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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, April 19, 2010**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 19, 2010

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1105)

[*Translation*]

### INCOME TAX ACT

The House resumed from March 15 consideration of the motion that Bill C-470, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (revocation of registration), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure today to speak to Bill C-470, which was introduced at first reading on October 29, 2009, by the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville. The bill itself is very short. It would amend several subsections of section 149.1 of the Income Tax Act.

These amendments would enable the minister to revoke the registration of a charitable organization, public foundation or private foundation if any of its employees receive compensation in excess of \$250,000. Bill C-470 clarifies that compensation includes not only salaries, but also “wages, commissions, bonuses, fees and honoraria, plus the value of taxable and non-taxable benefits”.

Lastly, Bill C-470 enables the minister to make public the names and salaries of the five highest-paid employees in each organization registered as a charity, as part of the annual listing of charities in accordance with section 149.1 of the Income Tax Act.

I would now like to describe the circumstances that led to this bill. On October 1, 2009, the SickKids Foundation made headlines when it was reported that its president collected a severance package valued at \$2.7 million. A debate ensued on the huge salaries paid to charity executives, what constitutes fair compensation, and whether these salaries are in line with such organizations' missions.

In Quebec, a series of articles was published in *les affaires* in 2008 calling into question the salaries of top executives at a number of charities. The title of the series was “Philanthropy: worthy causes, whopping salaries”. Naturally, the articles made a lot of people skeptical about how donations to these organizations are being used and may have a negative effect on future fundraising efforts for charities as a whole.

The author of these articles explained how surprised the average Quebecker was to learn that such a significant portion of donations and other amounts received by charitable organizations is spent on salaries, including those of the directors of these organizations. According to the figures declared to Revenue Canada in 2007, 55% of the revenues at Moisson Montréal was spent on salaries, 44% at Mira Foundation, 38% at Fondation québécoise du cancer, 35% at Sun Youth Organization, 31% at Leucan and 60% at Le Bon Dieu dans la rue.

This was also surprising to experts in the field. For example, the CEO of Bolduc, Nolet, Primeau & Associates, a philanthropic management company, stated that when salaries are as high as 30% or 40% of all revenues, there is a problem.

According to these articles, the average salary of directors of charitable organizations in Quebec was \$125,000. These high salaries surprised not only the public, but also the experts, who thought they were much too high. Even more disturbing than the high salaries was the silence or reluctance of some major organizations to reveal the salaries of their directors.

This made the public even more doubtful about the legitimacy of these salaries. There is a lack of real safeguards, and there have been concerns that these salaries could get out of control and end up comparable to the salaries of American charitable organizations, which had an average salary of \$410,000 in 2007. These salaries have been skyrocketing in recent years. In Canada, they increased by 17% last year alone, and there was a 44% increase between 1999 and 2008, according to the annual survey of benefits and compensation published by the Canadian Society of Association Executives.

However, the Bloc Québécois knows how essential it is for charities to be able to continue hiring qualified managers.

Bill C-470 would require that the names of the five highest-paid employees in each charity be published. The Bloc Québécois understands the underlying principle of transparency in this initiative, but it is worried about the privacy of these organizations' administrators. Perhaps the requirement of publishing these names should be removed from the bill.

Quebec charities with executives who earn an average of \$125,000 a year will have some room to manoeuvre when it comes to salary increases. By respecting a \$250,000 ceiling, these organizations will be able to recruit and retain qualified applicants.

*Private Members' Business*

But what about the salaries of executives in larger Canadian charities? Numerous factors need to be taken into consideration: the size of the organization in terms of its revenue, expenses and staff; the complexity of the regulatory environment in which the organization works; and the number of departments and government organizations it deals with.

Of course, these factors affect each organization differently. We cannot determine a realistic salary ceiling without considering these factors and taking into account the changing needs of the organizations as well as the domestic and international market.

The heads of several Canadian charities are already being paid over \$300,000, which seems reasonable, considering the size of the organizations they manage.

Also, the number of Canadian charities is quite remarkable: 161,000 in all. In Laval alone, where I am from, there are 383 registered charities, including childcare centres, community centres, volunteer associations, regional recycling depots, private schools, the Laval symphony orchestra and the Laval health and social services centre, a Government of Quebec organization. All of those organizations are registered under the Income Tax Act.

So it would be very difficult to establish a salary cap for such a diverse group of charities and organizations whose volunteer elements are not necessarily obvious.

Given that the Quebec and provincial governments have full jurisdiction over the charitable sector, we must ensure that Bill C-470, in its current form, does not infringe on Quebec's areas of jurisdiction.

Furthermore, given that any charitable organization that wishes to register in Quebec must first be registered with the CRA, we must ensure that Bill C-470 fits in with Revenu Québec's provisions in that regard.

In any case, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the principle of Bill C-470, which is why we will support it at second reading, so we may examine it in committee.

The Bloc Québécois recognizes the importance of charitable organizations in Quebec society. In order for these organizations to be able to pursue their charitable missions, it is important to maintain their credibility and the public's trust in them.

Nevertheless, the bill's impact on all charities must be thoroughly reviewed in order to ensure that these organizations can continue recruiting qualified staff despite the limitations this bill would impose.

• (1110)

[English]

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to second private member's Bill C-470 put forward by the visionary member for Mississauga East—Cooksville. I call her visionary because she brought in a bill on proportional sentences for murderers that was so good for Canadians that the government adopted it. I hope the government takes the same lead on this private member's bill as well.

Charitable giving is part of our nature as Canadians. Charities across the country receive billions in contributions from Canadians of all income levels, of all backgrounds, and from every province and territory.

That being said, I am well aware of the challenges that charities have faced in recent years. In 2008 Canadians donated \$8.19 billion, a 5.3% drop from the previous year. Although the figures for 2009 have not been released yet, the charities I have spoken to have told me how difficult 2009 was as well. The global economic downturn has had a huge impact in this regard, and like businesses, charities have felt the pinch.

There was good news however. The number of donors did rise to 5.8 million, which represented a 1.7% increase from the year before. This bill is about those 5.8 million Canadians.

The first component of this bill has to do with transparency, which is a standard that each and every charitable organization should be trying to achieve.

Those that give to a cause want to know that their gift is going to the right place. So we ask about a charitable organization's administrative costs, and how much of a donation is actually making a direct impact.

But surprisingly, up until last year, the Canada Revenue Agency never required charities to report the salaries of their top executives.

The charitable filings for 2009 mark the first time Canadian charities have disclosed compensation information for their ten highest paid officials. Previously, charities only had to provide limited information about their five best paid staff positions.

Yet, there is still great ambiguity with this disclosure. There are no exact salary figures for these individuals. Instead, there are only categories, like the top bracket of \$350,000 and over, which leaves a lot to be desired when it comes to information.

The bottom line is that if someone chooses to make a contribution, they have a right to understand exactly what the leadership within their chosen charity is being paid.

Donors are like shareholders of any public company, so disclosure needs to be a lot more specific to give donors the information they need to make informed decisions about where they choose to donate their hard-earned money.

The second aspect of this bill is about introducing a salary cap of \$250,000 within the charitable sector.

As the hon. member for Alfred-Pellan mentioned, there was great confusion and even anger when last year it was revealed that one of Canada's largest charities, the SickKids Foundation, paid its former president \$2.7 million in 2008. To many this is a figure that is very hard to comprehend, particularly when considering how hard it is for a charitable organization to raise that kind of money. It is especially hard to see how someone can faithfully accept that kind of salary for doing good deeds.

*Private Members' Business*

• (1115)

The salary cap in Bill C-470 would allow charities to pay their top executives salaries comparable to federal deputy ministers who run even larger and more complicated organizations. If a charity wants to exceed the cap, it would fall to the federal minister. If he or she does not accept the justification, he or she can decide to de-list the charity.

I have an issue with those who say that the House of Commons should not be involved in the salary decision-making process.

As I mentioned previously, tax receipts were given to over 5.8 million Canadians in the year 2008. The Government of Canada encourages charitable giving through these subsidies. This is a long-standing tradition and I will go as far as to state that it is one of the essential components behind charitable giving in our country. Thus, we as members of Parliament have every right to scrutinize the salaries of executives that are, to an extent, being partially paid by way of Canadian taxpayers.

This past December, the Fraser Institute released its 2009 Generosity Index. The Generosity Index measured charitable giving for both Canada and the U.S. in the year 2007 and detailed the percentage of tax-filers who donated and the percentage of income that they gave to good causes.

For Canadian charities, the numbers were troubling. Americans donated 1.6% of their aggregate income to charities while Canadians donated less than half of that, at 0.73%. In dollar figures, Canadians donated approximately \$8.5 billion to charitable causes, but if we had given at the same rate as our southern neighbours, the total would have been in excess of \$17 billion.

Bill C-470 is an attempt to assist charities with this gap by instilling greater confidence in their practices among the Canadian public. The successful passage of this legislation will ensure that not only will Canadians be able to access more information, but they will also be able to have confidence in compensation packages that are equitable and fair in consideration of their charitable gifts.

As the economy recovers, the rate of charitable donations will recover. This bill would open the books of charities so that Canadians can open their wallets to charities with confidence.

Once again I thank the hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville for bringing in this important measure as a private member's bill.

• (1120)

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-470, a proposal before the House sponsored by the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

From the onset, I will state that our government agrees with the member on the importance of ensuring proper and appropriate regulation of the charitable sector in Canada. This includes the need to remain vigilant against undue personal benefit for individuals employed in the sector.

Our government is always open to exploring ways to strengthen current legislation. In that regard, we welcome and will support Bill C-470 for discussion in the finance committee in the coming weeks

and months. Moreover, we understand that many charitable organizations, both large and small, would like to participate in the debate on Bill C-470 and potentially make some suggestions related to the proposal.

We are especially encouraged that the member noted earlier in the debate that she was ready to more fully explore this proposal at committee stage. The member for Mississauga East—Cooksville would likely agree that we need an opportunity to hear the voices of those involved in charities across Canada to make certain that occurs.

I also believe that all members of Parliament share in the member's belief that charities are a vital part of communities right across Canada. That is why since 2006 our government has taken some notable actions to help bolster charities and allow them to keep doing the great work they do in our communities.

In budget 2010, our Conservative government announced it would move forward with a plan to reform what is referred to as a disbursement quota. This reform is intended to reduce unnecessary red tape to better allow charities to focus their time and resources on their charitable activities and helping their communities.

For the benefit of the House, I will relay a small sampling of the feedback we have received on this particular budget 2010 announcement.

Imagine Canada applauded it for providing the following:

...greater flexibility for charities as they seek to meet the increasing and changing needs of Canadians...

The [disbursement quota] added layers of red tape and reduced flexibility in responding to the needs of Canadians and communities. ...[it] will help charitable organizations, especially smaller and rural ones, to better plan their activities to meet the real needs of their communities.

The Salvation Army cheered it by saying:

The removal of the quota will provide The Salvation Army, one of Canada's largest charities, with increased flexibility...

We are very pleased with this announcement. The proposed changes will allow us to better respond to the needs of the people we serve in 400 communities across Canada.

Finally, someone the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville may be somewhat familiar with, the Community Foundation of Mississauga's executive director, Eileen MacKenzie, explained:

We applaud the government's decision to reform the disbursement quota policy. ... [it] will lessen the administrative burden on our charities, direct more resources to addressing community needs and enable them to plan more effectively for the future.

This is a specific example of a helpful initiative our Conservative government has undertaken to support Canada's charitable sector. Today's proposal deals with the accountability of these registered charities, specifically regarding the compensation given to those employed by such organizations.

To put this debate into context, I believe it would be informative to look at how charities are regulated in Canada. First, responsibility for the regulation of registered charities is divided between the federal government and provincial and territorial governments.

*Private Members' Business*

Within the federal government, the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, regulates registered charities. The CRA is responsible for applying the provisions of the Income Tax Act relating to registered charities. Beyond income tax considerations, the regulation of charities is constitutionally under the jurisdiction of the respective provinces and territories in which they operate.

• (1125)

As mentioned earlier, recent reforms have given CRA more powerful compliance tools when regulating the charitable sector. The ultimate compliance tool is the ability to de-register a charity. If a charity is deregistered, it immediately loses its ability to issue tax receipts to donors. It also may become taxable on its existing assets. In addition, it must transfer its charitable resources to another charity within a specified period of time or pay a revocation tax to the government. Clearly, considering the special tax treatment that registered charities receive, excessive compensation for those employed by them is not something that donors or everyday taxpayers would approve.

That is why, currently, if the CRA comes across a situation where a registered charity is not fulfilling its charitable purposes and/or there is undue personal benefit, such as compensation clearly in excess of fair market value, CRA can take strong corrective action.

Under the present system, for the first infraction by a registered charity, CRA can impose a tax of 105% of the amount of the undue benefit. If a charity repeats such an infraction within five years, the penalty increases to 110%. In addition, CRA can immediately suspend the tax receipting privileges of the charity. Finally, if the problem is ongoing and repeated, CRA can move to deregister the charity completely.

Before concluding, I want to state that our Conservative government firmly believes that Canadians who donate their hard-earned money to charities should have the proper tools available to ensure that those organizations are accountable, and that is why we took action to improve accountability.

Up until last year, CRA had only required charities to report on the compensation for the five highest paid employees and indicate limited salary ranges, with the last threshold being \$119,000 and over. Our Conservative government did not believe that to be sufficient and brought in changes. Now we require charities to report the 10 highest paid positions, double than before. What is more, we expanded the salary ranges, with the last threshold being \$350,000 and over. I note that all of this information is available publicly and online for all to view at [www.cra-arc.gc.ca](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca).

Our new accountability rules will improve transparency, allowing those generous men and women in Canada, who donate their own hard-earned dollars, the information they need to make their charitable giving decisions with peace of mind.

Without a doubt, our Conservative government has taken action to both encourage charities to serve our communities across Canada better, while at the same time improving transparency surrounding their actions.

We are clearly committed to accountability and transparency in the charitable sector. While the tax system already has tools in place for both the regulation of compensation in the sector and to guard

against undue personal benefit, we are always open to exploring other ways to strengthen it.

As Bill C-470 successfully passes second reading and advances to the finance committee, however, we again both welcome and urge a very comprehensive discussion at that stage. That discussion will provide an essential opportunity to hear directly from those in the charitable sector and explore their questions and concerns.

• (1130)

**Mr. Andrew Kania (Brampton West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, “Salaries at some charities make a mockery of the concept of charity”. That is a quote from the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville, and she is correct. That is why I wish to congratulate her on introducing this bill which seeks to protect and stand up for donors, recipients of charitable funds, and taxpayers. I am honoured to be a seconder of this bill.

The purpose of this bill is twofold: first, to limit the global compensation of employees of charities to \$250,000 per year, which is a substantial sum; and second, to allow full public disclosure of the incomes of the top five employees of charities.

In terms of the analysis of the bill and the \$250,000 limit, the practical effect of imposing this, if it were to be exceeded by a charity, would be to provide the minister with the discretion to revoke the charitable status. This would not be automatic. It would allow the minister to use discretion in a particular circumstance if there were some reason that this should not take place. As well, there is an effective date of 2011 for this bill to provide ample time for transition purposes.

There are multiple reasons to support this bill. First, we must protect the recipients of charity, Canadians in need. We must ensure they are not taken advantage of and that the money raised to help them actually reaches them to the greatest extent possible. Every dollar spent on an executive that is in excess of what is reasonable is a dollar taken away from a recipient, and that must end.

Second, we must protect donors. Most donors are ordinary people who dig deep into their pockets in order to help others. It is simply unfair to these ordinary donors, ordinary Canadians, to allow such executives to abuse their generosity and, frankly, to earn far in excess of what most Canadians earn.

Third, we must protect charities and the charity system itself. Every year Canadians dig deep and contribute billions to 85,000 registered charities. They will not do so if they believe the system is broken, if their trust has been violated and, frankly, if their money is being wasted on exorbitant compensation packages for executives.

The SickKids example, which has already been mentioned in the House today, is relevant. When the *Toronto Star* broke the story that the head of the SickKids Foundation took home \$2.7 million in salary and severance in one year, people were rightly shocked and outraged.

Think about the average donor who is providing a donation of \$30 or \$50, whatever it may be, digging deep to help. Think about the recipients of charities who need that money to live. When they hear that somebody is making \$2.7 million from moneys that should be used to help, they are outraged and they should be.

What is important in terms of the integrity of the charitable system is that once the SickKids Foundation story broke, it hurt the foundation. There was a backlash from donors. The foundation had to set up a specific hotline to take questions and address concerns. The SickKids Foundation received a 10% decrease in donations and had to lay off 38 staff members.

I ask, how is it right that that individual received \$2.7 million in one year, and then the foundation itself was hurt by a decrease in contributions and 38 innocent Canadians received a pink slip, a layoff notice?

If this legislation had been in place at the time, it would have stopped this. The foundation would not have been allowed to pay \$2.7 million to that executive. The SickKids Foundation would not have received a 10% reduction in contributions, and those innocent 38 people would not have been laid off.

It is instructive to reflect upon the recent changes the Conservatives did make for disclosure provisions. The disclosure provisions, although admittedly an improvement, are not enough. The \$2.7 million salary was only learned of because the foundation also operates in the United States and had to file there.

• (1135)

The changes that have been made by the Conservatives create a continuing problem, because despite the new filing requirements introduced by them, there are no exact salary figures or names of the highest paid individuals that must be disclosed. Instead, charities must identify the number of people who earn a salary within a certain range, with a top range of "\$350,000 and over".

Using the SickKids Foundation as an example, if that foundation had not also operated in the United States where there are strict filing and disclosure requirements, and we only had the benefit of the new regime that the Conservatives introduced, the only thing we would have known is that at least one person, if not more, at the SickKids Foundation made more than \$350,000. We would not have had the right to know that \$2.7 million had been paid to an individual. Although the changes introduced are an improvement, they do not go far enough. This private member's bill must be supported in order to ensure that we have full disclosure of this information.

### *Private Members' Business*

The other reason we must support this bill is to protect taxpayers. In the most recent year, the taxpayers of Canada contributed almost \$3 billion in federal tax credits. Every Canadian has the right to know the salaries of such executives and provide reasonable limits to these taxpayer-supported activities. We are supporting these executives in their positions. We have a right to know how much they are making and we have a right to set reasonable limits on what that income is.

In terms of integrity, it must be remembered that in 2007, Canadians donated a total of \$10 billion and volunteered 2.1 billion hours. If that goes down because people do not believe that the system can be trusted and people are being treated unfairly, Canadians will suffer. Six years ago, in 2004, the United States recognized it had a problem regarding disclosure. The IRS announced new enforcement efforts to identify and halt such abuses. The IRS said:

We are concerned that some charities and private foundations are abusing their tax-exempt status by paying exorbitant compensation to their officers and others.

In Canada, nothing has been done to remedy the situation apart from the small change that I noted, which does not solve the problem.

This outrageous compensation is a serious problem in Canada. It is not limited to the one example of the SickKids Foundation that I noted. That perhaps is what broke the story, but it is not the only example. One reporter stated:

It seems for some of Canada's best known charitable organizations, charity begins in the chief executive's office.

Some of Canada's largest and best known charities pay some of their top officials more than \$300,000 per annum, which is more than deputy ministers make. Frankly, it is more than most Canadians make. Chief executives at Plan International Canada Inc., the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario and York University Foundation all were paid more than \$300,000 last year. The BC Children's Hospital Foundation and Toronto General and Western Hospital Foundation paid top executives between \$250,000 and \$300,000 per year.

Some people will oppose this legislation, but I ask why. First, why are they afraid of transparency? What are they trying to hide? Why would they not want to disclose what the top executives actually are making on an individual basis? Taxpayers have a right to know. Donors who provide the money have a right to know. Canadians who are receiving the benefit of these dollars have a right to know.

*Private Members' Business*

Second, is \$250,000 not enough? It is enough, but more than that, setting a limit will level the playing field in Canada. Tim Price, chairman of the York University Foundation board, said it paid CEO Paul Marcus \$394,000 in salary and bonus last year and that the payment “was in the context of the competitiveness of talent to be able to get a first-class person”. The foundation would not be required to have paid \$394,000 to that individual if there was a cap of \$250,000.

Frankly, people would not be seeking to move around and drive up the cost of compensation packages if there was a limit. Canadians who need these funds would actually receive them.

• (1140)

There are very large Canadian charities that already are compliant, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, United Way of Canada and the Red Cross. There is no reason that everybody cannot be compliant.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-470, brought forward by the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville, which has to do with charities.

I support this bill very much. I am little concerned because there has been some misinformation of which I think members should be aware. Probably the best reason this bill should go to committee is to enable the charitable institutions and foundations to provide some input. I understand there was concern in the charitable sector initially, but that actually has turned around. I believe there are some 85,000 charities.

I approach this not from the standpoint that I am looking for some charity that is doing something that it should not be doing. What is needed is greater transparency, openness and accountability. We are talking about taxpayers' dollars. When people make a charitable donation, they claim that donation and get the appropriate tax credit on their income tax return. All Canadians, all taxpayers, are subsidizing the contribution to various charitable organizations and foundations. From that standpoint, it is very consistent that disclosure of relevant information should be made available to all Canadians about how their tax dollars are being spent.

I do not think there are many people who have not heard some conversation about exactly who is getting how much and how much of their dollars is actually hitting the ground and helping the people they want to help. The United Way is asked this question all the time, and it reports on it and it boasts about it. Campaign 2000, which helps deal with the issue of child poverty, is constantly looking at how much money is actually going toward helping people and promoting the alleviation of child poverty in Canada.

It is extremely important that we look at this from the accountability aspect.

Today I received a letter from the Prime Minister's chief of staff, who subsequent to his appearance before the ethics committee on the subject matter, provided copies of the letters that he sent out to the ministers indicating that it is a responsibility of the government to promote accountability, transparency and openness. I think the House concurs. It is the law. It is a charter right.

I know where some of the confusion has arisen for some members who may have looked at this. It is one of those cases that if we just hear the short version, or the summary, we may get an impression which is not reflective of the full detail of the bill. The summary of this bill states, “This enactment amends the Income Tax Act to revoke the registration of a charitable organization, public foundation or private foundation if the annual compensation it pays to any single executive or employee exceeds \$250,000”, period.

That is how the summary was drafted, but that is not exactly what the bill would do. The bill would not revoke the registration of a charity, or a private or a public foundation, if it pays any one person more than \$250,000. The bill requires the disclosure and the minister may look at it. It is not absolute; it is optional. It is a matter that the minister may invoke if there is clear abuse. There is some ministerial discretion. This is not a black and white situation, that if a charity pays somebody over \$250,000 that, all of a sudden, the registration of the charity is revoked.

I hope that members will look carefully at this. This is one question that has to be totally clarified in committee to absolutely ensure, to the assurance of all hon. members, that this bill is not an attack on charities.

• (1145)

The government deputy House leader had made an indication that in his view there was a royal recommendation required for the bill, and I think he made an interesting argument. However, the bill effectively only amplifies or adds further criteria under which the minister responsible for the act in question, the Income Tax Act, can have the latitude to take decisions if it is appropriate.

The Speaker ruled that in fact there was not a need for a ways and means motion for this amendment to the Income Tax Act. I think members should take some solace from that. The bill is a sound bill, it is a clean bill and it should go to committee to hear from the stakeholders who may be affected and may be concerned.

It is always good when we can have people on side. They will come before committee, they will ask their questions or make their representations and things will be clarified. Then it is not just what a half dozen people happen to say during the debate at second reading in the House based on their own information or knowledge, but it is the experts. It is those who are in the business and who can provide the details and the commentary on the legislation and its implications and make recommendations for changes to the bill if necessary. That is what the committee is for.

We cannot make amendments here on second reading. We can say that we have some concern about this aspect and we hope that the committee will do that. Those are the kinds of things that happen from time to time. The committee stage is extremely important.

I believe this is an important bill, primarily from the standpoint of the openness and transparency requirements and the accountability requirements that we expect from all matters as they relate to governing the taxpayers' dollars.



*Private Members' Business*

The member in question has been here for more than 20 years. I know she does her homework. Anyone who knows the member knows that she is a member of great integrity. She has not brought many bills before this place, but when she does, look out, because she is responding to critical issues in which the public interest is to be served.

I am not going to get into this, but people may want to look at her background. The member has a reputation for bringing matters that I think are extremely important for us to consider.

This is not an inconsequential bill. It is a significant bill. It is a bill that I believe will get a thorough hearing at committee, and I believe it will pass at all stages and become law.

There was a question that came up in one meeting I was at that I want to raise as well, about whether or not this would affect universities, and people were talking about foundations.

As we know, many hospitals have a fundraising wing that is separate from the hospital operations themselves, separate and incorporated entities to raise money for hospitals. These would be maintained separately. The bill would not affect hospitals or other foundations that are set up for that purpose. It is a small detail, one question only, but it is the kind of question that has come up.

Therefore I wanted to rise in the House today to say that I have taken the time to look at it. I heard the member present her bill in debate. I heard her represent her position last week in the media. After people asked their questions and got the answers, to fully understand, it is amazing how the outlook on the bill has turned so dramatically.

I want to leave it at that, and I want to encourage all members of Parliament to please vote for the bill on second reading and to encourage the committee to do appropriate hearings to ensure that we make good laws and wise decisions.

• (1150)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville, a five-minute right of reply.

**Hon. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first let me thank members from all sides of the House who have added productively to the debate on this issue.

Bill C-470 seeks to add two ingredients to charity executive pay: reason and accountability. Salaries would have to be within reason, or the minister could take action in the interests of donors and taxpayers who often have no direct say on how their money is spent. Greater accountability will come with the disclosure of every charity's top five income earners and their salaries.

The government did make progress last year by requiring more detailed ranges of salaries, but no corporate CEO could get away with saying he just made over \$350,000. Donors are paying the bill and deserve the names, positions and amounts, like any shareholder. Arguments for continued secrecy have largely withered over the past several weeks. It is simply not tenable for charities who rely on the faith and trust of donors to say they deserve salary secrecy that is unthinkable in either the government or corporate sector.

The promise of Bill C-470 is that donor awareness may be a cure for the high salaries and costs that are shrinking every donor dollar

today. Bill C-470 also aims to add a measure of reason and restraint to charitable salaries. It does not seek to impose a hard cap, but simply to provide a long-overdue mechanism for the minister to restrain excessive compensation. The minister would retain the absolute discretion to act in the interests of both the cause and the donor community.

Diversionary concerns about the potential impact on the top salaries of professors and surgeons at universities and hospitals are not well founded, as most of these institutions have separate charitable foundations. For those that do intermingle operating and fundraising activities, the minister can make the obvious distinction.

Fewer than 1% of Canadians earn \$250,000 a year. Charities rely on the generosity of the other 99% and need to justify the exorbitant pay of their fundraisers. When one executive was reported to have received millions of dollars in salary incentives and severance, the excuses poured in from charities: "We have to attract fundraising talent from the U.S."; "We cannot find competent people who would work for under a quarter million a year". Other organizations have even argued that young people will not go into charity work if they cannot make a lot of money. I wonder if I am alone in finding this somewhat ironic.

From 2000 to 2008, the number of donors in Canada was basically stagnant, growing by less than 1% annually. So the charitable sector is not attracting more donors. Total tax receipted donations grew by an average of only 5%, little better than the rate of inflation. So Canadians are donating more, but hardly enough to justify ballooning fundraising pay.

Published information with the CRA reveals even less connection between pay and performance. Without a single person reporting making over \$250,000, one charity raises twice as much money at half the cost per dollar of the highest paying Toronto medical charity. So it is possible to run a charity without investment banker salaries. But exorbitant salaries are infectious and are spreading to charities great and small and even very small.

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One small foundation that pays more than \$350,000 actually hiked salaries by 69% over the last five years while revenue dropped 33%. Thirty-six cents of every dollar raised is now lost to fundraising and administration, double the rate of only five years ago. Paying astronomical salaries does not always deliver astronomical results. Many sports leagues have adopted salary caps to respond to similar situations where competition was raising costs far faster than revenue.

In conclusion, Bill C-470 asks the House to take a small step in curbing a free-for-all with donor and taxpayer money. Parliament alone can take a stand to safeguard the sacrifice of donors by insisting that charities deliver more transparency and ultimately more charity.

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The time provided for debate has expired.

[*English*]

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** All those in favour of the motion will please say ye.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 21, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

• (1200)

## SUSPENSION OF SITTING

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The House will suspend until 12 o'clock.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:57 a.m.)

## SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12 noon)

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[*English*]

**CANADA-COLUMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

The House resumed from March 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Colombia and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is one of the great trading nations of the world. That is why I appreciate this opportunity to speak today to the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

As my colleagues on this side of the House have repeatedly stated, this agreement is of critical importance to Canadian workers, businesses and investors as Canada emerges from the global recession. It will open up new doors and windows of opportunities at a time when Canadians need them the most. At the same time, this agreement is also a critical piece in helping Colombia establish lasting peace and prosperity for its citizens.

Let me begin by recognizing the significant progress that Colombia has made in recent years to overcome its troubled past.

Decades of internal conflict, much of it related to the international drug trade, have challenged Colombia's security and human rights record. While human rights and security challenges remain, the Colombian government has made substantial strides in recent years to overcome these challenges.

I want to say upfront that Canada supports Colombia's efforts to meet these challenges. Protection and promotion of human rights and the rule of law here at home and around the world are at the core of Canada's engagement with Colombia. Indeed, our government has made human rights a priority. Our government's vigilant stand against those who threaten the most basic of human rights has been recognized around the world in all our engagements.

The free trade agreement with Colombia, together with its parallel agreements on labour co-operation and the environment, is but one of several initiatives that support Colombia's efforts toward greater peace, security, prosperity and full respect for human rights. We can and should be proud of this record. Our government believes that engagement, rather than isolation, is the best way of supporting change in Colombia.

Lest there be any doubt, I want to emphasize that in recent years personal security in Colombia has improved. The engagement of the global community and international organizations has significantly improved the personal security conditions of the vast majority of Colombians.

Let me give an example. A couple of years ago, a Colombian citizen visited me in my office and we discussed some matters that were totally unrelated to this debate. However, before she left, I could not pass up the opportunity to ask her what things were really like in Colombia. I asked her to please be honest and tell us what the situation was like in that country. She said told me that over the last 10 years, its security had improved markedly. In fact, she said that her family, her neighbourhood and friends felt much more secure today than they did 10 years ago. This was an average Colombian citizen telling the truth about the situation in Colombia.

While there remains much to be improved in Colombia, its government has made considerable progress in its fight against the drug cartels and against paramilitary and rebel groups. In fact, we would be remiss if we did not take notice of the efforts that have led to the formal demobilization of over 30,000 paramilitaries and the weakening of the two primary guerrilla groups in that country. These are key developments in Colombia's efforts to break the cycle of violence.

Colombia also has a justice and peace law that provides the legal framework for truth, justice and reparations. Is the human rights situation in Colombia perfect? Of course not. What is important, however, is that we measure the significant progress that Colombia has made over the last 10 years. What is clear is that, more and more, Colombia is developing a measurable respect for the rule of law, a value that Canadians hold very dear. What we also should not forget is that Colombia is one of the oldest democracies in Latin America.

With the support of the international community, the Colombian government authorities and related civil institutions have undertaken a series of actions that are contributing to increased peace, security and prosperity in that country. It is vital for Canada and other free and democratic countries to pursue policies of engagement and support for peace in that country.

● (1205)

This free trade agreement helps us do just that. Engagement, rather than isolation, will be the key to a safer and more secure Colombian future. Canadians can be very proud of their role in assisting our Colombian partners along this path.

Canada closely monitors the human rights situation on the ground in Colombia and regularly raises issues concerning human rights in meetings with Colombian officials. In fact, Canada continues to be an active member of the Group of 24, a number of countries which facilitate dialogue between the government of Colombia and international and national civil society organizations. Indeed, in 2009 Canada and Colombia established formal senior level consultations on human rights and those discussions continue to this very day.

Canada maintains this open and frank dialogue on human rights with the Colombian government at the most senior levels. Our engagement in Colombia includes support for development, peace and security initiatives. In the last five years, Canada has disbursed over \$64 million through the Canadian International Development Agency.

CIDA has gradually focused its programming on children's rights and protections, while also supporting economic growth opportu-

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nities that contribute to reducing poverty in Colombia. Our projects have also prevented the recruitment of children into illegal armed groups and ensure their reintegration into their communities.

Other projects have supported environmentally sustainable agriculture to provide alternative livelihoods to growing illicit crops for the drug trade. Indeed, sustainable agriculture, in turn, contributes to food security for the many poor communities in Colombia.

I also point out that Canada's global peace and security fund disbursed over \$18 million in Colombia since 2006. This fund is helping to promote peace in Colombia and the region and is also promoting the protection of the rights of victims and the strengthening of the Colombian judicial system.

There is much more but, unfortunately, my time is limited. However, this agreement takes human rights very seriously. Indeed, Canada takes human rights very seriously. Our commitments under this agreement prove this fact.

At the same time as the free trade agreement with Colombia was signed, we also signed two parallel agreements on labour co-operation and the environment. These agreements commit both nations to work together to ensure high levels of protection for workers and the environment.

Canada believes that trade and investment liberalization can go hand in hand with labour rights and the environment. Indeed, engagement may be the very best way of moving countries that are in transition to a more robust environmental and human and labour rights regime.

Canada and Colombia also commit to providing acceptable protections for occupational safety and health for migrant workers and for employment standards such as minimum wages and hours of work. Failure to respect international labour organization principles and to enforce domestic laws is subject to penalties for violations, any penalties accrued to a special fund to be used to address and resolve matters identified through the dispute resolution process.

All of this is to say that protection and promotion of human rights are at the very core of Canada's engagement in Colombia. They are fundamental to the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement. As I said at the outset, we believe in the very positive role that trade and investment can play in a nation like Colombia.

Our approach of engagement offers an alternative to the protectionist, isolationist thinking that we see in some parts of the world and, indeed, in some parts of this very House from opposition parties. By promoting economic development and opening up new doors to prosperity, free trade agreements like this can strengthen the social foundations of countries. That is what we are doing in Colombia. For a country like Colombia, free trade can open up new avenues for success. It can create new jobs and provide a solid foundation for families to build a future.

I encourage the members of the House to support this very worthwhile agreement.

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• (1210)

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in many respects, I agree with the rules of engagement that my colleague outlined in his speech. I am not sure if we agree on all the details, but, nonetheless, the rules of engagement for trade and to create a better society have certainly borne fruit over the past 20, 25 years in many nations, not just Colombia, with which we trade.

He talked about the two parallel agreements. The one in particular I would like to talk about is the labour agreement. What specifically in this agreement puts Colombia in line with how we in Canada treat our labour practices? I would like some instances of policies that are truly Canadian or, in his case, British Columbian. Perhaps he could illustrate some of the new arrangements in Colombia about which he would like to talk.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his party support of this agreement. Our government agreed to accept an amendment to this agreement, which would make even more robust the reporting requirements for some of the human rights and labour issues addressed in the agreement.

In response to his question, he is absolutely correct. There is a collateral side agreement that will be signed between our respective countries, which would make much more robust the respect for labour rights in Colombia, as well as in Canada. That agreement references an international protocol and a declaration on the rights of worker, which is generally accepted by free and democratic countries around the world. Colombia has agreed to sign on to that, to respect those rights that are articulated in the agreement.

Those kinds of issues address the very concerns that some of the opposition parties, such as the NDP and the Bloc, have raised. We have gone the extra step to bring Colombia into the international community and to ensure it respects human rights and labour rights.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague from Abbotsford, who spoke to us at length about human rights as it pertains to the trade agreement with Colombia.

Why is he not taking into account all the agencies that are opposed to this agreement because human rights are not being respected in Colombia?

The Canadian Labour Congress is opposed to it, as are the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, Amnesty International, the FTQ, Development & Peace, KAIROS, the Public Service Alliance of Canada and Lawyers Without Borders. The list goes on. All these agencies monitor the respect of human rights in our dealings abroad.

We know that Canada has to protect its good reputation when it conducts business in other countries.

The hon. member said that the agreement will respect human rights. Why is he disregarding what all these agencies are saying?

[*English*]

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Mr. Speaker, first, I want to highlight the fact that this free trade agreement is perhaps the most robust our country has

ever signed with any country around the world. We recognize that Colombia has come through decades of strife, of drug-related violence and of abuses of human rights. Over the last decade, Colombia has made significant progress.

I made it clear right from the start that there was something that distinguished the Conservatives from the Bloc and the NDP. We believe in engagement. The Bloc and the NDP believe in isolating countries. They believe that by isolating countries, that is how we get them to buy into international norms for human and labour rights. That is not our approach.

Our Conservative government believes in engagement. We believe this agreement is the toughest we have ever signed when it comes to those kinds of issues.

I also point out that if we look at Chile and the free agreement we signed with it some 13 years ago, that agreement has moved Chile to having one of the most respected human rights regimes in South America.

The Conservatives are getting things done. We are improving the lot of the people of Colombia, as well as enhancing our own trading relationships, which are critical to our country.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on this last day before elected members of the House are muzzled by the Conservative government, I want to add my voice to that of my colleagues who have spoken so far in opposition to Bill C-2, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia.

The Canadian government's main motivation for entering into this free trade deal is not trade, but rather investments. This agreement contains a chapter on investment protection that will make life easier for Canadians investing in Colombia, especially in mining.

If all the agreements protecting investment that Canada has signed over the years are anything to go on, the agreement between Canada and Colombia is ill-conceived.

All of these agreements contain provisions allowing investors to take a foreign government to court when it adopts measures reducing the returns on their investment. Such provisions are especially dangerous in a country where laws governing labour and the protection of the environment are, at best, haphazard.

When it comes to the environment, one need only look at the Conservative government's track record to know that it is not a top priority.

By protecting Canadian investors against any improvements in living conditions in Colombia, Bill C-2 could well delay the social and environmental progress that is needed in that country. This is where the government's Bill C-2 has serious shortcomings.

Colombia has one of the worst human rights records. To advance human rights in the world, governments generally use the carrot and stick approach. They support efforts to improve respect for human rights and reserve the right to withdraw benefits should the situation worsen.

With this free trade agreement, Canada would forego any ability to bring pressure to bear on the Government of Colombia. Not only is the Canadian government giving up the carrot and the stick, but it is handing them over to the Colombian government.

The Conservatives are showing once again what little regard they have for human rights by supporting a country where workers are treated like merchandise and their rights are easily violated.

The government keeps telling us that it has also negotiated a side agreement on labour and another on the environment. We know that these types of agreements are ineffective. They are not part of the free trade agreement and investors could with impunity destroy Colombia's rich environment, displace people to facilitate mine development and continue to murder trade unionists.

We should also mention that the free trade agreement between the United States and Colombia, signed in 2006, is also stalled on the issue of human rights. This agreement will not be ratified by Congress until Colombia strengthens its legislation to protect minimum labour standards and union activities.

The Canadian government, which boasts about following in the footsteps of its American big brother in many areas, including the environment, and waits for its decisions, is missing out on the opportunity to follow its lead in this case.

Colombia is Canada's fifth-largest trading partner in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is the seventh-largest source of imports from this area. So, Canada has more important trading partners than Colombia.

In recent years, trade between Canada and the other Latin American countries has increased considerably, which has meant a smaller share of trade with Colombia than with other countries in the region.

• (1220)

Canada exports primarily cars and car parts, and grains, which represented 23% and 19% respectively of our 2007 exports, and which primarily favour Ontario and the prairies. Most of Canada's investments in Colombia are in the mining industry.

In light of this information regarding trade between Canada and Colombia, we are having a very hard time understanding why Canada would want to sign a free trade agreement with Colombia. When two countries enter into free trade agreements, it usually means they are special trading partners who trade sufficiently to make it worthwhile to lower trade barriers.

Let us be candid: Colombia is not a very attractive market, considering that trade between the two countries is quite limited. The main products that Canada sells there, like grain from western Canada, have no difficulty finding a buyer in these times of food crises. Exporters in Quebec and Canada would see limited benefits, at best, from signing this agreement.

We imagine that some Canadian companies might be attracted, but we find it hard to see how the public in Quebec or Canada will benefit at all from this.

The real danger is that with Colombia, the Conservative government is handing responsibility for deciding what is in the

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best interest of the people over to multinationals. That is not reassuring.

Colombia has one of the worst human rights records in Latin America. The Conservatives keep saying that the human rights situation in Colombia has improved significantly. It may be less catastrophic than it was a few years ago, but it is still far from ideal.

If we take a close look at the situation in Colombia, we see that it is one of the worst places in the world for respecting workers' rights. Trade unionists are targeted because of their activities. They are threatened, kidnapped and murdered. The statistics are devastating. Since 1986, 2,690 trade unionists have been murdered. Although these murders declined somewhat in 2001, they have increased since 2007. That year, 39 trade unionists were murdered and another 46 were murdered in 2008, an 18% increase in one year. According to Mariano Jose Guerra, the regional president of the National Federation of Public Sector Workers in Colombia, thousands of people have disappeared and the persecution of unions continues.

Colombia does not have a legal framework to govern collective bargaining. In fact, about 95% of the public sector workforce is not covered by collective bargaining legislation. Colombian civil society obviously opposes this agreement. The Coalition of Social Movements and Organizations of Colombia delegation is refuting the claims made by the Colombian and Canadian governments: the human rights situation in Colombia has not improved.

I, along with my Bloc Québécois colleagues, will be voting against this bill, which puts business interests ahead of human rights in Colombia.

• (1225)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was pleased that the member mentioned that Colombia is Canada's fifth largest trading partner in Latin America, so that it does not rank very high at all in the scheme of things.

The question is why is the government spending so much political capital trying to get this agreement through and why is it so fixated on it, when the government normally likes to follow the Americans? What do we see happening in the United States?

We met with house representatives and senators in Congress in February. Each Republican we talked to, although not all, was basically lamenting the fact that the agreement had no chance of getting through the United States Congress. It has been kicking around for three or four years now. It did not get through before Obama became President and now it has no hope of getting through.

Undaunted by that, the member for Kings—Hants comes up with an amendment that he thinks is going to help get this deal through. As a matter of fact, this deal was dead until the Liberals resurrected it. This deal was going nowhere and it has been saved by the Liberals and the member for Kings—Hants.

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[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Carrier:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I simply do not understand why the Conservative government is going ahead with this proposed agreement. The only possible explanation is the trade interests and the interests of investors already present in that country, who want to have complete freedom to do whatever they like in order to make as much profit as possible. I think proceeding in this way will tarnish the country's reputation, especially since as my colleague just mentioned, even the United States—normally the champion of free enterprise—is reluctant to sign this agreement. They might never sign it because they do not want to lose their reputation and trample on human rights in this way.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I fundamentally disagree with the hon. member and his party's position on this free trade agreement. There was a tiny hint of honesty in his statement. He did at least admit that the human rights situation is better in Colombia. I stated in my earlier remarks that we have to measure this based on the progress that Colombia has made.

What the NDP and the Bloc are expecting from Colombia is perfection. They want there to be a perfect human rights regime before Canada ever does business and enhances its trade opportunities there.

I want to again refer the member to the example of Chile. As he knows, Chile had the worst human rights record in South America and perhaps in the world in the 1970s under the Pinochet regime. Today it has the lowest murder rate in South America. In fact, our trade with that country has almost tripled since we signed a free trade agreement with that country.

I would ask the member to comment on the example of Chile, which is not far from Colombia, which has a similar context in which it has developed.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Carrier:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member from Abbotsford for his question, which gives me the opportunity to elaborate. Protecting investors is included in the proposed agreement, which means that investors can take a foreign government to court for any policy it might try to introduce in order to improve things for workers or to protect the environment. That is the most contentious part of the proposed agreement. Without such an agreement, a government like Canada's could influence Columbia more to improve the lives of the people there. Canada would have the power to persuade Colombia to improve human rights, unlike what will happen with an agreement that gives investors all the rights.

● (1230)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to speak to this bill and to how the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement and the parallel agreements on labour and the environment fit into Canada's engagement in the Americas.

It has become increasingly apparent that Canada's economic prosperity, our commitment to democratic governance and the

security of our citizens are linked with those of our neighbours. It was with this in mind that our Prime Minister announced in the summer of 2007 that the Americas would constitute a key foreign policy priority for our government. He stated clearly that Canada's vision for the region and our strategy of renewed engagement in the Americas would be based on three interconnected and mutually reinforcing pillars: first, strengthening and reinforcing support for democratic governance; second, building a safe and secure hemisphere; and third, enhancing the prosperity of citizens.

With strong leadership in the Americas, we can ensure that Canadians are safer, more secure and more prosperous. We all know that greater prosperity cannot take hold without security or without the freedoms and laws brought about through democratic governance.

On the democracy front, Canada's efforts in the region have included contributions to numerous Organization of American States electoral monitoring missions. We will continue to work hard to strengthen the capability of this organization in the area of democracy support.

Canada has also provided assistance to non-governmental partners in the region to deepen citizen participation and has also strengthened its diplomatic capabilities in the region.

This past fall we launched a new Andean unit of democratic governance in Lima, Peru to support regional efforts to enhance democratic practices, transparency and good governance.

Our decision to strengthen our engagement in the Americas actively and constructively is being noticed around the world. We are a key regional player. Canada is now firmly on the radar screen of our partners who are increasingly realizing that Canada is present to support their efforts.

Our government has provided leadership internationally by encouraging free trade and open markets. Our commitment to opening doors, not closing them, is a key component of our engagement in the Americas and around the world.

As host of the G8 and co-host of the G20 this year, we will ensure that prosperity in the Americas constitutes a topic of discussion at these meetings. We are committed to our efforts for free trade, not protectionism, around the world.

In addition to our commercial engagement in the region, Canada also has a significant investment presence. In fact, Canada is the third largest national investor in the Americas. Our investment presence is strong in the financial sector and also in the extractive sectors.

In recent years, Canadian banks have increased their presence throughout the Americas. Canadian mining companies have substantial operations in many countries throughout the region and some mines have become very important contributors to national revenues, job creation and local capacity-building. Our investment presence in the region also serves as an example of the best practices of corporate social responsibility.

Similarly, democratic governance cannot be consolidated in the context of persistent poverty and social exclusion or when personal security is threatened by crime and violence.

With regard to security, Canada's key objective is to enhance regional stability by addressing threats posed by drug trafficking, organized crime, health pandemics and natural disasters.

Our efforts focus on Central America and the Caribbean, the area where criminal activity constitutes the most direct threat to Canada. Activities include support for training of local police, the purchase of equipment and the provision of technical and legal expertise. We will also look to increasing our anti-crime programming in the region, focusing specifically on corruption, money laundering, narco-trafficking, security sector reform and human trafficking.

• (1235)

In addition to these efforts, we enhanced our diplomatic resources in the region by launching a regional office for peace and security in Panama late last year. This unit will work to advance Canada's efforts to develop and implement an integrated regional strategy for addressing public security issues in the Americas.

All Canadians, and indeed the world, were shocked by the huge tragedy in Haiti. Canada's rapid and comprehensive response to the devastating earthquake in Haiti earlier this year is also indicative of our commitment to the region and, specifically, to those people in Haiti. To facilitate international coordination of a response to the crisis, on January 25 Canada hosted the Montreal ministerial preparatory conference on Haiti. At this conference, consensus was achieved around a set of key principles that will serve to guide international efforts going forward.

During the subsequent pledging conference held in New York, Canada confirmed our long-term commitment to Haiti and announced a contribution of \$400 million for humanitarian and reconstruction work in Haiti.

Canada is committed to supporting Haiti for the long term. However, Canada is committed to doing humanitarian and reconstruction programs around the world. Recovery and construction efforts will take years and Canada will stand by the Government of Haiti and the Haitian population to build a better Haiti. Our common vision with Haiti and the international community is a country built squarely on the foundations of security, sovereignty, rule of law, economic prosperity, equality, inclusion, social well-being and human rights.

Haitians must have ownership over their recovery. Haiti's government, community and business leaders must act as agents of change, putting the interests of the Haitian people first. There is much work to be done in Haiti.

As we continue to enhance our renewed engagement in the Americas, we intend to continue to build on the successful achievements to date, and there is work to be done. However, progress will not be easy as we will be dealing with a region currently grappling with numerous challenges and uncertainties.

Today we heard a couple of the opposition parties dwelling only on those challenges. Insecurity is a serious concern, particularly in Central America and the Caribbean, where gangs and organized crime groups pose serious security in government's challenges. Health pandemics, as well as natural disasters, also pose significant threats to regional stability and security. Weak democratic institutions in several states throughout the region is a concern. Declining

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trust among citizens of politicians and political parties is troubling as well.

Of course, the challenges to democratic governance and ensuring security that we currently face in the hemisphere are set against the backdrop of a thin and uneven economic recovery in a region of the world already facing huge income disparities. It is part of the world where there are massive challenges.

The Canada-Colombia free trade agreement embodies many of the different areas of focus for Canada's engagement in the Americas. Canada has an active agenda for the future of our engagement in the Americas. We believe that we have a real opportunity in Colombia to bring our Americas agenda to the world stage. The safety, the security and the prosperity of Canadians depends on it.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, is my honourable colleague aware of what is happening in Colombia today? Does he know that one of the biggest scandals to hit the Colombian government has just come to light? The secret police has embarked on a program of disinformation, a program to discredit, scam, fabricate false ties to the guerrillas, falsify documents, sabotage, threaten, blackmail and commit terrorist acts against opposition parties, NGOs, political leaders of the opposition and others in the country. It is scandalous.

Is my colleague aware of this? Does he not wonder why Mercosur—the South American common market encompassing Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay—does not want to do business with Colombia?

I know why. It does not want to do business with Colombia because it is a corrupt country that does not respect human rights.

• (1240)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that Canada is the greatest country in the world, as I am sure the hon. member would.

One of the differences I see is that we get stronger and better when we reach out, which is what we are intending to do through this agreement. Our economy is based on an open, free market system where trade agreements are sought and where there is less government intrusion and much less regulation and red tape. That is on our side.

The member is pointing to corruption. In my speech I acknowledged that there was corruption in many of the American states. However when we watch the evolution of Colombia and see how it gained independence from Spain, how it was part of a greater community called Grand Colombia with Venezuela, Colombia and maybe Ecuador, it has progressed since then.

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A turning point came in 2002 when the new President Uribe took power. He came with a view to opening markets. He came with a view to lessening corruption. We saw poverty drop by 22% in Colombia and unemployment drop by 27%. We saw hope instilled in Colombia. Free trade agreements similar to this one would enhance both that government and our country as well.

In the region, with Venezuela and some of the other countries around, when we can support—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please. Question and comments. The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the speaker for the Conservatives actually admits that the human rights record in Colombia is bad. In spite of that, they are basically pushing ahead with this deal because they want to support the investors and their positions.

We have had people and organizations solidly opposed to this trade agreement. The Council of Canadians, CUPE, B.C. Teachers Federation, Canadian Labour Congress, Canadian Auto Workers, United Church of Canada, Public Service Alliance and many more organizations across the country have studied this free trade deal and have recognized that it is a bad deal and that the government should not be proceeding with it.

Why is the government proceeding in the face of all of this opposition against it?

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** Mr. Speaker, the fact that the member would stand and read out a number of the organizations that would oppose it does not surprise me. The opposition to this by most of those organizations would not surprise me.

We will support this because, first, it is in the best interests of Canada. It follows our focus on the Americas. It is matched to a greater plan of providing stability to the region and providing a country that borders Venezuela with a little more hope when it is next to a regime that really forgets about human rights and walks away from many human rights.

There is hope in Colombia and hope with the new president. We have seen a drop in crime. We have seen a drop in a lot of things since 2002. Free trade agreements would enhance that even more.

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, about 45 years ago I had the opportunity as a student in the United Kingdom to watch the first debate that took place in the U.K. on the question of the common market and Britain's membership in the common market. It was very interesting to watch that debate, because the trade union movement lined up consistently against Britain's joining the European community. The Labour Party, of course, was very badly divided, but generally speaking on the left-hand side of the spectrum the universal view was that any kind of expansion of a free trade zone was going to be a bad thing for trade unionism, a bad thing for human rights, a bad thing for British political institutions.

It is very interesting today if we go back and talk to the trade union leadership in the United Kingdom. We find the strongest Europeans are the leaders of the British trade union movement. The people who believe the most strongly in the need for broadening

trade areas, for expanding trade opportunities, can be found in the British labour movement.

What I find both interesting and troubling is that the same evolution has not taken place in this country. We have to recognize that the issue of trade is fundamental to the prosperity of Canada. More than 50% of the wealth of Canada, of the GDP of Canada every year, comes from our international presence. It comes from trade. If we were to be cut off from trade, from investment, from a world of international engagement on the economic front, our prosperity as a country would be literally cut in half.

Again, I know there will frequently be people trying to see partisan issues or partisan advantage in here, but for me the question is: What is in the broad public interest of Canada? We are a trading country. We are a smaller country. We are not a big superpower. We cannot impose our trade conditions on other countries. We do best when we have strong multilateral agreements, and if I had my druthers, if I had my preferences, I would say we would like a Doha round that is going to produce greater, stronger multilateral engagement, much stronger multilateral protection, much stronger multilateral rules for Canada, and that would be the direction in which we would want to move.

However, the world reality is that we do not have stronger multilateral agreements as a real possibility today. The Doha round is frozen, and there is no particular progress being made in that regard. Governments in this country, both Liberal and Conservative, have over the last 15 to 20 years asked how we can expand the world of not only freer trade, but trade that is governed by the rule of law, trade that now is increasingly expanding other relationships in terms of our social and political relationships. How can that take place?

Over the last while, we have had free trade agreements with Israel and now with Jordan. We have had free trade agreements with Chile and with Peru, which has just been passed, and we have other agreements that are being carried out.

● (1245)

[*Translation*]

For its part, the Government of Colombia made an important decision to open its market by signing free trade agreements with Andean nations and all of its neighbours except Venezuela.

It is also discussing the possibility of signing an agreement with the European Free Trade Association, EFTA, and with the European Union in general. Such an agreement would be very important for Colombia, which also wants to sign agreements with the United States and Canada.

I hear a lot of criticism about this, mostly with respect to the human rights situation. The Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party say that the human rights situation in Colombia is so bad that it would be unthinkable to sign a free trade agreement with Colombia.

The member who just spoke said that Colombia is so corrupt that we should not even consider signing a free trade agreement with it.



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However, I would say that it is precisely because a country like Colombia has problems that the rest of the world should make an effort to negotiate agreements. Trade would then be carried out in accordance with international law, and we would have the opportunity for ongoing dialogue about labour rights, workers' rights, union issues, violent crime, drugs and human rights. That is what this accord sets out to do, and that is what the committee will discuss.

I am not suggesting that there are no problems in Colombia. On the contrary, there are. But will a free trade agreement really cause more problems? I do not think so. I think that, on the contrary, it could improve the situation. With the amendments proposed by my colleague, the member for Kings—Hants, this agreement will finally give us an opportunity to take a closer look at the human rights situation.

• (1250)

[English]

I have heard some things said about this agreement, but there is one argument in particular coming from my friends in the New Democratic Party that I want to deal with.

I have heard it said by many members of the New Democratic Party that the amendment proposed by my colleague from Kings—Hants essentially says this. Colombia will do its own review of its own human rights situation, and Canada will do its own review of its own human rights situation, and that is the extent of the monitoring that is proposed in the amendment. I want to say that is categorically false.

That is a false description of the amendment and of what is proposed. For the first time in a free trade agreement, we have a very clear indication that the question of human rights in Colombia will be reviewed by the Department of Foreign Affairs, NGOs in Canada, any international organizations that are hired by or contracted by either the Government of Canada or any human rights organization in Canada that wants to do so. It is allowed to come forward to Parliament, and Parliament is allowed to discuss that. These are the reviews that are anticipated in the amendment and these are the reviews that can take place.

When I look at the situation, no one on our side of the House is saying that the human rights situation in Colombia is great and that there are no social or economic problems in Colombia. We are not saying that.

What we are saying is that the steady extension of the rule of law as it pertains to commerce, human rights, the rights of labour and the rights of environment, the steady pushing of those frontiers from a Canadian base is the best we can do right now, because the multilateral agreements that we have been looking for, such as in the Doha round, are not possible.

It is not possible to put up our walls and say we are not coming back. Let us just say this agreement were to be defeated, that the House voted against it. Would trade with Colombia stop? No. Would investment in Colombia stop? No. Would there be more or less monitoring of that trade? There would actually be less. When have we debated most significantly the human rights situation in Colombia? Right now as a result of this legislation.

This is what puts the spotlight on human rights in Colombia. This is what puts the spotlight on human rights in Latin America. This is what puts the spotlight on the connection between trade, the environment, human rights and the rights of labour. I would rather be doing it this way than leaving it in the darkness, which my friends in the Bloc and the New Democratic Party seem so happy to do.

[Translation]

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it all becomes clear. The Conservative-Liberal coalition, or the Liberal-Conservative coalition, is taking shape. Never mind principles; money and investments are being protected and that protection has nothing to do with the free trade agreement with Colombia.

They simply want to protect investments. I totally understand the hon. member who just spoke and quite handily avoided talking about this, but we get the impression that investments in mining are being protected and that this has nothing to do with free trade with another country.

I also understand that other people are talking while I am, even though they are not allowed to do so, but that is another story.

I would like to know what the hon. member has to say about being so quick to abandon his principles regarding what is going on in Colombia in order to protect investments.

• (1255)

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Speaker, I want to say two things. First, in a modern economy, there is nothing wrong with wanting to protect investments, and it is not a sin to want to protect property rights.

At the same time, it is very important that we respect all general human rights and labour rights. Furthermore, there are more than just property rights. It is not simply a matter of protecting the investors, because investors are always protected. They are already protected and they have no problem.

Do Canadian foreign investors in Colombia think that they have no protection in Colombia? On the contrary, they are already there because they are protected, and they will not disappear if there is no agreement.

What really matters to us is how we will do it. We will expand the notion that rights are applicable everywhere, and that they are shared throughout the world.

Is that the opposite of property rights? I do not think so. Is it limited to property rights? I do not think so either.

[English]

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, given the dirty tricks that happened in the House last Friday, every single Liberal member of Parliament should be standing up this evening and voting against this agreement on that basis alone. The reason why the Conservatives are bringing in dirty tricks is that the public is clearly not on their side.

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As the member well knows, in Toronto just a week and a half ago, there was another standing-room-only crowd coming forward. Many of his constituents and constituents from other Liberal-held ridings in Toronto were saying no to this agreement. The reality is that there is not a single independent human rights organization on the planet that agrees with the Liberal Party.

My question is very simple. I do not want any skating from the member, even though he has said in the past that he likes to skate. Given this amendment that is being put forward and given the fact that so many organizations are saying they want to come forward to the trade committee and have their voice heard on the amendment and on the agreement themselves, will the member say publicly that the Liberal Party will support full and comprehensive hearings at the trade committee, if it takes weeks or months, so everybody's voice is heard?

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure we will have a full and ample discussion at the committee. There is no question about that. There is no reason to insult anybody who either appears or does not want to appear in front of the committee. We very much look forward to a full and open discussion.

What I find fascinating when I listen to the members of the hon. member's party is that they are literally frozen in time when it comes to this question of trade. Every single social democratic party in Europe has moved on. The one party that has not moved on and that is proud to wrap itself in the ideology of the 1950s and the 1960s is the New Democratic Party of Canada. That is the reason it is stuck in time, stuck in place and stuck in the polls, and that is where it is going to stay.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the opportunity to speak about the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

Let me take a moment to tell my colleagues that since 2006 the Government of Canada has achieved a number of important milestones in the area of international trade. We have concluded new free trade agreements with Colombia, Peru, Jordan, Panama, the European Free Trade Association, and the countries of Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. We have launched negotiations on a comprehensive economic and trade agreement with the European Union, the world's largest market by GDP, and we have begun negotiating with a range of countries on foreign investment promotion and protection agreements, air service agreements, and science and technology partnerships.

Our government's aggressive free trade agenda is crucial for a lasting economic recovery. We are ensuring that Canadian business can compete. We are ensuring they can compete responsibly.

I would like to speak to the issue of corporate social responsibility as it relates to the agreement. The Government of Canada takes matters of corporate social responsibility very seriously, which is why this free trade agreement, as well as parallel agreements on labour co-operation and the environment, includes CSR.

Responsible business conduct reinforces the positive effects that trade and investment can have on the communities in which they operate. It can improve human rights, labour standards and the environment, while increasing the competitiveness of firms.

Not only do these agreements advance the government's policy to promote corporate social responsibility in Canada, but they also encourage our treaty partners to increase corporate social responsibility. By signing on to these agreements, Colombia has indicated that it is committed to promoting the same principles of corporate social responsibility within its business community. Both Canada and Colombia have agreed to support positive corporate social responsibility practices and remind enterprises of the importance of incorporating that in their internal policies.

Corporate social responsibility activities address a number of concerns, specifically environmental protection, human rights, labour relations, corporate governance, transparency, community relations, peace and security, and anti-corruption measures. At its core, corporate social responsibility incorporates social, economic and environmental concerns into the daily operations of firms to benefit industry and society, with particular consideration for the community in which they are operating.

Given that Canada and Colombia have a significant investment relationship, it was critical to include corporate social responsibilities in these important agreements. Provisions in these agreements encourage both governments to promote voluntary principles of responsible business conduct within their business communities. The parallel agreements on labour co-operation and the environment also help ensure that increased business between our countries does not come at the expense of our social and environmental responsibilities.

Aside from these agreements, Canada is involved in several initiatives to help promote these principles.

Canadian extractive companies are world leaders in corporate social responsibility. Our government is committed to supporting these Canadian companies in their efforts abroad.

In March 2009 the government announced a comprehensive corporate social responsibility strategy. Today we see that these measures are working. Based on extensive consultations with stakeholders, the mining industry and non-governmental organizations, our government's strategy represents a workable, proactive and effective approach. This initiative will increase the competitiveness of Canadian mining and oil and gas companies by enhancing their ability to meet, and possibly exceed, their social and environmental responsibilities abroad.

However, that is not all. The government is supporting a new centre of excellence, independent of the government, to develop and disseminate high-quality CSR tools, training and information to sector stakeholders. We created a new corporate social responsibility counsellor office to help resolve any issues that arise between Canadian companies and the communities in which they operate. Currently, Dr. Marketa Evans, Canada's CSR counsellor, is working to address the concerns of corporate social responsibility beyond our borders.

Furthermore, Canada will continue to offer its support for host country capacity-building initiatives related to resource governance and commitments to the promotion of widely-recognized international voluntary CSR standards. Members will note that an important aspect of Canada's approach is adherence to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development guidelines for multi-national enterprises.

• (1300)

The organization's guidelines promote CSR and have been a long-standing key element of Canada's CSR approach. The guidelines recommend voluntary principles and standards for responsible business conduct, including the establishment of a national contact point.

The role of this contact point is to resolve differences of opinion among CSR stakeholders and to promote awareness of the guidelines and ensure their effective implementation. Canadian companies are encouraged to follow these guidelines, as well as those of the international finance corporation performance standards, the voluntary principles on security and human rights and the global reporting initiative. These are multilateral instruments promoting CSR that are key elements of Canada's approach to the issue.

Canada also supports and promotes CSR principles within the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the G8, Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation and La Francophonie. Let us make this very clear. We have appointed a CSR counsellor to assist in resolving social and environmental issues relating to Canadian companies abroad and we are establishing a new centre of excellence as a one-stop shop to provide information for companies, NGOs and others.

We will offer continuing CIDA assistance to foreign governments to develop their capacity to manage natural resource development in a sustainable and responsible manner. We will continue to promote internationally recognized voluntary CSR performance and reporting guidelines. Canadians can be proud of our government's commitment to this and Canadian companies can continue to be leaders here in Canada and beyond. We need to give them the tools to compete and succeed among the best. They can serve as an example.

Since February 2007 Canada has been a supporting country for the extractive industries transparency initiative, an organization that publishes payments by extractive sector companies to resource-rich governments and compares them with government records in an open and accountable manner. The publication of these records potentially expose corrupt transactions, as well as governmental integrity.

Honest governments that apply their revenues to benefit all their citizens are generally better governments. This government expects all Canadians operating at home and abroad to respect all applicable laws and international standards. They must also operate transparently and in consultation with host governments and local communities to ensure activities are conducted in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.

As we can see, Canada is committed to promoting CSR and is proud to encourage our trading partners to do the same. The government believes that liberalized, rules-based trade and social

### *Government Orders*

and environmental responsibilities go hand in hand. Corporate social responsibility is an important part of this principle. The Canada-Colombia free trade agreement recognizes this and is an important tool to create opportunities for Canadians in a socially and environmentally responsible manner.

For these reasons, I ask all hon. members for their support of this agreement.

• (1305)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I note how the government's position is so radically different than ours in the NDP. What is the problem with understanding the nature of human rights complaints in Colombia? What sort of vision do Conservatives have over there of the situation in Colombia in which they can ignore the facts?

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** They don't care.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** As my hon. member says, is it simply that they do not care? Is it a real desire to see this Colombia trade deal move ahead before the next election so that the present regime in Colombia can hold it up like a flag saying, "Canada supports us, we must be doing something right?" What is going on with this?

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** Mr. Speaker, a few minutes ago I heard my colleague across the aisle talk about the NDP being locked in the 1950s and 1960s with its ideology and it certainly comes out again in this comment.

I do not know what the NDP thinks. Is it that we will build some sort of wall around Colombia that will all of a sudden change things? We already have companies trading with Colombia. We already have investment in Colombia. This is an agreement that will insist on Colombia moving forward with respect to its labour and social obligations. This is good for Canada but it is also good for Colombians, and I wish the NDP would at least get into this century.

Like I said, my colleague across the floor was absolutely right. The NDP is locked in the 1950s and 1960s.

• (1310)

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to revert to a question I asked one of his colleagues earlier. For reasons of consistency I will do much of the same. The parallel accord regarding labour and some of the fundamental policies that will ensue from the nation of Colombia regarding labour practices certainly are about to fall in line, according to this agreement, with what we are doing here.

Perhaps the member would like to provide the House with an example of some of those labour policies that we have in this country that he hopes that the nation of Colombia will adopt as well.

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**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague has actually hit the nail on the head where those parties that are opposed do not seem to grasp. With the opportunity for Colombia to move ahead by leaps and bounds to the standards that we have in this country, some of these issues will be far better for Colombia and Colombians in that we will have that opportunity.

With the economic boost to them, to their labour, and to their social opportunities, this is tremendous. It is also good for Canadians. It gives us opportunities to trade with Colombia in a free trade agreement. As I said previously, we currently trade with Colombia. There is no reason why we cannot enhance that trade. As we do it, it will be of benefit to both countries.

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, and I thank him for his intervention, the NDP and Bloc members are opposing this basically because their opposition is rooted in an isolationist, socialist ideology.

My friend also knows that the NDP members today are couching their opposition in terms of human rights and labour laws, but back in the 1980s, when we were debating the North American Free Trade Agreement, they were actually opposed to that agreement as well when those issues were not at play.

Perhaps my colleague could comment on that and the fact that there probably is not one free trade agreement that the NDP has ever supported in the House.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. The NDP has been opposed to every free trade agreement that I know of that has come before the House. This is just one more step in that long list of complaints that it has about free trade.

**Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I first want to say that I understand completely the efforts on the part of members of the other opposition parties in expressing the concern regarding human rights. I indeed applaud them for ensuring that this is such a significant part of the debate.

I want to stress that we as Liberals share all of those same concerns. This is one of the ironies of this debate, and I would suggest that this is true for most members of the House in its entirety, that we are all very concerned about human rights, that we all want to see significant improvement in human rights for all Colombians.

I suggest that the differences lie not in our collective desire to see improvement and our collective concern for human rights but our views on how to accomplish that, and in this case in particular for Colombians. It comes down to a difference of approach, whether we support the approach of using walls as opposed to windows, of avoiding versus engaging, and engaging in criticism as opposed to providing support.

[*Translation*]

I completely agree with the members of the opposition parties about human right in Colombia. We know that respect for human rights is a problem in that country. The Liberal Party wants to see change, and I believe the same can be said for most members in the House, no matter which party they belong to.

We know that there are problems and of course we want to find solutions for Colombians with respect to the human rights situation,

but the question is how. How can we really help Colombia? Is it better to use walls or windows? Is it better to criticize or to provide support when that country takes action to improve the situation? Is it better to deny there are problems or engage in fixing them?

• (1315)

[*English*]

I want to speak a bit about those three different approaches.

If we talk about walls versus windows, is it better for the people of Colombia to have Canadians says that this is a problem, that we disagree with it, that we see human rights as a big problem so we will not participate? Is it better to tell Colombia to put up its walls so we will not see what goes on behind them? Is it better to say that windows are a better approach so we can see through them, so they will shed daylight on what goes on, so they can be opened and allow in fresh air?

These are serious issues. These analogies may seem somewhat simplistic, but they do make the point, in my view, of whether it is better to raise walls and hide behind them and pretend that we do not see what goes on, or whether it is better for Colombia to have an opportunity to open those windows to allow the light in, to allow us to participate in a dialogue.

Is it better to criticize, or is it better to support Colombia? We could say no to this free trade agreement thereby limiting our economic engagement with Colombia. We could say from that perspective that we do not agree with what happens there, that it should be changed, but it is all just criticism.

The alternative is for Canadians to provide support, and the only way for us to support Colombia is to engage with Colombia. It is absolutely a difference between a philosophy of trade and an opportunity to engage, as opposed to some people unfortunately viewing trade as somehow encouraging behaviour that we do not support.

I stand here on not only a very personal basis, but on behalf of the Liberal Party as well. We feel very strongly that trade gives us the opportunity to participate and support the government of Colombia, the businesses in Colombia, the Colombian people when they engage in activities that further human rights as opposed to us standing back and criticizing. I would venture that it is all too easy for us to sit back and criticize rather than get involved, do the work and provide support when it is needed.

The other option is avoidance versus engagement. We could just avoid the problem, or we could engage.

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As one of my colleagues said a little while ago, if we do not sign this free trade agreement with Colombia, we could all go home and pretend that the problem never existed. However, what on earth would Canada and Canadians be able to do to further human rights and enhance them if this agreement goes off the table? If anybody in the House believes that Canadians and Canada will have any further influence, that there will even be any attention paid to the challenges faced by Colombians, then he or she is naive, with all due respect. It will simply not be part of the discussion any longer.

On the contrary, if we engage, if we sign this free trade agreement, if we involve Canadian businesses with Colombian businesses, if we involve Canadians with Colombians, then it would give us the opportunity to work on a regular basis with the Colombian government, Colombian businesses, Colombian non-profit organizations, Colombian labour movements and the Colombian people to move the whole issue of human rights further. It would give us the opportunity to enhance economic activity, which we believe is fundamental to improving human rights, and to continue, rather than avoiding, rather than having it disappear from anybody's radar screen.

Thanks very much to my colleague from Kings—Hants, we now have an amendment to the agreement that would force an additional level of engagement specifically on some of these issues.

I have full respect and admiration for all of my colleagues who have engaged in this conversation, because this is an issue about which we are all concerned. It is a difference of approach.

I will therefore be supporting this bill, specifically because in our view those concerns warrant a much greater level of engagement than simply saying that we are not interested any more.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

The Liberal Party truly believes that fuller economic engagement will allow Canada to exert its influence over Colombia in terms of the human rights situation we are currently debating.

Since the election of President Uribe in 2002, Colombia has made progress in reducing violence and human rights violations despite an armed conflict fuelled by the drug trade.

This progress is largely due to close collaboration with international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Progress has already been made because international organizations have become involved and people are participating in commercial enterprises.

I will stop there because I want to answer my colleagues' questions. We have to decide if we want to build walls or windows; if we want to criticize and deny the problems or become engaged.

In order to truly improve the human rights situation in Colombia, I choose engagement. I will be voting in favour of Bill C-2.

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Liberal member's heartfelt comments, but I do not agree with her walls versus windows analogy. Another possibility would be to build different windows. Colombia has an embassy in Canada and Canada has an embassy in Colombia. There are many ways this debate could move forward.

I have to wonder about the progress made in that country since President Uribe came to power in 2002, as the member mentioned. Are fewer people being killed and imprisoned? Is that progress?

It is strange to hear such arguments. I would like the member to talk about the argument that alternative solutions already exist. However, we must not go from putting up a wall that is a trade barrier to putting up a wall of misunderstanding that would only encourage a government that completely denies civil liberties.

**Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. Some progress has been made, but the situation is not perfect. That is why we are taking part in this debate. We want to improve the human rights situation in Colombia. Is it better to go on criticizing or to offer our support, to show them that we have seen some progress and we want to help them continue in that direction?

I am not the only one saying this. The American President, Mr. Obama, congratulated President Uribe for the progress made in terms of human rights in Colombia and the in fight against the murders of trade unionists in that country. He noted that there had been appreciably fewer deaths related to the labour movement and increased prosecution of individuals who commit egregious human rights violations.

Some progress has been made. Are we going to encourage Colombia or continue criticizing?

• (1325)

[*English*]

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it looks as if there will not be free and fair elections in Colombia on May 30.

The international pre-electoral observation mission, an international organization which is in Colombia observing the first round of elections, cites the following violations so far: human rights violations; illegal and armed groups interfering in the electoral process, creating fear and intimidation; and illegal campaign financing, using federal social programming to influence and coerce citizens. It has found a number of problems already before the presidential election on May 30. It is also calling for the Canadian government to back away on Bill C-2 until after the elections.

In light of these observations by this international organization, is the member content with her and her party's stance on Bill C-2?

**Ms. Martha Hall Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, the point is things are not perfect. I will point out that President Uribe in fact respected the democratic requirements to not run for another term, but that is not the point.

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The point is we engage in trade with all sorts of countries that do not have perfect electoral situations. Women do not have the right to vote in a number of countries with which we promote trade. Do I object to that? No. I support engaging in trade as much as possible because of the firm belief that the more we engage in trade, the more we can highlight the fact that we expect to see democratic reforms and improvements to human rights. Rather than hiding behind walls, rather than pretending they are not there and simply not engaging, by engaging and supporting our trading partners, we are also helping them to improve the democratic process and human rights.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak to this issue. Many of my colleagues will not be able to do so now after the shenanigans on Friday, when the opportunity for us to express our opinion on this issue, an opinion that is backed up by groups across the country, was taken away. The support for our position from people right across Canada is very strong. Our voice has been muted in the House by the actions of the Conservative Party. The government has taken that away from us.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the bill. I would like to focus on two aspects of the free trade deal.

We have paid a lot of attention to the aspect of human rights, environmental protection and labour rights. Those issues stand by themselves. Canada should not legitimize a corrupt regime in a country where trade unionists and human rights defenders are murdered with impunity and where drug cartels and paramilitary death squad leaders have infiltrated the government. We should not be doing that. That is pretty clear. Why are we doing it? That is a good question.

The agreement is based on the much discredited NAFTA model of trade and investment that enshrines investors' rights over democratic processes. If we look at all the other countries in South America when it comes to investor rights over a democratic process we will see that they are a little different.

In its submission to the committee studying this bill, the Canadian Labour Congress said:

Authentic democracy and the respect for human rights are not the direct outcome of free trade. If human rights and the security of the person are not upheld, neither are the democratic rights of millions of Colombians. Since January 2007, there have been 115 trade unionists murdered.

Rather than being a trade agreement, this is a trade and investment agreement. Something we have to understand is that this is Canada and the free traders' toehold in South America. There is virtually no other country in South America that is going to put up with this kind of agreement.

These countries want control of their own resources. They want to build their own states. They are a little tired and a little turned off by the last 30 years of imperialism on the economic front throughout South America. That has led to democratically elected governments in many of these countries that are standing up for their rights to control their resources, to control their economies and to make the right moves so that their people can move ahead.

That is what is happening in the rest of South America. The free traders have a toehold in South America where the rules that we thought were great will still be upheld by a corrupt and decadent

government that has nothing in comparison to the human rights that we espouse.

What is it that we are going to accomplish for Canada with this action? We are going to fight a rearguard action in South America against the direction the democratically elected governments of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, Chile and Venezuela have all said they are interested in going. They are interested in controlling resources and in returning investment to their people.

Now, that is a problem for those who are free traders, who want to protect multinational corporations' investing in other countries. That is a problem and we need to strike a balance. However, the balance is not going to be struck in Colombia. The balance is going to be struck with the majority of the countries in South America. What is Canada doing with this agreement with Colombia? It is painting itself into a corner and I do not think that is correct.

● (1330)

The Conference Board of Canada said:

Our annual trade with Colombia is about the same level as that with South Dakota and is actually smaller than that with Delaware or Rhode Island. Compared to other markets much closer, Colombia is not really a major player. Eighty per cent of Colombia's imports to Canada are actually duty free already. The gains from free trade are probably not as great as they would be in other cases.

It is really not about the money. It is not about the \$1.3 billion that we trade with Colombia. That is not going to be much altered by that. What we are not doing is reaching out for a new future in South America as people are doing right now in all those other countries. We could talk about a better arrangement with South America. That is what we should be discussing here.

We have been accused of being Luddites or of living in the past, but we are living in today. We are not living in a past that said our goal in this world is simply to exploit other countries. It is to have other countries grow as we want to grow. That is a New Democratic position. I hope that position can permeate some of the other parties. I am sure there are many people here who support that.

There is a regional trade agreement among Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay founded in 1991. They want a common market in South America. They want to work together in that region to build their economies and to make a better future for their people. Why are we not supporting that kind of effort? Why are we not engaging with those countries? Why are we engaging with Colombia?

The countries under Mercosur are Canada's largest export market in South America and home to significant Canadian investment already. We are working there. They are the countries we should be actively engaging with. Colombia is the odd man out.

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Comments have been made to me by my constituents about the nature of the amendment that has been put forward by the Liberal Party and supported by the Conservative Party for assessments by individual countries on this particular deal. My constituents are saying that they will not be satisfied with anything less than an independent impact assessment conducted by an independent third party. Reports generated by the Colombian government are not satisfactory. They are not trustworthy. We cannot go ahead with an agreement in that fashion.

The haste to move ahead with this for political purposes perhaps, with the election coming up in Colombia at the end of May are not reasons for us to move ahead with this agreement.

There is no great rush for increased trade with Colombia. There is a great rush to keep that toehold in South America.

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to the hon. member's speech. We know that the government has sent the RCMP after a person who had a business dealing with a man suspected of illegal activity, but it is prepared, without restriction, to sign a trade agreement with a corrupt government that is suspected of committing abuses and murdering union leaders. What is wrong with this picture?

[*English*]

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, in reality, they are very similar because the Prime Minister has asked the RCMP to investigate the minister for a very political reason, to get this political problem out of his jurisdiction.

Why are we going to bat for a country and setting up a free trade agreement with a government that has such an insidious record?

Logic has it that the most likely indicator of future performance is past performance. We have the past performance of the Colombian government, the present performance of the government, and the future performance of the government will likely be somewhat similar. However, our Conservative government, supported by the Liberals, says that we should do this anyhow. It is political. That is why the government is doing it.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear the member talk so passionately on the issue of human rights. Being of my generation, which was the Trudeau generation, and the discussion of human rights in our country during that era, it is quite shocking today to see the Liberals making haste to help conclude a trade agreement with a country with a record that even the United States in its pro-free trade agreement stance in the world is stepping away from.

I understand that the member was a mayor of a community. Probably in that capacity he worked within collective agreements. In collective agreements when there is a complex issue and both parties want to put it aside, they sign letters of intent, side agreements, that have no weight in law whatsoever but are an agreement to proceed in a certain manner. We have the same thing with respect to this agreement. The parties are talking about the rights of trade unionists and other rights in side agreements when they should be in the core of the agreement.

On the issue of free trade agreements, why did we fight them for so many years? All one has to do is look at Hamilton where I am from. We lost 50,000 jobs to free trade. In Ontario, in the first two years of the original free trade agreement, 500,000 jobs were lost. That is why we oppose them.

• (1340)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot agree with my colleague more about the nature of these potential sidebar agreements to this trade agreement. They are not worth it. They are not worthy of consideration in this larger agreement. I have real troubles with the agreement and I have expressed them, but the nature of these side agreements that have been proposed are simply not adequate.

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak in the House today to the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

This is an important agreement for Canada, Canadian workers and our farmers and producers alike. Farmers need trade to survive.

Now more than ever, we need to be doing everything we can to open doors for Canadians, to create new commercial opportunities around the world and to work beyond our borders to help Canadians to succeed. Canadian businesses need access to markets in order to compete, grow and succeed. That is why the free trade agreement is such an important accomplishment.

Canadian businesses and investors have long called for closer economic co-operation with Colombia, and our government will answer the call.

In 2009, our two-way trade in merchandise totalled \$1.3 billion. Key Canadian products, such as cereals, wheat and barley, machinery, pulse crops, paper and motor vehicles, are the driving forces behind this achievement. Once this new agreement is in place, it will be easier for Canadian companies to trade in those products, along with many other products, like beef, pork, liquor, wine, machinery and mining equipment. Trade will flourish. These companies certainly see the clear progress Colombians have made in recent years to tackle difficult challenges in their own country. Our government wants to continue to support this progress and to help create new opportunities for Colombians within our commercial relationship, and we want to do so in a positive and responsible manner.

Our companies recognize the economic potential of Colombia. I will give a specific example. Earlier this month, our government announced that Colombia has reopened its market to Canadian cattle effective immediately. This is proof of the strong relationship we have with Colombia and now we are getting things done for Canadian farmers.

Colombia is a vibrant and dynamic market for Canadian exporters. It is a significant growing source for imports that are important to Canadian consumers and businesses. At the same time, it is a very appealing market for exporters and foreign investors. It is a market of 48 million people.

*Government Orders*

Once this free trade agreement is in place, Canadian exporters and investors in a broad range of sectors will benefit from lower trade and investment barriers in the Colombian market.

Upon its implementation, Colombia will eliminate tariffs on nearly all current exports, including wheat, pulses and mining equipment. The reality is that Canadian exports, particularly commodities, are already at some disadvantage due to many of our main competitors, such as the U.S., and their geographic closeness to their markets.

These disadvantages of course will get worse if the U.S. and Colombia sign their own free trade agreement. If we wait to implement our agreement, we risk seeing Canadian exporters further disadvantaged in the important market. Many other Canadian exporters stand to lose by delaying implementation of this agreement.

Colombia maintains a tariff averaging 17% on agriculture products, with tariffs ranging from 10% to as high as 108% for some pork products, 80% for beef products and 60% for beans. Indeed, agriculture was a key driver for these free trade agreement negotiations. From the very start, we were guided by the principles that a successful outcome in agriculture would be absolutely critical.

Once this free trade agreement is in place, 80% of our agriculture tariffs will be eliminated immediately. This translates into about \$25 million of annual duty savings for our producers in key sectors, such as wheat, barley, lentils, beans and beef. Clearly this is a significant benefit for our agriculture sector.

We need this free trade agreement to provide competitive access for Canadian products. By creating new market opportunities for Canadian exporters, this free trade agreement is also expected to have a positive impact on the Canadian manufacturing sector. This sector has been particularly vulnerable during these tough economic times. This sector needs opportunities for growth.

Growth can be achieved in Colombia. With rapid growth in the Colombian economy in recent years, prior to the economic downturn, Canadian companies have made important investments. The strong presence of Canadian companies has also created many export opportunities for Canadian exports of industrial goods.

Some of Canada's leading exporters to Colombia include off-road dump trucks and auto parts. Mining equipment designed and built in Saskatchewan has also found a place in Colombia. Both those products will likely benefit from increasing market access through this free trade agreement.

• (1345)

We need to create these opportunities for Canadian businesses to increase their export potential. Trade agreements are a critical part of these efforts.

We have entered an age of fierce global competition as emerging economies continue climbing the value chain and establishing themselves in an ever-widening range of sectors. We need to listen to Canadian businesses, help them expand their reach into exciting markets and put them on a level playing field with their competitors. The time for Canada to act is now.

Canadian businesses and workers expect their government to put in place trade agreements that allow them to compete in international markets on a level playing field. They have come before the Standing Committee on International Trade on these issues to speak to the benefits of this agreement. We cannot put our exporters at a relative disadvantage.

The Colombia free trade agreement also forms part of the government's efforts to strengthen Canada's engagement in the Americas by fostering economic development and strengthening democracy and security.

As we know, Colombia, as a nation, is making substantial progress toward becoming a more stable and secure nation. Our government wants to support these efforts. Free trade is a vehicle that can help us do that and give entrepreneurship a chance to thrive in communities across the country. We all want a democratic and secure hemisphere, one that is free of the shackles of terrorism, crime and instability. However, we cannot have a democratic and secure nation without creating a path for its own aspirations or without creating jobs and opportunities through the power of international trade and investment. That is what the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement would help to do.

At the same time as we signed this free trade agreement, we also signed two parallel agreements on labour and the environment. These agreements commit both nations to work together to ensure high levels of protection for workers and the environment. Canada believes that freer trade and investment can and must go hand in hand with labour rights and the environment. These agreements with our Colombia partners prove it.

This free trade agreement not only benefits Canada, but it benefits our Colombia partners too.

We are a trading nation. Our businesses can compete with the best in the world. Today I am proud to say that we can find Canadian businesses, Canadian products and Canadian investment dollars at work all over the world.

We have debated this agreement for some 30 hours. We know the merits of this agreement. It is time that we listen to our Canadian companies and work to ensure that they maintain their competitiveness in this market and have a chance to pursue new opportunities.

For those reasons and for the many benefits to our Colombian partners that this agreement would bring, I ask for the support of all hon. members from all parties to stand up for Canadian workers. We must continue these efforts and create new opportunities for all Canadians to thrive and prosper in this global economy.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member who just spoke is a man who is very concerned with the well-being of Canadians and I am sure he is viewing this particular agreement from that perspective and that perspective alone. However, I say to the member that in this House, the NDP, the Bloc and others have tabled petitions by thousands of Canadians asking us not to proceed on this particular agreement.



*Government Orders*

In addition, as I said a few moments ago to the member for our own party who spoke previously about the side agreements, the side agreements in this particular free trade agreement do not have the teeth necessary to ensure that the murders that have taken place and the treatment that the citizens of Colombia have received at the hands of the paramilitaries will ever change. In fact, the changes that we heard the Liberals talk about in the House just a few moments ago were changes that came about by interventions by the NGOs and others from Canada.

I would like the member's comments on the petitions of Canadians.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Mr. Speaker, the one thing we have been doing is listening to Canadians about this agreement. In the agriculture committee alone, we talked about the importance of the Colombia free trade agreement. For example, Mr. Jurgen Preugschas from the Canadian Pork Council stated:

We need to pass the bilateral free trade agreements that are in there right now, such as with Colombia.

He needs this trade agreement. Our pork producers need this trade agreement. They came to our committee and told us to get this deal done. They looked at the hon. member for the NDP and said that we needed to get this done.

Why will the NDP not co-operate? Why will it not support our hog producers across Canada and help them get this deal done?

• (1350)

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to my hon. colleague's comments and I listened to some of the criticisms from the New Democratic Party.

I think it bears taking a moment to reflect on the fact that the New Democratic Party has never supported a trade agreement in this House, let alone a free trade agreement in this House. The NDP continues to mislead the general public and it uses facts that are absolutely incorrect that it would never repeat outside this House.

How do we deal with that in a democratic forum?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Mr. Speaker, I come from a province that has had an NDP government. It was a government of have nots and a government that could not do. It was a flat earth society in Saskatchewan until we realized that we could, would and did change that. If people look at my province today, they will see the examples of those types of benefits.

I ask my colleagues in the NDP to realize that trade is not evil. If they try to understand it they will recognize the benefits that trade and business provides to our country.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, having two Business Excellence Awards under my belt, I certainly do not take any lessons from the hon. member about what is good for business and communities.

What all Conservatives are refusing to mention are the clear links between the Uribe regime and the murderous paramilitary thugs who kill human rights and labour activists. In fact, the Defense Intelligence Agency in the United States talked about Mr. Uribe being a big fan of the Medellin cartel. He developed and prospered

in the political system through his links with the Medellin cartel and he is a personal friend of Pablo Escobar.

Since the Conservatives always used to say that they were tough on crime, why are they being soft on the crimes of the Colombian government?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot think of any country in this world that did not have a rocky start. If we look at the U.S., it had assassinations of presidents, for example, when it had its start.

Looking at what we can do as Canadians to help Colombians, I think it is a lot better to encourage them, work with them and bring them forward instead of poking a stick in their eyes and saying that they are doing everything wrong. Instead of telling Colombians that they are not good enough, why do we not accept them for what they are and help them? We can learn from them as they learn from us and both of us will benefit from an agreement like this.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am speaking to the House for the umpteenth time about the implementation of the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement, the infamous Bill C-2, which the government insists that we pass without discussing any of the human and social considerations about which the public has sent us so many emails.

Clearly, the Bloc Québécois will say for the umpteenth time that it is against this free trade agreement.

Earlier I heard my colleagues from other political parties praising this agreement and its resulting business and export opportunities. I do not know where they are getting this from because there is not a great deal we can export to Colombia. It is an extremely poor country, which imports very little. It exports a bit of grain, but that is about it.

They are not mentioning the real reason they absolutely want to conclude a free trade agreement with Colombia. Below its soil there are desirable minerals. The motives for this agreement are the minerals found underground in Colombia. No one has said so directly here in the House, except of course the opposition parties who have nothing to hide.

This agreement contains a chapter on investment protection, which will make life easier for Canadian investors who invest in Colombia, particularly in the mining sector.

Over the years, the Conservative government has signed a number of agreements with different countries, and the primary concern of all these agreements has been the return on investments.

We believe that this provision has always put investors' profits ahead of human and social rights. It is very dangerous in a country such as Colombia, a country where labour or environmental protection laws are haphazard. When a law is enacted to protect the Canadian investor, it is at the expense of a people or a country.

Colombia has one of the worst human rights records in the world, and certainly in Latin America. Human rights are not important to Colombia.

*Statements by Members*

During the many weeks that we have been discussing this agreement, the government has constantly repeated that the agreement it will sign with Colombia also has two side agreements—one on labour and another on the environment. We know very well that side agreements are ineffective. They are not part of the free trade agreement, which means that investors can—with impunity—destroy Colombia's rich environment, displace people in favour of mine development, and continue to murder trade unionists or NGO workers who defend human rights.

Today, we received an email from a Colombian-Canadian living in Montreal. He told us that human rights violations are rampant in Colombia. He also said that one of the most serious accusations against the Uribe government involves the biggest spy scandal in Colombian history perpetrated by the administrative security department.

• (1355)

It involves the secret police of President Alvaro Uribe's government. This citizen forwarded a copy of a 166-page document that was discovered. It indicates that Mr. Uribe's government wanted to create controversy around NGOs and link them to drug trafficking organizations. It is clear: that is what it says in the Uribe government document. When we are told in this House that the Colombian government—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but it is now time for oral questions.

The hon. member will have four minutes when debate resumes.

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

• (1400)

[*English*]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this being Earth Week, I rise to congratulate a group of citizens in my riding on a significant breakthrough last Tuesday in their battle to stop a quarry in northeast Flamborough, a quarry that would have damaged important wetlands and ecosystems that support unique species, songbirds, raptors and all manner of flora and fauna on this side of the Niagara Escarpment.

Graham Flint, who left his international career and donated countless volunteer hours to lead hundreds of FORCE members from Carlisle, Freelon, Mountsberg, Kilbride and area, said it best, "Together we have succeeded". That is because last week, the Ontario cabinet ordered the quarry stopped. Pending any potential appeal by the company, residents in the area can breathe a sigh of relief.

FORCE stands for Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment. I can say from attending some of their events that they are a force to be reckoned with.

Special recognition is also due to my provincial colleague, hon. Ted McMeekin, and local city councillor Margaret McCarthy. It was a joyous occasion for both of them, Mr. Flint and FORCE, and it is great news for safe local drinking water and the environment.

**STATUS OF WOMEN**

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, April 17, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of Equality Day.

[*Translation*]

We have come a long way in 25 years, but we still have a long way to go.

[*English*]

This past weekend at the Thinking Women's Brain Spa, there was huge concern that Canadian women are now fighting to hold on to the rights we have, instead of being able to fight for equality for all women.

Marilou McPhedren spoke on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Legal Education and Action Fund and explained that, without resources for gender equality initiatives, women's rights will be further eroded and there is a need for evidence-based advocacy for the lived rights of Canadian women.

Nancy Peckford and the fabulous team from Equal Voice led us in the "Be Her or Support Her" boot camp to get more women elected, and Mary Anne Burke and Margrit Eichler taught us the tools of the bias-free framework, tools for the shared goal of full equality for all Canadians.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**FRANCO MATERAZZI**

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Franco Materazzi passed away on March 29, 2010. The Outaouais region is in mourning for a great economist.

Mr. Materazzi studied and was familiar with the region's economic development, and was a key contributor to it as well. He identified all the problems our businesses face with regard to federal government contracts, and outlined the challenges of developing high-tech companies in the Outaouais region. His many studies have become indispensable.

I met Mr. Materazzi and immediately understood why he was so admired. His dream was not to take centre stage, but to help businesses get established. He was a compassionate man, who was involved with the Fondation de l'Université du Québec en Outaouais for many years.

On behalf of myself and my Bloc Québécois colleagues, I offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Materazzi.

*Statements by Members*

[English]

**BAISAKHI FESTIVAL**

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week in my home town of Hamilton, Ontario, our Sikh community celebrated the annual Baisakhi Festival. For Sikhs everywhere, Baisakhi marks the time farmers harvest crops in India and the beginning of the new spring.

This festival is celebrated with great enthusiasm around the world, wherever there are Sikh communities. On this day in Punjab, farmers thank God for the bountiful harvest and pray for prosperity in the coming year. The day of the Baisakhi festival has tremendous significance in Sikhism. It is on this day that Sikhs everywhere commemorate the establishment of the Khalsa in 1699 by the 10th Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

In keeping with the spirit of this special occasion, I would like to say to my Sikh constituents and friends back in my riding of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, and indeed to Sikhs around the world, happy Baisakhi and happy Khalsa Day.

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[Translation]

**NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK**

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, National Volunteer Week is our opportunity to acknowledge the men and women who give of their time to try to bring some improvement to our lives.

At times when it seems nothing is going right, they are there to comfort us. Through a handshake, an embrace, a smile or simply a sympathetic ear, they give us hope.

During this week when we celebrate those who give of themselves, we must remember that volunteering is a career in itself. These volunteers work with the most vulnerable members of society, provide much needed assistance to the very ill, help men, women and children in need, and take care of our seniors. Their selfless efforts deserve our admiration.

I would like to thank them for making change happen. Happy National Volunteer Week.

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• (1405)

[English]

**POLAND**

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my deepest condolences to the Polish nation for the tragic and sudden passing of President Lech Kaczynski, his wife Maria and 94 members of Poland's civilian and military leadership.

It is barely possible to comprehend that there could be another Polish tragedy associated with a place called Katyn. I say that particularly mindful of the Canadian families of the original victims of the Katyn massacre 70 years ago that remember it every year at the monument in my riding.

It is too early to say what the tragic plane crash of April 10 will mean for Poland. It is not too early to speak about the courage that it took to keep the idea of Poland and the truth of Katyn alive over the years, including by Polonia here in Canada. It was done despite much indifference internationally and in the face of brutal regimes. Nor is it too early to recognize that the incredible perseverance of the Polish people has built a strong, stable democratic country, which Canadians greatly admire.

As Poland mourns and recovers from this tragic event, Canada can and must continue to be a strong friend by officially recognizing the original Katyn massacre and pressing for Russia and others to do the same. I invite members to join me in that commitment.

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**NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK**

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this week is National Volunteer Week, a time for us to recognize those within our communities who give of themselves to make our lives better.

In my constituency I would like to recognize Lorne and Helen Dueck for their work with the Ontario March of Dimes, Doug French for his work with the Child Advocacy Centre of Niagara and Dr. Julia Murray of Court Animal Hospital who has done extensive volunteer work to help lower the amount of stray cats in St. Catharines.

While volunteers have many faces and can play many roles, today I would like in particular to thank those Canadian seniors who volunteer. Whether they are raising funds, rallying behind important causes or providing much needed services to others, seniors in my constituency of St. Catharines play a key role. They are an inspiration to us all.

I hope everyone will join me this week in saying a sincere thanks to all our Canadian seniors who volunteer.

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[Translation]

**GUY BOUCHER**

**Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, April 7, Hamilton Bulldogs coach Guy Boucher was named outstanding coach of the year by the American Hockey League. This was his very first season as the Bulldogs' coach.

Mr. Boucher is a native of the Lower St. Lawrence, more specifically Notre-Dame-du-Lac. He is the second youngest coach in the American league and an inspiration to the young people in our region.

He has proven that with determination and an excellent work ethic, it is possible to achieve our goals and make our dreams come true.

This young coach is just beginning his career in the professional circuit and he is already considered a great teacher. His determination and passion for teaching younger people will surely earn him many more nominations and a bright future.

*Statements by Members*

Again, my most sincere congratulations to Mr. Boucher.

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[*English*]

**ARTS AND CULTURE**

**Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last night Canada experienced the Juno Awards in St. John's, Newfoundland, where the best Canadian artistic talent was showcased. I would like to congratulate the talented nominees and winners of these prestigious awards.

Also this weekend, the Minister of Canadian Heritage announced renewed, stable, multi-year funding for the Canada Music Fund. This means over \$79 million dollars of direct support for our Canadian artists so they can create and showcase their music to Canada and to the world.

Our government is giving more money to artists and more support to our creative economy than any government in history because we recognize the contribution of arts and culture to our society, our identity and our economy.

Just ask Heather Ostertag, president of FACTOR, who said that this government has “clearly demonstrated [its] commitment to Canadian culture, [which] will ensure that Canadian artists [continue] taking their music to the world”.

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**NATIONAL LIBERAL WOMEN'S COMMISSION**

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today the National Liberal Women's Commission is in Ottawa for a day on the Hill, meeting with Liberal MPs and senators. The Liberal Party believes it is absolutely critical to involve more women in the political process and encourage more women to run for elected office.

Its visit to Ottawa is timely as this past Saturday Canadians celebrated the 25th anniversary of the enactment of section 15 of the charter, which states:

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

It was the women of Canada who fought to have their rights enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It was not until the women of our country marched on Ottawa and demanded their inclusion that this section 15 became a reality. Since then, organizations like the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund have led the way in the fight for equality, though we have much more to do.

I welcome our Liberal Women's Commission to Ottawa and encourage it to be the next—

•(1410)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Saint Boniface.

**VICTIMS OF CRIME**

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I dedicate my statement today to the family of murder victim Paul William Cherewick, who was also once my neighbour.

Today the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice launched the fifth annual National Victims of Crime Awareness Week symposium. Our government's commitment to ensuring that victims have a stronger voice in the criminal justice system remains a cornerstone of our justice agenda.

In 2007 our government created the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime to serve as an independent resource for victims in Canada. In that same year our government committed \$52 million over four years for a package of programs, services and funding to help the federal government and the provinces and territories respond to a variety of needs of victims of crime.

Budget 2010 provided additional funding of \$6.6 million over two years.

We are all encouraged to further explore new ways to reach out to victims of crime and, in the spirit of the theme of this week, to let them know that every victim matters.

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**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak today about hunger and starvation in the developing world and how Canada could help.

Many say that the world grows more than enough food for everyone. Why then do almost one billion people still face hunger today?

Many of Canada's current aid and trade policies support replacing small scale local farming abroad for chemically dependent industrial agriculture centred on exports. We are adding to the problem. Especially bad is the conversion of food crops to agrofuels and the promotion of patented genetically modified crops that prevent poor farmers from saving their own seeds.

This leads to situations like 2008, when market speculation drove food prices up and when countries that could no longer afford to feed themselves suffered food riots and hunger.

Our development and trade policies need to support the food sovereignty and security of developing countries instead of dismantling local sustainable farming.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**VICTIMS OF CRIME**

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, an opportunity to remember that every victim counts.

Our Conservative government has always made it a top priority to protect law-abiding Quebecers and Canadians. We created the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims Of Crime, we passed the Tackling Violent Crime Act, we introduced a bill to get tough on violent and repeat young offenders and, as announced in the Speech from the Throne, we will introduce more bills to strengthen victims' rights.

That being said, I would be remiss if I did not mention a sad anniversary. Nearly a year ago, the Bloc Québécois voted against Bill C-268, a bill to end trafficking in children. That was completely unacceptable.

Despite the Bloc's opposition to our justice and crime initiatives, our government is making sure that victims' rights take precedence over those of criminals.

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### EQUALIZATION

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Beauce claims that Quebecers are a bunch of spoiled children who are never satisfied and always ask for more. He also said they have built a system of economic dependence that has become more and more elaborate.

This is a clear demonstration of misunderstanding and contempt. Despite being shackled by Canada's chains, Quebec has successfully developed an economic and social model all its own, and with only half of the resources it should have available.

As a token Quebecer in Ottawa, the hon. member must realize that, if not for the fiscal imbalance, which the federal government like to maintain, there would be no economic dependence.

It is precisely this dependence—which the member for Beauce alluded to—that the Bloc Québécois wants to correct, not only through its bill to eliminate the so-called federal spending power, but ultimately by achieving Quebec's independence. That is the only way Quebec can achieve its social and economic goals.

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•(1415)

[English]

### NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

**Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this week is Canada's National Volunteer Week and I wish to underline the importance of volunteers to our country.

The work of volunteers often goes unnoticed, but some of our most valued institutions run on volunteer work. Thousands of volunteers work every weekend without pay to ensure that things like hockey and soccer happen for our kids. Without volunteers, many children simply would not have access to community sports and activities.

[Translation]

Consider the Olympic Games: while our athletes proudly represented us in competition and in the media, it was the thousands of volunteers working behind the scenes who made this major

### Oral Questions

sporting event possible. The Olympic Games could not have happened without them.

Volunteers work in more than just sports. They work in hospitals from coast to coast to coast, in schools, in political parties and in grassroots clubs.

This week gives us an opportunity to highlight the invaluable contributions these people make to their communities.

[English]

Volunteers make our communities—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

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### FIREARMS REGISTRY

**Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today, the Liberal leader has come out against an attempt to scrap the long gun registry by promising to whip the Liberal vote on Bill C-391. He has a problem, however, because eight of his rural MPs have already voted to support my bill, which would end this Liberal boondoggle. They include MPs like the Liberal member for Labrador, who said, "I will vote subsequently to scrap the long gun registry".

The choice is clear for these Liberal MPs. They will either vote to end the long gun registry or vote to keep the long gun registry. It is that simple. Those eight Liberal MPs must tell the House and their constituents if they will bow to their leader and his hopes for political gain on the issue of the long gun registry or listen to their constituents and stand up for their interests and the interests of all law-abiding Canadians.

It is time to end the long gun registry. Last November, eight Liberal MPs agreed with me on that. I hope they have not changed their minds. Their voters deserve better.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### ETHICS

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Jaffer was arrested in September 2009, more than seven months ago. The Prime Minister did not call in his minister and ask her about her involvement in Mr. Jaffer's tangled affairs, nor of her possible involvement in some of the criminal charges. He defended her in public for seven months after she made mistake after mistake after mistake.

How can the government possibly justify the Prime Minister's error of judgment in this matter?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, some 10 days ago serious allegations were brought to the Prime Minister's attention, and I should be very clear that these allegations had nothing to do with government business. He did the right thing. He referred the matter to the relevant authorities and we will leave it in their capable hands.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the allegations did not surface 10 days ago. They were perfectly available seven months ago. That is the issue.

When the Prime Minister gets information he likes, he calls it credible. When he gets information he does not like, he attacks the witness. When he gets information from a private detective, he listens. When he gets credible information from Richard Colvin, a reputable diplomat, he attacks the witness.

How can we trust the Prime Minister's judgment when he puts his political interests ahead of the public interest in every—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transport.

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we can look at the Prime Minister's judgment. Look at what he did upon first taking office. He immediately brought in the Federal Accountability Act, the toughest anti-corruption legislation in Canadian history.

Time and time and time again, the Liberal Party violated the public trust. It had to write cheques back to the taxpayers for millions of dollars because it was stolen money.

The Prime Minister has banned big money in politics. The Prime Minister has brought a significant increase in ethical standards to Parliament, and 10 days ago, the Prime Minister did the right thing once again.

• (1420)

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the issue is whether the government conforms to its own legislation. That is the issue.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister has said that the information he received from some shady detective is believable, yet he has rejected testimony from Mr. Colvin, who is an eminently credible witness.

How can Canadians trust the Prime Minister's judgment when he allows himself to be guided by partisanship rather than respect for the facts?

[*English*]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, when serious allegations arose about a former member of his ministry, did the ethical thing. He did the right thing. He did not accept the information. He referred the entire matter to an independent authority so that it could make a determination of what to do with it.

That showed a high ethical standard. The Prime Minister did the right thing.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has not even disclosed what those allegations are. We are still under a veil of secrecy here.

The parliamentary secretary for infrastructure received three proposals from Rahim Jaffer at a meeting he failed to disclose with the former Conservative caucus chair turned unregistered lobbyist. The first involved biomass technology, the technology Mr. Jaffer represented and his wife, then a cabinet minister, was pushing. Another proposal was for solar power, a technology we now learn

that Mr. Jaffer's business partner, Mr. Gillani, is linked to through Solterra Corporation.

Will the government turn over these proposals and disclose any other illicit lobbying?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite has any allegations he would like to make and any evidence he would like to put forward with respect to the Lobbyists Registration Act, and the very first thing that this government did upon taking office was bring in an independent Commissioner of Lobbying, he should forward the matter to the independent commissioner, who works for this House, not this government.

That is the high ethical standard that this Prime Minister has always followed.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a high ethical standard is not leaving it to the opposition to look into this matter. It is the role and responsibility of the government to do exactly that.

Allegations that the immediate past Conservative caucus chair was using government resources, including the office of a minister, his wife, to promote personal business interests for profit must be cleared.

Could the Minister of Industry confirm that his staff also received emails sent from Mr. Jaffer using an email account that belonged to the member for Simcoe—Grey?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, our colleague in the Liberal Party is undertaking a fishing expedition.

If he has any allegations with respect to any inappropriate contact, he should forward them to the relevant authority, to the independent lobbying commissioner that this House established, that this Prime Minister established.

If he has allegations about the misappropriation or misuse of funds in a member of Parliament's office, he should speak to the chairman of the Board of Internal Economy, and in fact, Mr. Speaker, that would be you.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the matter involving the former status of women minister and her husband, Rahim Jaffer, new allegations surface daily. First came rumours of prostitutes and cocaine use, influence peddling and tax havens. Now there are new revelations from the private detective who provided the information in the first place. This government wants everyone to think it is so tough on crime, but in fact, it is criminally incompetent.

Is it not time for the Prime Minister to disclose what he knows?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a week and a half ago, the Prime Minister was made aware of serious allegations that he promptly referred to the appropriate authorities. The RCMP is working on the matter and will come to its own conclusions. Let me make it very clear that these allegations in no way affect the business of government.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, no, they only affect a former minister. How does that make sense?

The Prime Minister is refusing to do anything about the Afghan detainees issue because he claims that it boils down to allegations made by a couple of diplomats. In the matter involving the former minister for the status of women, the Prime Minister acted quickly in response to allegations from a private detective who collects tanks and bazookas. That is very serious.

Will the Prime Minister finally disclose the substance of the allegations that prompted him to act so quickly, as he did not do in the Afghan detainees file?

• (1425)

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a week and a half ago, the Prime Minister was made aware of serious allegations that he promptly referred to the appropriate authorities. The RCMP is working on the matter. The allegations have nothing to do with any other member, senator or government employee.

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the former status of women minister allegedly met with Nazim Gillani, the business partner of her husband, Rahim Jaffer. Mr. Gillani has a shady past and runs an escort agency in Toronto. The simple act of socializing with the owner of an escort agency shows a lack of judgment on the part of the former minister, who had responsibilities for the status of women, I must add, and this justifies her dismissal.

Now the question remains: what were the other reasons that pushed the Prime Minister to call the RCMP?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is the same question, and I will give the same answer.

I think that what is important here is that when the Prime Minister was made aware of serious allegations, he promptly referred them to the appropriate authorities. That said, the RCMP is working on the matter and will come to its own conclusions.

**Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, according to the Prime Minister's informant, the Conservative couple allegedly had dummy companies created in for them in Belize. The scheme would allow Rahim Jaffer and the former status of women minister to make money without being bothered by Revenue Canada. The minister allegedly even used a government trip in July 2008 to complete this transaction.

Did the Prime Minister at least verify this information?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister acted promptly and responsibly. When he was made aware of serious allegations, he referred them to the appropriate authorities.

These allegations have nothing to do with government business. If the member has allegations and information to submit, she can should bring them forward here or outside the House. But she must stop this fishing expedition.

[English]

**PUBLIC SERVICE**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the spouses of members of our Canadian military slain in the line of duty were told that they would get the first call on government jobs. They were told that by the Conservative government two years ago.

Yet, we see no action whatsoever. In fact, even Public Service Commission President Maria Barrados has said that she has been frustrated by the government's foot-dragging on this important idea.

Spouses are supposed to get on the public service's priority list within two years of their loved one being killed. Why has that not happened yet?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, other than the brave soldiers themselves who perish in the course of action, nobody has suffered more than spouses and their families. It is for that reason we agree. As a matter of fact, we have always supported that spouses should have this preferential treatment. Officials are working with the Public Service Commission and we expect to see these regulations fully implemented in May.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after having served their country with courage, many veterans and their families are abandoned by the government. The Conservatives have axed support for veterans living in private homes. Compensation offered to seriously wounded soldiers is insufficient and is far below what our allies offer. Families of slain soldiers are not getting access to the jobs promised.

Why do such a large number of veterans in Canada live below the poverty line?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we owe a lot to our veterans who risked their lives. Programs have been implemented since the new veterans charter was passed. This charter received a broad consensus across the country and among the military and veterans.

I would like to remind the NDP leader that we are now focusing on reintegrating people into civilian life and our programs take that particular factor into consideration.

• (1430)

[English]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the veterans charter, proposed by a good New Democrat member of this Parliament, was brought forward and we thought the government was going to be serious about it, but it turns out that was not the case.

In fact, we are seeing that action is simply not happening, except that the Prime Minister saw fit to go to a veterans food bank in Calgary for a photo-op. Does he not realize that if he was doing his job to look after the veterans of this country and their families, there would not be a need for a veterans food bank?

*Oral Questions*

Why do Conservatives not start taking action and backing up their rhetoric with some deeds?

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are two parts to the question. First of all, when injured veterans return home, they receive a lump sum payment, the amount of which depends on the injury. Then, if they join a rehabilitation program, they receive 75% of their salary until they find a suitable civilian job.

It would take time to go into detail about food banks, so I will simply say that we are following the situation closely. When people are not receiving the services they need, we help them find our programs that will benefit them.

\* \* \*

**ETHICS**

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities still refuses to disclose the three projects Rahim Jaffer submitted to his parliamentary secretary. By all indications, one of the projects involved Wright Tech Systems Inc., which Mr. Jaffer hoped to sell off for a \$1 billion profit and which his wife was promoting in her capacity as a minister.

Can the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities tell us whether he was aware of the proposals considered by his parliamentary secretary for the green fund? If not, why was he not aware of this \$1 billion deal which comes under the portfolio for which he is responsible?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have been actively engaged in the green fund. It is doing a lot of great things for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We just recently announced \$100 million to bring clean water to Hamilton, which is part of a \$300 million project. We are making major investments in Yukon to help the environment and major investments in northwestern British Columbia.

I am involved in every step of the way. No project was either recommended or approved in this regard. That is the high standard of ethics from this government and this Prime Minister.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that does not answer my question. This story goes to the core of the Conservative Party and the Prime Minister must shed light on the dealings between his government and Mr. Jaffer's company.

Mr. Jaffer allegedly used government resources to promote his company and we already know that at least two ministers had been in contact with him. A forensic audit is needed.

Can the Minister of Industry and the Minister of Natural Resources tell us whether their offices had any contact with Rahim Jaffer, Patrick Glémaud or their Green Power Generation company?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. Ten days ago when serious allegations were brought to the government's attention, the Prime Minister did the right thing.

Let me remind the House that the allegations brought to the Prime Minister some 10 days ago had absolutely nothing to do with government business. On the issues with which she is speculating, no grants were recommended and none were forthcoming. That is the ethical way to run a government.

I am pleased to tell the member for Toronto Centre that the green fund is also helping clean up the Ottawa River right here in our nation's capital.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this issue is all about the Prime Minister's judgment. He had ample reason to drop the minister from cabinet. Why did he delay? He should have dropped her 24 months ago for abandoning Brenda Martin. He should have told her to step aside seven months ago when cocaine was found in her car. He certainly should have fired her two months ago when she violated safety regulations at the Charlottetown airport.

Why was the Prime Minister's judgment lacking for so long, or did it just not suit his purposes at the time?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is quite outrageous. Serious allegations were brought to the Prime Minister's attention a week ago Thursday and what did the Prime Minister do? He immediately acted within hours.

The allegations that were brought before the Prime Minister some 10 days ago had nothing to do with government business. The Prime Minister, rather than sweep the issue under the rug, did the right thing. He referred the matter to an independent third party. That is the high ethical standard our Prime Minister promised and that is the high ethical standard he has lived up to.

• (1435)

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us take another look at what the Prime Minister did and his lack of credibility.

First he said he referred the matter to the Ethics Commissioner for investigation but she said no formal request was made. Next, the Prime Minister said the former minister was fully informed. She denies that completely. Then the Prime Minister said the matter was referred to the RCMP. Really, was it?

Can the minister responsible for the RCMP confirm that a formal criminal investigation is taking place? Can the Minister of Public Safety confirm that, yes or no?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear that when this issue was brought to the Prime Minister's attention, when the facts were brought to the Prime Minister, he did not know whether they were true or whether they were not true. He referred it to an independent officer of the House to look into it. He referred it to the relative authorities, in this case the RCMP so that they could make the decision as to whether to look into it.



Notwithstanding the fact that in this instance none of the allegations in question had anything to do with government business, any other minister, any MP, any senator or any employee of the Government of Canada, that is the high ethical standard that the Prime Minister adopted.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### AFGHANISTAN

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a confidential military report, an excerpt of which was read to the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan on April 14, states:

During the interviews conducted, it is believe [sic.] that all the detainees were deceptive and they have a better knowledge on TB [Taliban] activity in their area...it is recommended that [names] be transferred to the National Directorate of Security (NDS) for further questioning.

Will the minister confirm that this process is nothing more than the subcontracting of torture?

[English]

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Yes, I can confirm, Mr. Speaker, that is not the way the Canadian Forces act.

In fact, I refer to a letter from the chief of the defence staff, Walt Natynczyk, that was released to the hon. member. I commend it to him for his reading, where the chief of the defence staff said, "The Canadian Forces do not transfer individuals for the purposes of gathering information".

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, according to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Canada alone transferred 60% of NATO detainees to Afghan authorities.

Is that not another example of the strategy of the government which, to avoid a second Somali affair, tries to rid itself of prisoners as quickly as possible and at any cost, even if it was sending them to be tortured?

[English]

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what it indicates is that the Canadian Forces are working very hard under difficult and dangerous circumstances in Afghanistan. I remind the hon. member, if he needs to be reminded, that we are working in Kandahar province in the toughest, most difficult part of the country. We are there working with an international coalition. We are there working with the Afghan security forces as well. It stands to reason there would be a high number of Taliban insurgent prisoners taken given those circumstances.

We need to commend members of the Canadian Forces for the hard work they are doing on behalf of our country.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### ETHICS

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said that he is not

#### Oral Questions

able to do his job properly. The figures in the latest budget are incomplete and the Treasury Board refuses to give him the information he needs to assess the cost-cutting efforts a number of departments are being asked to make. In fact, the government is hiding its data from Kevin Page to avoid being held accountable.

Does the government's secrecy and back-room games in an attempt to keep Kevin Page from doing his job not prove that budgetary transparency was never in the government's plans?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government is very open regarding its accounts and the budget. If they want figures, they can submit a written request, and I will try, if I can, to send the documents they are looking for.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, whether we are talking about Afghan prisoners, the Jaffer affair, Rights & Democracy, the secrecy with Kevin Page, or the political interference in the access to information process, the government always has the same dismissive attitude towards transparency and accountability.

Does the Prime Minister realize that under his watch, democracy and transparency are suffering?

● (1440)

**Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I repeat with pleasure that if they want official documents, figures, or something else that they are missing, they can call me, send me a letter or make a request. If I can, I will immediately try to send them the figures they are looking for.

\* \* \*

#### AFGHANISTAN

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. The minister is well aware that the chair of the Military Police Complaints Commission has not been allowed to see the documents. Witnesses can see the documents, and so can the government's lawyers, but the person presiding cannot.

What kind of a hearing is it if the chair—the judge, in effect—cannot see the documents?

[English]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the questioner and all members that government lawyers will continue to work with the MPCC to provide all necessary documents relevant to its mandate. I suggest to the hon. member that he let the commission do its work.

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a fundamental principle of our justice system that justice must not only be done but be seen to be done. On Wednesday, we had a serious allegation from a witness in front of the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan. The same day, the general said he was going to refer to an inquiry. The next day, the general dismissed the complaint and the same day the minister in charge dismissed the complaint as well and attacked the credibility of the witness.

*Oral Questions*

What kind of a process can there be when the government is judge and jury in the same case and does not give a neutral inquiry a chance to do its job?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what we saw coming from the chief of the defence staff was a very comprehensive response. In that letter he described what actually happened in a military operation where an armed insurgent was threatening the lives of Canadian Forces. There was information provided in that letter that provided answers which very much were contrary to the evidence of another witness who had given information that the hon. member seems to embrace quite quickly.

There is a forum for this information to be examined. I know the member is getting exercised. He does not like facts. The reality is that the facts are there for all to see.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yes, the facts are there for all to see. The evidence of detainee torture is mounting. We have Colvin, Anderson, Gosselin, Malgarai, the U.S. Department of State, our own human rights reports and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. The government makes the feeble defence that none of these allegations is true and if the allegations are true, nobody has told it.

Whether the Conservatives have been guilty of continuing the torture of detainees by sending them to the NDS or the subcontracting of torture ought to be determined by a judicial inquiry. Why would the government not have the courage to call one?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is doing exactly what he is accusing others of doing by accepting this evidence without taking it into account. He has listed a number of names. I could list all the names of the senior officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs, and I could list all of the leadership of the Canadian Forces, all of whom have given a completely contrary view of the evidence of what was taking place around the allegations of Taliban prisoners.

Those forums are there. We have the MPCC. We have the parliamentary committee. We now have Mr. Justice Iacobucci reviewing documents. The hon. member is on a different track for political reasons.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, nobody is asking the government to accept any evidence. There are allegations and there are counter-allegations. They say these allegations are true; others say other allegations are true. The fact is nobody can determine the truth, least of all that government.

We need a public inquiry. We need a judicial inquiry. We need the scrutiny of a sitting judge. The government does not have the courage. It is a cowardly government. It does not want to face the facts. It should stand and be clear with Canadians and call a public inquiry.

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we can talk about courage in this place. It is very easy from the safe sanctuary here in the House of Commons to judge this.

The courage I am interested in is the courage of the Canadian Forces, the men and women on the ground in Afghanistan at this very moment fighting to protect our values both at home and abroad.

We have forums to look at this particular situation. We have people, very qualified, who have given evidence. We have heard from senior members of the Canadian Forces, those within the Department of Foreign Affairs, those within the public safety department.

I put a lot of faith in both the bureaucrats and the leadership of the Canadian Forces.

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● (1445)

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice launched the fifth annual National Victims of Crime Awareness Week symposium.

Our government's commitment to ensuring that victims of crime have a strong voice in the criminal justice system remains a cornerstone of our justice agenda.

Would the Minister of Justice please tell the House what our government has done for the victims of crime in this country?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his continual support of our justice agenda.

As part of a government that is committed to supporting victims, we created the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime. We committed \$52 million over four years to help federal, provincial and territorial governments respond to a variety of needs of victims of crimes. I have to tell members how pleased I was to see an additional \$6.6 million in the 2010 budget.

I am proud to be a member of the only political party that will stand up for victims in this country.

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**AFGHANISTAN**

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today in Britain the High Court heard about how detainees were punched repeatedly, suffered electric shocks and sleep deprivation at the hands of the notorious NDS. Meanwhile, in Canada, the government refuses to recognize that torture is widespread, despite the fact that we have transferred many more detainees than the British ever did.

We learned over the weekend that just between January and September 2009, Canada transferred 163 Afghan prisoners to the dreaded NDS.

How can the government continue to say that these transfers were not at risk of torture? Does it think there is a separate suite for Canadian detainees in the NDS? Come on.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, come on. We have had a system in place for a number of years improving upon the transfer arrangement that we inherited when we came to government and which was found to be lacking. We have had an opportunity now to both mentor and monitor what takes place inside Afghan prisons. We have invested in the Afghan justice system. We are there to help build their capacity. There have been a number of incidents that have been discussed here in the House of Commons and in parliamentary committees, and at the MPCC. There are documents that are being reviewed by an independent judge. All of this is being done for the purposes of ensuring that the mission is going well.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this new information supports what Richard Colvin told Parliament back in November. The NDS is notorious for torture. It is corrupt and releases even high-value prisoners for bribes. It is accountable to no one. Yet, we send prisoners to it for “further questioning”, and when we receive a substantial allegation of torture, we ask the NDS to do what? To investigate itself.

Is the government incapable of seeing the problem in this picture we have presented? When will it halt the transfers to the NDS and call an inquiry?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, is the hon. member incapable of listening to testimony from any other witness than those who fit his purpose?

We heard from General Gauthier. We heard from General Thompson that same day and his testimony that they worked with the NDS, that they turned prisoners over, in some cases, for criminal investigation.

We are there to help the Afghans build their capacity. We are there to ensure that the Afghan system improves. It is not perfect. We did not find it perfect. We are certainly leaving it much better than when we first arrived in Afghanistan almost 10 years ago.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**ARTS AND CULTURE**

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the House of Commons passed a Bloc Québécois motion to extend levies to the sale of digital audio recorders, but it seems that the Minister of Canadian Heritage has no plans to include this measure in the amendments to the Copyright Act that the government will soon be introducing.

Why is the Minister of Canadian Heritage rejecting this legitimate measure, which the Union des artistes au Québec called for, and which would ensure fair compensation for artists?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once we have tabled our bill, the member will be aware of the facts and will have an opportunity to talk about it.

The government has always said that it provides financial support to artists. We do not want to force consumers to pay another tax for no good reason. The budget offers increased funding for Quebec's

artists and its cultural community, but the member voted against the budget.

• (1450)

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is insulting the cultural sector by refusing to ensure that artists receive fair compensation. Furthermore, the Union des artistes believes that by opening telecommunications companies to foreign investors, the Conservative government is threatening the cultural sovereignty of both Canada and Quebec.

When will the government realize that its deregulation policy is threatening Quebec's culture?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely ridiculous. We do not need any advice from the Bloc Québécois about how to protect Canadian culture. Our investments and our bills are protecting this country's culture. The Conservative government will always be proud to do whatever it takes to protect and celebrate Canadian and Quebec culture.

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**PENSIONS**

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week the government said it was searching for a solution for Nortel employees on long-term disability. However, a few hours later, these same employees stated that the Conservatives had told them they would do nothing. This is an unacceptable contradiction.

Yes or no, will the government help these people who may go bankrupt because of its inaction?

[English]

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the Minister of Finance is meeting with his provincial and territorial counterparts today to discuss the future of the Canadian pension system.

At the same time, in the individual case that the member mentioned, he knows, or should know, that those individual pensioners, through their lawyers, made a deal with the creditors to deal with their pension issues for the remainder of the year.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** That is no help, Mr. Speaker.

There is a private member's bill in the Senate today that would deal effectively with this matter. Since opposition parties support the bill, the Prime Minister has the power to cause all members of both Houses to carry this bill at all stages today. This would be a humanitarian act to rescue hundreds of Canada's most vulnerable citizens who, through no fault of their own, will otherwise face a life of crushing poverty.

Will the Prime Minister act?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the hon. member. What he is proposing that this House and the Senate do is to supercede the rights and responsibilities duly agreed upon by the creditors and by the lawyers for the pensioners. He seeks to put his will in place of the free will of those individual parties. That is not the role of this Parliament.

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**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on this the first day of the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, the government's own victims' ombudsman is saying that crime victims are being shortchanged by the Conservatives.

Ombudsman, Steve Sullivan, informs us that millions have been cut from victims services. He said, "Victims of crime are on the short end of the stick".

If victims are truly a priority for the government, could the minister tell us if he will restore funding for the victims of crime?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the one thing we can all agree on is that standing up for victims is not a priority of the NDP. That is the first question I have had on this subject in about a year, so I thank the member for the question.

As I already indicated, we created the role of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime. We committed \$52 million over four years and we stand by that commitment.

I was pleased to see the Minister of Finance include an extra \$6 million for victims in this country. That should have everybody on their feet supporting victims of crime in this country.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the ombudsman's comments cut to the heart of what is wrong with the Conservative crime agenda.

The government says that it is supporting victims by imprisoning more Canadians for longer sentences. It is supporting victims that way.

That is wrong again. According to Mr. Sullivan, "By focusing solely on sending people to prison longer, we're not serving the majority of victims of crime". He also says that sentencing concerns are a very small part of meeting victims' needs.

Does the minister agree with the ombudsman that longer prison sentences do not meet the main needs of most victims of crime?

• (1455)

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have taken a very balanced approach.

One of the reasons we have brought in changes to the Criminal Code is that we are standing up for victims and reduced victimization in this country. I appreciate that is a foreign concept for the NDP but we will take a very balanced approach. For once, this should have the support of the New Democrats.

**MUSIC INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last night, the Juno Awards showcased the very best of Canada's music industry from coast to coast to coast. We congratulate the award winners.

Our government is proud to support our artists and that is why we have increased funding for Canada's music industry and delivered more support for artists than any other government in Canadian history.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell the House how we are delivering real support for Canada's music industry?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased this weekend in St. John's, Newfoundland to follow through on our government's campaign commitment to give record support for Canada's music industry.

We made a commitment that we would provide record funding for Canada's music industry and we have done that and we have provided it for a record amount of time over five years.

We had artists there from Newfoundland and Labrador and from across the country support our announcements. In fact, this is what they had to say about our government support.

Heather Ostertag of Factor said that the government has "clearly demonstrated their commitment to culture", and that the government is doing everything it can to make sure the music industry will go forward for the next generation.

We are doing what we said we would do.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC SERVICE**

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I listened to the President of the Treasury Board equivocate, the Minister of Veterans Affairs regurgitate and the Minister of National Defence obfuscate.

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

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** Look it up.

When it comes to veterans, the government is long on words and short on actions. Widows and widowers of fallen soldiers have been promised public service jobs. Why has it taken so long for the government to act?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the only skating that is going on here is by the member opposite.

On the issue of ensuring that the widows and spouses of those who have been lost in the brave fight in Afghanistan have regulations in place so that they can move into an area of preferential treatment related to job-seeking, that will be in place this coming month.

On the issue of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, if there is information that he wants he just needs to ask for it and I will do my best to get it to him.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on March 23, the Minister of Industry stated that he could not take action on the right to appeal and intellectual property rights without the consent of Quebec and the provinces. In a letter dated February 27, 2008, the Quebec government indicated that uncertainty was harmful to Quebec's innovative biopharmaceutical companies and called for quick action by the federal government. Two years later, nothing has been done.

What is the government waiting for to provide the balanced protection of intellectual property rights required by the industry?

[English]

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member well knows that in my discussions with the pharmaceutical sector one of the issues that I was concerned about was additional costs to the provinces if we move ahead unilaterally with right of appeal. I have said to that sector and to my counterparts in the provinces that if they agree, then we can move forward.

Why does the hon. member want to add several hundred millions of dollars to the budget bill of the Government of Quebec? That is what I would like to know.

\* \* \*

**TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it has been five days since the giant cloud of volcanic ash left millions of people stranded at airports across Europe.

European governments are taking action. Britain is sending in navy ships and is working with Spain to use its airports to fly its citizens home. Canadian travellers have not been as lucky.

The government has done little more than offer an 1-800 number and an Internet link. What is the government doing to help stranded Canadians get home?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are aware, obviously, that the volcanic ash over Europe has left millions of travellers stranded across the globe. We are monitoring the situation very closely and officials in my department are ready to provide consular services.

We hope the air space will reopen so that affected Canadians can return safely to Canada. I encourage travellers to check our website with our advisories, as well as to verify with the airlines.

\* \* \*

● (1500)

**RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is number one in the G7 for supporting basic research at universities and colleges but we lag behind other industrialized countries in business innovation and private sector research and development.

With the economic recovery under way in southern Ontario, could the Minister of State for Science and Technology and the Federal

Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario tell us what the government is doing to promote innovation among small and medium-sized businesses?

**Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this morning I announced a brand new pilot project initiative that will provide up to \$15 million to help businesses move promising products from the R and D stage to the marketplace. This initiative will create jobs and strengthen the economy of southern Ontario by giving businesses greater access to the research capacity at our colleges and universities.

Polytechnics Canada says that this unprecedented federal investment could become an innovation game changer, and I think it will.

\* \* \*

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will use simpler words this time. In Conservative rich Alberta, veterans line up at the Calgary poppy fund food bank to get \$500 worth of food every month. As many as 20 to 30 homeless veterans sleep in the Calgary drop-in every night. They suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and they are not being compensated when they are injured. Now their spouses cannot get access to public service jobs.

What are the Conservatives doing for Canadian veterans?

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have various programs to help veterans who become homeless.

We work with organizations that identify those with this need. When these people are identified, we help them.

\* \* \*

[English]

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development snubbed aboriginal financial institutions when he failed to include them in the loan loss reserve program.

For years no banks wanted to invest in on reserve businesses, so the AFIs shouldered the risk by themselves and made it profitable. Now the big banks want to move in and the government is helping them, but leaving out the AFIs.

The Conservative aboriginal caucus wants AFIs to be part of the loan loss reserve program. When will the minister level the playing field and add AFIs to the loan loss reserve program?

*Routine Proceedings*

**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, the aboriginal financial institutions are tremendously important. When I was before committee I talked about our obvious support for aboriginal financial institutions.

However, we want the big banks in the game of lending money as well to first nations and aboriginal people across the country. We have a pilot project in place not only with the banks, but also with large credit unions and the First Nations Bank of Canada, all of which is to get them in the exciting game of economic opportunity for aboriginal people across the country, not only AFIs, but banks and credit unions to be in this game as well. It is good.

\* \* \*

**POINTS OF ORDER**

COMMENTS OF THE MEMBER FOR FLEETWOOD—PORT KELLS

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during question period on April 16, the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells totally misinformed the House. She stated that I, during the human resources committee, confirmed that the Liberal Party did not give any choice to parents for child care. That statement is totally unacceptable. I never said any such thing. Now I am correcting the record on what was said about me, with due respect.

During that committee, I was talking about a woman who could not get child care or another job because she had no child care and she ended up on welfare, which was no choice at all, and that \$100 a month gave nobody any choice whatsoever. In fact, the minister responded to a question by saying that she was providing choice with \$100. That does not even provide babysitting for one day.

The hon. member should apologize for totally misinforming the House about what I said at committee.

• (1505)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Beaches—East York knows that the Speaker does not get involved in disputes as to facts. Allegations that members may have said something when they did not or may have said something when they meant something else, or whatever, are made from time to time in the House and often it is in the nature of debate.

Therefore, I am afraid it is not a point of order that I feel the Chair can entertain at this stage.

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**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(b) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 43 petitions.

**CANADIAN FORCES PROVOST MARSHAL**

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2008 annual report of the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal.

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**MILITARY POLICE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION**

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2009 annual report for the Military Police Complaints Commission, "A Decade of Oversight".

\* \* \*

**CANADIAN FORCES GRIEVANCE BOARD**

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2009 annual report of the Canadian Forces Grievance Board, "The Road Forward".

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS**

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation to the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association on its participation in the standing committee meeting held in Paris, France, from February 15 to 17, 2010.

\* \* \*

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, which passed a motion on Thursday, April 15, inviting the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to introduce a bill regarding the application of the Official Languages Act to Air Canada, its subsidiaries and partners.

[English]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following reports of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts: the eight report on Chapter 6, Selected Contribution Agreements, Natural Resources Canada, of the spring 2009 report of the Auditor General of Canada; and the ninth report on Chapter 2, Intellectual Property, of the spring 2009 report of the Auditor General of Canada.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to both these reports.

**MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY ACT**

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-513, An Act to amend the Motor Vehicle Safety Act and the Department of Transport Act (safety information).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have an amendment to the Motor Vehicle Safety Act and the Department of Transport Act, called the consumer's accountability and reporting act. The CAR bill would make the industry more accountable, with a new reporting system that would put crucial safety information in the hands of consumers.

The bill would clarify that the vehicle event data recorder, or black box, information is owned by the owner of the vehicle and that the information must be made available at an easily understood format by the manufacturer.

It would require automakers to report real safety issues identified in Canada and elsewhere to Transport Canada within seven days and to the owner of the vehicle within thirty days. It would bring in a standardized consumer safety complaint procedure, with dealers and automakers reporting to Transport Canada within seven days.

It would require safety information, including worldwide recalls, automaker service bulletins to dealers, which are also known as secret warranties, as well as any legal actions against automakers here and abroad, to be posted on automaker and Transport Canada websites.

It would bring in a one-year cooling off period before former Department of Transport employees could accept employment from an automaker or importer.

The bill would also improve communication across the country, with the federal minister providing the safety complaints to the appropriate provincial departments within seven days.

Consumer groups in Canada and abroad have called the CAR bill the world's best and a world first for elements of accountability and transparency for consumers.

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

\* \* \*

• (1510)

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE****SCRUTINY OF REGULATIONS**

**Mr. Andrew Kania (Brampton West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, consultations have taken place among all parties and I ask for unanimous consent that the first report of the Standing Joint Committee on the Scrutiny of Regulations be concurred in.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

*Routine Proceedings***PETITIONS****HOUSING**

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present three petitions.

The first is many pages of petitions concerning a national housing strategy. I would like to thank the staff and students at Windermere Secondary School in Vancouver, particularly Donna Lee, who collected signatures. The petitions have also come in from Victoria, Vancouver, Saskatoon, Langley, Burnaby, Kingston, Ontario, Salmon Arm, B.C., Prince Rupert, Powell River, North Vancouver, Barrie, Ontario, right across the country.

The petitioners call for a national housing strategy that will ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for all Canadians and for the passage of Bill C-304.

**ANIMAL WELFARE**

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from constituents who call upon us to ensure that all efforts are made to prevent animal cruelty and reduce animal suffering.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to support a universal declaration of animal welfare.

**SEEDS REGULATIONS**

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the third petitioner is from people in Vancouver.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to enshrine in legislation Bill C-474, An Act respecting the Seeds Regulations, to require that an analysis of the potential harm to export markets be conducted before the sale of any new genetically engineered seed is permitted.

[*Translation*]

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by Canadian citizens residing mainly, but not exclusively, in eastern Ontario and western Quebec.

The signatories are asking the government to be more flexible in determining who can be included in the family class.

Specifically, they want the government to create a special immigration process to enable Canadian citizens and permanent residents to sponsor family members who were personally and directly affected by the January 12, 2010, earthquake in Haiti, regardless of their age.

*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

## AIR PASSENGERS' BILL OF RIGHTS

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition involves thousands of Canadians who call on Parliament to adopt Canada's first air passengers' bill of rights.

Bill C-310 would compensate air passengers with all Canadian carriers, including charters, anywhere they fly in the world. The bill would provide compensation for overbooked flights, cancelled flights and long tarmac delays. It would address issues such as late and misplaced bags and requires all-inclusive pricing in the advertising of all airlines.

Legislation of this type has been in effect in Europe for five years and actually a lot longer in a different form. The question is why passengers with Air Canada should get better treatment in Europe than they do in Canada.

Airlines would have to inform passengers of any flight changes, either delays or cancellations. The new rules would have to be posted in airports and airlines must inform passengers of their rights and the process to file for compensation. In fact, if airlines follow the rules, it would cost them nothing.

The petitioners call upon the government to support Bill C-310, which would introduce Canada's air passengers' bill of rights.

• (1515)

## EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition, signed by dozens of Canadians, calls upon the government to match funds personally donated by the citizens of Canada for the victims of the Chilean earthquake. As members know, the earthquake occurred February 27. It was an 8.8 magnitude earthquake in southern Chile.

Communities across Canada have since mobilized, raising money. They question every day why the Prime Minister refuses to give the same treatment to the Chilean earthquake victims as he did for the victims of the Haitian earthquake and match funds personally donated by Canadians to help the victims of the Chilean earthquake.

## CANADA POST CORPORATION

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise once again to present a petition on behalf of constituents regarding Canada Post. Some of the comments they have made in this petition are certainly relevant to them and many rural communities across the country.

The government expects Canada Post to inform people at least one month prior to closing, moving or amalgamating. It also calls on Canada Post to respect the moratorium of closures in rural and small towns. To connect communities throughout this vast land, the postal offices provide an invaluable service to many of the smaller communities, thousands of them across the country, and also play a key role in the social and economic life of a smaller community.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to instruct Canada Post to maintain and improve its network of public

post offices and consult with the public, one that is respectful. Recently, I met with Canada Post and addressed some of these issues. I would like to thank the representatives of Canada Post for providing the opportunity.

This petition comes primarily from the residents of the town of Peterview, a few from Botwood as well as Bishop's Falls.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 45, 46, 74 and 116.

[Text]

Question No. 45—**Mr. Scott Reid:**

With regard to the public reports which are issued by or on behalf of the RCMP, in which information is made public as to what took place each time a taser is fired or otherwise used to control a member of the public: (a) since January 1, 2001, what changes have been made, from time to time, with regard to the types of information being released, both in terms of types of information being withheld, which had previously been made public, and types of information being made public, which had previously been withheld; (b) since January 1, 2001, what instructions have been given to the individuals who prepared these reports, regarding the types of information which ought to be withheld or made public; (c) who issued any such instructions, and with whom did the instructions originate; and (d) since January 1, 2001, has additional unreleased information been collected, and, if so, what is the nature of this additional information, on any of the following topics: (i) related injuries which took place during the tasing incident, (ii) the duration of the shocks, (iii) whether the individual who was tasered had been armed, (iv) whether the individual who was tasered was violent, combative or posed a risk of death or grievous bodily harm, (v) what alternative measures the police tried before resorting to a taser, (vi) whether the individual who was tasered was first given a verbal warning, (vii) whether the individual who was tasered had already been handcuffed or otherwise restrained?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am informed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that in regard to a) To the extent information on the conducted energy weapon, CEW, is released via the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act, no changes have been made since January 1, 2001, with regards to the type of information being released. These federal acts give Canadian citizens the right to access information in federal government records and provide them with the right to access personal information held by the government and protect that information against unauthorized use and disclosure. The RCMP, as a federal agency is bound by these acts.



To the extent that the RCMP publicly reports on the use of CEWs, this began in late 2007 with the publication of the fourth quarter (October to December 2007) report on CEW use by RCMP members. Since October 2007, the RCMP has continued to prepare and publicly release quarterly reports on the use of CEWs by RCMP members. The quarterly reports are available via the Internet at: <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ccaps-spcca/cew-ai/report-rapport-q4-2008-eng.htm>. The RCMP also produces annual reports on our member's use of CEWs. The 2008 annual report will be available on the same website in the near future. The 2009 report will also be posted on the RCMP website once completed.

In regard to b) To the extent that information is released via the Privacy Act and the Access to Information Act, the analysts responsible for requests related to CEWs determine what information needs to be exempted and what information can be released, based on the provisions of the acts.

To the extent the RCMP reports publicly on CEW use, the instructions have been to collect data from the field and compile this information into statistical reports on a quarterly and annual basis.

In regard to c) With respect to the Privacy Act and the Access to Information Act, following consultations, directions were given to the analysts responsible for the review of the records as to what information needed to be exempted and what information needed to be released.

With respect to the quarterly and annual CEW reports prepared by the RCMP, the Assistant Commissioner at Community, Contract and Aboriginal Police Services issued the instructions that the reports be prepared.

In regard to d) RCMP policy requires members to complete a report each time the CEW is used, which includes the type of information referred to. Since the RCMP approved the CEW as an intervention option, there have been thousands of CEW reports completed. Amendments or additions may have been made to some reports since the original submission to clarify or include additional detail.

Since October 2007 the RCMP has proactively provided information on CEW use in quarterly and annual reports that are available via the internet. Access to information requests are made to the RCMP as per the provisions of the Access to Information Act whereby information on CEW deployments that is held by the RCMP is disclosed.

**Question No. 46—Mr. Scott Reid:**

With regard to the case of Adam Dormer, who was tasered by an RCMP officer on July 21, 2007: (a) what instructions were given to the individuals who prepared the public report on this incident, regarding the types of information which ought to be withheld or made public; (b) who issued any such instructions, and with whom did the instructions originate; and (c) has additional information been collected, which is not being released, on any of the following topics: (i) related injuries which may have taken place during the taser incident, (ii) the duration of the shocks, (iii) whether he was violent, combative or posed a risk of death or grievous bodily harm, (iv) what alternative measures the police tried before resorting to a taser, (v) whether he was first given a verbal warning, (vi) whether he had already been handcuffed or otherwise restrained?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am informed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that

*Routine Proceedings*

in regard to a) The information pertaining to Adam Dormer that was released as a public report was done as part of an access to information request in which over 4,000 conducted energy weapon , CEW, reports were released. This release was actioned as per the requirements of the Privacy Act and the Access to Information Act. The analysts responsible for requests related to CEWs determined what information needed to be exempted and what information could be released, based on the provisions of the Acts.

In regard to b) Following consultations, directions were given to the analysts responsible for the review of the records as to what information needed to be exempted and what information needed to be released, based on the provisions of the Privacy Act and the Access to Information Act.

In regard to c) Since the release of the access to information request in spring 2008, no new information pertaining to the Adam Dormer matter has been collected and not released on any of the topics referred to. While there is information on the details of this incident that pertains to injuries, the duration of the CEW deployment, his behaviour, the attempts to use alternative measures by police before deploying the CEW, whether he was given a verbal warning and whether or not he was handcuffed or restrained, this information was contained in the original file and the CEW report has not been modified since the CEW report was released as part of the access to information request in 2008.

**Question No. 74—Ms. Irene Mathysen:**

With regard to the 54th UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March 2010: (a) how many NGOs, organizations or individuals applied to be part of the official Canadian delegation; (b) how many groups or individuals were chosen to be delegates; (c) what were the criteria on which the delegation was chosen; (d) what rationale was used to determine those criteria; (e) were both successful and unsuccessful applicants informed of the decision; (f) how were the applicants informed; and (g) what level of support was provided to those delegates?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the response is as follows: a) Status of Women Canada received 27 submissions to be part of the official Canadian delegation to the 54th commission on the Status of Women.

b) Three.

c) The selection criteria was included in the call for submissions letter and is as follows: Guidelines to Assist in Selection of NGO delegates i) Overall knowledge of gender equality issues; ii) Significant expertise in one or more of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing platform for action; iii) Expertise of thematic and institutional issues to be discussed at the 54th UNCSW; iv) Potential to disseminate information and to link with other organizations in the NGO community and civil society; v) Commitment to further advance equality between women and men both in Canada and internationally; vi) Availability to attend related NGO preparatory meetings in the event they take place.

*Routine Proceedings*

d) The criteria that was used to select NGOs is the same criteria that SWC has used for many years and is based on the expertise of the NGO delegates and how they can contribute both to the proceedings of the UNCSW as well as their ability to liaise with NGOs during the event and afterward.

e) Yes

f) Applicants were informed via email from Status of Women Canada

g) All travel-associated costs for NGO delegates chosen to be on the delegation are covered by SWC for the period of their participation on the Canadian delegation.

**Question No. 116—Mr. Marc Garneau:**

With regard to the protection of intellectual property rights: (a) what measures is the government planning to implement in order to comply with the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement; and (b) when will these measures be presented?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to the protection of intellectual property rights: a) The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement, ACTA, negotiations are being undertaken with a view to establishing new global standards for the enforcement of intellectual property rights, IPR, in order to more effectively combat trade in counterfeit and pirated goods. Canada is actively participating in the ACTA negotiations to help shape an international agreement that reflects our national interests. In addition, Canada is presenting a position that embodies our domestic legal and policy framework. Since these negotiations, which cover a broad range of complex issues, are ongoing, it is premature to speculate about any specific measure that the countries would agree to include in an eventual agreement.

b) Only once the negotiations are concluded and the text of the agreement is finalized, would Canada be in a position to assess whether or not it should implement any measures to meet the ACTA. Moreover, the Parliament of Canada must approve all international commitments that Canada would undertake before they are implemented. As with any trade negotiation, before acceding to any agreement, Canada would need to be satisfied that it reflects Canadian interests.

\* \* \*

[English]

**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. 2, 5, 11, 27, 29, 43, 44, 48, 57, 61, 62, 63, 66, 70, 72, 77 and 93 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

**Question No. 2—Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:**

With regard to the Community Adjustment Fund of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, up until November 18, 2009: (a) what amount has been allocated to each Atlantic province; (b) which projects have benefited from this

funding, by province; (c) how much have these projects received, by province; and (d) in which city and constituency are these projects being carried out?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 5—Mr. David McGuinty:**

With respect to funding for aid in the Horn of Africa Countries (Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia): (a) what is the government spending on development aid in each of the Horn of Africa countries, broken down by state, province, district and urban area; (b) what role is Canada taking in the training of security forces in each of the Horn of Africa countries, broken down by state, province, district and urban area; (c) what support, logistical or otherwise, is Canada providing to African Union forces; (d) what institutional and capacity building projects funded by Canada, directly or indirectly, are underway or under consideration in each of the Horn of Africa countries, broken down by state, province, district and urban area; (e) what are the overall Canadian aid levels or aid flows for each of the Horn of Africa countries, broken down by state, province, district and urban area; (f) who are the Canadian and international executing agencies currently delivering aid in all of its forms to each of the Horn of Africa countries, broken down by state, province, district and urban area; (g) how many of these agencies are Canadian; and (h) exhaustively, what bilateral and multilateral aid is provided by Canada in either the United Nations or any United Nations agencies or regional development banks such as the African Development Bank, including trust funds, for each of the Horn of Africa countries, broken down by state, province, district and urban area?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 11—Hon. Marlene Jennings:**

With respect to the allegations of torture of Afghan detainees: (a) what briefing materials have been prepared on this issue, since January 2006, by (i) the Department of Foreign Affairs, (ii) the Department of National Defence; and (b) what briefing materials have been prepared on this issue for members of the Conservative caucus, since January 2006, in preparation for meetings of (i) the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan, (ii) the Standing Committee on National Defence?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 27—Mr. John Cannis:**

With regard to the Recreational Infrastructure Canada Fund: (a) what projects are being funded; (b) in what federal electoral district is each project located; (c) who applied for the funding for each project; and (d) what is the exact amount of money allocated to each project?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 29—Mr. John Cannis:**

With regard to the Community Adjustment Fund: (a) what projects are being funded; (b) in what federal electoral district is each project located; (c) who applied for the funding for each project; and (d) what is the exact amount of money allocated to each project?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 43—Ms. Martha Hall Findlay:**

With regard to Access to Information Requests: (a) how many were made to each department during each fiscal year from 2004 to 2008; (b) how many were made to each department from April 1, 2009 to December 9, 2009; (c) how many were responded to by each department during each fiscal year from 2004 to 2008; and (d) how many were responded to by each department from April 1, 2009 to December 9, 2009?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 44—Ms. Martha Hall Findlay:**

With regard to all government advertising from April 1, 2009 to December 9, 2009, including, but not limited to, television commercials, radio ads, magazine ads, newspaper ads, billboards, train wraps and other advertising venues, to promote Canada's Economic Action plan or [www.actionplan.gc.ca](http://www.actionplan.gc.ca): (a) what companies were used to produce each commercial/ad; (b) what media outlets were used to air/publish each commercial/ad; (c) what criteria was used to select the commercial/ad placements; (d) how much did it cost to produce and air/publish each commercial/ad; (e) how often are the commercials/ads aired/published; (f) how much commercial broadcast time, air time, newspaper space and other communication venue available was ordered per outlet; and (g) how much was spent per outlet?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 48—Ms. Siobhan Coady:**

With regard to Access to Information Requests for 2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009, and in 2009: (a) in each of the above mentioned years and broken down by department, how many Access to Information Requests have been responded to (i) within 30 days, (ii) within 30 to 60 days, (iii) within 60 to 90 days; (b) broken down by department, how many Access to Information Requests have taken more than 90 days to respond to in each of the above mentioned years; (c) broken down by department, what was the processing time for each request that took longer than 90 days in each of the above mentioned years; (d) broken down by department, what is the average length of time for processing for each of the above mentioned years; and (e) broken down by department, (i) how many Access to Information Requests were denied in each of the above mentioned years, (ii) what were the reasons given for the denials of these requests?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 57—Mr. Massimo Pacetti:**

What is the total amount of government funding, allocated within the constituency of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel in fiscal year 2006-2007, listing each department or agency, initiative and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 61—Mr. Andrew Kania:**

With regard to government print advertising: (a) how much has the government spent on promoting Canada's Economic Action Plan through advertising in Canada, broken down by province; and (b) when was each advertisement published, and in which publication?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 62—Mr. Andrew Kania:**

With regard to government non-print advertising, such as television and radio: (a) how much has the government spent on promoting Canada's Economic Action Plan in Canada, broken down by province; and (b) when was each advertisement aired or broadcast, and by which entity or organization?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 63—Mr. Andrew Kania:**

With regard to government non-print advertising, such as television and radio: (a) how much has the government spent on dealing with the H1N1 pandemic, broken down by province; and (b) when was each advertisement aired or broadcast, and by which entity or organization?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 66—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With respect to armed conflicts where Canada is both directly and indirectly involved: (a) what are the sites and in detail, Canada's involvement; (b) how are civilians, and particularly, children, minorities, and women impacted for each identified site; (c) which identified areas have refugees and refugee camps, with the numbers of civilians, and particularly, children and minorities affected, and what are the living conditions in refugee camps if applicable; (d) what is the process for determining whether Canada becomes either directly or indirectly involved or not in a conflict, and how does Canada become involved; (e) how does the process ensure

that good verifiable information is obtained from the field, particularly in areas where there is poor communication; (f) how does Canada obtain information from civilians who might be afraid to speak out, as well as NGOs, who need to have their work protected; (g) what is the process for ensuring that good information is acted upon, and what is the demonstration, if applicable, of where Canada has acted upon such evidence with regard to identified sites; (h) does Canada invest in development and reintegration in areas to ensure alternative lifestyles for civilians and, if so, in which areas specifically; and (i) what are the other sites, by countries, where Canada is aware of an armed conflict but is not involved?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 70—Mr. Don Davies:**

With respect to individuals working in Canada under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, for each of the fiscal years from 2004 to 2009: (a) how many distinct temporary foreign workers were eligible to work in Canada for some or all of the calendar year; (b) how many T4s were issued to temporary foreign workers; (c) how many T1s were filed by and processed for temporary foreign workers; (d) what was the average tax overpayment that was returned to temporary foreign workers who filed a T1; and (e) what was the average tax overpayment that was left unclaimed by temporary foreign workers who were issued a T4 but did not file a T1?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 72—Mr. Don Davies:**

What was the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 1998-1999 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Vancouver Kingsway, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount by fiscal year?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 77—Hon. Dan McTeague:**

With regard to the transfer of Canadian offenders from abroad to Canada, what is, for the calendar years 2005 to 2008: (a) the total number of transfer applications carried over from the previous year; (b) the total number of new applications made; (c) the number of applications that were approved; (d) the total number of applications rejected; (e) the total number of applications withdrawn by the offender; (f) the total number of cases that remained open at the end of the year; and (g) the average time that the Minister took to make a decision regarding any decided cases?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 93—Mr. Scott Andrews:**

With regard to Transport Canada and their role in the ongoing risk assessment process for Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, through the 2006 Environmental Risk Assessment Study of the south coast of Newfoundland: (a) what is the current status of this Risk Assessment Study within Transport Canada; (b) what studies have taken place concerning the broad range of information collected from the Risk Assessment; (c) what is the status of Phase II of this Risk Assessment Project to determine the effectiveness of the current response regime; (d) what work has been done within Transport Canada to determine (i) the appropriateness of bringing response equipment closer to Placentia Bay, (ii) any changes necessary under the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 for pollution prevention and emergency response; (e) what, if any, financial assistance is budgeted to improve the response regime in Placentia Bay; and (f) what are the time projections for Transport Canada to conclude an acceptable level of environmental response and pollution prevention response for Placentia Bay?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[Translation]***CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Colombia and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Colombia be read the second time and referred to a committee and of the motion that this question be now put.

**The Speaker:** Before question period, the hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville had the floor. She has four minutes left.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, before question period, I was telling the House that we have received an extremely important email from a Colombian-Canadian who lives in Montreal. This man opposes the ratification of the free trade agreement between Canada and Colombia because of the many human rights violations in that country.

He sent us some extremely important information. He said that a 166-page document at the heart of a current scandal in Colombia had been taken from the administrative security department, which is the secret service agency of the government of the incumbent president, Alvaro Uribe. This scandal is shaking democracy in that country to the core and completely destroying all trust in Uribe's outgoing government.

This document reveals a macabre espionage plan including strategies such as disinformation, casting discredit, scams, falsifying ties with guerrillas, falsifying documents, sabotage, threats, black-mail and acts of terrorism.

The email in question includes examples. In one document, entitled the social and political front, it recommends creating ties with the national terrorist organization. In another document, it is clear they knowingly intend to discredit the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, misinform the public on what is going on in the government, neutralize the destabilizing actions of NGOs, establish ties with drug trafficking organizations and foster an Internet operation to create controversy around the NGOs.

This Colombian-Canadian told us that the Government of Canada absolutely must withdraw from the Canada-Colombia agreement, which, as we have said so many times, does not provide any guarantees concerning human rights violations.

Colombia has one of the worst human rights records in Latin America. People there are poor and workers' rights are violated. Anyone looking closely at the situation in that country realizes it is one of the worst places in the world when it comes to respecting workers' rights, something that has been denounced by the International Labour Organization and by all unions.

The Bloc Québécois does not understand why a free trade agreement was negotiated with Colombia when we know that union leaders are often the victims of violence.

We also need to think about displaced people. It is usually small-scale farmers and miners who are forced to leave their lands to make room for large agri-food and mining companies. In most cases, the people displaced do not receive any form of compensation.

Colombia is not a country we should boast about being friends with. On the contrary, we must force that country to adopt legislation and practices that comply with UN requirements.

• (1520)

I am very surprised to learn that the Liberal Party supports this free trade agreement. I began my political career on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, which, at the time, was chaired by a Liberal member. The Liberals were always very careful—and it was to their advantage—not only to defend democracy, but also to set the record straight in terms of international affairs and human rights.

I simply cannot fathom the fact that the Conservative government is going to ratify an agreement that most Canadians, union members, the UN, Amnesty International and various human rights organizations are all criticizing. I cannot believe that the Liberal Party would be an accomplice to signing that agreement. I am surprised and disappointed. Some members in the House say it does not matter, because Canada will be doing business. That is not true; it will be the mining companies that do business. It will not be Canada doing business.

I still hope that my colleagues on both sides of the House will side with the Bloc Québécois and the NDP to prevent the signing of this free trade agreement. It is a bad agreement and one that takes no account of the human beings affected.

• (1525)

*[English]*

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the member has crafted a speech that raises all the concerns members have had at second reading. However, the member will well know that, at second reading, we are talking to ourselves.

I think the important part here is that we express our concerns about human rights. I think virtually every speaker, unanimously, in the House has expressed concern about human rights abuses in Colombia and with any of the people we trade with. There are a lot of countries around the world that have very poor human rights records as well.

The question then becomes whether or not it is our responsibility to see this bill go to committee after second reading so that we can hear from the expert witnesses, the human rights advocates and those who will try to explain to the committee whether or not trade will, in fact, have a beneficial impact on the human rights situation in a country like Colombia. If not, that kind of evidence and testimony would certainly give parliamentarians a better perspective from which to craft a strategy for dealing with trade with those countries who have problems with humanitarian rights.

*Government Orders*

Would the member like to see some of these human rights groups come to committee and make the case to support some of her arguments, or does she just want to ignore what the international bodies are saying and decide right now that we are not going to be able to carry this any further? Should we not hear from those witnesses?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member has posed a very good question.

I do not agree with him when he says that all members have expressed concerns about human rights. I have been listening to the debate for a very long time. If he takes a look at this morning's debates in particular, he will realize that members of his own party have nothing but praise for this free trade agreement, which truly surprises me.

I do agree with him when he states that other countries have a very poor human rights record, but not as poor as that of Colombia. It is Colombia's underground wealth that is coveted by mining companies. Colombia is one of Canada's very minor trading partners. There is very little, except for some grains.

This morning, members opposite said that it would help exports. However, that is just not true. Our exports to Colombia are practically nil. He ought to do some deeper thinking.

At second reading, it is possible that it is effective. I hope that, if this bill is adopted at second reading, members of the Liberal Party will ask questions and try to understand the crux of the matter—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I must interrupt the hon. member as there is another question.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona will have less than 30 seconds to put his question.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, certainly the Liberal flip-flop on this issue is akin to the sheriff having joined the rustlers, because in 2008, less than two years ago, at the Standing Committee on International Trade, the Liberals were pushing for an impartial human rights assessment before any agreement was signed. That is what they wanted to do two years ago under their previous leader and the previous critic.

They had a change in the Liberal Party, a new leader and a new critic, and now they have flipped right over directly in line with the Conservative position, a total flip-flop on the issue.

I would like to ask the member whether she agrees with that analysis.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Mr. Speaker, I agree completely with his analysis and I do not understand this flip-flop. Is it because the Liberals want to befriend the big Canadian mining companies? That is possible. I just do not understand: the party that defended human rights has done a complete about-face today and does not care in the least. I would ask the Liberal members to question their leader about this.

[*English*]

**Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise with great pleasure today to discuss the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

It is not often that one can get excited or energetic about certain treaties. By and large they are viewed as rather dry and ordinary things, but I have a personal stake and a personal interest in this treaty. Unlike most members of the House, I have family that is in Colombia and not just Canadians who have immigrated there as expatriates to take a high paying job. They are 100% born and bred Colombians. So for me, Colombia is a special country, a country not as special as my homeland, Canada, but a country that has great potential, a great future. It is a beautiful country.

For those who are watching I encourage them to visit. The stereotypes of a failed state that is incredibly dangerous and a narco-state with guerrillas running there are stereotypes of the past.

I have visited Bogota and Cali, and the regions around it. It is a beautiful country. One of the country's slogans reads, "Colombia is Passion" and it is quite accurate. It is a place where I encourage, particularly come winter, Canadians to consider.

I had planned to speak almost exclusively on the issue of agriculture and Canadian exports to Colombia. I am predominantly here to represent the people of Saskatoon—Humboldt and they will benefit greatly from this treaty because of the nature of commodities that are grown in my riding.

However, watching earlier today on television and listening to some of the debate and statements made by some of the members, it is apparent that they do not have a firm grasp of the actual facts on the ground in Colombia. I feel that I must take a few minutes before I get into the main body of my speech to rebut some of the arguments.

First, while the arguments against this agreement are clever politics, members holding themselves up as defenders of human rights against money-grabbing business interests, the core of their arguments on human rights is disingenuous and not factual.

The critics of this treaty have deliberately chosen to ignore the effects this treaty will have upon the Colombian people. In fact, the argument that human rights will be damaged by this is wrong. It is the complete reverse.

If one thinks what is one of the most fundamental human rights for mankind, it is the right to food. Therefore, let us look at what this treaty will do for food in Colombia. It will lower the cost for staple foods: peas, lentils, oats and wheat. These are things that ordinary Colombians eat every day and are a particularly high percentage of the budget of low income Colombians.

Canadian exports to Colombia will not displace local production. The grains that we will export to Colombia will not affect the local commodities. They will displace commodities imported from places such as Chile, the EU and the United States.

*Government Orders*

The other thing that would be interesting for our viewers to note is that Colombia has a very large social problem. Some of the industries that will benefit from the treaty actual deal with these social problems. The Colombian textile and apparel industry will gain more access to Canadian markets under this treaty. That is important to Colombia for social reasons. Many of the workers in the textile and apparel industry are what are called heads of households, single mothers whose husbands have either died or run off and are not supporting their children. These women, who are raising their families, work in disproportionate numbers in this industry.

It may interest the House to know that some Colombian businesses have gone directly and given priority to these women to help them because of the social need in this country.

That is one very basic human rights issue, the need for a good job and the need for employment for lower income Colombians. That is what this agreement is seeking to do, to help Colombians. Would it solve all the problems? No, but it is a good benefit, a human rights benefit to the people of Colombia, giving people the ability to make a living. Is there a more fundamental human right than that?

The other major point that has been brought forth by critics today is that the Colombian government, for some reason, does not seem to care about human rights and does not care about union rights. I found this most interesting having listened to the debate.

• (1535)

Members keep citing the number of union leaders killed without noting that some of those union leaders were killed by leftist guerrillas, some were killed due to other causes, and that there is a considerable amount of violence in the whole country.

I have still yet to hear either the Bloc Québécois or the NDP cite the number of evangelical pastors killed in Colombia, a group that is not normally known to be left-wing but has suffered disproportionate violence there as well. If their case was sincerely about human rights, they would cite those as well.

They point at the question of targeting the unions. It should be noted that local union leaders support this free trade agreement with Colombia, even as their national presidents and associations oppose it. It comes down to the question: do we support local union leaders or the nationals.

Other things should be noted as well. The Colombian government has its own judicial and human rights and legal system, and these are working. Colombian businesses are one of the highest investors of any country in the world in social development programs for its people. This is verifiable by independent statistics.

Having dealt with a few of those issues, let me talk about the positives that this agreement has for Canada.

Our government has aggressive free trade agreements that are providing tools Canadians need to compete and succeed around the world. We have negotiated with other countries, such as Jordan, Panama and EFTA. This agreement is one of the tangible examples of how the government is working to maintain and expand markets for our agriculture exports.

This free trade agreement will strengthen our existing trade relationship with Colombia and provide Canadian agriculture, and agri-food exporters and producers with improved access to this important market.

Canadian exports of agri-food products are worth \$247 million. Colombia is the second largest market for Canadian agriculture exports to South America. The purpose of this treaty is to increase our market share.

At the moment, however, Colombia maintains tariffs averaging 17% on agriculture products, rising from 10% to as high as 108% for some pork products, 80% for some beef and 60% for certain beans.

Thanks to this free trade agreement, Canadian producers will benefit from the elimination of tariffs on exports to Colombia. In fact, 86% of agriculture tariffs will be eliminated immediately once the agreement is in force, including for Canadian exports of wheat, barley, lentil and peas. These are real tangible benefits for producers in my province of Saskatchewan.

To the benefit of our food processors and consumers, Canada will immediately eliminate tariffs on nearly all agriculture imports from Colombia. This is important to help fight the drug problem in Colombia because these are the sort of crops that are replacing the coca production in the areas that produce cocaine. This is important for security and human rights in Colombia.

The passage of this free trade agreement is essential if we are going to compete effectively within Colombia's market. Other countries recognize that there are opportunities in Colombia. Colombia has concluded similar agreements with the U.S. and the E.U. These are major agriculture competitors with Canada who we must beat into the Colombian market.

Colombia is a vibrant and dynamic market for Canadian exporters and has been an important partner in international trade. Getting into Colombia in a timely manner helps our farmers to be competitive.

Opening expanding markets around the world creates opportunities for our producers to drive the Canadian economy. Now more than ever we need to do everything we can to open doors for our producers, our workers and our farmers, not close them

In Colombia, like everywhere else, we have continued these efforts with the free trade agreement and with recent announcements of the reopening of the Colombian market for Canadian cattle and beef. Colombia was the first country in South America to reopen its market to Canadian cattle since 2003. This is great news for our beef and cattle industry.

Our government will continue to work for Canadians to ensure that they have full access to important markets across the Americas and across the globe.

*Government Orders*

This free trade agreement includes obligations addressing technical barriers to trade to facilitate the conduct of trade, and ensure that regulatory processes do not become unnecessary obstacles.

In summary, this agreement is good for Canada and it is good for Colombia. All members need to vote for it.

● (1540)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his personal knowledge of the Colombian situation. It is always helpful to get a perspective.

I spoke to this particular bill some time ago and one of the key aspects was the corrupt judicial system within Colombia. The number of murders was staggering and there were virtually no prosecutions whatsoever. This is concerning to me. The member did not comment on the state of the judicial system there.

I would be interested to know if he is aware of any jurisdiction, other than his heart, where improving trade with that jurisdiction would have a substantive effect on human rights abuses within that country?

**Mr. Brad Trost:** Mr. Speaker, the precise examples that I gave in my speech were on increasing the quality of life for the poor people of Colombia. As far as will wealth inevitably create more human rights, I do not automatically equate the one with the other. World War II Germany was a wealthy country which did not respect human rights for that era.

However, in regard to the question if Colombia itself is trying to improve by doing its best, I would think there are other answers to that question and those answers are “yes”. Having spoken with lawyers who work in the human rights department and have been under pressure in the Colombian government, and having discussed the matter and looked at the rates of crime and violence, both involving the war, assassinations and so forth going down, the government is doing its best to try to get a grip on the situation. I think that can be demonstrated at committee, through statistics and discussion of certain programs.

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to the comments of the member. In fact, Colombia is indeed probably one of the most beautiful countries on this planet. Its temperate climate is absolutely beautiful 12 months of the year. It is a wonderful place to visit. However, it does have some problems. It is the longest democracy I think in South America, 200 years of history. However, it has had 200 years of violent history. So, I am not entirely sure that free trade is going to stop that particular tradition of 200 years.

It looks as if there is not going to be a fair presidential election on May 30. The international pre-election observation mission to Colombia, which is in the first leg of its study, has found a number of problems, such as human rights violations, illegal armed groups interfering with the electoral process, creating fear and intimidation, illegal campaign financing, and the list goes on.

My question for the member is this. Would it not be wise to wait until after the presidential election to see what happens before even proceeding with Bill C-2?

**Mr. Brad Trost:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague gets to the point why there is a filibuster on this bill. No credit wants to be given to the current Colombian administration. Let us be fairly clear. Independent polling of the race clearly states that supporters of the current president and his policies not only take first place but, in most polls, also take second place.

Is the system down there perfect? No, it is not. However, that is the same as stating that it would not be wise to negotiate trade agreements with Canada because of the sponsorship scandal and the previous effect it had on political parties in this House.

To draw such a strong link between certain problems that are limited in the country to the complete opposition to all trade treaties to the country is, in my opinion, ludicrous.

● (1545)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives basically decided on the human rights assessment issue two years ago and they were against it. The question is, why would they not allow the committee to carry out an independent human rights assessment if they thought that Colombia, in some way, would measure up? The truth of the matter is they knew Colombia would not measure up.

Also, we know they like to follow the United States. Even George Bush could not get this agreement through Congress in the last three years. So, the question is, what do the Americans know about the situation in Colombia that the current government obviously does not?

**Mr. Brad Trost:** Mr. Speaker, currently, the American political situation is dominated by protectionists in its Congress. That is hardly unique. The Canadian government has no interest in imitating the American government in its massive deficit protectionist mentality that currently seems to be down there. We fought with the United States on issues about the buy American issue, not all elements. Some down there engaged us on it. This is actually a reason why we should get ahead of the United States instead of following. Canadian companies can get an advantage before a U.S.-Colombia trade deal goes through, which would provide us with substantive economic leverage.

**The Deputy Speaker:** 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 Charlotte-town, The Budget; the hon. member for Halifax, Housing.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Don Valley West.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise somewhat nervously, standing very much in agreement with the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt. It does make me a little bit nervous to be speaking in such agreement with him. I will offer some different reasons why at second reading stage I will be voting in support of the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement and sending it to committee for review, consultation, consideration, amendment and passing so that we can continue a relationship with a country that desperately needs a relationship with Canada.

*Government Orders*

I have come to this position rather circuitously, hoping that I would hear something in the debate, and I have been listening to the debate, that would convince me that it is indeed good for Canada and Colombia to enter into this agreement. I have heard enough now that I actually think it is a good idea that we engage in this process.

It gives us an opportunity to look at human rights in that country in a new light and actually engages us in this discussion. In fact, if the government had not presented Bill C-2, we would not be having this discussion about human rights in Colombia. It is a good thing for Canadians to open their eyes to the human rights abuses, the dismal record of human rights in that country, but also the potential for a country to examine itself and police itself eventually and enter into world trade agreements and bring about prosperity and hope to its people.

For the last 25 years I have worked as a United Church minister. The United Church of Canada has stood very strongly in favour of various agreements in the world that will allow human rights to be discussed and also to be improved. It is in that light that I begin to look at this agreement.

I am very pleased that the Liberal Party will be presenting an amendment that looks at the mechanism within this agreement to ensure that human rights abuses are monitored and that the effect of this agreement is actually measured as time goes by.

In this discussion I have been surprised at some of the opposition members who seem to not understand that a free trade agreement is essentially an economic agreement. It is an agreement about trade, not principally a human rights agreement. We can take this as an opportunity to open the door to discuss human rights and to try to foster better human rights in another country, but it is essentially a trade agreement that is about prosperity, economics and making sure that Canadians have products that we can receive and use, and that we can sell and make a profit on.

This particular agreement, though, has raised concern. My constituents in Don Valley West have expressed that concern to me quite regularly. I have received a number of letters from very thoughtful constituents who are concerned that we may be fostering human rights abuses through this trade agreement. I simply do not see that as a possibility. Nor do I see a free trade agreement as being some sort of prize for having an unblemished human rights record. I do not think there is a single country in the world that could stand up to the test of having an unblemished human rights record.

Certain countries, such as Colombia, have a much more tarnished record on human rights. The record of atrocities has been enumerated by members of this House. As people read through *Hansard*, they can read the number of concerns that we have. Every single one of those is valid, but do we think a free trade agreement will help this or hurt this?

I have come to the conclusion that as we move toward freer trade with Colombia, we will be building prosperity and that prosperity will bring about human rights improvements. We do not have proof of that. Those concerns should linger in this House. Those concerns should dominate the work of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, as well as the committees of this House that

examine international human rights and the effects of this agreement. I think that we will be investigating that over many years to come.

I am very pleased the amendment which we on this side of the House have managed to negotiate will ensure that our Parliament, and not only the government, will be monitoring human rights.

There is a sense that we do not trust the Colombian government. I understand that lack of trust. It is a government which has dubious electoral practices. Colombia is a country that has had unusual difficulties with respect to narcopolitics, gangs and various other human rights abuses. However, that does not mean we wait until those issues are dealt with before we start a trade agreement that actually improves the life of ordinary Colombians.

● (1550)

Ultimately that is our goal. Our goal is not to be ideologically for free trade, or ideologically against free trade. Our goal is to examine this agreement as an agreement with one country and see whether or not it will foster human rights, whether or not it will engage people in the international community in ensuring that the very poorest in our world have greater prosperity, greater openness in government, greater engagement with the world and greater opportunity to come to know Canada and what Canada stands for.

My sense is that the government has entered into this agreement largely based on an economic strategy. I applaud the Conservatives for beginning the debate, but I also am encouraged that they understand this is not just an economic agreement, but also an opportunity to engage in these questions of human rights.

I have received a number of letters outlining disturbing cases, but no more so than the conversations I have had with Colombians who live in my riding. I have never been to Colombia. I am not an expert on it, nor am I an expert on free trade, but I have an interest and a passion for the Canadians who have come from Colombia and now live in my riding. They have expressed two concerns. They have expressed concern for relatives who still live under the threat of a tyrannical government, but also those who have not had the possibility of jobs and the opportunity for economic advancement. They are of a divided mind when I discuss this agreement with them. They are concerned about the possibility of this agreement being used as a stamp of approval for the Colombian government and its current practices. In no way is it that at all.

This agreement is an opportunity to engage in the conversation and to begin to monitor human rights and put on that monitoring the obligation that Colombia will have to fulfill its obligations under this agreement. Monitoring of human rights is very much a part of that.

The most devastating cause of human rights abuses is poverty and misplaced power. This trade agreement begins to address both of those issues. It begins to look at a government and demand from it democratic institutions, democratic responses so that that government may be a world player with us and we can engage with it as a sibling government.



*Government Orders*

More importantly, it opens up the opportunity for prosperity, for the accumulation of wealth and for an understanding that ordinary people deserve jobs that we take for granted. It is simply too rich for us in a northern western country with all that we have to stand back and say that we expect something more from Colombia than we have of ourselves.

Canada's human rights record is not unblemished. Canada's human rights record certainly is not as extreme as that of a country like Colombia, but our own country has not been perfect with respect to first nations, with respect to new Canadians, with respect to women and with respect to children. We have much work to do on that, but that does not stop us, nor should it stop us from economic participation in the world.

This agreement affords us an opportunity as a Parliament to open up our doors, open up our minds, open up our hearts to understand another part of the world we may not understand. If we were to wait for all human rights abuses in that country to end before we engage with it economically, we would be waiting forever. Instead, we should open the door to have a two-way conversation, for goods and services to flow, for cultural opportunities to expand. In that sense we as a country will be helping another part of the world meet our standard of living, develop an economic standard, a human rights standard and a standard about the cultural way of living that we expect in Canada.

• (1555)

**Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as would be expected with my colleague's background as a United Church minister, he is quite interested in the human rights question. In my time both on my trips to Colombia and in talking to people here, I have had the privilege of talking with many organizations, government relations personnel, human rights personnel, et cetera.

I am a member of the committee involved in studying this agreement. At committee, what sort of messages and witnesses would give the member comfort that the human rights situation is being monitored and that the development by Canadian companies there is progressive, solid and is building the country? What sort of people would he be looking for at committee to help reassure him regarding his human rights concerns?

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** Mr. Speaker, I will be looking for a variety of witnesses. They should come from third party, outside international multilateral bodies, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, for instance, that look at those kinds of questions. There should be a variety of Colombian voices and perhaps some from its neighbours as well. There would need to be voices from labour unions, from other NGOs, from the churches, the evangelical churches and the Roman Catholic church as well.

Human Rights Watch has been to my office in Toronto. It has expressed strong concerns about this agreement to me. I would hope that Human Rights Watch and some of the Canadians who have monitored elections would be brought in. I have some names of people who were involved in the last election monitoring endeavour. I think there are some very carefully worded questions that should be answered. Their answers would be weighed. We would weigh what they said, recognizing that everyone has a degree of self-interest in the answers given to these questions.

I trust the committee members in listening to the answers to their questions will give some thought to whether not having a free trade agreement would help or hurt human rights, more than having a free trade agreement would help or hurt human rights.

Decisions regarding helping or hurting a country are important to discuss.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we were concerned in the House about the Liberal flip-flop on this particular issue. Two years ago the member and the Liberal Party appeared before the Standing Committee on International Trade. At that time they were supporting an impartial human rights assessment. There is nothing wrong with that. As a matter of fact, that is the proper way to approach this issue. Trade with Colombia continues with or without this agreement. That is where the Liberals were under their previous leader and their previous critic.

Then there was a coup in the Liberal Party. A new leader and a new critic took over and all of a sudden, the Liberals have moved to the extreme right. They flipped overnight. Now they are in lockstep with the Conservatives. However, those members who were for the independent human rights assessment are still sitting there and are now being forced by their new leader to get onside with the Conservatives.

I am just asking the member how he can feel comfortable with flip-flopping so fast on this issue.

• (1600)

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to respond, because I do not see any flip-flop here. I see an evolution of thought and ideas and an improvement on the government's plan.

Our leader is an internationally recognized and renowned expert in international human rights. He has written extensively, travelled extensively, discussed extensively and is quoted extensively on international human rights. He is bringing to bear the thought that an annual examination of human rights as embedded in this new treaty as it will be amended would be far more effective than any idea the New Democratic Party could ever come up with.

The reality is we are putting right in the heart of this agreement the requirement that we as a government and as a Parliament engage in constant, ongoing evaluation of human rights so that we will see whether this agreement is helping or hurting the people.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I must say that I have been dying to speak. I am shocked by the comments I have just heard about free trade promoting human rights, and by the Liberal flip-flop on the free trade agreement.

I would like to take a quick look at the past. I remember the reaction in Canada when Brian Mulroney negotiated a free trade agreement between Canada and the United States. Canada did not want a free trade agreement at all, but Quebec wanted one because it was good for Quebecers. In the end, with the help of Quebec, Mulroney won the election, and he negotiated a free trade agreement with the United States.

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Then, Jean Chrétien took power. He promised to do all he could to put an end to the free trade agreement. What did he do? He not only failed to put an end to it, but he also went on to become the greatest proponent of free trade agreements that I have ever seen. This comment was in response to the Liberal flip-flop.

As for human rights, I would like to hear how a free trade agreement could promote human rights. I have heard in this House, from very well-meaning people, that Bill C-2—

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

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, am I out of order?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member asked me if you were giving your speech or making a comment. I said that you were giving your speech.

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, I said that I was very anxious to speak. I will continue to talk about the general principle of human rights and free trade agreements.

Free trade agreements are signed with an economic goal in mind and they must result in benefits. The free trade agreement with Colombia will essentially favour two groups: mining companies, which, through government help, will have access to Colombian subsoil and the Colombian government, which will receive taxes and so on from these mining companies. Why would they think that Colombians, that everyday people in Colombia, could benefit from this free trade agreement?

They can say that they are concurrently negotiating a human rights agreement. However, negotiating an agreement and taking concrete action to improve the human rights situation are two completely different things.

I was involved in the union movement for a number of years and, like my colleague, I am interested in the social aspects of what is happening in my riding. It is the balance of power that drives the relationship between the workers and the employers. If there is no local balance of power, there needs to be a national or regional balance. If that balance does not exist, the human rights situation will not improve and there will be no unions or laws to protect workers.

I am truly dumbfounded by the debate on this bill. My colleague said that farmers from out west could sell their products—wheat, oats or barley—to Colombia. If Canada were to do that, it should be because Colombians are not able to grow these grains to feed themselves. But, this is supposedly their primary resource.

What will Colombians gain from this agreement? Some might ask me why the government signed this agreement. It signed it because it thought it was in its own best interests and it did not need people's support. Everything I have read clearly shows that the mining companies are the ones who will benefit. They can move in and have, what I believe, is the other kind of free trade agreement.

First there was the FTA, even though the rest of Canada did not want it and had it imposed on them. Nevertheless, that agreement did not affect trade between states. Why not? Because no one could file a complaint without going through the state.

In the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement, which has support from both sides of the House, it is not the state that can lodge a

complaint if there is a problem in a mine, but rather the company. The fact that companies can lodge international complaints directly against Colombia without Canada's consent is something new.

● (1605)

When two states have a relationship, they can negotiate to find a balance, but in this case, no one is trying to achieve such a balance.

A company might have expected to make a profit by setting up in a given location because it wanted to use the water from a river, for instance. If it cannot use the river because it is drying up or because farmers are forcing it out, that company could sue Colombia—according to the bill—for the profits it is losing. It makes no sense.

People are saying they want to help Colombia, but this will not help that country.

I invite my hon. colleagues who are standing with their parties to take a close look at the balance of power underlying this agreement. It is not about trying to improve things through trade across borders that is beneficial to both parties, even though a free trade agreement normally tries to improve the situation for both parties.

I will close by saying that I read in the report that the Standing Committee on International Trade has expressed countless reservations about this free trade agreement, that it even went to Colombia and unfortunately learned that the government had proposed this free trade agreement before the committee could make any recommendations.

As the members have probably guessed, I do not support the bill.

● (1610)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member. She made an excellent presentation. Obviously, the happiest ones in this country right now are the mining companies. They probably had a pretty easy job of getting to the leadership of the Liberal Party to have it flip to where it is now, joined up with the Conservatives on this issue.

It has been a big gift for the Conservatives, because something is being done here that they could not get done on their own. They are in a minority situation and will never get a majority government. They could try to pass this agreement as often as they want, but they would never get it through the House. That was a stroke of luck for them.

The mining companies probably put pressure on the Liberals. It did not take much to pressure the new Liberal leader to get in line with the corporate agenda. Now we find all the Liberals happily jumping in line behind their leader, except the member for Mississauga South and a couple of other members over there who are still reluctant to go down that route.

I want to ask the member if she would like to make any further comments about that, because I think she really is on the right track.

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, I think that I am on the right track. Take NAFTA, for example. That free trade agreement also has a chapter 11 like the one in the bill before us. NAFTA also includes Mexico. I went to Mexico and, except for those who produce fruit, which sells very well in the United States, a lot of people had a lot to say about how other parts of Mexico are against NAFTA. They would like to renegotiate a better deal for themselves.

I think that is the principle. Both parties have to benefit.

[English]

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I profoundly disagree with the member. Canada is one of the great trading nations of the world. She of all people should understand that not only all Canadians but the province of Quebec benefit from robust trade with countries around the world.

She must be aware, or certainly should be aware, that back in the 1970s, Chile had perhaps the worst human rights record in the world, certainly in the Americas. Today its human rights regime is very robust. In fact, it has the lowest murder rate of all of Latin America. Its economy is doing well. Its banking system, I believe, is the fourth strongest in the world.

Why is that? It is because 13 years ago Canada engaged with Chile and entered into a free trade agreement. It was the right thing to do because when countries that are in the process of moving toward better human rights regimes and are engaged with countries that already have a long history of defending human rights, they do well and they improve that system of human rights.

Has my colleague looked at Chile, which is also part of Latin America, as an example that her party should be looking at to take a positive position on this free trade agreement between Colombia and Canada?

• (1615)

[Translation]

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, I have not checked recently, but it seems that the situation in Chile has improved significantly because of the educated middle class. Chile has had many years to create its own development tools.

A free trade agreement alone cannot develop an economy if local political, economic and social leaders do not create the tools to develop the economy and improve things for the country.

I will look at what has happened recently, but I am sure that development in Chile came about because of what I would call internal factors.

[English]

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to speak in the House today to the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement and the parallel agreements on labour and the environment. This agreement is an important part of our government's ambitious free trade agenda, as well as Canada's deepening engagement in the Americas.

As an export-driven economy, it is in Canada's best economic interest to open up as many foreign markets as possible for our

producers and our exporters. By increasing access to foreign markets for Canadian businesses, we can foster economic growth and create new jobs for Canadian workers, which is crucial in these difficult economic times. That is why this government is actively engaging in numerous free trade agreement negotiations in this region and elsewhere in order to build on Canada's already existing network of trade agreements.

Since 2006, the Government of Canada has achieved a forward-looking track in international trade. We are engaged in talks on an economic partnership agreement with India, one of the fastest growing economies in the world. We have opened up new trade offices in critical global markets, such as China, India and Brazil, to help Canadian companies and investors deepen their engagement in these countries, as well as five new trade offices within Canada to work with companies locally.

Since 2006, we have signed bilateral science and technology agreements with both China and Brazil. We have also signed a trade co-operation agreement with the United Arab Emirates.

Today, Canadians reap the benefits from several long-standing free trade agreements in force, notably the North American free trade agreement with the United States and Mexico and separate bilateral agreements with Chile, Costa Rica and Israel.

More recently, on July 1, 2009, a free trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association countries of Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein came into force. This agreement is notable for being the first free trade agreement that Canada has conducted with European countries. More important, however, this agreement increases the market access for Canadian exporters to the lucrative and sophisticated European markets. Through this deal, Canadian businesses gained immediate benefits through the elimination of duties on all Canadian non-agricultural merchandise. Tariffs were eliminated or reduced on selected Canadian agricultural exports, such as durum wheat, frozen french fries, beer and crude canola oil. However, this reduction in tariffs is not the only benefit of this agreement. Thanks to this deal, Canadian companies can now access innovative technologies and other inputs from these European markets at lower costs, including through the importation of machinery and scientific and precision instruments.

However, the agreement with the European Free Trade Association is not the only recent trade agreement that Canada has implemented. On August 1, 2009, the Canada-Peru free trade agreement, along with agreements on labour co-operation and the environment, came into force. The free trade agreement with Peru contains considerable benefits for Canada. For instance, Canadian producers immediately benefited from the elimination of tariffs on 95% of current Canadian exports to Peru, with most remaining tariffs to be eliminated over a period of five to ten years.

*Government Orders*

Products that received immediate duty free access to Peru include wheat, barley, lentils, peas and selected boneless beef cuts, a variety of paper products and machinery and equipment. Canadian businesses also received improved market access in other sectors of the Peruvian economy, such as mining, energy and professional services, as well as banking, insurance and securities.

This government is continuing to pursue ambitious trade agreements with others as well. That is why, on March 24 this government tabled implementing legislation for the Canada-Jordan free trade agreement along with parallel agreements on labour co-operation and the environment. Through this goods-only agreement, Canadian businesses will have improved market access to Middle Eastern countries. In particular, once the Canada-Jordan free trade agreement comes into force, tariffs on over 99% of recent Canadian exports to Jordan will be eliminated.

Key Canadian sectors that will benefit from this immediate duty-free access include forestry, manufacturing and agriculture and agri-food, sectors in which Canadian companies are global leaders. Given these benefits to the Canadian economy, this government is working toward the implementation of the Canada-Jordan free trade agreement as soon as possible.

● (1620)

This government's free trade agenda, however, does not stop there. On August 11, 2009, the Prime Minister announced the conclusion of negotiations of the Canada-Panama free trade agreement, as well as parallel agreements on labour co-operation and the environment.

These agreements, which are currently undergoing legal review, are another important pillar of this government's plan to increase market access for Canadian exporters. Once enforced, the Canada-Panama free trade agreement will improve market access for goods and services and provide a stable and predictable environment for investments in Panama.

In the meantime, while this House debates the Colombia and Jordan free trade agreements and while the agreement with Panama is undergoing legal review, this government is working on numerous other fronts to conclude additional trade agreements.

That is why at the Canada-European Union Summit in May 2009 this government launched negotiations toward a comprehensive economic and trade agreement with the European Union. A third round of talks with the European Union are taking place this week. These negotiations not only enjoy wide support among the private sector on both sides of the Atlantic, but the provinces and the territories are involved at a unprecedented level in these negotiations.

Meanwhile, negotiations with the Caribbean community are also progressing. The second round of negotiations between Canada and the Caribbean officials took place a few weeks ago.

Canadian officials also held a negotiating round last month with their counterparts from Central America as part of the ongoing negotiations between Canada and the four Central American countries of Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador.

This government remains dedicated to advancing our ongoing free trade negotiation with other partners, including South Korea,

Singapore and the Dominican Republic, as well as seeking ambitious opportunities elsewhere.

For instance, Canada has started exploring deeper trade ties with India. To this end, in November 2009, Canada and India agreed to establish a joint study group to look at key sectors of interest and the possible parameters of a comprehensive trade agreement. The first meeting of this joint study group took place in Delhi this past December, and officials from both sides are currently working to complete the study.

Canada is also currently involved in technical discussions with Japan.

What does an active trade agenda really mean for Canada? To put it in straightforward terms, by bringing down barriers to trade and investment, the government will help Canadian businesses compete in an ever more competitive world while also stimulating the Canadian economy.

This is where the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement plays an important role. Once implemented, this agreement will reduce tariffs for Canadian producers who want to export to Colombia, as well as expanding opportunities for Canadian investors and service providers. This agreement will also help Colombia build a more prosperous, equitable and secure democracy, a democracy that can contribute to growth and economic stability in the region.

In these difficult economic times, we cannot hide behind trade barriers. Protectionism is not the answer. Partnerships are. Canadians can count on this government to lead efforts in securing foreign markets for Canadian businesses and take every opportunity to oppose protectionism and defend free and open trade on the world stage.

I will make it clear once more. Since we took office, we have conducted 14 ministerial visits to China, including recent visits in April 2009 by the Ministers of Trade, Finance and Foreign Affairs. We have made significant investments to develop the Asia-Pacific gateway, a corridor initiative to make it easier for goods to flow between Canada and Asia, by spending over \$2.5 billion.

Our government has opened six new trade offices in Chinese cities to attract trade and investment to Canada. This will help Canadian businesses reach the Chinese market.

Our government also recently opened three new trade offices in India, bringing the total to eight, and making our network in India one of Canada's largest world wide.

*Government Orders*

Our government continues to expand Canada's trade network around the world. We have begun discussions for trade agreements with the European Union and India. We have completed new free trade agreements. We have more on the way with countries such as Morocco and Ukraine.

This is why I ask for the support of all hon. members for the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement. Let us stand up for Canadian workers. Let us stand up for freer trade and increased competitiveness. Canadians expect it and our government will continue to deliver it.

• (1625)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have an issue with the previous Conservative member who spoke. The previous speaker suggested that Pinochet's human rights record was bad and that the free trade agreement with Chile basically improved the human rights record in Chile.

That is absolute nonsense. I was an election observer in Chile in 1989 when Pinochet lost the referendum and again in 1990 when they had an election to elect a new president. Patricio Aylwin was elected as the president and he restored the democratic state that had been there up until Salvador Allende's time when he was overthrown in 1973. It was seven years and two elections before democracy was re-established and the free trade agreement was signed. It had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with any improvement in Chile's human rights record. It was a totally separate issue.

**Mr. Dean Allison:** Mr. Speaker, I think what is absurd is thinking that if we isolate countries and we are not prepared to trade with them or help them find their way out of some of these difficult internal situations, they will just evolve. Somehow by our isolating the countries that do not have options, that depend on drugs and on a whole bunch of other factors, all of a sudden they will be able to find democracy on their own. I think that one of the unique things we are able to do is to come in with labour and environmental agreements that are some of the strongest and toughest in the world. What we are trying to do is provide them other opportunities so they do not have to depend on the drug trade.

Quite frankly, I believe that if we could continue to show countries that need support that there are other options, that they could continue, they could become competitive, they could learn to sell goods, they would look at other ways democracy can be done. I believe this is one of the ways we could help these countries out of some of their current situations.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very intently to the speech of the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona and I have listened to him at committee. He always tries to bring in relevant comments and improve legislation instead of just tearing it down.

So, my point would be that, when we look at the situation in Colombia today, when we look at the improvements that have been made, when we understand and actually get beyond the rhetoric of the opposition to this deal and actually look at the effect it will have for the people on the ground, for the jobs, for the opportunity, for mainstream Colombians, we see those benefits far outweigh any possibility of any outrageous negative outcomes commented on by the naysayers.

**Mr. Dean Allison:** Mr. Speaker, as the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, I just want to say that, being on the trade committee and working with the parliamentary secretary, I have had a chance to go to Colombia to see first-hand what is going on, to see what is happening. Are things perfect there? No, not by any stretch of the imagination. There continues to be a number of issues that need to be worked on.

However, I really believe that as we are there with our labour agreements, side agreements, our environmental agreements, we are going to help Colombia continue to raise the bar in terms of where it is at and where it has come from.

My friends across the way like to continue talking about human rights abuses and all these things, but they talk about numbers and they use numbers that actually happened previous to the current government that is in place right now. And so, as the world engages countries like Colombia and helps them find a place for their goods and services, I believe that is one of the things they need to bring them into this century and, frankly, help them trade and depend less on things like drugs.

• (1630)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, it is absolutely absurd to say the figures are outdated. Every single independent human rights organization on the planet says there is a risk of this actually galvanizing more human rights violations, as the member well knows. The reality is that the current government has its hands soaked in blood. So much for the anti-crime agenda of the Conservatives. We have a president who rose to power with the support from the Medellín drug trafficking cartel, who is personal friends with Pablo Escobar, the notorious cocaine trafficker.

We have to ask: Why are the Conservatives so soft on Colombian crime?

**Mr. Dean Allison:** Mr. Speaker, I think one of the things we need to point out is that this president has been working very hard to get rid of the drugs that have been plaguing his country for a number of years and, quite frankly, so has his cabinet. He has put a lot of things in place, in terms of anti-corruption, and people are under investigation because, quite frankly, he is trying to have a very transparent government.

**Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to talk about the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement. It really is an important agreement that would allow Canadian workers to compete and succeed in a market that is very important to us. In particular, I would like to discuss the issue of labour under this agreement.

As is the case with other Latin American countries, as part of our re-engagement in the Americas, Colombia needs the support of Canada to overcome its challenges and ensure continued economic and social development. We would not want to turn our backs on the government of Colombia and send a negative message not only to Colombians but also to those in the Americas who look forward to increased trade bringing prosperity and contributing to better governance, peace and security in the region.

*Government Orders*

The Canada-Colombia free trade agreement is an important part of this commitment to the Americas. It is important to our history of engagement rather than isolation, in countries where Canada can make a difference and help others toward a future of lasting economic recovery, especially in these tough economic times.

The agreement includes parallel treaties on labour co-operation and the environment. The labour co-operation agreement is strong and comprehensive and will help improve labour standards for Colombian workers in many different sectors. Canadians can be proud of their government for ensuring that with all of our engagements, labour is a priority for this government along with the environment and human rights.

I know there are concerns about the impact of increased trade on workers, and I assure the House that it is an important concern for this government as well. This government firmly believes that prosperity cannot come at the expense of workers' rights. This government is committed to working with Colombia to improve labour standards and to help Colombia protect its workers. That is why the Canada-Colombia labour co-operation agreement is so very important.

The agreement is intended to facilitate co-operation on labour issues and to hold Colombia accountable for maintaining rigorous domestic labour standards reflecting those set out by the International Labour Organization. This agreement commits both countries to ensuring that their laws respect the International Labour Organization's 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

The International Labour Organization's declaration covers a wide range of workers' rights and obligations: the right to collective bargaining, the abolition of child labour, the right of freedom of association, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour, and the elimination of discrimination.

However, our agreement with Colombia goes even further. It commits both countries to provide for acceptable protections in occupational health and safety, to provide for migrant workers to enjoy the same legal protections as nationals in terms of working conditions, and to provide for minimum employment standards, covering such things as minimum wage and hours of work. The agreement also includes a strong dispute resolution mechanism, along with penalties for not living up to these commitments.

To ensure the highest possible compliance, the agreement provides for an open, robust and streamlined complaints and dispute resolution process. As part of this, members of the public can submit complaints to either government concerning the non-compliance of a party with its labour laws and the provisions under the International Labour Organization's declaration.

If a matter cannot be resolved, an independent review panel may be established and could require the offending country to pay up to \$15 million annually. This fine would be placed into a co-operation fund to be used to resolve the matter identified through the dispute resolution process.

The Colombian government has demonstrated resolve in recent years to fight impunity for crimes, and Canada needs to support these efforts. The government of Colombia has committed financial

resources for the investigation and prosecution of violent acts against union leaders and members through a special unit of the office of the attorney general.

In addition, through the protection program for vulnerable groups, the government of Colombia is providing protection for labour union members, their families and other potentially targeted groups such as politicians, journalists and civil leaders. Colombians and Canadians alike expect that the government of Colombia will remain committed to preventing crime and will prosecute those responsible. Our commitment to the rule of law goes beyond our borders wherever Canada engages.

• (1635)

The fines payable under the labour agreement are not designed to punish specific criminal acts. They are designed to help ensure compliance with and respect for domestic and international labour obligations.

Moneys placed in the co-operation fund would be disbursed according to an agreed-upon action plan. This would ensure that the matters under dispute are effectively resolved. Through this agreement, Canadians would have a unique tool at their disposal to ensure that the Colombian government continues to demonstrate the political will and provide the necessary resources to improve the labour situation.

We clearly recognize the challenges that a nation like Colombia faces in complying with each and every standard set out in the agreement. Nevertheless, Canada believes that compliance with the obligations of this agreement can be achieved not only through a robust dispute resolution mechanism but also through enhanced technical co-operation. That is why our agreement is complemented with \$1 million in labour-related technical assistance programming in the areas of social dialogue, occupational health and safety, labour inspection and enforcement of national labour legislation.

These initiatives aim to promote and enforce internationally recognized labour standards, particularly in the areas of labour inspection, tripartite consultation, enforcement of labour rights and occupational safety and health. These initiatives will also help Colombia enforce its domestic laws and meet the high standards established by this agreement. They will foster greater dialogue and co-operation among workers, employers and government to address labour issues. Canada is committed to helping our Colombian partners make the most of our new free trade agreement.

This government is re-engaging with our partners in the Americas and promoting the principles of sound governance, security and prosperity. We see improving workers' rights in the Americas as a fundamental part of this pursuit. More broadly, we are committed to playing an active role in promoting human rights across Latin America and throughout the Caribbean, and that includes Colombia.

We are one of the largest supporters of the Organization of American States, working in Colombia to support peace and demobilize paramilitary forces in that country. Our global peace and security fund is helping to promote peace, protect victims' rights and help strengthen Colombia's judicial system.

*Government Orders*

Canada takes human rights in Colombia very seriously, and this commitment extends to workers' rights. We believe free trade can play a positive role in a country's economic and social life. Workers' rights fit squarely into this principle and will continue to guide our engagement with Colombia and our partners throughout the hemisphere.

Canada is committed to supporting Colombia's efforts to meet these challenges and to build a better country for its people. Our government recognizes that free trade is a key driver of our economy, representing one in five jobs and a full two-thirds of our gross domestic product. We cannot talk about economic recovery without talking about free trade. That is why our government is putting such a strong emphasis on freer trade, an aggressive free trade agenda that will create jobs and foster economic growth.

Colombia is important to this agenda. It is important to Canadian workers and, of course, it is important to the development of a safer, more secure and prosperous Colombia. A safe, secure and prosperous hemispheric neighbour is a tenet of our engagement in the Americas. Today we have the opportunity to extend a future of promise to Canadian industry and the Colombian people for a future of mutual benefit and of course to demonstrate that, wherever Canada is, we promote the highest standards of labour rights and the protection of human rights. We can only do this through engagement. With the right mechanisms, such as the agreement we have before us, Canadians can make a difference.

For these reasons, I ask all hon. members for their support for this agreement. Let us get this agreement moved off to committee, to support Canadian business and to support the future of Colombia.

•(1640)

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that was such a reasonable sounding appeal. It made it sound like such a wonderful deal for us and Colombia to pass this allegedly free trade agreement.

The hon. member went on at great lengths about how it would be good for Canadian workers and Colombian workers. I am trying to resolve that in my mind with whether that will be similar to what the government has done for workers in Sudbury, a little closer to home.

I have a specific question. Paramilitary forces in Colombia now are driving Indians and Mestizos off the land, out of the jungles and away from their traditional forms of agriculture, which have been shown over centuries to be sustainable.

There are highly sensitive soils in Colombia, highly sensitive and biodiversity ecosystems, which do not work well with our more northerly kinds of agribusiness, monocultures and so on in these sensitive soils. What concerns me is not just the affront to civil rights but the affront to ecosystems in that area.

I doubt I will get a good answer, but I hope I will be wrong and that I will get a good explanation as to why my fears are unfounded about the destruction of biodiversity and sensitive soils in Colombia.

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member said he thought what I said about what was in the agreement sounded good. The fact is it is good. It is a good thing that we are engaging with Colombia. As I laid out in my presentation, there are so many different aspects of engagement with countries in the Americas like

Colombia that are positive for countries such as Colombia that we work together. By putting our heads in the sand and putting up a wall would be to the detriment of our own workers and our own economy in Canada and is not going to be very helpful.

I am very confident this agreement does have the protections in it that Canadians expect. It is something that is positive for Canada and it is something positive for Colombia in terms of our engagement.

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on the question that the NDP member just asked.

It is never passing strange that we find the NDP coming up with all kinds of reasons to oppose free trade agreements no matter what they look like, no matter what the stripe. I just heard about biodiversity and the quality of the soils. Earlier the NDP members were talking about the human rights regime.

I look back to the 1980s and the early 1990s when Canada was negotiating a free trade agreement with the United States, NAFTA. Even back then the NDP members opposed that free trade agreement. They did not have human rights as an issue. They did not have labour rights as an issue. They did not have biodiversity as an issue. They did not have soil quality as an issue.

The NDP members are, in principle, opposed to any kind of free trade agreement. They put up silos around our industries. They build trade walls around Canada. They ignore the global economy. They simply forge ahead as if they are hiding in a little hole.

Does the member not find it passing strange that the NDP would consistently find new ways of opposing free trade agreements?

•(1645)

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** Mr. Speaker, the fact is if one is ideologically opposed to free trade in principle, one will find any excuse to oppose it.

I happen to chair the Canada-U.S. Interparliamentary Group. We know how important trade is with Canada and the United States and we know how many jobs are dependent on it.

We hear them on the other side say that we have lost jobs, but the fact is free trade has been good for Canada. It has created millions and millions of jobs in the NAFTA area and in the more than 20 years since the original Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement was passed.

Just last week I was in Biloxi, Mississippi, where the Canadian provinces and the southeastern states. We heard a presentation from the head of FedEx, which laid out all of the positive things that came out of free trade. I wish the hon. member had heard what was in that speech. This is the message the members from the House take down to the United States. These are the kind of positive things that we can get out of a free trade agreement with Colombia, moving forward for both Canadians and Colombians.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, over the past year I have received many letters and emails regarding the free trade agreement between Canada and Colombia. It is undoubtedly an issue that many Canadians care about. It is an economic issue, sustaining jobs in Canada and Colombia, and it is a moral issue when we consider the human rights situation in Colombia.

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[*Translation*]

People are worried. They see the violence and conflict in Colombia. They worry that with this agreement, Canada is supporting and even encouraging these actions.

The reality is that in order to make positive changes in the world, we must get involved. The other opposition parties want to wait until Colombia figures things out for itself and becomes a model country before Canada signs anything.

[*English*]

However, the truth is Canada and Colombia exchanged over \$1.3 billion in trade last year. Canadian businesses are taking note of this accord. With the signing of this agreement, Canadian entrepreneurs are prepared to make long-term investments that will benefit the Colombian people.

Canadian agricultural interests are supportive of this agreement. Canadian business organizations, including some members of the small business community, see the opportunities with this agreement. Other Canadian companies such as SNC-Lavalin and Brookfield Asset Management have opened new offices in Bogota and established a \$500 million fund to invest in Colombia.

All of this is happening outside of this new agreement that we are supporting today. I say “we” because the official opposition played an important part in getting this agreement. Economics is the motor of trade, but we also have a duty to engage our economic partners on a human level. Sometimes people need to talk about other things before they get people to listen to what they have to say.

Human rights are at the root of our Liberal values, so in order for us to support this agreement, we needed to ensure that the economic agreement with Colombia would have a component that protects the right of Colombian workers and keep our companies out of human rights conflicts. That is why it was such a key element that our international trade critic, the member for Kings—Hants, broke the barriers of partisan politics and negotiated an amendment compelling each country to monitor and publicly report on how this free trade agreement impacted human rights both in Canada and Colombia.

In fact, under this new Liberal deal, Canada and Colombia must publicly measure the impact of free trade on human rights in both countries. This is the first such human rights reporting requirement for any free trade agreement in history. It imposes a new requirement on Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to focus on, collect and analyze information on the impact of the Canada-Colombia FTA on human rights both in Canada and in Colombia. This information must be provided to the Parliament of Canada in an annual report, which can then be used to guide Canada's foreign policy with respect to Colombia. In addition, the public tabling of the annual reports in Parliament will allow for greater scrutiny by all opposition parties and provide a transparent way for civil society organizations from around the world to access this data as they conduct their own human rights impact assessments.

The Liberal amendment for a human rights reporting requirement was motivated by a desire for greater public oversight in the area of human rights and a belief that human rights were deeply intertwined with economic opportunity. We recognize that human rights abuses in Colombia have largely resulted from violence fuelled by

Colombia's illegal narco-economy, which in turn has been perpetuated by Colombia's endemic poverty, persistently high unemployment and insufficient social infrastructure. We believe that increased political and economic engagement can help address the root causes of violence and improve the human rights situation in Colombia.

● (1650)

[*Translation*]

This age of globalization is about opening up to the world and not shutting it out. I visited Colombia 15 years ago. Back then, like today, I saw a lot of challenges, a lot of problems with violence, and a lot of concerns regarding citizenship, but I also saw a lot of poverty.

Canada has a responsibility to share what we do well: not only our economy, but also our impact on human rights. That is our responsibility.

[*English*]

The Liberal Party believes Canada has a moral obligation to help Colombia continue to improve its human rights record. We must work with Colombia to strengthen its public institutions and create legitimate economic opportunities for all Colombians.

This free trade agreement, with the Liberal amendment establishing a human rights reporting requirement, will significantly strengthen Canada's ability to achieve these goals and engage Colombia on the issue of human rights. Furthermore, the Liberal amendment would provide Canadians and Colombians with an ongoing assessment of progress in this area.

Colombia is at a critical juncture in its history, emerging from decades of violence and civil war. The Liberal Party of Canada believes that countries like Canada can support Colombia on its path to peace, justice and reconciliation by helping to build and strengthen Colombia's public institutions and provide greater public oversight on the human rights situation in Colombia.

Canada must not turn its back on Colombia and isolate its people at this time. Rather we must seize this opportunity to open doors, to engage the people of Colombia and to work with them to break the cycle of violence and human rights abuses that prevents the country from reaching its potential.

I spoke earlier about how trade agreements make good business sense, but I must ask all members to consider the human dimension of this free trade agreement.

The Canada-Colombia free trade agreement includes the most robust agreements on labour co-operation and the environment that Canada has ever signed.

With the help of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, some improvements have been recorded in Colombia regarding those human rights, but there is still a long way to go. There are many obstacles in the way of progress such as poverty, resulting from persistent high unemployment rates in Colombia.



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To increase trade, Canada can help build Colombia's legitimate economy, creating real jobs for Colombians, including the most vulnerable. We can provide opportunities that help wean Colombians off their illegal and violent narco-economy. At the same time, this free trade agreement can help strengthen the protection of Colombian workers. The Liberal Party believes that through free trade, Canada can help build Colombia's legitimate economy and create real jobs and opportunities for all Colombians, especially the most vulnerable.

It is important that Canadians know that this agreement is open to accountability. The annual reports analyzing the impact of this FTA on human rights produced to the House of Commons will be available to the public and will be debated at trade committee. Witnesses will be heard, both from Colombia and Canada, on an annual basis. We will deepen the transparency and accountability of this trade agreement. We believe it will actually set a precedent for trade agreements signed between countries around the world.

It is important that we engage Colombia and the Colombian people as a partner in progress, to help them achieve a more peaceful and prosperous future.

I believe this agreement, particularly with this amendment, will strengthen human rights engagement on an ongoing basis and ensure that this Parliament, on an annual basis, will receive a report on the human rights impact of the agreement and will help continue the debate, continue the engagement and strengthen human rights and labour rights in Colombia.

As Canadians, we have the tremendous luck to live in a country that is open, free from violent conflicts, civil war and torture, a country that is prosperous, environmentally conscious, and socially inclined. However, with that luck, comes great responsibility. We must keep the channels open and do the right thing for all Canadians and Colombians. This is where we turn our focus from just making our country a better place to making the world a better place.

• (1655)

[Translation]

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I had a really hard time keeping up with the member's speech. I see a Canada-Colombia free trade agreement as an economic agreement, but it would force us to compromise our principles and our values. We cannot say that social and human rights are good for Canada, where we demanded and fought so hard for them, but then say that for Colombia, where these rights are violated, they are not important.

When I was a member of the Standing Committee on International Trade, I heard about the deaths of union activists and about truly horrible living and working conditions. I wonder what my colleague thinks about moving forward with this free trade agreement. Would it not mean moving forward with an agreement that would violate human and social rights?

I am very much against this free trade agreement.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. Our trade with Colombia is already in excess of \$1.3 billion, and yet has no impact on human rights in Colombia. Signing this agreement will allow and require us to monitor the human rights situation and the impact of our trade with this country,

and give us a tangible tool for improving the circumstances of the Colombian people in the future.

[English]

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I can only lament the ignorance to the actual situation in Colombia. The hon. member has not read any of the human rights reports, not one of them; not Human Rights Watch, not Amnesty International, not the CCIC, not the CLC report, not a single report to actually understand why every independent human rights organization on the planet that has commented on this agreement has talked about the risk of the human rights situation getting worse.

We combine that with the lamentable ignorance of the Liberals of their own amendment that does not compel anything more than the Colombian government to do what it already does, which is issue a report on itself every year. Every year the Colombian government says that it does a great job of protecting human rights and labour rights. No matter how many bodies are in the streets, the Colombian government always whitewashes itself.

The real question here is why the Liberals have completely betrayed all of those who voted for them in the past thinking that they were doing something on human rights and were concerned about human rights.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, something we can always count on is the NDP members standing to oppose any free trade agreement that is brought forward in the House. It is unfortunate because trade opens the way to engaging with other communities and other countries and provides a platform on which to work to build better prosperity.

Not every country in the world can have the laudable human rights record that Canada has. We are not without our imperfections but it is through prosperity, working together, leaning in on it and ensuring that we are working together to create a better, more prosperous future for—

**Mr. Peter Julian:** We are going to do a forum in your riding.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I am not sure why the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster asked the question if he is not interested in listening to the response. It is difficult for the Chair to hear above all that noise.

There is enough time for a very brief question or comment. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade.

• (1700)

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to leave the human rights side of this agreement aside for a moment and look at the trade statistics themselves.

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The New Democratic Party and the Bloc Québécois have both been adamantly against this free trade agreement and yet in the province of Ontario, where many New Democratic Party members were elected, and in the province of Quebec, where the Bloc members were elected, they stand to gain more from this trade agreement than any other region in Canada. Quebec does nearly one-third of the trade that is carried on with Colombia, so I do not understand the position of the members.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, the free trade agreement has the support of significant elements of the Colombian private sector and public sector. Specifically the private sector unions, headed by Gerardo Sánchez Zapata, said that this procedure was welcomed by Colombian workers and that they were thankful to the Parliament of Canada for its position because it helps strengthen the mechanism already in place that monitors and evaluates the progress in matters of human rights.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House for this ongoing debate on the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement. I think we have had over 50 hours of debate, both in the Chamber and at committee, on Colombia already. I am hoping to hear something new in these closing hours of debate today. So far I have not but I am still hopeful that something else will perhaps come up that we have not been aware of.

This is a good agreement for Colombia and Canada. It has a number of additions to it. Here in the Chamber I would like to publicly thank the hon. member for Kings—Hants for his intervention and the assistance of the Liberal Party on this agreement because it will benefit not just Colombians, who desperately need this agreement, but Canadians as well.

As the global economy continues to recover, one thing is clear: free and trade and partnerships, not protectionism, hold the key to long-term prosperity. Canada's approach has been to keep the doors to diversifying global trade open and this agreement is part of that strategy. We are aware that Colombia is already a significant trading partner for Canada, with two-way trade totalling over \$1.3 billion in 2009. Colombia is an established market for Canadian exports and holds significant potential for Canadian businesses, the potential we need to continue to work toward a fragile recovery and continue to move forward in these very difficult economic times.

Over the past five years, Canadian merchandise exports to Colombia have grown by 55%. Colombia is also a strategic destination for Canadian investment, with the stock of Canadian investment in Colombia reaching over \$1.1 billion in 2008. A country like ours, with so much expertise, can offer a lot to Colombia. Canadian engagement on trade is a key factor to the development of a safe, secure and prosperous Colombia. I think that all of us in the House would be in agreement on that point.

Canadian businesses currently are and have the potential to further become important players in the Colombian market. We need to be able to compete with those who are there, countries like the United States. Looking beyond investment services and market access for goods, this agreement is a comprehensive free trade agreement with terms that extend well beyond these subjects to include other areas of importance to Canadian businesses.

The free trade agreement provides comprehensive terms of the agreement in areas such as financial services, temporary entry of business persons, electronic commerce and telecommunications, and competition, monopolies and state enterprises.

For the second year in a row, the World Economic Forum ranked the Canadian banking system as the soundest in the world in its annual report on global competitiveness. Canadians can be proud. This is an area where Canada is truly excelling. Across the Americas, Canadian banks are helping foster economic growth through access to credit and other financial services. The Canadian financial services sector is a leader in providing high-quality and reliable financial services. This agreement includes comprehensive obligations for the financial services sector, including banking, insurance and securities.

These terms go beyond those already agreed to at the World Trade Organization and ensure that the Canada's financial services sector can compete with its American competitors in Colombia. These market access commitments are complimented by key terms that ensure non-discrimination, provide a right of establishment for financial institutions and promote regulatory transparency in the financial sector.

Those are key elements that our sector is seeking to ensure it is able to compete in an increasingly competitive global market. This government is responding to this demand.

Another important area included in this agreement to ensure that businesses are able to fully maximize the opportunities in Colombia is temporary entry for business persons. Our government is responding to this demand.

● (1705)

This is an important issue for Canadian businesses to ensure their employees are able to work in Colombia and is a natural complement to market access for goods, services and investment. In recognition of the significant number of Canadian companies operating in the region, the agreement removes unnecessary barriers impairing the ability of companies to bring in the skilled workers they need. This would include impediments such as the requirement for labour certification tests, quotas, proportionality requirements or any prior approval procedure. The agreement extends to an extensive list of professions, including various technicians and provisions for spousal employment.

This goes beyond coverage previously achieved in any Canadian free trade agreement. We are tearing down the barriers to trade when Canadians need it most.

The strength of this trade agreement does not stop there but also extends into the areas of electronic commerce and telecommunications. Electronic commerce is an important addition to the previous free trade agreement in light of the importance of ensuring that new digital economy issues, such as protection of personal information, consumer protection and paperless trade, are not overlooked.

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Those issues are increasingly important for businesses in the 21st century and Canada and Colombia have recognized this fact. Colombia has agreed to a permanent moratorium on customs duties for products delivered electronically. This includes items such as electronic software, music purchased online and digital books. This moratorium is important not only for businesses but consumers as well.

In addition to electronic commerce, telecommunications provisions were also included to support the competitive development of the telecommunications sector. The obligations contained in this agreement go beyond Colombia's current obligations through the World Trade Organization. Through this free trade agreement, Canadian telecommunications service providers would be able to compete with their American counterparts in the Colombia market.

Clearly, there are many benefits of this free trade agreement with Colombia that go beyond trade, goods and investment.

The final area that I would like to touch on is the terms in this free trade agreement related to competition, monopolies and state enterprises. This agreement meets Canada's objective of ensuring that anti-competitive business practices do not undermine the benefits of trade and investment liberalization achieved in the overall agreement.

Canada and Colombia will co-operate on issues related to the competition policy through their respective authorities. The obligations ensure that Canadian companies doing business in Colombia are treated fairly with respect to their investments.

Overall, this is a high quality and comprehensive trade agreement. This is a market where many key exporters have seen enormous potential. Colombia has stable political institutions, progressive laws and strong pro-market orientation.

These strong economic fundamentals were noted by the World Bank in its report, "Doing Business 2010". No less than the World Bank has rated Colombia among the top 10 countries in the world for regulatory reform and the best country in Latin America for doing business.

Quite frankly, if we listen to some of the rhetoric that has taken place in the House about Colombia and then look at such respected institutions as the World Bank, there is a serious dichotomy, a serious split between the reality of what major players in the world's economy, such as the World Bank, are saying and what the critics of this free trade agreement are saying.

Colombia is well positioned to weather the global economic crisis. The country has sound macro-economic policies and improved security, which have resulted in favourable economic conditions and stronger demand for imported products. This represents new opportunities for Canadian exporters.

This free trade agreement has the support of key exporters and investors across Canada. Its passage through the House will ensure that Canadian business is able to take advantage of the opportunities in this important market. Our government believes that our businesses can compete with the best in the world and this agreement will help them do it.

The world is quickly discovering the benefits of doing business with Canada and we are there to assist to make that happen.

• (1710)

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest, of course, to the hon. member's comments. It occurs to me that the Conservatives are not even really serious about Bill C-2. I was thinking back to the prorogation we just had. It seems to me that this bill was well on its way before prorogation. Then, after prorogation, we had to start the bill all over from the beginning again.

If the Conservatives were serious about this bill, why did they bother proroguing in the first place and stopping all these bills, including crime bills and other bills that they said they were so interested in? Now these bills have to start all over again from the beginning. It seems to me that they are starting to agree with the NDP that this is not a good bill.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat taken aback by the question. In the early part of the question, it sounded as if we may have actually one NDP member who has read the agreement, who perhaps understands at least a minute amount of it, and is willing to support it. But I understand now that that is actually not the case.

I would like to know of one trade agreement, free trade agreement, any trade agreement, that the New Democratic Party has supported. They do not exist. There is no such thing. The NDP is anti-trade. I do not know how it expects the people in Canada to survive as an exporting nation, to create jobs and opportunities for our people, and I do not know how it expects Colombians to create jobs and opportunities for their people, if we do not trade with one another.

There were comments made earlier about bodies in the streets in Colombia. I am going to tell members something. I personally have been to Colombia. I know people from Colombia. I have friends in Colombia. In the 1970s and the 1980s, there were bodies in the streets, but they are not there today. There is a freedom of movement that has never occurred before in the history of Colombia. There is a freedom and a sense of individual protection and safety that was never there before in the history of Colombia. That country is moving in the right direction.

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for his cogent intervention on this very important issue.

As he and I both know, unfortunately, the NDP and the Bloc are mired in this archaic ideology where they will not support any type of free trade agreement. It does not matter with who it is. They do not understand that it is a big world out there. We have supply chains all over the world. We have opportunities to build Canada's prosperity. They simply shut their minds to that.

However, I want to turn my colleague's attention to the issue of diversifying Canada's trade.

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As he knows, back in the 1980s and the 1990s, we signed a free trade agreement with the United States, which later on became the North American Free Trade Agreement. It has done marvellous things for our economy. It has dramatically increased trade between our nations. However, it is always dangerous to rely on one major trading partner.

Perhaps my colleague could comment on the advisability of expanding those trading relationships and signing additional free trade agreements, such as this Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

● (1715)

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, upon forming government, our government established two new priorities.

The first one was re-engagement with the Americas, which would enable us to concentrate on economies such as Colombia and sign a free trade agreement with Colombia, and to work with Panama, Peru and other nations in Central, South and Latin America, and the Caribbean.

The other part of our strategy was a global commerce strategy; that is, to find new markets around the world. That is why we are fully engaged with the European Union on signing a comprehensive trade agreement. That is why we are fully engaged with countries like Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland. We signed a free trade agreement with those four nations. That is why we are looking at the BRIC economies of the world: Brazil, Russia, India, and China. These are the growing economies of the world.

We can no longer simply be dependent upon one major trading partner. We must look further afield and diversify our trading partners. That is good for Canada and, quite frankly, that is good for the rest of the world.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is vote buying and vote selling, misuse of identity documents, illegal possession of identity documents and stolen documents. This is all part of the election in Colombia.

There is coercion and intimidation of voters. My gosh, this is what democracy is all about in Colombia. Fraud is committed by polling officers at the polling stations, wow. There is obstruction of the electoral observers so they cannot go and see what is going on. There is control over public transportation to prevent voters from getting to the polling stations. On top of that, there is an absence of educational outreach to voters to teach them about the importance of citizenship and participation.

Is this the Canadian vision, or the Conservative Party or maybe the Liberal Party's vision, of democracy and an election that is fair and free?

This kind of report came from several countries, including Canada, United States, Germany, U.K. and Mexico, participating in an extensive pre-electoral observation mission. Their reports talk about widespread fear among the Colombian population in this region because they are worried about their lives, intimidation, and what would happen to their financial resources.

The government manipulates the social programs for its own political ends. It says, "If you don't vote for me, you're going to get

cut off from the families in action benefits". That is not a fair and free election. That is not what democracy is all about. If the residents and voters do not attend political meetings or vote for the governing party's candidates, they can have their benefits cut off. That is not what democracy is all about.

The other situation is that funding is transferred from drug trafficking to finance campaigns. That is criminal behaviour. There were agreements between candidates, government officials and companies to award government contracts after the election if they donated to their campaign.

Occasionally, we see this here in Canada. It becomes a scandal. We have heard about brown envelopes over restaurant tables, or sometimes a meeting at a certain bar or maybe with certain mutual friends or former MPs, I do not know. Certainly, this kind of behaviour cannot be tolerated. That is not what the New Democratic Party of Canada's definition is of a fair and free election, and that is not what democracy is all about.

Democracy should not be about fear. That is what is happening in Colombia. Apparently, the mission recommends that the nation update its electoral census to avoid situations reported in which the dead vote. I know that occasionally some MPs go and sign up people who may be dead to become a member of certain parties, but that is not what should be tolerated.

We have seen report after report. Two years after the Conservative government started on this free trade deal, what has happened? There is more fear and increased intimidation. This is according to a 2009 report of the office of the United Nations high commissioner. Regarding human rights in Colombia, he said that the office located in Colombia had observed an increase in the number of intimidations and death threats by letters and emails against human rights defenders, social and community leaders, and members of other marginalized groups.

● (1720)

I keep hearing that the more we engage with the Colombians, the safer it is for them. Actually, the opposite happens because the government is tolerating it, even encouraging it through its secret services.

It is given encouragement by these free trade deals, by the Liberal Party and Conservative Party in Canada and the Conservative government, that we will reward the Colombian government even though it continues to intimidate its opponents. The elections in Colombia are not fair nor free. We will reward Colombia by providing even more trade. That is the exact opposite of what Canada should do.

Canada should send a clear message to the existing government of Colombia and say that we believe in democracy. We should send a clear message that we believe that elections should be fair and free, and that when the Colombian government sends secret services to intimidate opponents, to fabricate allegations against its opponents, to sabotage and inflict terror upon its political opponents and citizens, that when secret services that are condoned by the government conduct smearing campaigns, we will not reward such behaviour. We will say no to any free trade agreement with a president and a government that is of this nature. If not, the message we are sending is that we will support criminal behaviour and elections that are conducted in a way that is totally undemocratic.

What we should be calling for instead is a halt to this trade agreement. We should be calling for an independent and comprehensive human rights impact assessment, not done by the government itself but by an arm's length agency. And until that kind of assessment takes place, we should not proceed by saying to that government that we will have a trade relationship with it. If not, those people who have been jailed, terrorized and forcefully displaced will feel that justice is not on their side.

Since 1997, between 2.6 million and 6.8 million hectares of land in Colombia have been acquired by violence, most of them through the paramilitary strategy. Not only does this kind of government intimidate its citizens but it has forcefully removed land from people, so it certainly is not a government we should support by negotiating free trade with it.

We have also noticed, with two successive terms of this government, that it has focused on intensifying the wall. We can always tell what kind of government it is. Does it rule by hope or by fear, and can we examine its defence budget? In these two terms, the Colombian government's defence budget has risen from 5.2% of the GDP in 2002 to 14.2% of GDP, that is \$11 billion in 2010.

That is a lot of money that could have been used to help feed its people, to help bring some of the 4.9 million people who have been displaced by force in the last 25 years back into their country. It could help some of the people who are starving, who are being intimidated by the secret services. Instead, it is putting its money into the defence budget rather than the education budget. The education budget is only 13.9% of GDP. Its defence budget is even higher.

That is why we should vote against this free trade deal with Colombia.

• (1725)

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member spoke at length about human rights issues in Colombia, but I have not heard the NDP speak about human rights violations in Venezuela. I would be very interested in her view of the Chavez regime. I would be interested in why the NDP members are so conspicuously silent on their brethren Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. Why are they being so silent when there is a Canadian physician who has been detained in Venezuela? Dr. Carlos Cossio and seven members of his family were arrested a few weeks ago accused by the Venezuelan government without any evidence whatsoever of espionage. They are being detained in Venezuela against their will.

I would be very interested in knowing why the NDP members refuse to stand up to bullies and thugs like Hugo Chavez in

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Venezuela. Is it because of their ideology that they are all right with left-wing thuggery in Venezuela and they are opposed to some sort of ideological perspective that is more in keeping with market-based economies?

I cannot understand the NDP members at the best of times, but I certainly cannot understand why they are being so silent on defending fundamental human rights in Venezuela.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Mr. Speaker, the former Conservative member of Parliament now sits on the Liberal bench, and there is not a lot of change there. Any time a member of Parliament tries to change the subject and change the channel, there is something to hide. We are talking about Bill C-2, the free trade agreement with Colombia.

I understand that the Conservative members are so worried about this bill that last Friday, when the bill was not even on the agenda, they moved a time allocation motion to try to change the channel and say that we are going to have closure, similar to what occurred with respect to the HST.

• (1730)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Idiiotic.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Answer the question.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Madam Speaker, they brought in closure to stop the debate and rush the bill through. That is the kind of anti-democratic behaviour that we should not tolerate in the House of Commons. Yet the Conservative government, because it refuses to debate this bill properly, invoked closure. That is why we have to vote on the bill today.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I hope members realize that I will not recognize them if they heckle while a member is speaking.

The hon. member for Westlock—St. Paul.

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I was listening to the hon. member's answer about changing the channel. I was hoping to give her a little more opportunity to answer the question that was put to her about Chavez.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Madam Speaker, I thought we were discussing free trade with Colombia. I thought we were talking about whether or not the dead should vote. That is what I have noticed in those reports. The dead vote. Should we tolerate that? I do not think we should.

Should we tolerate exceeding campaign financing limits? Maybe that is a practice the Conservative Party is familiar with. Maybe that is why the Conservatives support that. There is also the use of money from illegal activities, especially from drug trafficking, to finance campaigns. Is that the kind of behaviour we should condone and the kind of government we should support? Absolutely not.

If that is happening in Colombia, we should say no to that kind of behaviour. We should not reward that kind of government. We should say no to free trade with Colombia.

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**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-  
sor, Lib.):** My goodness, Madam Speaker, the vigorous debate that we have here today. I am very proud to be a member of Parliament during these times. I suppose we can all just get along for a little while. I hope that my speech is not going to be as contentious as what we have heard over the past little while.

I would like to bring some facts to this debate. I would like to put them out there for a decent round of questions and comments so we can talk about this issue as it goes forward not just for us but also for the wonderful people of Colombia.

I want to start by talking about my personal opinion regarding the free trade arrangements that exist currently throughout the world and what they do not just to liberalize trade but also to increase the standard of living for people involved in the economy and the illegal economy. It allows people in all regions of a nation to better the standard of living of anyone who wants to participate. I will touch on this later in my speech.

I am a rural member of Parliament and I would like many people in the rural areas of Colombia to be engaged in this process as well.

Right now we have an economy that is global, far more global in nature than we ever anticipated. The rapid development of this global economy is intense. It is certainly intense in my riding in the traditional sectors of mining, fishing and even forestry. Many people in the rural areas of the Andean region rely on these industries as well, particularly the mining industry.

We have to analyze the three pillars by which we want to engage Colombians not just in conversation but in an arrangement that would allow them to better the standard of living not just for the select few elite, but for people in the entire region. It is part of that legal economy that we need to increase.

Fifty-six per cent of the people in Colombia engage in illegal economic activities. Through no fault of their own they are engaged in a workforce that is not legitimate for the most part. For people in some of the smaller places in Colombia, it is all that they have. They find themselves in a situation where they are desperate to make a living for their communities and for their loved ones. Those people need options.

We have created some options that they can use to increase their skills which would allow them and their children to stay within the regions they love so much. Colombians love their country. This is important for the Andean region.

We already have comprehensive agreements in place with Chile and Peru. These agreements provide a substantial boost to many people living in the rural and urban communities.

Hopefully, we can wean Colombians away from the practices taking place in other countries that do not believe in the same values, such as Venezuela, as my hon. colleague talked about.

We need to give these people options. It is not that they want to be involved in the activities we hear so much about. The narcoculture economy in Colombia is well developed. Destruction of that type of economy is not going to happen overnight. It has to be done piecemeal. It has to be done through steady investments, through a

sense of corporate responsibility. Canada can share its sense of corporate responsibility with Colombia.

We are not oblivious to all that is happening in Colombia. My hon. colleague from Trinity—Spadina ran off a list of incidents that we would not want to ever see happen in that country. How can we give the people who live there the option to get away from that? We need to engage these people.

I have heard the criticisms made by Amnesty International and others that the Bloc and the NDP have brought out. We need to engage these people. We do not disagree with them, but why take these measures and just throw them out? This is the part that we need to understand.

We are currently working on a comprehensive free trade agreement with the European Union. I bring that up only because this deal would be a boon for people in rural communities. It would allow them to improve a currently failing industry. A prime example involves those individuals who make a living from catching and harvesting shrimp.

● (1735)

The European free trade agreement is going to bring about a positive deal for them for the very simple reason that it gives them options. It does not matter if they are in Belgium or Colombia, it is the options that this creates.

Sure this is a benefit for us; we do not disagree. We would never walk away from something that is only a one-sided deal, but there is also something for them.

I want to refer to what has been talked about in this debate for some time and that is the comments by President Barack Obama on this. There has been some confusion as to whether the United States does or does not agree with this. I think the principles laid down by Obama are true. He said, "I commended President Uribe on the progress that has been made in human rights in Colombia and dealing with the killings of labour leaders there, and obviously we have seen a downward trajectory in the deaths of labour unions and we have seen improvements when it comes to prosecution of those who are carrying out these blatant human rights offences".

I do not think the President of the United States is saying the place is perfect, but he is saying it is a lot better than what it used to be.

This is part of a proactive measure that helps these people get away from the type of living where they are living from hand to mouth every week. It is not just a question of making money. They are dealing with people who are incredibly dangerous. The paramilitary groups, whether or not they are disbanded, in some instances they are regrouping under some major urban crime. That is what we have to avoid. We can do that by engaging them and giving young people options.

I have a teenage son. If my teenage son were growing up in Colombia and there was no engagement with the outside world, think about what would happen. His only option would be to engage in part of that economic activity that is completely and utterly illegal. His life expectancy would be cut in half. However, he knows that living in Canada he does not have to choose that life.

We share a bit of what we are with them. That is striving for perfection. It is the same argument I have over universal health care with people. My American counterparts sometimes say that Canada has a bad system. Well, it is better than theirs. Universality is not perfect, but at least it is worth striving for.

In this case increasing the standard of living for average Colombians, whether they are rural or urban, is certainly worth striving for. I think this agreement does this.

My hon. colleague from Kings—Hants has brought forward an amendment which goes in the direction of achieving a better standard of living, the report brought here in the House for us to vet, to look at and to debate. That is what we need, a proactive measure that actually makes this a better situation not just for those who do business in Colombia but for us.

SNC Lavalin, a successful company in Montreal, is now doing business in Colombia, quite comfortably, I might add. Brookfield Asset Management created a \$400 million Colombia infrastructure fund. They would not do this if it was an absolute nightmare to work in Colombia. They are not saying it is perfect; they are just saying it is better than what it used to be. I think they like this deal as well. They certainly agree with the principles of corporate social responsibility.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights made these comments:

The report demonstrates how the internal armed conflict continues to pose many challenges for the country, including the complete disregard for international humanitarian law by guerrilla groups [most notably FARC]. This situation is exacerbated by violence against civilians committed by illegal armed groups that emerged after the demobilization of paramilitary organizations, links between illegal armed groups and drug trafficking, and the particularly acute impact of the internal armed conflict on indigenous peoples and Afro-Colombian communities.

There is no doubt it is there, but the problem now is that we need to make this better. That is what this agreement does.

• (1740)

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have two questions. When I listen to some of the criticisms from the opposition parties, at least from the Bloc and the NDP, on this trade agreement, they continually say that the paramilitaries are linked to the government.

There is never any acceptance that 30,000 paramilitaries have been disbanded. They never say that FARC, the communist-led insurgency in the jungle, is fed by the narco-economy and continues to feed the narco-economy. Somehow that is just left out of the equation. Could the hon. member speculate as to why?

When we look at this overall agreement and what happens to immediate jobs in Canada and in Colombia, right now our businesses are operating anywhere from a 1% to a 15% deficit. That is what the tariff is. Now they will be able to compete on equal footing with anyone else on the planet. Other countries in the world have already signed free trade agreements with Colombia, including those in the European Union and other modern countries in the world. Why would we not move in this direction?

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Madam Speaker, I mentioned something in my speech was about Peru and Chile, and I think my colleague would concur with me. We have established comprehensive trade

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agreements there and in other nations around the world. We need to point to that to see it is not just an issue of trade deficits and improving the economy, but also one of social responsibility.

One thing I really like about this are the side accords about labour. An issue we have in our country is workers' compensation. Workers' compensation principles are now improving around the world, thanks in part because of these trade agreements. He talked about the crime aspect. There is no doubt about that. In rural areas, when they disband these military groups, they reform, regroup and end up in major urban centres.

Once again, that exacerbates a situation where people just do not have options. Well over half of the people there are not involved in the legal economy. It is not because they do not want to be, it is because they do not have that choice. This is not entirely perfect, but it is certainly a positive step ahead for these people to get ahead and join in with the rest of the world to improve the standard of living.

• (1745)

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I cannot believe what I am hearing from the Conservatives and Liberals today. They readily admit that Colombia is a disaster in human rights, with a drug trade and lax environmental regulations. Their logic seems to be that the more problems a country has, the better it is to conclude a trade deal with it.

However, Colombia is the second most biodiverse country in the world. Ten percent of the world's species are in the forests there. There are over 1,800 birds, over 600 amphibians and over 400 mammals. The list goes on and yet deforestation has displaced four million people, according to the UN, and 50,000 hectares of deforestation have displaced 300,000 people just in 2007.

How can the Liberals go along with the Conservatives on this kind of faulty logic?

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Madam Speaker, I want to address the issue. He talks about the disaster there and gives the impression that it is becoming increasingly worse as they digress. Numbers point out that the rate of unionist homicides in Colombia between 1995 and 2008 has decreased dramatically. Basically, per 100,000 inhabitants, it was at 25 to 30 above that at the peak of 1996 and down to less than half that in 2008.

Again, it is not a perfect situation for a trade partner to be in, but it certainly has improved over the past while. Canadians have gone a long way in providing the world with decent policies surrounding biodiversity and we continue to do so. Why would we not want to engage Colombia in a conversation to do much of the same when it, too, has the renewable resources that it desires so much and that we can contribute to help save the very asset about which he talked?

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**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to talk about the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement, an agreement that is part of our aggressive free trade agenda at a time when Canadians need it most.

Since 2006, our government has continued to expand Canada's trade network around the world. We have begun discussions for trade agreements with the European Union and India. We have completed free trade agreements with the European Trade Association, Peru, Jordan and Panama. We have completed our free trade agreement with Colombia as part of our strategy to open doors for Canadians at a time when it is most welcome. The time to implement this agreement is now.

I would like to take this opportunity today to look at our relationship with Colombia through two different lenses, the lens of trade in services and an investment lens.

Let us start with the benefits of this trade agreement to Canadian service providers. From financial services, legal services, engineering and architecture to high technology, the opportunities are there. Canadian service providers already have a substantial presence in the Colombian market. Our service exports to Colombia are in the area of about \$80 million to \$85 million each year. Driving these numbers are Canadian financial, mining, engineering, petroleum extraction sectors and tourism.

Services sectors like these in Canada stand to benefit greatly from the new free trade agreement. They will be able to enjoy a secure, predictable, transparent and rules-based trading environment. It also gives Canadian service providers an added measure of confidence. They can now plan for the future, knowing that under this agreement, they will be treated the same as Colombian service providers.

Moreover, our two countries have agreed to begin discussions on mutual recognition agreements, starting with engineering, that allow for our standards and qualifications to be recognized in each other's country. This will save service providers in both nations time and money and let them get to work more quickly in each other's market.

For these reasons, our free trade agreement with Colombia provides a great opportunity to take our current trade in services to a new level in the years ahead. Our services sector is an engine of our economy. In total, it is responsible for 71% of our gross domestic product. Development of new market opportunities is our priority. Helping the Colombian government on the trade and investment front is a way to do this. For Canadians during this period of global economic uncertainty, it is important to keep markets open.

The free trade agreement with Colombia will help increase the competitiveness of Canadian exporters at a time when they need it most. The free trade agreement with Colombia will engage rather than isolate Colombia to ensure a brighter future.

These are just some of the factors driving Canadian investment into the Colombian market. Free trade accounts for three in four Canadian jobs. That is why I am so pleased to see that our free trade agreement with Colombia opens up many new doors for Canada's services sector.

We already know that this agreement gives Canadian services providers greater access to the Colombian marketplace than ever before. It is now time to ensure that Canadian service providers can take advantage of the opportunities and remain competitive globally.

I would like to look more closely at what the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement means for Canadian investors. Two-way investment is an absolutely critical driving force in today's economy. Investment links our business to global value chains and to the technology and expertise they need to forge a wide range of commercial links with our partners around the world. That is certainly the case for Canada.

At the end of 2008, Canada was a net provider of foreign direct investment, or FDI, with the overall stock of Canadian FDI valued at approximately \$637 billion. The inward stock is impressive as well, with foreign-held direct investment in Canada totalling \$509 billion that same year.

Investment with our partners, inward and outward, is enormously important. That is certainly the case with Colombia. The Colombian workforce is highly skilled, qualified and trained, giving global investors, including Canada, more and more confidence in the Canadian marketplace as well as the Colombian marketplace. Thanks to the dedication of the current Colombian government, we see steady improvements in the security and stability of Colombia, to the point where the stock of Canadian investment in Colombia reached over \$1 billion in 2008.

We expect this number to continue to grow over the next two years, thanks in great part to Colombia's burgeoning oil and gas and mining sectors and to Colombia's great need for infrastructure.

● (1750)

These are just a few areas where Canada has significant interest and can offer a lot to our Colombian partners going forward. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that our investment relationship with Colombia figured prominently in our free trade negotiations.

For Canadian and Colombian investors alike, the free trade agreement offers an unprecedented level of stability, predictability and protection, one that will help us take our investment relationship to a new level in the years ahead. The agreement establishes a stable legal framework that gives Canadian investors the predictability they need and deserve.

At the same time, strong obligations will ensure the free transfer of investment capital and protect against expropriation. It also gives investors access to transparent, binding and impartial dispute settlement processes. In short, under the free trade agreement, Canadian investors will be treated, with very few exceptions, just as well as Colombian investors.

For Colombian investment in Canada, we have taken steps to ensure that we maintain full policy flexibility in key areas, like health and public education.



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From the outset of the global economic downturn, our Prime Minister has been very clear that trade and investment hold the key to helping the world economy recover. That is why our government is continuing to move forward on an aggressive free trade agreement agenda that puts a strong focus on creating new partnerships with key nations around the world.

To create new commercial opportunities around the world, we need to be doing everything we can to open doors for Canadians and to work with our partners to help Canadians succeed. That includes service providers and investors. That is why I ask for all members to show their support for the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement not only on behalf of Colombians but Canadian investors and the Canadian economy.

One thing it is important for me to point out as a rural member of Parliament coming from eastern Alberta is that it is critically important for our beef livestock and pork sectors to have opportunities open up. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has done a tremendous job going around the world opening up new markets for our farmers and investors.

It is, however, difficult when we get these free trade agreements, which our own farmers and constituents say are tremendously important, people like Jurgen Preugschas from my riding, who is the president of the Canadian Pork Council. He came to the agriculture committee and said that they absolutely need this free trade agreement to be ratified and moved forward in the House of Commons. He explicitly looked at the NDP members of Parliament and said that this had to happen. It is free trade agreements like this that will continue to move not only our global economy to recovery but the Canadian agriculture sector to the recovery it needs and to expand and open up markets.

Opposition members often ask how much trade we really do with Colombia. When it comes to pork, it is essential to know the industry and the market and to understand that while these niche markets may not always be huge, they provide a very important market for us to send products that other countries do not necessarily want. They provide added value to our carcasses and farmers and the \$1 or \$2 extra that it adds on pork means a lot of money in rural Canada.

I know the NDP is predominantly a party of downtown Toronto and downtown Sudbury, but at the end of the day, we need to represent rural Canadians as well and we need to come to this place and get together.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Downtown Toronto? Working class Canadians vote for us.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Obviously, I hit a nerve. I know the member for Burnaby—New Westminster is a strong advocate of human rights, even though he does not appear to hold the same values to Hugo Chavez as he does to Colombians.

I implore members to stop filibustering and move this forward so we can all work in the best interests of our constituents and take into account rural Canadians. These kinds of free trade agreements are tremendously important to them.

I ask all members of the House to support the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

● (1755)

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I have a very quick question.

The member talks about us filibustering, but the biggest filibuster of all was proroguing Parliament, which meant this bill had to start at the beginning. He talks about filibustering. The Conservatives do not even want this bill to go forward. I am not even sure what they are trying to do today.

Would the member like to comment on this?

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Madam Speaker, I do not intend to continue to fight past battles with these members. I came to this place hoping to move forward on important projects, important bills like the Canada free trade agreement. I am happy that this member has not supported the long-gun registry, and I look forward to seeing him continue to support the abolishment of the long-gun registry, just as Liberal members across the way have.

I look forward to our continuing to work together in the best interests of rural Canadians.

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am so pleased that my Conservative colleague from Alberta talked a bit about the agricultural prospects for Canada and Colombia that are contained within this free trade agreement. I would encourage him to expand a bit more about how important it is that Canada expand its free trade relationships around the world.

As he knows, we have embarked upon a free trade negotiation process with the European Union. We have already signed an agreement with the European Free Trade Association. We are negotiating with many other countries around the world to ensure that we have a diversity of trading relationships so we are not as dependent on the United States as we have been in the past.

I would encourage him to expand a bit on that and to also expand on the impact this agreement and other trade agreements would have on the agricultural industry, especially in his province of Alberta.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Madam Speaker, being a member of the agriculture committee, I have seen the member constantly strive to fight for agriculture in Canada, particularly the agriculture in his area. He has always been a strong proponent.

He is absolutely right. We need to continue to try to move forward on free trade agreements, bilateral free trade agreements. The European Union is tremendously important. Once again, I will go back to pork. This is an industry that has been devastated over the last several years. Romania's being included in the European Union has taken away another niche market for our pork industry that is tremendously important to value-adding for our Canadian farmers.

It is the same as Colombia. Not only would this free trade agreement with Colombia give us a niche market that is important to our farmers but it would also raise human rights standards for Colombian farmers. It would also allow them to interact on a more global basis with us in an exchange of ideas and information that would better their farming techniques.

It is important that we do not become an isolationist country when it comes to free trade and that we continue to expand that around the world.

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• (1800)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member should be aware that there is an election process going on in Colombia right now and that just recently a group of international election observers returned and detailed a report of some very bad things going on in Colombia; for example, vote buying and selling, misuse of identity documents, illegal possession of identity documents, including stolen documents, coercion and intimidation of voters, fraud committed by polling officers, and on and on.

The question is: When does this member think things are going to improve in Colombia? If we sign a free trade deal with Colombia, are things going to just turn around and Colombia is going to become a model partner in a free trade agreement? That is absolute nonsense, and he should know that.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Madam Speaker, I have already outlined the benefits to Colombians and the Canadian economy.

However, I would like to let the member from Manitoba know that there are bad things happening right here in this country, right here in Manitoba. Our farmers in Manitoba are having a tough time in the pork industry. They are concerned about where they are going to get their next meal from. They are concerned about what is going to happen on their farms and where they are going to trade to. They are losing markets in the United States. They are losing markets with country of origin labelling. They want to know what the government and their members from Manitoba are doing for them and that they are standing up for Manitobans, not just coming to this place, worrying about whether or not Colombian farmers are getting a fair shake, but worrying about whether Manitoban farmers and Canadian farmers are getting a fair shake out of these deals.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-2, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia.

First of all, the Bloc Québécois is opposed to Bill C-2. The Canadian government's main motivation for entering into this free trade deal is not trade, but rather investments.

I wish my Conservative colleagues would at least have the courage to tell the truth. Always trying to invent illusions, as the Conservatives do, is most harmful to us as we do our jobs as MPs.

They are trying to pass this off as a trade agreement. The Conservative members spoke of opening up major markets with Colombia. Canada has been negotiating for two years and I have yet to receive a single email from farmers or businesspeople in my riding asking me to sign this free trade agreement with Colombia.

This agreement contains a chapter on investment protection, which would make life easier for Canadian investors, particularly those who invest in the mining sector in Colombia.

The ultimate goal is to provide businesses with access to markets and investments.

We have to be careful because, comparing this investment protection agreement to all the others Canada has signed over the

years, the one that would bind Canada and Colombia seems ill conceived. All these agreements contain clauses that enable investors to sue the local government if it takes measures that reduce their return on investment.

These provisions are particularly dangerous in a country where labour and environmental protection laws are uncertain at best. Such an agreement, by protecting a Canadian investor against any improvement in the living conditions in Colombia, could slow down social and environmental progress in a country that is in great need of such progress.

What Conservative MPs from Quebec and the rest of Canada need to understand is that people will not stand for our Canadian companies investing in a country where they do not meticulously observe labour laws, respect human rights and protect the environment.

I know that this is extremely hard to swallow for Conservative members from the west whose hands are full with the oil sands development, but the vast majority of Quebecers and Canadians will not stand for the Canadian government allowing Canadian companies to invest in countries like Colombia without respecting human rights and protecting the environment.

Colombia has one of the worst track records in the world, and certainly in Latin America, when it comes to human rights. That is where the problem lies. The government wants to allow companies to invest in a country that does not respect human rights.

In order to promote human rights in the world, governments usually use the carrot and stick approach. If we want to promote human rights in Colombia, and if they absolutely want to do business with us, then we have to be able to tell them that they must first improve their human rights record.

They support efforts to ensure greater respect for human rights and reserve the right to cut off those benefits if things go back to the way they were.

If Canada signs this free trade agreement, it will relinquish its power to exert pressure. Not only will it give up the option of using the carrot and the stick, it will be handing that power to the Colombian government. That is why we said this was a bad deal. It is a bad, ill-conceived free trade agreement that eliminates the Canadian government's power to force Colombia to improve its workers' quality of life, human rights and environmental rights.

The government keeps saying that it has included side agreements on labour and the environment in the free trade agreement. But such side agreements are manifestly ineffective. They are not part of the free trade agreement, so investors are free to destroy the rich Colombian environment, displace people to set up mining operations and keep murdering trade unionists with impunity. That is what is going on now.

*Government Orders*

•(1805)

Our Conservative colleagues are trying to lull us into submission by telling us that it is a good agreement, but there are no provisions concerning human rights and environmental protection in the agreement, even though they should have been. The Conservatives talk about the side agreements, but they are not part of the main agreement, so companies are not required to comply with them.

The Bloc Québécois does not agree that the government should exchange its ability to exert pressure to ensure respect for human rights against the privilege for Canadian companies to make foreign investments.

The Bloc Québécois is in touch with the people. If they knew about this, Quebecers and Canadians would never agree to investments that compromise human rights. Once again, the Conservative caucus is trying to make us accept this. We are being gagged. On Friday, the Conservatives decided to limit the time for debate on this agreement. The government wants to force all parliamentarians, all Quebecers and all Canadians to accept this terrible free trade agreement.

In December 2009, this bill was debated at second reading before being set aside when Parliament was prorogued. I asked the minister who gagged our debate why, if it was so important to the Conservatives, the government prorogued the House and ended the debate just before the holidays. By proroguing the House, they decided to end the debate.

We think that it was, once again, to please investors close to the Conservative Party. That is the harsh reality. It is a party that acts out of political interest. The Prime Minister acted out of political interest when he prorogued the House. He is again acting out of political interest and also to help his mining friends, in this case, and the oil companies. It is a question of investments and Colombia's natural resources.

An amendment to an amendment stating that a number of human rights organizations were strongly opposed to the ratification of this agreement was rejected by the Conservative and Liberal parties on October 7, 2009. Once again the opposition parties, both the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, agreed on this amendment to the amendment to respect human rights.

The Conservatives and Liberal voted against this amendment to the amendment. The Liberals voted against it for political reasons. For some months now, all the Liberals' actions have been politically motivated. Inevitably, there has been pressure from mining and oil companies to get this free trade agreement signed.

The free trade agreement between the United States and Colombia, signed in 2006, is also stalled because of the human rights issue. Quebecers and Canadians are not the only ones who oppose the agreement. The people of the United States are also worried about the human rights issue. This agreement should not be ratified by Congress until Colombia strengthens its legislation to protect minimum labour standards and union activities in order to respect human rights and labour rights.

Once again, the Conservatives decided to rush through with this in order to serve the interests of a handful of Canadian investors. The

Liberals and the Conservatives are going to ratify this agreement despite the fact that the Americans have decided not to ratify it until Colombian laws change to allow effective union action and ensure minimum standards for working conditions. This will ensure that Canadian companies that employ Colombian workers provide them with decent working conditions and respect labour laws so those employees can work in an environment consistent with our values.

•(1810)

As the members can probably guess, out of respect for human rights and the environment, the Bloc Québécois will be voting against this free trade agreement.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the member's speech very much. He has a great deal of experience in the House and has understood what is at stake with this free trade agreement.

All human rights organizations, without exception, are opposed to this agreement. As the member knows very well, even the members of the Standing Committee on International Trade, when they saw what was happening on the ground, stated that it made no sense to go ahead with the agreement without an independent and impartial assessment of its impact.

All human rights organizations and free and independent trade unions are against this agreement. Can the member explain why the Conservatives and the Liberals are prepared to sacrifice the fundamental values of Canadians, who believe that a system must be put in place to protect human rights?

**Mr. Mario Laframboise:** Madam Speaker, I thank the NDP member for his question. It is clear that this is an investment agreement. We are sacrificing human rights in Colombia to satisfy a handful of rich individuals who control the mining and oil companies.

As I already said: the Americans were not fooled. They are demanding changes to legislation before they will sign a free trade agreement. Once again, the Conservatives and Liberals will violate these human rights in a country that is in desperate need of having them protected.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** It being 6:15 p.m., it is my duty, pursuant to order made on Friday, April 16, 2010, to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of second reading stage of the bill now before the House.  
[English]

The question is on the motion that this question be now put. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Call in the members.

• (1835)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 27)

**YEAS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Arthur	Ashfield
Bagnell	Baird
Bélanger	Benoit
Bernier	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boucher	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooogé	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crombie
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Dei Mastro	Devolin
Dion	Dreeshen
Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	East
Eyking	Fast
Flaherty	Fletcher
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Généreux	Glover
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guarnieri
Hall Findlay	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Holland
Ignatieff	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mark	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Mendes
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Ohrai	Oda
Oliphant	Paradis

Payne	Petit
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Raït
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Rota	Russell
Saxton	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Simms	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Szabo
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Trudeau
Tweed	Uppal
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Volpe	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young	Zarac— 182

**NAYS**

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bevington	Bigras
Blais	Bonsant
Bourgeois	Brunelle
Cardin	Carrier
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Donnelly
Dorion	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Faille	Freeman
Gaudet	Godin
Gravelle	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	Hughes
Hyer	Julian
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Leslie	Lévesque
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Ménard
Mourani	Mulcair
Nadeau	Ouellet
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paquette	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Rafferty
Roy	Savoie
Siksay	St-Cyr
Stoffer	Thi Lac
Thibeault	Vincent— 78

**PAIRED**

Members

Bellavance	Finley
Lessard	Ritz— 4

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

*Government Orders*

[English]

The next question is on the main motion.

● (1840)

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor:** Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you would find agreement to apply the vote from the previous motion to the current motion.

**The Speaker:** Is there agreement to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** There is no agreement. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And five or more members having risen:*

● (1850)

[Translation]

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

*(Division No. 28)*

**YEAS**

Members

Abbott  
Aglukkaq  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Ambrose  
Anderson  
Arthur  
Bagnell  
Bélangier  
Bernier  
Bezan  
Blaney  
Boucher  
Braid  
Brisson  
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
Bruinooge  
Calandra  
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
Carrie  
Chong  
Clement  
Cummins  
D'Amours  
Day  
Del Mastro  
Dion  
Dryden  
Dykstra  
Eyking  
Flaherty

Ablonczy  
Albrecht  
Allison  
Anders  
Armstrong  
Ashfield  
Baird  
Benoit  
Bevilacqua  
Blackburn  
Block  
Boughen  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Cadman  
Calkins  
Cannon (Pontiac)  
Casson  
Clarke  
Crombie  
Cuzner  
Davidson  
Dechert  
Devolin  
Dreeschen  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Easter  
Fast  
Fletcher

Fry  
Gallant  
Généreux  
Goldring  
Goodyear  
Grewal  
Hall Findlay  
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
Hiebert  
Hoback  
Holder  
Ignatieff  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kent  
Komarnicki  
Lake  
Lebel  
Lemieux  
Lukiwski  
Lunney  
MacKay (Central Nova)  
Mark  
McCallum  
McGuinty  
McLeod  
Menzies  
Miller  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Murray  
Norlock  
O'Neill-Gordon  
Oda  
Paradis  
Petit  
Prentice  
Proulx  
Raiitt  
Ratansi  
Regan  
Richards  
Rickford  
Russell  
Scheer  
Shea  
Shory  
Smith  
Stanton  
Strahl  
Szabo  
Tilson  
Tonks  
Trudeau  
Uppal  
Van Loan  
Verner  
Wallace  
Warkentin  
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)  
Weston (Saint John)  
Wong  
Yelich  
Zarac — 183

Galipeau  
Garneau  
Glover  
Goodale  
Gourde  
Guarnieri  
Harper  
Hawn  
Hill  
Hoepfner  
Holland  
Jean  
Kania  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Kerr  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lauzon  
LeBlanc  
Lobb  
Lunn  
MacAulay  
MacKenzie  
Mayes  
McColeman  
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
Mendes  
Merrifield  
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
Murphy (Charlottetown)  
Nicholson  
O'Connor  
Obhrai  
Oliphant  
Payne  
Poilievre  
Preston  
Rae  
Rajotte  
Rathgeber  
Reid  
Richardson  
Rota  
Saxton  
Schellenberger  
Shipley  
Simms  
Sorenson  
Storseth  
Sweet  
Thompson  
Toews  
Trost  
Tweed  
Van Kesteren  
Vellacott  
Volpe  
Warawa  
Watson  
Woodworth  
Young

**NAYS**

Members

Allen (Welland)  
Angus  
Asselin  
Bachand  
Bevington  
Blais  
Bourgeois  
Cardin  
Chow  
Comartin  
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)  
DeBellefeuille  
Deschamps  
Dewar  
Dorion  
Dufour  
André  
Ashton  
Atamanenko  
Beaudin  
Bigras  
Bonsant  
Brunelle  
Carrier  
Christopherson  
Crowder  
Davies (Vancouver East)  
Demers  
Desnoyers  
Donnelly  
Duceppe  
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)

*Government Orders*

Faille	Freeman
Gaudet	Godin
Gravelle	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	Hughes
Hyer	Julian
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Leslie	Lévesque
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Ménard
Mourani	Mulcair
Nadeau	Ouellet
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paquette	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Rafferty
Roy	Savoie
Siksay	St-Cyr
Stoffer	Thi Lac
Thibeault	Vincent — 78

**PAIRED**

## Members

Bellavance	Finley
Lessard	Ritz — 4

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on International Trade.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

\* \* \*

[English]

**JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ACT**

The House resumed from April 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-9.

● (1855)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 29)

**YEAS**

## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Arthur	Ashfield
Baird	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson

Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fast	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kennedy (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mark
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Paradis	Payne
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Saxton
Scheer	Schellenberger
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young — 143	

**NAYS**

## Members

André
Ashton
Atamanenko
Bagnell
Bélangier
Bevington
Blais
Bourgeois
Brunelle
Carrier
Christopherson
Crombie
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Dewar
Donnelly
Dryden
Dufour
Easter
Faille

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Gaudet
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Guarnieri
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (St. John's East)	Holland
Hughes	Hyer
Ignatieff	Julian
Kania	Laforest
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lavallée	Layton
LeBlanc	Lemay
Leslie	Lévesque
MacAulay	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Ménard
Mendes	Mourani
Mulcair	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Neville	Oliphant
Ouellet	Paillé (Hochelaga)
Paillé (Louis-Hébert)	Paquette
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Proulx	Rae
Rafferty	Ratansi
Regan	Rota
Roy	Russell
Savoie	Siksay
Simms	St-Cyr
Stoffer	Szabo
Thi Lac	Thibeault
Tonks	Trudeau
Valeriote	Vincent
Volpe	Zarac— 120

## PAIRED

## Members

Bellavance	Finley
Lessard	Ritz— 4

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

**ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

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

• (1900)

[*English*]

## THE BUDGET

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, over the past several years, the University of Prince Edward Island has formulated a proposal to establish a centre for rural excellence. The project would benefit the university greatly, as well as other areas of Prince Edward Island.

On March 4, the finance minister tabled the federal budget. On page 242 of the budget, it states:

Upgrades to infrastructure at the University of Prince Edward Island will create over 300 jobs and inject about \$30 million into the economy.

It was positive news, as it suggested the university could proceed with creating the centre.

On March 25, I asked the finance minister in this House whether the statement that was in his budget was accurate. His answer was, “The budget is accurate”.

Around that time or shortly thereafter, things started to slide, particularly the information we were receiving from the Department of Industry, as it attempted to explain the statement given by the minister in the House and the statement in the budget.

The Department of Industry explained that UPEI had previously received a small grant of \$2 million and that by using the multiplier of 15, we could get to \$30 million, and this was the promise. Obviously, that was ridiculous. It was next suggested that the \$30 million referred to other projects, which did not add up to anything close to \$30 million and also did not involve the University of Prince Edward Island.

This was a total fabrication. It was not correct. One would expect that statements in the budget would be accurate and that the minister's answers to questions put to him in the House would also be accurate.

This issue is reflective of a fundamental problem with this institution; namely, there are no repercussions for making these types of statements.

My question for the parliamentary secretary or the minister, whoever is answering the question, is extremely simple. I would appeal to him to not just read the text of the answer given to him by the Department of Finance or the Department of Industry, but to rise and answer the question, which I will ask very slowly and simply. Is the statement on page 242 of the budget, “Upgrades to infrastructure at the University of Prince Edward Island will create over 300 jobs and inject about \$30 million into the economy” accurate?

**Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I do wish to clarify questions surrounding the level of funding provided to the province of P.E.I. under the knowledge infrastructure program and, in particular, certain numbers reported in the fifth report to Canadians.

The knowledge infrastructure program is providing significant short-term stimulus in local communities across Canada by investing in infrastructure at universities and colleges. Through the program, we have committed \$2 billion over two years to 536 different projects in every province and territory in Canada. This has been more than matched by contributions from the provinces and other sources, resulting in total project costs of roughly \$5 billion.

Prince Edward Island has received funding for two KIP projects: one at Holland College and one at the University of Prince Edward Island.

The project at Holland College includes major renovations to the Charlottetown Centre and the construction of a new centre for applied science and technology. The total cost of this project is \$17 million, of which the federal portion is \$8.5 million.

The project at UPEI includes \$4 million for major infrastructure upgrades, of which the federal government is providing \$2 million.

Total federal funding for P.E.I. under the KIP program is therefore \$10.5 million over two years.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Because my colleague from Charlottetown seems to be confused as to the content of the fifth report to Canadians, specifically an item on page 242 of that document, I appreciate this chance to offer him some clarity on the matter.

Page 242 of the fifth report to Canadians states that investments on the island under the KIP program will create over 300 jobs and inject about \$30 million into the economy.

Under this program, UPEI and Holland College together received a total of \$10.5 million in federal funding. When matched with provincial funds, this amounts to \$21 million for Holland College and UPEI together.

Even when assessed under the most conservative evaluations of the impact of stimulus funding, we arrive at a total economic benefit to the Island economy of \$31.5 million.

We have never claimed that the project at UPEI has received anything other than \$2 million in KIP funding matched by the province.

I have to say that I regret the confusion that has resulted from the member for Charlottetown's misreading of the fifth report to Canadians. The fact is that we hold in high regard the provincial governments and partnering institutions for working with us on these projects, projects that are of great importance to students and faculty at both UPEI and Holland College.

• (1905)

**Hon. Shawn Murphy:** Madam Speaker, the member across indicates that I am confused. However I am going to read this again, and I am going to read it very slowly:

Upgrades to infrastructure at the University of Prince Edward Island will create over 300 jobs and inject about \$30 million into the economy.

I asked if that statement was accurate. The minister said it was. The parliamentary secretary obviously just said it was not accurate. He has just told this House that the correct information is not \$30 million but \$2 million. When you add another \$2 million coming from the provincial government, that totals \$4 million.

We have a grossly inaccurate statement. I am not confused. I read it three times in the House. No one in Canada is confused right now.

My question to the member across is: As it is very clear what that statement said, why was the inaccurate and false information included in the budget?

**Mr. Mike Lake:** Madam Speaker, let me reiterate the facts for the benefit of all members.

The University of Prince Edward Island is receiving funding under KIP to update the essential physical infrastructure on several of its campus buildings. The total cost of these upgrades is \$4 million, of which the federal government is providing \$2 million.

KIP is also providing funding to Holland College to undertake a major renovation of the Charlottetown Centre and construct a new centre for applied science and technology. The total cost of this project is \$17 million, of which the federal portion is \$8.5 million.

Taken together, federal funding for P.E.I. under the KIP program totals \$10.5 million over two years. This funding is generating jobs

and other economic benefits to the island while at the same time renewing important infrastructure at centres of learning.

I also note that budget 2010 included \$135 million over two years to renew the National Research Council of Canada's regional innovation clusters program.

This too, is good news for Prince Edward Island as Charlottetown is home to the nutrisciences and health cluster initiative, a partnership between the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, UPEI, the P.E.I. BioAlliance and its private sector members, and provincial and federal governments.

HOUSING

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to start this question to the government with a story. When I was a law student, I did a placement at Dalhousie Legal Aid Service doing poverty law work, and I worked with a lawyer on a case involving a young man who was involved in the criminal justice system.

Nova Scotia has an excellent restorative justice program for youth and this young man was diverted from court to a restorative justice contract where he had to fulfill certain obligations like going to school or doing volunteer work. This young man missed many of his restorative justice appointments. He was hardly ever at school. He did not even come close to completing his contract. He actually missed a court appearance and an arrest warrant was issued.

When we finally tracked him down, he did not have much to offer by way of why he could not complete his contract and he seemed resigned to the fact that he would go to jail. However, this was not the kid who we knew. This was not the kid who had made a mistake, had owned up to it and who was eager to learn from his mistake.

Eventually it came out that he and his mom had been kicked out of their apartment and they were homeless. They were couch surfing from friend's house to friend's house until she could scrape enough money together to put a down payment on a new apartment.

I think a lot about this young man, even now, years later. How was he supposed to go to school and concentrate on it when he did not have a home? How was he supposed to follow his bail conditions when he did not have a home? How was he supposed to concentrate on righting his wrongs when he did not have a home? How was he supposed to contribute positively to his community when he did not have a home?



*Adjournment Proceedings*

This story is all too common. We know from a recent report of the Conference Board of Canada that 20% of Canadian households are not able to afford their housing. This means people are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. We know some Canadians spend 100% of their income on housing, forcing them to access food banks and soup kitchens in order to eat and to heat their homes with their ovens because they cannot afford heating. Heat is not a luxury, especially in a country like Canada; it is a necessity. Housing is not a luxury.

Hundreds of thousands of Canadians are on the brink of losing their homes. We need action. During this parliamentary session, we have the opportunity to set up a national framework that would ensure Canadians are housed. This is Bill C-304, which has been reported back to the House and awaits third reading.

This bill, introduced by my colleague from Vancouver East, would create a national housing strategy and would bring together all levels of government in order to set standards for housing across the country and ensure secure, accessible, affordable and sustainable housing for all Canadians.

The Conservatives claim they have already done enough. They cite stimulus money spent on housing as a sign that they are truly engaged in the issue. Every time we talk about housing in this place, they come back to the stimulus budget, but that is not a strategy. It is a piecemeal approach. It is visionless and it is not coordinated.

Two weeks ago we learned that only 300 housing units were promised to Inuit communities when we know the need was 1,000 units. We know what the solution is, so why should there be a shortage at all?

Time and time again the Conservatives defend their appalling record on housing. Despite having the opportunity to bring Canada in line with all other G8 countries, all those countries that have national housing strategies, they resist. They remain silent on their reasoning and they obfuscate on nothing more than ideological grounds, not based on social policy, on research, but on cementing an us versus them approach to Canadian politics.

Canadians want answers and they want solutions. They do not want their members of Parliament to refuse to see the woods for the trees. When will the government support our national housing strategy?

● (1910)

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is certainly with great pleasure that I rise to respond to the member for Halifax.

There is no question that our government believes that housing is indeed an important step toward self-sufficiency and full participation in the economy. Having a home is very important. That is why our Conservative government has a multi-pronged approach to provide housing to Canadians.

The NDP talks about notions like a housing strategy, but that is what it is, talk. What Canadians care about, and what Canadians expect, is action. And taking action is what our Conservative government is all about.

Our government provides \$1.7 billion per year in federal funding in support of almost 625,000 low income households living in social housing. Our government has also committed \$1.9 billion over five years to combat homelessness and provide housing to vulnerable Canadians. Our economic action plan adds even more to these impressive investments.

We committed over \$2 billion to repair existing, as well as build new, social housing. This includes: \$1 billion for repairs and upgrades, \$400 million for seniors housing, \$75 million for persons with disabilities, \$400 million for first nations reserves, and \$200 million for housing in the north. The member may say that these are just talk about funding, but these are significant amounts for specific sectors of society. They are doing very specific things, steps that need to be taken.

In addition, the economic action plan includes \$2 billion in low-cost loans to municipalities for housing-related infrastructure. Overall, Canada's economic action plan provides \$7.8 billion to build high-quality housing, stimulate construction activity, support home ownership, and enhance energy efficiency.

Our investments are showing results. Our investments in housing have resulted in over 3,500 projects currently underway and over 100 low-cost loans being provided to municipalities across the country. Our investments are helping Canadian families, creating tens of thousands of jobs, but do not just take it from me. Listen to those on the ground who have praised these investments. They are more than just steps that are taken and not integrated. They are steps about which those who are stakeholders have something positive to say.

Nicholas Gazzard from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada said, "The federal government's financial commitments on affordable housing are impressive".

Tim Richter of the Calgary Homeless Foundation stated, "This is the largest federal investment in social housing in more than two decades, which is very positive".

Geoff Gillard of the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association said, "The recent five-year renewal of the three federal housing and homelessness programs ended more than a decade of short-term housing funding announcements. This was a welcome shift—".

The Wesley Institute stated that our government's investments in affordable housing and homelessness "are making a positive difference in the lives of many Canadians...there are substantial economic benefits—including jobs". Hardly an appalling lack of action. The comments speak for themselves and there is more positive feedback that I could be providing.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The NDP keeps pretending to care about this issue, but actions speak louder than words. Shamefully, the NDP has voted against each and every single investment our Conservative government has made in housing. The hon. member has to answer to her constituents and to all Canadians who are benefiting from these investments. She has to explain to seniors living on fixed incomes, to Canadians with disabilities, to aboriginal Canadians, and to all vulnerable Canadians why she and her party voted against all of these investments, and why she does not think they deserve access to affordable housing.

The member can talk about a national housing strategy but what is required is action and not talk.

• (1915)

**Ms. Megan Leslie:** Madam Speaker, a strategy is action. It would force the minister to develop a strategy and to act on it.

I would note that regarding the stakeholders that the government has put forward as being supportive of the stimulus spending, of course they are supportive of it. It was the first time we had seen money for housing for quite some time, but those same stakeholders actually testified at the hearings on Bill C-304. They have come out strongly in support of a national housing strategy.

They have come out strongly in support of Bill C-304. They have called upon Canada to honour its obligation when it signed, in 1976, onto the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, saying out loud to the world that there is a right to housing in this country. Yet, we have seen no action on it. These same stakeholders are calling on us to honour our international obligations.

A national housing strategy would provide for a more productive and healthier workforce. It would provide stability for countless adults and children. It would cement housing as a right.

Why does the government continue to resist our housing strategy?

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Madam Speaker, the government has a housing strategy. The strategy involves taking steps and making investments. A strategy without spending a dime or taking a step does not mean very much. Over 3,500 projects are under way across the country thanks to the investments in housing we have made through the economic action plan.

Canadians are getting help and thousands of jobs are being created. However, the member and the NDP Party voted against affordable housing for seniors, voted against affordable housing for Canadians with disabilities, voted against affordable housing for aboriginal Canadians both on and off reserve, voted against low-cost loans to municipalities and voted against \$1.9 billion over five years to fight homelessness. How do they explain that to those individuals? How do they explain that to the people who need housing, the people who need a hand up, that need some help to ensure they have a home? How do they explain it to them?

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:19 p.m.)

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