it the most effective basing location. St. John's has three times the number of fog days as Gander.

The Canadian Forces routinely evaluates the processes and capacities following search and rescue responses and incidents to ensure that our resources and personnel are best suited to the meet the needs of Canadians.

As far as the current positioning of search and rescue assets goes, Gander is centrally located in Newfoundland and Labrador, which allows the CF to provide an even search and rescue coverage throughout the region.

I want to take a moment to talk about the specific situation that the member for St. John's East referred to in his original question in May.

A portion of the combat support squadron from Goose Bay was temporarily deployed to Canadian Forces Base Wainwright for six weeks. The combat support squadron at Goose Bay is principally established to support flying operations at the base and on the range. Its search and rescue role is secondary to this role, and therefore the deployment had no impact on primary search and rescue responses.

The Canadian Forces has finite resources. The *Ocean Ranger* incident led to an inquiry which led to some recommendations, and one of those recommendations has been fulfilled by the positioning of Cougar helicopters on a 24/7 basis. The fact of the configuration did not delay, for any length of time, the launching of that helicopter. In fact, the helicopter was on site 52 minutes after the initial mayday call. That is a pretty good response.

To position extra resources in St. John's would require assets we just do not have, and they would not be based optimally as all of our experience has shown.

I am going to conclude by saying that Canada has one of the best search and rescue systems in the world. It is made possible by the ability of the Canadian Forces and its search and rescue partners to effectively coordinate all available assets and bring them to bear on an incident.

I hope this information has helped the member better understand the effective and efficient use of finite search and rescue assets which are maintained throughout the country, and that includes Eastern Quebec, Southern Baffin Island and throughout the region of Newfoundland and Labrador.

● (1925)

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Speaker, the resources are only finite because the government has not seen fit to respond to the need and to the recommendations of the *Ocean Ranger* commission 25 years ago when the level of activity in the oil and gas offshore was minimal compared to today when we have in excess of 600 people offshore 24/7 on 3-week rotations where they are working 12 hours a day, rotating back and forth on a permanent basis.

It is at least 600 people, and sometimes many more than that. Plus there are vessels going back and forth, helicopters doing the travel and all of the need and the risk that is there.

We are not talking about the number of incidents because we hope there will not be any incidents. It should be based on the risk that is present because of the dangers associated with this particular activity. Cost should not be a factor. We do need to see that this recommendation be followed completely, not the way it is being followed now.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleagues simply will not take the truth for an answer.

The fact is it was responded to. That is why the Cougar helicopter is there, on station. We cannot have an airplane hovering over a crash site before it happens.

The fact is, tragic as it certainly was, that crash was not survivable. Having a Cormorant in St. John's would not have changed the outcome of that incident at all.

While we are talking about finite assets, yes, they are finite and, yes, money is an issue and, yes, that member and his party have voted against every measure to increase assets to the Canadian Forces and to provide better service by the Canadian Forces to the people of Canada. He should not talk to us about finite assets when his party votes against them every time we bring them up.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:28 p.m.)

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