



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, June 10, 2010

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 10, 2010

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)

[*Translation*]

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I have the honour to table the 2009-10 annual reports of the Information Commissioner of Canada on the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act.

[*English*]

These documents are deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 2 petitions.

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STRENGTHENING THE VALUE OF CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP ACT

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-37, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act.

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

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following reports of the Canadian delegation of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas, or FIPA, respecting its participation at the trade knowledge workshop and bilateral visit to Argentina held in Buenos Aires on March 15 to 19 in 2010.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to its study of the tax treatment and characterization of personal services businesses.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to its study of the claim relating to lobbying activities by the member for Scarborough—Rouge River. By this report, the committee wants to draw the attention of the House to the potential breach of its privilege and recommend that it takes any measures it deems necessary and appropriate.

* * *

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ACT

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-530, An Act to amend the Northwest Territories Act (borrowing limits).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to introduce this private member's bill, as it is another step on the Northwest Territories' road to becoming more like a province.

Currently, the NWT must come cap-in-hand to Ottawa asking for an increase in the amount that it can borrow. Many of the borrowing requirements in the Northwest Territories are for things that are self-financing. Yet, still, this borrowing limit means that we must obtain the permission of cabinet to move forward with these amounts.

We are not content to remain in this colonial position. Our government is strong and has been fiscally responsible for many decades. For years, the federal government has promised the evolution of provincial-like jurisdictions to the NWT but with no action. Because of this lack of action, the natural resources of the Northwest Territories are in jeopardy.

Routine Proceedings

Without the ability to borrow more money, the territory may be forced to privatize certain facilities, like the Taltson hydro project with the expansion to service the diamond mines, something that is a profitable venture for the public government in the Northwest Territories. However, without the borrowing capacity, it cannot participate in this project. The natural resources of the Northwest Territories should go to benefit the people of the Northwest Territories, especially those where the government has taken an active role in developing a project.

This bill and my previous bill to give jurisdiction over new highway construction would make the Northwest Territories more like a province. Step by step, we can achieve what other parts of the country have and we want to move forward.

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

* * *

[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-531, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda)

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing this bill, with the support of the leader of the Bloc Québécois who felt it was relevant to do so, because there is an important loophole in sections 318 and 319 of the Criminal Code.

At the end of March, a judge had to dismiss a charge of inciting hatred against Jean-Claude Rochefort, who writes a blog in which he was inciting hatred against women. He was disseminating hate propaganda and defending the Polytechnique killer, who killed 14 women in that college. He was defending Marc Lépine and saying that there should be more Marc Lépinés.

I believe that we should pass this bill because the Criminal Code does not define a group of women as an identifiable group. Because of this, the judge was not able to proceed with the incitement of hatred charge, as this can only be brought when the hatred is directed at an identifiable group. We need to include the word "gender" in the identifiable groups listed in sections 318 and 319 of the Criminal Code, so that women can be recognized as an identifiable group and so no one else can ever utter threats, incite hatred or distribute hate propaganda.

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

* * *

●(1010)

[English]

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-532, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (warning labels regarding the consumption of alcohol).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to introduce my Bill C-532, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (warning labels regarding the consumption of alcohol).

I thank the many constituents who came to me regarding this issue. They want something done about it. In particular, I would like to recognize Dave and Margie Fulton, who are the founders of the

fetal alcohol support and information network in Thunder Bay, and foster parent and FASD educator, Marilyn Leiterman.

The Parliament of Canada recognizes that alcohol abuse is a serious health and social problem in Canadian society and that a comprehensive national strategy must be developed and implemented by the Government of Canada in concert with provincial governments to combat this problem. There is also a recognition that labelling alcoholic beverages with a warning to consumers about the dangers of the misuse of alcohol represents an important step in combatting this problem.

I am specifically asking for a message from the Minister of Health warning the consumer that the Public Health Agency of Canada advises that there is no safe amount of alcohol to drink during pregnancy.

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

* * *

SREBRENICA REMEMBRANCE DAY ACT

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-533, An Act respecting a Srebrenica Remembrance Day.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased this morning to introduce a bill that seeks to establish a national Srebrenica remembrance day to be held every July 11. I thank my colleague the hon. member for Vancouver East for seconding the bill.

In July 1995, an estimated 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were massacred in the Srebrenica region of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a UN declared safe area by Bosnian Serb forces. This was the largest mass murder in Europe since World War II.

Both the appeals chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Court of Justice ruled that the Srebrenica massacre was genocide.

In addition, resolutions condemning the massacre have been passed by the European Parliament and the American House of Representatives and Senate.

This past March, the president of Serbia issued a full state apology and endorsed the ruling of the International Court of Justice.

Recognizing the devastating effects of the July 1995 Srebrenica genocide, this bill would provide the opportunity for all Canadians to stand with those in the Bosnian Canadian community to share in their pain and honour the memory of those men and boys massacred.

As we approach the 15th anniversary of this massacre, I hope this bill will serve as a step in the right direction which will ultimately provide some semblance of comfort to the survivors of this genocide and to the Bosnian community here in Canada.

May the memory of those lost never be forgotten.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

●(1015)

**ENSURING SAFE VEHICLES IMPORTED FROM MEXICO
FOR CANADIANS ACT**

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (for the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities) moved for leave to introduce Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Motor Vehicle Safety Act and the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

* * *

TACKLING THEFT AND PROPERTY CRIME ACT

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (for the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada) moved for leave to introduce Bill S-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (auto theft and trafficking in property obtained by crime).

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there were consultations among all parties and I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the Member for Hochelaga, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to Monday, June 14, 2010, at the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders.

The Speaker: Does the honourable member have the unanimous consent of the House to introduce this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Andrew Kania (Brampton West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, bonjour, *Sat Sri Akal, Namast.*

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this petition was supposed to be presented yesterday when hundreds of Canadians travelled to Ottawa to remember the thousands of Sikhs killed in India in November of 1984. However, prior to the hearing of petitions, the Conservatives brought a procedural motion and then voted in favour of skipping past petitions, so the tabling of this petition yesterday was blocked.

Today, one day late, I have the honour of presenting a petition signed by thousands of Canadians remembering the thousands of Sikhs killed in India over two days in November of 1984.

Members of Parliament are not allowed to endorse the contents of a petition, however, in tabling this petition, I do wish to offer a few personal words about this tragedy.

First, I would like to remember the victims and their families and offer my sincere condolences. This petition is truly about them.

Second, I would like to use this solemn occasion to reflect on Canadian ideals of justice and tolerance. We hold those values to our hearts as we remember and honour those who were victims of hatred.

The essence of this petition is the pursuit of justice, closure and reconciliation within a peaceful and united India.

EUTHANASIA AND ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to table a petition signed by people from across my riding expressing their opposition to euthanasia and to assisted suicide. They ask parliamentarians to vote against legislation that would legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide. We have done that, but I table their objection just the same.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to present a petition signed by several hundred residents from the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region and elsewhere in Quebec, who state that they are deeply concerned about the lack of support for sick persons within the employment insurance system. The petitioners ask that changes be made to the Employment Insurance Act to have sickness benefits provided for a period of 50 weeks rather than 15 weeks, as is the case currently, and that the rules governing eligibility to the program be made more flexible.

I want to highlight the courage and the colossal work of Claudia Ouellet from Dolbeau-Mistassini who circulated the petition and made thousands of citizens aware of the serious impact that illness can have because of the lack of flexibility in the Employment Insurance Act. This petition is in addition to the 62,000-name petition presented in April by my colleague from Chambly—Borduas. Moreover, this petition is consistent with Bill C-525, introduced by my Bloc Québécois colleague, the member for Alfred-Pellan.

And in conclusion, I must deplore the lack of openness of the member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean who was unavailable to receive Ms. Ouellet in his office to present this petition. That is incredible. And so, on behalf of Claudia Ouellet from Dolbeau-Mistassini, I am presenting this petition aimed at improving EI sickness benefits.

Routine Proceedings

●(1020)

[English]

COSMETIC USE OF PESTICIDES

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions on behalf of my constituents.

The first is a call to ban the cosmetic use of chemical pesticides on the basis of an extensive body of medical literature that has demonstrated that chemical pesticides pose a significant threat to human health.

The petitioners state that children are more at risk because of their smaller developing bodies and that cosmetic pesticides are also known to have an adverse environmental effect on non-targeted wildlife species like birds, fish and bees.

They feel very strongly that because at least one chemical company has considered challenging provincial legislation banning non-essential pesticide use through chapter 11 of the North American Free Trade Agreement, it is important that the House of Commons enact Bill C-368 for an immediate federal moratorium on the cosmetic use of chemical pesticides as a precautionary approach until such time as their use has been scientifically proven to be safe.

HARMONIZED SALES TAX

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is yet another one on behalf of my constituents. It is a call to rescind the so-called HST, the harmonized sales tax.

The petitioners oppose this tax because they feel it is a tax that has been passed on from big business to consumers. It is tough on small businesses and other key B.C. industries such as tourism. It comes at a time when too many Canadian families are struggling to pay their bills.

Therefore, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to work with the province to rescind this tax.

INDIA

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Canadians I am presenting a petition on the tragic events of 1984 in India. Many Canadians across the country are marking this solemn occasion.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to: recognize that an organized campaign of violence, rapes and killings took place in India in November 1984 against the Sikh community, resulting in the deaths of thousands; call upon the government of India to take all reasonable measures to bring all persons responsible for this organized campaign of violence to justice, including criminal prosecution against the responsible persons, following due process of law; formally recognize that this organized killing spree resulting in the deaths of thousands is genocide, as per the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

[Translation]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by several dozen residents of my riding, more specifically from the municipality of Sainte-Émélie-de-

l'Énergie, who are asking the Government of Canada to demand that the Canada Post Corporation maintain and improve its network of public post offices and that it consult the people and the members of Parliament who were elected to represent them, the postal unions, and other major stakeholders, for the purpose of designing and improving a democratic and uniform process to make changes to the public postal network.

These constituents are very worried about the closure of post offices in the regions, in particular in the municipality of Sainte-Émélie-de-l'Énergie. I am pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

●(1025)

[English]

PRISON FARMS

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

The first petition is signed by dozens of Canadians calling on the government to come to its senses and stop the closure of the six Canadian prison farms. All six prison farms, including Rockwood Institution in Manitoba, have been functioning farms for many decades now. They are providing food to the prisons and the community.

The prison farm operations provide rehabilitation. They provide training for prisoners through working with and caring for plants and animals. The work ethic and rehabilitation benefit of waking up at 6 a.m. and working out of doors is a discipline that many Canadians can appreciate. Closing these farms will mean a loss of the infrastructure and will make it way too expensive to replace them at some future date.

Therefore, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to stop the closure of the six Canadian prison farms across Canada, and furthermore, to produce a report on the work and rehabilitative benefits of prisoners of the farm operation and on how the program can be adapted to meet the agriculture needs of the 21st century.

EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by dozens of Canadians calling on the government to match funds personally donated by the citizens of Canada for the victims of the earthquake in Chile.

On February 27, 2010 there was an 8.8 magnitude earthquake in southern Chile. The Chilean Canadian community has been having social events since that time to raise money. The question is still being raised as to when the Prime Minister will give the same treatment to the victims of the earthquake in Chile that he did for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti and match funds personally donated by Canadians to help the victims of the earthquake in Chile.

Routine Proceedings

LAWRENCE HEIGHTS REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of thousands of residents in Eglinton—Lawrence, especially in the area bounded by Bathurst, the 401, Eglinton, Dufferin, and those east of Bathurst going up to Avenue Road. They have expressed great concern at the city of Toronto's emerging preferred plan to redevelop and sell off about 100 acres of Lawrence Heights for private residential and commercial development on lands formerly developed and owned by CMHC.

They are concerned primarily because this is going to create in the middle of their riding and community, a city of 20,000 to 25,000 residents, whose presence will put enormous strain on water and sewage services and cause backup on the services that currently exist. There will be an enormous traffic flow, probably somewhere between 14,000 and 17,000 additional cars on a daily basis in what is otherwise a very quiet neighbourhood.

In fact, they are so concerned that they have taken to petitioning city council, Queen's Park and now CMHC through this House because of the massive increase in traffic congestion, increased exhaust and noise pollution, noisy crowded neighbourhoods, a decrease in safety and security, a reduction in privacy and space and devaluation of property prices.

As a result, they, as residents of Eglinton—Lawrence, call upon the minister responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to investigate and ensure that the redevelopment under consideration is consistent with the original conditions of land transfer from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to the Toronto housing community and implore that the government engage itself in the most vigorous of fashions in order to preserve and maintain that which they bought into when they became thriving members of a community of dedicated Canadians to developing not only Toronto but all of Canada.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following question will be answered today: No. 226

[Text]

Question No. 226—**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:**

With respect to the Annex 1 requirements under the World Health Organization's International Health Regulations (2005): (a) what progress has the government made in its ability to detect and respond to potential public health emergencies at the local and regional levels; (b) what progress has the government made in developing a national health surveillance system; (c) what progress has the government made in developing multi-lateral information sharing agreements; and (d) when will the government's multi-lateral information sharing agreements be completed?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to a) The international health regulations, IHR 2005, require that state parties, by June 15, 2009, assess the ability of existing national structures and resources to meet the minimum core capacity requirements for surveillance and response. As a result of such assessments, state parties are expected to develop a plan of action to ensure those core capacities are present and functioning by June 15, 2012. Through a network of IHR champions, drawn from

each province/territory and federal department or agency, Canada completed an assessment exercise in May 2009. The results of this assessment exercise were reviewed by the IHR champions at a national IHR roundtable in June 2009. It was concluded that Canada met the minimum core capacity requirements, but there were areas that required strengthening from a national perspective, including information sharing, mortality surveillance and detection of severe respiratory illness of unknown cause. At the last meeting of IHR champions on April 21-22, 2010, a plan of action was developed to address these areas, and work is underway to implement those actions. Provinces and territories, as well as federal departments and agencies, are responsible for developing action plans addressing any issues specific to their jurisdiction. A report describing the capacity assessment process, its findings and the plan of action, will be published before the fall of 2010.

In response to b) A number of notable actions are underway to work towards a 'national health surveillance system', NHSS: i) The Public Health Agency of Canada, PHAC, has laid down, and continues to develop, corporate building blocks—frameworks, policies and tools—that are essential to relationship and trust-building across jurisdictions, in order for an NHSS to take shape and be successful. These include the development and implementation of an integrated framework for surveillance; a data quality framework; a draft privacy management framework; a PHAC policy on the collection, use and dissemination of public health data; a web-based tool for privacy impact assessments; and, a PHAC risk management standard and tools to support implementation. ii) PHAC is currently developing a business plan to modernize the Canadian Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System. This is a significant undertaking to ensure the alignment of notifiable disease surveillance elements, from data collection to reporting, across all jurisdictions. iii) PHAC officials are involved in pan-Canadian data standards work and will increasingly be taking a leadership role to promote the jurisdictional consistency in the use of data standards that will be necessary in the adoption of electronic health records, EHR. iv) Through the surveillance and information expert group of the pan-Canadian public health network, the agency is leading the development of the multilateral information sharing agreement, on which there has been recent progress. Details follow in response to the next question.

In response to c) In September 2009, federal/provincial/territorial ministers of health signed a memorandum of understanding, MOU, on information sharing during a public health emergency. The MOU establishes a framework for the sharing of information between jurisdictions. A formal FPT multi-lateral information sharing agreement is now being developed and will include the details of what information will be shared with whom, when and/or how. Detailed negotiations are underway through the pan-Canadian public health network and conference of deputy ministers of health.

Points of Order

In response to d) Currently, work associated with the multi-lateral information sharing agreement is being integrated within the workplans of the relevant expert groups of the pan-Canadian public health network and the pan-Canadian international health regulations action plan. Canada is required to demonstrate that the core components and functions to support the obligation to report internationally are in place by June 2012. Work on the multi-lateral information sharing agreement will play a key role in assuring that the necessary information for monitoring IHR compliance is available from the provinces and territories. While this work will contribute to the relevance and success of the agreement, detailed negotiations through the pan-Canadian public health network and conference of deputy ministers of health are still required to complete the agreement. Given the complexity of this process it is difficult to determine an exact date for when the agreement will be available for signature by ministers.

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[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. 221, 227 and 230 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 221—**Hon. Wayne Easter:**

With respect to government decentralization: (a) since 2006, how many assessments have been completed of government departments or parts thereof, agencies, or Crown corporations which could be relocated from the National Capital Region to other regions of Canada; (b) since 2006, how many proposals have been prepared concerning the relocation of government departments or parts thereof, agencies, or Crown corporations from the National Capital Region to other regions of Canada; and (c) for each decentralization assessment and proposal, which government department, agency or Crown corporation was considered, and when was the assessment or proposal completed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 227—**Ms. Irene Mathysen:**

With regard to the Women's Community Fund and the Women's Partnership Fund: (a) which organizations or groups applied for funding under each program in 2008, 2009 and 2010; (b) how many organizations or groups received funding under each program in 2008, 2009 and 2010; (c) which organizations or groups were successful in receiving funding from each program in 2008, 2009 and 2010; (d) which organizations or groups were not successful in receiving funding from each program in 2008, 2009 and 2010; (e) what criteria were used to approve funding for organizations or groups and their projects; (f) how much money was granted to each organization or group and project, and how much money has each received to date; (g) which organizations or groups were recommended for funding to the Minister for Status of Women by ministry staff; (h) which organizations or groups that were recommended for funding to the Minister for Status of Women did not receive funding; and (i) what criteria did the Minister for Status of Women use to decide which of the organizations or groups recommended for funding were funded and which were not?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 230—**Ms. Meili Faille:**

With respect to the development of the logic model for the Integrated Relocation Program (IRP), as introduced at the January 29, 2007, meeting of the Standing

Committee on Public Accounts: (a) who were the members of the interdepartmental working group who participated in the development of the logic model; (b) how often did the interdepartmental committee meet to develop the logic model and on what dates; and (c) what were the forecasts of the logic model for retaining or selling a house, and what are the results to date for each year of the IRP?

(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.

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POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-469—ROYAL RECOMMENDATION REQUIREMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to reply to the arguments made May 6, 2010 by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons regarding my private member's bill, Bill C-469, An Act to establish a Canadian Environmental Bill of Rights.

The parliamentary secretary argued that the bill requires a royal recommendation because it would require new spending on the following basis: one, that part 2 authorizes environmental protection actions against the government by enabling Canadians to seek recourse in the Federal Court to protect the environment in relation to any action or inaction by the government which has resulted in significant harm; and two, that part 4 authorizes the Auditor General to review new regulations and bills to ensure consistency with Bill C-469 and to report any inconsistencies to the House of Commons.

I wish first to respond to the argument put forth that part 2, clause 19 of the bill, "would create potential legal liabilities for the government by adding the power to the Federal Court to order the government to pay for the restoration or rehabilitation of the part of the environment, and the power to order the government to pay for the enhancement or protection of the environment generally" and the argument that "clause 19 would result in a potential increase in the government's legal liability since payments resulting from decisions of the Federal Court would be made from the consolidated revenue fund".

First, Bill C-469 merely establishes standing to bring an environmental protection action against the government. The enactment of this provision would create no immediate or automatic liability on the federal government. In point of fact the overall intent of the law is to encourage action by the federal government to assert its existing jurisdiction and legislated powers to protect the environment in the interests of current and future generations of Canadians.

The bill's purpose is to ensure greater transparency and participation in environmental decision making. The intent is to make the government accountable for the actions it takes or fails to take to protect the environment in the interests of Canadians.

Points of Order

If those broad rights and powers are asserted, then no action would likely be precipitated. Further, if the federal government's powers to protect the environment are exercised with due diligence, then a successful court action against the crown is unlikely. As a consequence, no new liability would arise.

In making his case, the parliamentary secretary referred to, for example, the Senate Speaker's ruling on May 5, 2009, at pages 739 to 740 of the Senate *Debates*, that Bill S-219, an act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, required a royal recommendation because it would increase the Crown's liability under the Canada Student Loans Act by expanding the range of conditions under which government would have to make good its guarantee of loans under that act.

However, the Senate Speaker in his ruling then went on to quote from the 23rd edition of Erskine May to distinguish those cases that would and would not require a royal recommendation:

While page 888 does state that the Royal Recommendation may not be required if the "liability arises as an incidental consequence of a proposal to apply or modify the general law," this does not save Bill S-219, since the changes proposed to the student loans regime are not merely incidental to the bill, but its primary purpose.

Based on this analysis, it is submitted, contrary to what the parliamentary secretary has asserted, Bill C-469, which merely provides standing to a defined class of potential litigants to consider seeking a court order would not require royal recommendation. No immediate spending or liability arises from part 2. Any potential liability would arise only as an incidental consequence of an action actually being filed proving failure by the government to fulfill its duties as trustee of the environment, to enforce an environmental law or for violating the right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment.

Further, the litigant must provide proof of actual or potential significant harm to even file the action. The imposition of new spending by the government is not at all the primary purpose of the bill. No immediate liability arises with the enactment of the bill and most certainly not as a result of part 2.

• (1030)

It may also be noted that Erskine May, 23rd edition at page 888 clearly provides that "Liability on the Crown or local authorities to pay costs, compensation or damages does not require a money resolution if such a liability arises as an incidental consequence of a proposal to apply or modify the general law".

It is further specified that in the case of widening the jurisdiction of a court, a money resolution is not required even though the proposal may have the incidental consequence of increasing the costs of administration of justice.

The parliamentary secretary referred to the Speaker's ruling on June 12, 1973, that Bill S-5, an Act to amend the Farm Improvement Loans Act required a royal recommendation because it proposed substantial additional liabilities on public moneys.

However, this ruling was subsequently considered by the Speaker on February 12, 1998, on page 3766 in considering Bill S-4, an Act to amend the Canada Shipping Act, who held that there was already statutory authority under the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act to make the payments that Bill S-4 outlined.

It may be noted that many federal environmental laws, including the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, already provide that the Crown is bound. According to Erskine May, 21st Edition at page 717, "No further authorization is required for an expenditure covered by an existing statutory authority, including liability to pay damages covered by existing law".

By way of example, crown agencies such as the Department of Public Works and the Department of Defence have been held by the courts to be liable to pay damages where they have failed to take appropriate actions to comply with the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

Further, the provisions in Bill C-469, related to proceedings against the federal Crown, are consistent with the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act, chapter C-5, section 33. Section 3 clearly provides that the Crown is liable for damages for torts committed by a servant of the Crown.

It may be noted that John Mark Keyes in his article, "When Bills and Amendments Require the Royal Recommendation: A Discussion Paper and Guidelines", *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, volume 20, number 4, winter 1997-98 at page 8 cites Erskine May, 21st edition, page 717, on cases where a royal recommendation is not needed as including, "Widening the jurisdiction of a court or creating offences although they may have the effect of increasing the costs of the administration of justice".

Further, any potential liabilities under part 2 of the bill are highly speculative and that they would be substantial is even more so speculative.

For example, government might first avoid a court action or settle such an action if filed by diligently exercising its powers or duties to undertake an environmental assessment or to complete an action plan for a threatened species within the statutorily prescribed timeline or by passing new regulations, or by a myriad of other measures.

Even if an action under Bill C-469 has its day in court, the court is provided a wide range of remedies, including directing the government to implement measures previously announced and budgeted for, or otherwise prescribed by another law. Thus any court-ordered payments under section 19 of the bill are highly speculative and could only occur after the government has made decisions to not avoid or remedy the problem by any other means.

The Speaker similarly rejected such speculation in multiple rulings on September 27, 2006, page 3314; on February 8, 2007, page 6548; and again on February 14, 2007, page 6816. The Speaker found that Bill C-288, the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act did not require a royal recommendation.

Points of Order

The parliamentary secretary's second argument was based on part 4 of the bill. Section 26 requires the Auditor General to examine proposed regulations and bills for consistency with Bill C-469 and to report any inconsistency to the House. It was the parliamentary secretary's assertion that this role differs significantly from the current duties of the Auditor General under section 5 of the Auditor General Act and would require new government spending.

This section requires the Auditor General, in accordance with such regulations as the governor in council may choose to make, to review any new regulations or bills to ensure consistency with the purposes and provisions of Bill C-469, and to report such findings to the House of Commons.

•(1035)

Let us first consider the mandate of the Auditor General as prescribed in the Auditor General Act. The act also establishes the Office of the Commissioner of Environment and Sustainable Development. Section 21.1 prescribes a broad mandate to the commissioner to provide sustainable development monitoring and reporting including on matters reiterated in the preamble of Bill C-469, inclusive of integrating environment and the economy, protecting ecosystems, and respect for the health of Canadians and the needs of future generations.

Section 23 of that act requires the commissioner to make examinations and inquiries considered necessary to monitor the extent to which specified departments have contributed to meeting sustainable development targets and report to the House actions including exercising the authority of the governor in council. Part of that authority includes the promulgation of regulations, and review and authorization of proposed laws.

The Auditor General Act also requires that the commissioner, on behalf of the Auditor General, report annually to the House of Commons on the progress of the federal government in implementing the federal sustainable development strategy and meeting its targets, which would include consideration of new statutes and regulations.

Thus, Bill C-469 would not create a substantially new or radically different mandate than that already prescribed for the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainable Development within the Office of the Auditor General, as provided in the Auditor General Act.

I further submit that section 26 of Bill C-469 is very similar to that considered in the Speaker's ruling on February 8, 2007, at page 6548 on Bill C-288, Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act. The Speaker in that instance held that the bill did not require a royal recommendation as the new responsibilities placed on the national round table on the environment and the economy by that bill did not meet the test, to quote the Speaker's words, of "whether some entirely new activity or function is being proposed which radically diverges from the activities already authorized in existing legislation".

It may be noted that in the same ruling, the Speaker also provided, "Now it might be argued that this would increase the workload of the national round table, but even if this were so, an increase to its budget would be sought through existing appropriation arrangements".

As the Speaker has clearly ruled, it is important to distinguish between an effect of a bill potentially increasing the workload of a department or agency and an effect of establishing distinctly new activity or function. It is my humble submission that the same logic and same conclusion would apply to part 4 of Bill C-469 regarding the role specified for the Office of the Auditor General.

The parliamentary secretary referred to the Speaker's February 11, 2008, ruling on Bill C-474, Federal Sustainable Development Act; however, in that case, Bill C-474, at first reading, originally proposed repealing the sections in the Auditor General Act concerning the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development and creating a new independent commissioner appointed by the governor in council who would not only assess federal progress on sustainable development but also provincial progress.

At committee stage, Bill C-474 was amended to rely on the existing position of the commissioner established under the Auditor General Act and to add the monitoring and reporting duties on federal progress toward sustainable development granted to the commissioner under that act. The Speaker on June 10, 2008, at page 6819, held that the amended bill no longer needed a royal recommendation. It is that amended Bill C-474 that is analogous to Bill C-469.

Finally, in closing, as a private member's bill can proceed through second reading and committee stage regardless of whether it requires a royal recommendation, in whole or in part, recognizing it may potentially be amended in committee or at report stage, a ruling from the Speaker would be most welcomed in advance of the vote at second reading and referral to the committee. This will inform the committee members whether any amendments may be necessary to be considered to avoid any potential need for a royal recommendation and thus maintain the possibility of a third reading vote.

•(1040)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for her submissions and I will get back to the House in due course on this matter.

The hon. member for Mississauga South is rising on another point of order.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order in relation to the third report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates tabled this morning during routine proceedings on the basis that the matter reported to the House is beyond the mandate of the committee and this report, therefore, should not be admissible.

Standing Orders 108.(1) and 108.(2) lay out the powers of standing committees, the power to create subcommittees, and the additional powers of standing committees. In looking at this, it would appear that there are no general powers of standing committees that would relate to this.

This matter relates to, and I would read from the report:

—a study of the claim that the Member from Scarborough—Rouge River was actively lobbying the Government of Canada,...while sitting as a current Member of Parliament;—

This matter came before the government operations committee. The member for Scarborough—Rouge River and the member for Scarborough—Guildwood appeared at the committee as signed-in members of the committee to deal with this claim and this study that was being proposed. Their arguments why the study was beyond the mandate of the committee are laid out in that meeting.

I would also report that the clerk of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates also advised the committee that the matter was beyond the mandate of the committee, as laid out in Standing Order 108.(3)(c).

I have taken the opportunity to look down and also check, yet again, and can see absolutely no authority whatsoever for this committee to be reviewing the ethical conduct or conflict of interest of a member of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I would refer you to Standing Order 108.(3)(a)(viii), regarding the specific or the extra authorities of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which reads:

—the review of and report on all matters relating to the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons.

This committee, it would appear, has the authority to look into any claims related to the Conflict of Interest Code or conduct of members of Parliament, which as you know has happened from time to time.

I understand and I was advised by the member for Scarborough—Rouge River that he had submitted a supplementary or dissenting report, as authorized by the committee, with regard to this third report. It was forwarded to the clerk of the committee in advance of the deadline time and that it was in the proper form authorized by the committee. I note that the particular supplementary or dissenting opinion, and I do not know what it was called because it is not here and it is a secret until tabled, has more information there, I am sure, with regard to what has been reported to the House.

I would also point out that matters dealing with the Lobbying Act and whether there are any breaches there of someone lobbying and not being registered, et cetera, are matters which actually could come under the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. I would note in the Standing Orders that the Commissioner of Lobbying and the Lobbying Act have not been included in the committee's mandate although they were amended in the accountability act. The Standing Orders have yet to be updated.

•(1045)

As well, I would submit that not only is this report inadmissible and incomplete without the dissenting opinion, but the subject matter from which this matter flows, which is the study of the claim that the member for Scarborough—Rouge River was actively lobbying the Government of Canada while sitting as a current member of Parliament, is in fact out of order in that committee.

I submit that this particular study and any activities related to this claim and this matter should cease in that committee as soon as possible. If someone cares to make a claim, I submit that it should be referred either to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, or more appropriately, to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner for appropriate review.

Business of Supply

I find it very disturbing and distressing that this has transpired, notwithstanding all the clear evidence that this matter, which is being handled by the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, is not within its mandate and should never have been approved or undertaken by the committee.

•(1050)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence is rising on the same point.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many of us here would be a little confused about what is going on. We are talking about the reputation of one of the longest serving members of the House. He has distinguished himself not only through his study on procedures but also through his input and his dedication to public service.

People would be as confused as I am for a reason. My colleague from Mississauga South is arguing that the report is not in order, is not receivable, and should not be received, because it does not, at the very least, contain the dissenting report submitted by the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, whose reputation is impugned by the study. That such a report would not have that dissenting report is already an admission that we would want to receive whatever it is the committee is doing and that we claim is not within its mandate.

On the other hand, if we do not do that, then we accept what the committee has already been doing. The member for Mississauga South has no personal interest in this other than the integrity of all members of Parliament who are open to study by members of a committee, even if it goes beyond its mandate.

Mr. Speaker, I think it would serve all of us as parliamentarians to have you review the mandate of that committee, keeping in mind that committees, even though they are masters of their own agenda and can do what they wish, are still creatures of the House and must reflect the intent and the operations of the House. Perhaps you would find it well worthwhile and beneficial for all of us to take a look at that mandate and see first, whether, in fact, that report is receivable because it goes beyond the mandate of the committee.

Second, if you find it receivable, whatever your reasons may be, perhaps you will insist that it contain the dissenting report of the member so that his reputation, which is the subject of such a report, can at least be placed in the equilibrium and balance of debate and consideration for all members, current and subsequent, in the House.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. members for their submissions. I will take the matter under advisement. I am sure that there will be other submissions on it in due course.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SECURITIES REGULATION

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ) moved:

Business of Supply

That this House denounce the government's unrelenting efforts to marginalize the Quebec nation, in particular by depriving it of the major economic lever of securities regulation, a matter that is under the exclusive legislative jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces and for which they have established a harmonized regulatory system recognized for its effectiveness by the OECD and the World Bank, among others, and that it demand, along with Quebec's National Assembly and the business community in Quebec, that the government immediately withdraw its draft bill.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy with the support provided to me by my colleague, the member for Compton—Stanstead, but I would also like to have the support of the hon. member for Macleod. Indeed, I think it is very important to reread this motion from the Bloc, which says the following:

That this House denounce the government's unrelenting efforts—one might even call it pathological obstinacy—to marginalize the Quebec nation, in particular by depriving it of the major economic lever of securities regulation, a matter that is under the exclusive—we emphasize that word—legislative jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces—including that of the member for Macleod—and for which they have established a harmonized regulatory system—and I will come back to this, of course—recognized—internationally—for its effectiveness by the OECD and the World Bank, among others—to mention only those two organizations—, and that it demand, along with the Quebec National Assembly and the business community in Quebec, that the government immediately withdraw its draft bill.

The very important thing is to be aware of the mission of a securities commission. The mission of the Autorité des marchés financiers du Québec, the Quebec financial markets authority, is to enforce the laws governing the regulation of the financial sector, notably in the areas of insurance, securities, deposit institutions, other than banks—as we know, the banks are in federal jurisdiction—and the distribution of financial products and services. I will come back to the word “distribution”, as it is very important.

The Autorité des marchés financiers, like the securities commissions in each Canadian province, provides assistance to the consumers and users of financial products and services; ensures that financial institutions comply with standards; supervises distribution activities; supervises stock market and clearing house activities; and in a program unique to Quebec, sees to the implementation of protection and compensation programs for consumers of financial products and services.

Something that may not be well known is that the AMF has regulations and administers 14 different acts in Quebec. This is really a very broad and very crucial sector. Of course, there is the Act respecting the Autorité des marchés financiers, but there are also acts covering automobile insurance, deposit insurance, insurance, financial services co-operatives, the distribution of financial products and derivative financial instruments, the Mouvement Desjardins, securities, the Caisses d'entraide économique, the Sociétés d'entraide économique, and others. We can thus see that a securities commission is not just an office that one can simply close, or that, looking down from the heights of an Ontario ivory tower, one can simply turn into a branch office, end of story. That kind of thing is just not possible.

The AMF has considerable expertise. It is a Montreal institution and a Quebec institution, and the services of the Autorité des marchés financiers and the securities commissions are provided locally. That is also true of its counterparts in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. It is important that these entities have a good knowledge of the needs in their markets and that they serve their clients in their own language.

The financial sector of the AMF commissioned an independent study that shows that a regulator—and I will come back to the term “regulator” later—is an important component of the financial sector. So, when we say—in the more than 20 questions that we have asked in the past month, and that have not, by the way, been answered satisfactorily—that it is an important component in the financial sector, we are not kidding around. This is not just some authority, it is a part of the daily life of our services.

• (1055)

More than 150,000 direct and indirect jobs in Montreal and Quebec are affected by the financial regulator. That is 7.5% of the jobs in the Montreal region. There are 97,000 direct jobs in Montreal in this field, and the average salary is approximately \$60,000. These are significant salaries. It is a major force in the Quebec economy. In Montreal, there are people with expertise in the areas the AMF is involved in. They do business with credit unions and banks, brokerage offices, lawyers and notaries' offices, etc.

Proximity is important. When someone asks a question, they need to obtain an answer in their own language and quickly, and that is done in Montreal.

To make the Canadian government's position look better, some people have said that the Canadian experience has been bad. They have said it was awful to have 13 financial markets authorities, 13 different sets of regulations, 13 different tariffs and 13 different invoices. This is the way it was long ago. In the mid-1990s, the previous government, the Liberal Party, asked the financial markets whether harmonization could be increased, as borders were increasingly porous. The financial market authorities replied in the affirmative to the question from the Liberal government of the day by increasing harmonization. There are no more specific instructions.

My colleague from the Liberal Party who also has personal experience in the financial arena, no doubt remembers the particular instructions from the OSC and the securities commission of Canada. We had Q-21, and on their side, they had something else, in the area of mergers and acquisitions. Now, there are no particular or provincial instructions. The instructions are now national, and cover all of Canada.

I was an issuers' representative. When an issuer paid to issue a prospectus, at the time it had to prepare 10 to 13 different cheques. This was annoying. That is no longer the case. Issuers prepare a single cheque which is sent to CDS, and that is the end of it. People recognized that there was a problem and the financial market authorities came up with a solution.

Now there is a coordinated approach and investors benefit from uniform protection. The current system also allows both regional approaches and local expertise to be taken into account. For instance, in Quebec there are start-up funds and specific workers' funds. The Canadian west has its junior capital pools that work well, and that is a good thing. It is possible to establish regional authorities which together offer harmonized services to the financial community, while taking into account the specificities of our regions.

Business of Supply

This system has been recognized by the OECD and I will get back to that later if I have time. Since this system is recognized internationally, why change it? Why destroy something that works very well?

●(1100)

What the government is doing, this interference, this sort of hostile takeover—to use a term from the field—has been planned for a long time. In 2005, some people were mandated to study the advantages of a single regulatory system. The Purdy Crawford group was given the mandate to study the advantages of a single commission. So what's a guy to do, as we say back home? He indeed examined the advantages of having a single system. But the current system functions very well and all the studies show that there is no advantage to be gained from disrupting everything and introducing a single system.

Stubbornness is a factor here, and there are costs to be considered. Since the Conservatives started stubbornly trying to implement this hostile takeover of the provinces' and Quebec's regulatory systems, \$317 million has been spent—wasted. These days, people are making political hay with the billion dollars for three days and the \$14 million an hour. But for the Canada-wide—also known as centralized, federal or Conservative—financial markets authority, \$2.8 million in additional credits was allocated in May 2008; in last year's budget, \$154 million was allocated to this, and this year it is \$161 million. That is illegal and shameful. The Conservatives do not even know if the Supreme Court will give them the slightest authorization to do that and they have already spent a third of a billion dollars to crush the provincial securities systems.

I was talking about the advantages and disadvantages. In Quebec, we have what is known as a compensation fund. It already exists. Not only did we invent it, we apply it. What is the purpose of this compensation fund? When a financial agent—such as a broker or a distributor of financial products—duly registered with the Autorité des marchés financiers, commits fraud, resorts to deceitful practices designed to lead people astray, or embezzles his clients' money, the clients are compensated. People register with the Autorité des marchés financiers and if brokers commit criminal acts, the victims are compensated. This was done for the clients who were defrauded by Vincent Lacroix. Not everyone was compensated, but 900 of those who had their funds embezzled were compensated. The others were tricked by criminals who were not registered. Now, if a criminal does not register in Quebec, he will not register either with the federal authority. Quebec spent \$31 million to compensate 900 individuals who were the victims of fraudulent proceedings in the Norbourg-Lacroix scandal.

The Conservatives' argument refers to people who were duped by Earl Jones. That is misleading and a misrepresentation. Criminals do not register. That was very clear in the case of Bernard Madoff in the United States. The SEC was unable to catch him. Those people, whether or not there are victims, do not register with any federal authority or provincial, so who is going to catch them? Those are the people who deal with crimes. The OECD looked into the people who handle criminals. In the OECD's ranking of countries Canada places fourth, because of its policies and because of the Competition Act, which is a federal statute.

●(1105)

Australia is second, and the United States is first. That is not too bad.

In the area of regulation of the banking industry, and in terms of competition, Canada ranks ninth, and in terms of stabilizing authority, it is eighth. That is not very high. This an area of exclusive federal jurisdiction. The federal government should start enforcing its own laws in its own areas of jurisdiction with respect to the Competition Act and the banking sector; when it does that, we can say it has done its job.

The OECD looked at the regulation of financial systems. Canada overall ranks second. The United States is fourth, the United Kingdom fifth and Australia seventh. Who regulates financial systems? They are responsibility of the financial market authorities in Quebec and the other provinces.

We have been told we have to consider international representation. Apparently we seem crazy to the rest of the world because we are divided into 13. The annual conference of the International Organization of Securities Commissions is taking place right now. Where? The conference is being held in Montreal. International authorities are in Montreal under the auspices of the AMF and the other provinces' financial market authorities to discuss issues. This is happening in Montreal.

This morning's newspapers reported that the president of Standard and Poor's was talking about the International Organization of Securities Commissions. He is there, too. Quebec's finance minister, Mr. Bachand, who officially opened the public portion of the conference, had the following to say, "All indications are that the Canadian system we have adopted works very well, in part because many international organizations rank it among the best in the world." I was referring to an article in *Le Devoir*. Now I am going to talk about an article in *La Presse*. The article states that even the president of the Securities and Exchange Commission is there. If the AMF and the provincial securities commissions applied their rules in a way that made no sense, would Mr. Volcker or Ms. Shapiro of the SEC be in Montreal? Are those people wrong?

We have produced a long list of people in Quebec who support the Autorité des marchés financiers and are telling the Government of Canada that it is mistaken. We have the Association de l'exploration minière du Québec, the Barreau du Québec, various chambers of commerce, the Fédération des chambres de commerce, the Conseil du patronat, Canam, Quebecor, Jean Coutu, Desjardins, Power Corporation, La Capitale, Transat and Transcontinental. Are all those institutions wrong?

They are not socialists, which is what the Minister of Finance called them two weeks ago when he was a bit tired. This is not a gang of socialists. They are not people from the Bloc. Let them read the other articles and the letters sent on October 2, 2007, by Ms. Jérôme-Forget, who is not a socialist. Desjardins did it in 2008, Allaire and Nadeau in 2009. There is also the study by Secor and Pierre Lortie. Pierre Lortie, no less. Pierre Lortie is a lot of things, but he is not a sovereignist. That is too bad. That is going to take us a while. Still, he produced an excellent report. He said that what the Conservatives are doing is utterly mad.

Business of Supply

I have 30 seconds left. Why are spending so much time talking about this issue? Is it because it falls within our jurisdiction? Passports work. Everyone knows that. This is a development and economic ownership tool. These are our jobs and our young people. It is deceptive to say that voluntary adherence will be easy and that that will solve the problem of all the Earl Jones in this world.

Most importantly, whatever is done in Quebec will be done with respect for our language, which would not be the case if the federal plan were to become a reality.

• (1110)

[English]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Hochelaga for a very passionate speech once again. I know he has not had the privilege of sitting in this House for as long as some to listen to all of the passionate speeches that have argued the same thing he has argued and have all failed the five, six or seven times they have been brought forward.

I would like to reflect on a couple of his comments. One of them was in a question the other day, which was a wonderful opportunity that I missed, by the hon. member for Hochelaga who said, “If it is not broken, why fix it?” The only thing I see broken is the record that keeps playing over and over again in the same groove with the same old arguments that are, frankly, not shared with the rest of the world.

One other comment he made was, “Go ahead with it”, and that is the gist of the whole argument. It is voluntary and we would encourage Quebec to go ahead with it on a voluntary basis.

The hon. member used selective quotes from the IMF and from OECD. The IMF said:

Canada is currently the only G7 country without a common securities regulator, and Canada's investors deserve better.

Did the hon. member overlook this quote from the IMF to find the one that he used?

• (1115)

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Mr. Speaker, our passion will not wither with time, and we are passionate for Quebec. For the remainder of our time in this place, which will hopefully be as short as possible, we will make sure that we remain passionate.

People are quoting off the top of their heads comments apparently made one day by the IMF. Who would believe that the likes of Paul Volcker or the representative of the Japanese Financial Services Agency who, incidentally, spoke excellent French, Standard & Poor's president Deven Sharma, the chief operating officer of the Bombay Stock Exchange, the president of the International Federation of Accountants and the president of the French Autorité des marchés financiers, that all these individuals would want to waste their time? The member can still attend the international conference underway in Montreal.

I did not see anyone from the federal government there yesterday. Why fix something that is working? The member should put on his

glasses or borrow his colleague's glasses and take a look. It is working.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say from the outset that I am speaking on behalf of Earl Jones' fraud victims, as there are several in my riding.

I greatly appreciated my colleague's substantial presentation. I cannot say that I agree or disagree with everything he said, but his speech certainly raised questions in my mind.

When I read the government bill, I cannot figure out why it is proposing a national regulatory system, since participation will clearly be voluntary and there is an opting-out clause, one of Quebec's historical demands. In other words, what the government is proposing is something that might exist in a scenario where Quebec would be independent, that is, one securities regulator for Quebec and one for the rest of Canada.

Why does the member oppose this government initiative, which is not a national initiative and is actually proposing what he would like to see happen if his option were to be successful?

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Mr. Speaker, in response to the member's question, the first thing we have to look at here is whether this has potential.

At a press conference where his remarks were translated by another minister, the Minister of Finance clearly said that he would not accept the mutual recognition of passports by different authorities, which currently works well in Canada. In other words, he would not accept what already works between Canada and the United States.

I am familiar with financial products in Canada and the United States, and there was the U.S. wrap. It worked. The minister said that he would never accept that. But in his draft legislation on a Canadian national securities commission, he took the various authorities hostage on the issues of fraud and fraudulent practices, telling them that if they opt in or opt out, there will be enforcement. That is unacceptable.

• (1120)

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am really surprised by the government's priorities. It is closing down prison farms and pushing the Canada-Colombia free trade deal. Now its next big topic is a centralized national securities regulator, which by the way, it has to refer to the Supreme Court before moving it forward. As the member pointed out, it has spent \$300 million already on something that may be largely unnecessary.

This matter is not only about Quebec. The province of Manitoba for at least the last 10 years, maybe more, has definitely been looking at this issue and is definitely opposed to it. The province of Alberta is very concerned about what will happen to its financial services sector as a result of this. My question would be where B.C. is in all of this. Why is B.C. not interested in questioning this whole idea? Why is it only Quebec, Alberta, and Manitoba at this point?

Business of Supply

Fundamentally, it is not necessarily the structures that count; it is the people running the structures. The different regulators in the United States and Canada have all been asleep at the switch. They tend to hire people from the very industries they are there to regulate. That is not the way we should be setting up our securities commissions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Mr. Speaker, I urge the NDP member to put all the pressure he can on the member for Macleod, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance. I would like all of us to call on him to listen to Alberta's finance minister, Ted Morton, and not to the former Ontario finance minister. He should go visit him on the weekend; he has the time. He should visit Alberta's finance minister, and I am sure that the minister will convince him that the former Ontario finance minister is leading us into a trap. The same goes for the people of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Are all of these people wrong?

I urge the member for Macleod, for whom I have a great deal of respect, to go see Alberta's finance minister.

Yesterday, I spoke to Quebec's finance minister, and we shared the same opinion. I hope that next Monday, the member for Macleod will return to the House and say that he spoke to his finance minister in Calgary and that he agrees that the former Ontario finance minister is wrong.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise my friend from Hochelaga that I actually had a long visit with Alberta's finance minister after a wonderful event in Black Diamond, Alberta last Saturday, and we did discuss this. There were slight differences of opinion, but I would like to share with the hon. member that we had a very respectful debate and discussed this issue. That is exactly what we should do. I would encourage all hon. members to have that respectful debate in this House today.

I must say that I have a great deal of respect for that hon. member for the role he is playing on the finance committee, and we welcome his presence and his contribution there.

To the point at hand, I am joining this debate, yet again, on another Bloc Québécois opposition motion that repeats, and I have referred to the broken-record analogy, the same, tired Bloc rhetoric opposing our government's attempt to strengthen securities regulation in Canada.

Before I continue, right off the bat I want to set the Bloc straight once and for all, if I can. To paraphrase the late American legislator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the Bloc may be entitled to its opinion, but not to its own facts. Many opponents of improving Canada's securities regulation, especially the Bloc, have repeatedly suggested that both the IMF and the OECD are in some way against a national securities regulator in Canada. That is wrong, that is misleading, and that needs to stop.

The Bloc knows, or should know, because we have told it repeatedly, that both the IMF and the OECD are actually long-standing and strong supporters of a national securities regulator for Canada. I reflected the quotes that the hon. member is selectively

using. I would suggest that he look at all quotes from the OECD and the IMF. With the greatest of respect, I would ask my colleague in the Bloc to listen carefully now to the collection of key quotes I am about to share with him. These quotes will provide indisputable proof that they are dead wrong and will end this nonsense the Bloc keeps repeating.

The first is from a recent OECD survey of Canada:

The current diversity of regulations—for example, each province has its own securities regulator—makes it difficult to maximize efficiency, and increases the risk that firms will choose to issue securities in other countries. A single regulator would eliminate the inefficiencies created by the limited enforcement authority of individual provincial agencies.

The second is from a recent IMF mission to Canada statement:

Consolidating and enhancing securities regulations would further strengthen the already robust financial stability framework. Over time, bringing a greater financial stability focus to securities regulation, and achieving greater national integration... would provide a more holistic perspective to financial stability arrangements. In this connection, the [IMF] welcomes the [Canadian government's] intentions...to follow the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Securities Regulation.

Those are pretty clear quotes.

What is more, the IMF has also further noted:

Given that Canada is playing in the highest league, you should equip yourself with the best instrument. I think that on financial issues, you still have to provide your customers—your investors and savers of your country—with better tools... Canada is currently the only G7 country without a common securities regulator, and Canada's investors deserve better.

That is a key point. I want to emphasize for my friends in the Bloc that Canada's investors deserve better. Those investors include the good people of Quebec, whom they are sent here to this House to represent. I would suggest that not only do we deserve better securities regulation, we deserve better than misleading arguments from opponents of a national securities regulator when it comes to the positions of both the IMF and the OECD. Canadians do too, and so do their constituents, the ones ultimately most impacted and affected by our decision on this matter.

● (1125)

If this debate on the Bloc opposition motion sounds all too familiar, it is, as I said before, because we have debated it before. We have debated this Bloc opposition motion three, four, five, or six times already in the past few years. I have actually lost track of how many times we have debated it. As the legendary New York Yankees catcher Yogi Berra once noted, "It's like déjà vu all over again."

In fact, almost one year ago today, on June 15, 2009, to be exact, we had a Bloc opposition motion debate that dealt with the exact same debate we are having today. Today we will largely see the exact same Bloc members rise to speak. They will repeat the exact same Bloc talking points. Then they will recite the same old tired Bloc speeches with the same over-the-top rhetoric.

Business of Supply

For those watching who are not familiar with the ways in which this House of Commons works, every session each opposition party is given a limited number of what we informally call opposition days. An opposition party, on its designated opposition day, can pick whatever issue it wants to debate. This is its biggest opportunity to focus the attention of the House of Commons as a whole on what its members consider the most pressing or important issue to their party, and more importantly, to their constituents.

I emphasize that the opposition party can select literally whatever issue it wants without restriction. It can be literally whatever it wants. It could be anything from the environment to foreign affairs, defence, international trade, or natural resources.

However, time and again, the Bloc has chosen to debate the same issue and has brought forward essentially the same motion that opposes stronger securities regulation in Canada. How can we explain the Bloc's singular obsession with this one topic? Does the Bloc honestly think that this is the only issue Quebeckers care about? Are they that out of touch with their constituents?

Maybe it could be that the Bloc is suffering from collective amnesia, as they keep bringing forward the exact same motion to debate, time and time again. I believe that all members have access to medical assistance right here on the Hill. Perhaps the Speaker may want to encourage Bloc members to take advantage of this service. Regular checkups are very important, I would remind everyone.

However, in this case of collective amnesia, let me briefly refresh the Bloc's collective memory on the continued failure of its motions. Every single previous Bloc motion brought forward on this issue was soundly rejected and defeated by this House. In other words, every single time, the House has said that the Bloc is wrong and has instead supported our Conservative government's attempt to strengthen securities regulation in Canada. I predict that it will happen again today.

I predict that yet again, this House will agree with our Conservative government, along with the IMF and the OECD, that a Canadian securities regulator is about giving investors the strongest protection possible, which is something that is long overdue. Indeed, the drive for a Canadian securities regulator is not a recent phenomenon.

In fact, as far back as 1935, the Royal Commission on Price Spreads advocated the creation of a national securities board. Seventy-five years later, after countless Canadian and international studies recommending that we replace the current system of 13 securities regulators with a national securities regulator, we are closer than ever before to finally replacing the balkanized system that has evolved, a balkanized system that is widely mocked.

For instance, the National Union of Public and General Employees has described it as:

—ineffective provincial securities commissions, each seeming to vie with the others for the title of the weakest sheriff in town.

That is why, since we formed government in 2006, we have been working with provinces and territories and have been leading the call for a more efficient, streamlined securities regulatory system that better reinforces financial stability and that reduces unnecessary costs, strengthens enforcement, and better protects investors.

●(1130)

Indeed now more than ever, we have to better protect Canadians from fraudsters and Ponzi scheme organizers.

We are an investing country. Canadians own RRSPs, equities, mutual funds, or are covered under registered retirement plans. These nest eggs represent Canadians' financial future.

Too many small investors, retirees and families putting money away for the future have felt the impacts of fraudsters like the Earl Jones and Vincent Lacroix schemes. Too many have lost their life savings. For these people it is absolutely devastating. For our country it is embarrassing.

As a *Toronto Star* editorial stated:

Currently, our capital markets (stocks, bonds and derivatives) are regulated by the provinces and territories – 13 different jurisdictions in all. This has led to a patchwork quilt of regulations that allows con men and corner-cutters to slip through the cracks and evade justice. Think of Conrad Black (charged in the United States, not Canada) or the principals behind the Bre-X gold scam....In other words, the current system is not good for investors, who comprise about half of all adult Canadians, directly or indirectly (through mutual funds)....

Even more damning is the assessment of the Canadian Foundation for the Advancement of Investor Rights:

We have rampant insider trading in Canada and the regulators appear to be completely ineffective at detecting it.

Our Conservative government will not sit by and let Canadians be bilked of their hard-earned money. We owe it to Canadians to do all we can to protect them. Canadians need stronger enforcement to better detect, deter and investigate wrongdoing. Canada is the only industrialized country without a single securities regulator. This is not only unacceptable at the present time but it is now no longer an option. That is why we have proposed a new Canadian securities act.

What is more, let me be clear and dispel the Bloc's rhetoric. This act is not a federal power grab. Indeed the act was developed working with 10 participating provinces and territories. Let me stress that this is a voluntary initiative. This act will not force any province or territory to participate in a Canadian securities regulator, if it chooses not to. Provinces and territories will be able to opt in at will.

We also recognize that a Canadian securities regulator will require the support and expertise of the best talent from Canada's financial markets. That is why we have committed that local offices will remain in place. Current staff in the provinces and territories will be offered jobs in the regulator.

Additionally, we will also work hard to ensure that local offices have the authority they need to make regulatory decisions that they should. This is in keeping with the proposed act which envisions an organization with comprehensive national standards. It will be made up of strong local offices with an understanding of regional economies and that enjoy the confidence of local businesses.

Business of Supply

We are going even further to underline our commitment to respect the provinces and territories and ensure we are not acting beyond Parliament's jurisdiction. Accordingly, to achieve absolute clarity, we have referred the matter to the Supreme Court of Canada. We will be asking the court a clear question: Is the annexed proposed Canadian securities act within the legislative authority of the Parliament of Canada?

Furthermore, we will wait to have an answer from the Supreme Court about the constitutional authority of Parliament to legislate in this area before we proceed further on a new Canadian securities act. This is the right and fair course of action.

Even former Quebec intergovernmental affairs minister, Benoît Pelletier, has admitted such:

The fact that [the federal government] decided to ask the court for an opinion in my view is something that is fair.

Before I conclude, let me just say that the global recession has been a wake-up call for all of us to rethink and refocus the way we do things. Modern stock markets call for timely regulatory and structural reform to improve integrity and strengthen efficiency.

• (1135)

This is about co-operation, not about jurisdiction. It is about establishing a national Canadian securities regulator that would provide clearer national accountability, reduce overlap and duplication, and strengthen enforcement; a regulator to better serve the needs of investors and contribute to the financial stability of Canada's financial sector. We owe it to Canadians to put in place a system that protects their hard-earned savings.

I could spend the rest of my time here today trying to convince the Bloc of the merits of improving securities regulation in Canada. I could quote the OECD, the IMF, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Foundation for Advancement of Investor Rights, the Earl Jones Victim Organizing Committee, the Quebec Provincial Association of Retired Educators, the Small Investor Protection Association and countless other supporters of a national securities regulator, but I know it would be useless. The Bloc is not listening to reason on this.

As we largely already know the Liberals' position based on their long historical support for a national regulator, I want to turn my attention squarely to the NDP. I ask the NDP not to ignore the pleas of those who have advocated a national regulator, such as unions like the Canadian Labour Congress, the National Union of Public and General Employees, and CUPE.

I ask the NDP not to ignore the many past and present NDP members of Parliament, including their former finance critic, Judy Wasylycia-Leis, the incoming mayor of Winnipeg I understand, who advocated a national securities regulator. Indeed, Ms. Wasylycia-Leis once told the *Toronto Star* that she was convinced of the need for a national securities regulator rather than the piecemeal provincial approach. I ask the NDP to understand that we owe it to Canadians to provide them the best protection possible.

As an August 2009 report from the left-leaning Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives concluded:

The lack of a national securities regulator is a clear "black hole" in Canada's financial regulatory system....The recent moves to bring security regulation under a national regulator should be accelerated....

I note that even the NDP leader recently told the Toronto Board of Trade that he would like to see us moving toward national securities regulation.

I ask the NDP members to oppose this Bloc motion today. Instead, join together with the government and the many voices in Canada that believe we need to get serious about white collar crime and protecting all Canadians by finally moving forward with a Canadian securities regulator.

• (1140)

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, up until near the end of his speech, I believed that the respect that I have always felt for the Alberta member was reciprocated, but when he said that this is useless because the Bloc does not listen, I would ask for some courtesy. It is easy to throw out quotations, and I believe his speech had 72 or 80, but I would like to know what he thinks and not have him quote umpteen people. I, too, could join in the quote contest.

[English]

I have a quotation about an unprecedented power grab and that if it is not broken, do not try to fix it.

[Translation]

We could take bets on who said that. It was his friend, Alberta's finance minister. So I am telling him no. I am sorry, but I do not want to be a local office. I do not want to be a branch within a system that I do not recognize and that does not recognize me. Once he has understood that, then we can make some progress in this debate. Just because we have debated this one, two, three or four times does not mean that we will stop. No, we will keep going until you understand. I am hoping that, in his great intelligence, he will finally admit that, at the very least, we are listening and that we understand. Even if we have to agree to disagree, that would represent some progress.

[English]

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I guess it is all in the interpretation. We can listen all we want, but do we understand and do we comprehend what is being said? Do we respect the substance of what is being put forward? There have been six different debates over the same issue. Is it listening? Is it understanding? I guess it is all in how we perceive it.

My friend from Hochelaga asked me a very pointed question: What do I think?

Business of Supply

In answer to a question earlier this week, I referred to a banker I know whom I happened to meet in the airport. He was travelling to Montreal to look for investors. I asked him what his overall goal was, whether he was planning on setting up a branch of his bank in Quebec. He said “not on your life”. He said he would access funds to invest in his bank, but he would never under today's passport system, consider opening a branch in Quebec. That is a lost opportunity for Quebec. It is a wonderful bank, a solid bank, that refuses, because of the complications in other provinces, the lack of a national regulator, a national comprehension, to open a branch in Quebec. Quebec lost that opportunity.

• (1145)

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would note it was back in 2008 that the Liberal Party recommended that this matter first be sent to the Supreme Court for it to decide whether it was constitutional. The Conservatives followed our lead and that is fine. My problem is that they seem to be assuming that the Supreme Court will decide in their favour.

The Conservatives have already spent about one-third of \$1 billion on this enterprise. There was \$2.8 million in the supplementary estimates in 2008, \$154 million in budget 2009, and \$161 million in budget 2010. It seems that the Conservatives are acting out of disrespect for the Quebec provincial government in assuming that this will go through and charging ahead with one-third of \$1 billion.

Why are the Conservatives gambling one-third of \$1 billion of taxpayers' money on an enterprise which will simply go down the drain should the Supreme Court decide against the government?

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, the member for Markham—Unionville is another member of the finance committee who usually has quite a bit to contribute. We appreciate his support on committee for a lot of the good initiatives that have gone forward.

The member talked about dollars in the billions, less than a billion of course. Let me refer to a study by John Coffee of Columbia University. His study shows that Canada, in not moving forward with this, could suffer a loss of \$10 billion in economic benefits. That is not chump change. That is big money. That is the lost investment into this country.

The hon. member asked me why we would spend money consulting with provinces and Canadians when it is a shared jurisdiction. This government does not move forward without consulting our partners. It is a voluntary system. The task force talked to all of the relevant people involved in this, the people who have been impacted, and came back with the suggestion that we move forward but we move forward by asking for the Supreme Court to rule.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I hung on to every word of my friend the parliamentary secretary, as I do every time he speaks in the House. Most of the words he spoke seemed to indicate that he was most concerned about protecting Canadians. I think that was the gist of his speech.

I remind him that New Democrats have been calling on the federal government for some time to get tough on white-collar crime. He mentioned the former member of the House, Judy Wasylycia-Leis, our member from Winnipeg. What he did not say is that she put

forward a very detailed plan, when she was the finance critic, to effectively fight corporate crime in Canada. A single regulator is a solution to really no known problem in Canada. It is simply an attempt to impose Ottawa's will on the provinces to better serve its friends on Bay Street.

If we want to protect Canadians, it seems to me that Canada already has tough laws to combat fraud and unfair practices. I suggest we need to enforce the laws we already have, for example, including strengthening the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions and the integrated market enforcement teams.

• (1150)

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend from the NDP does raise a very important issue. I reflected on that momentarily in my speech, but we are very concerned about this. In fact, I attended a conference in Berlin in which Canada participated. Canada is looked to as a leader in ways to stop white-collar crime and reduce tax havens. We have addressed that in budget 2010 and we are strengthening that.

However, this is an integral part of doing just that. Yes, we have laws in place, but we do not seem to have enforcement. I do not like to raise individual names, but Conrad Black is a shining example. Canada could not seem to come up with a charge for an individual who was basically found guilty very shortly after in a United States' court. We obviously do not have the tools in place to protect Canadian investors, be they small or large investors.

The other part we do not talk enough about is the fact that companies want to invest in Canada. When they look at 13 different jurisdictions, they wonder why they would bother, why they would go through the extra paperwork. Each jurisdiction asks them different questions so they go somewhere else.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak on this opposition day motion.

The first part of the motion is a bit of a no-brainer: that the House denounces the government's unrelenting efforts to marginalize the Quebec nation. Indeed, Liberals agree that the Prime Minister has been a failure when it comes to federal-provincial relations and we disagree with the Conservative approach of acting unilaterally to sow divisions in the country. It is a party that governs by division, a party that believes so long as it can retain the support of the 35% of Canadians it needs, it can ignore and marginalize the remaining 65%.

In fact, I would expand the first part of the motion as the Conservatives not only marginalize Quebec, but all Canadians who they feel they do not need to win an election. We hear it all the time. We have heard the Prime Minister voice his disdain for people who attend arts galas. To the Prime Minister, those people are not real Canadians. We have heard the Conservatives attack our hard-working police officers, dismissing them and their views on crime prevention, because Conservatives believe police officers are part of some nefarious cult.

Business of Supply

Therefore, yes, I agree with the Bloc motion that the current Conservative government marginalizes not only Quebec, but virtually everyone who they feel they do not need in order to cling to power.

The second part of the motion deals with the issue of securities regulation. As we all know, last month, the finance minister referred a draft securities regulation bill to the Supreme Court for its opinion on the constitutionality of the bill.

Some experts believe the regulation of the securities industry falls under the property and civil rights sections of the Constitution; that is to say, under provincial control. Others believe the regulation of securities falls under the federal government's powers to regulate trade. There has been an academic discussion on these issues for decades, and it could go on for decades more.

Technically, the debate began in 1964, when the Royal Commission on Banking and Finance recommended that a single securities regulator be established.

In 1973 the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs began a five-year study on the idea of a single securities regulator.

Then, around 1988, federally-regulated banks began to enter the securities market and the debate took on a new form. At the time, it was reported that Pierre Fortier, Quebec's minister of financial institutions, and Tom Hockin, his federal counterpart, were close to a deal on the issue. However, in the end, nothing was accomplished.

The idea of a single regulator appeared again in the mid-1990s, and here we are again debating it still in 2010.

One thing is clear. Today, we have the opportunity to hear the Supreme Court's opinion about the constitutional and jurisdictional issues that have never been answered clearly in the 56 years of this debate. I am happy to report that we only have this opportunity because when the Conservatives announced that they would unilaterally impose a securities commission on the provinces, back in February 2008, the Liberal Party said, no. We said that, first, the matter should be referred to the Supreme Court and that the government should seek the court's opinion on whether the federal government had the constitutional authority to proceed in this way. The Conservatives eventually came to their senses, agreeing with the Liberal Party, and last month they took our advice by referring a draft bill to the Supreme Court for its opinion.

Now that we are roughly a year away from a Supreme Court ruling that would answer the 56-year-old question about a single regulator, we should at least wait to hear what the court has to say. If the Supreme Court agrees with the Bloc's legal opinion on this matter, then Bloc members should be ecstatic. The whole issue would go away after 56 years of on and off debate.

That is why the Liberal Party, after we called for the referral to the Supreme Court, is eager to hear what the court has to say. It is why we cannot vote for this motion that would essentially lead to years of more debate that, for all intents and purposes, is pointless until we hear the opinion of the Supreme Court.

●(1155)

It is here as well that I take issue with the government. While it followed our advice and eventually referred the matter to the Supreme Court, it has acted in such a way that it is assuming the Supreme Court will go in its direction or it is taking a wild gamble with one-third of \$1 billion of Canadian taxpayer money. It is spending money lavishly on this project before it knows what the Supreme Court will say.

If the Supreme Court decides against the government, the government will have thrown down the drain more than \$300 million of taxpayer money. Why would it spend so lavishly before it even knows what the Supreme Court has to say? I would contend that it should spend more modestly.

Yes, some money is required for consultations and so on, but that does not cost over \$300 million. The government is taking a big risk spending Canadian taxpayer money on a project that may never see the light of day, depending on what the Supreme Court says.

Make no mistake, all Canadians want an efficient securities regulation regime that protects their interests. Once the Supreme Court has made its ruling and provided clarity, the Liberal Party will approach this issue with the belief that the best approach is one that protects investors, promotes capital market efficiency and ensures the unique expertise of each region is not lost.

The Liberal Party, as everyone in the chamber knows, has a long track record of financial leadership, of which this regulator issue is one aspect. The stable financial system in Canada, which the Liberals built, has become a model for the world during the economic crisis.

I would note that strong banks have fared Canada well in this past crisis and that a single regulator certainly is not a panacea for stability during a financial crisis. We observed in the U.K. and the U.S., each of which has a single regulator, that their banks required bailouts and did far worse than Canadian banks.

If the stability of the banking system has little to do with a single regulator, to what can we credit the relative stability and success of Canada's banks? The answer is pretty clear. During the 1990s, under a Liberal government, we resisted the fad or trend of the day to move in the direction of deregulation. The U.S. and U.K. moved in that direction. The then Conservatives, Reformers or Canadian Alliance, whatever they were called back then, were pushing the Liberal government also to move in the direction of deregulation. They were pushing the Liberal government to allow Canadian banks to merge.

Mr. Chrétien said no to bank mergers and he said no bank deregulation. He was right and the Conservatives were wrong. I would admit that I was wrong too on one of those points. At that time I worked for the Royal Bank and believed merger was a good idea. However, now that we have seen the fate of Canadian banks versus others in this financial crisis, it is clear to me that, notwithstanding what I might have thought in those earlier days, the Liberal government was right to say no to mergers and to the deregulation of the banking system and the Conservatives in opposition were wrong.

Business of Supply

I think we can all agree that the strength of Canada's banks, which has helped us during this financial crisis, is part of the Liberal legacy to the country, a legacy the Conservatives were extremely lucky to inherit and would not have existed had they been in power. They would have allowed mergers, moved in the same direction, as the U.S. and U.K., of bank deregulation and our banks would probably have ended up in no better shape than the banks of the U.K. and the U.S. This is an example of the financial or fiscal stewardship that one can expect from the Liberal government, carried out in the 1990s.

• (1200)

The other dimension of that, which the Conservatives inherited, is the strength of our fiscal situation. As we all know, in the mid-nineties the Liberals inherited a \$42 billion Conservative deficit. In a few short years we converted that to surplus. We paid down debt for a decade.

Whereas at the beginning, when Liberals came to power, Canada was the basket case of the G7. The *Wall Street Journal* said we were on our way to becoming a third world country. By the end of the Liberals' period of government, we had the lowest debt ratio in the G7 countries and a fine record of paying down debt.

That was the other thing, in addition to strong banks, that the Conservatives inherited as a consequence of this Liberal legacy. While it is true that they frittered away their inherited \$13 billion surplus to the point where they were in or near deficit before the recession even struck, nevertheless, they were unable to undo the basically good fiscal record, fiscal situation, which they inherited.

The reason I go into these issues is that members of the House can be assured that once the Supreme Court decision comes down, perhaps in a year, that we on the Liberal side, should we be the government at that time, will act in the best interests of what is good for the Canadian financial situation and the Canadian economy, just as we did in the 1990s with respect to ensuring sound regulation of the banks, to not allowing mergers, resulting in strong Canadian banks today.

In terms of fiscally prudent behaviour, which eliminated that big fat Conservative \$42 billion deficit, we paid down debt for a decade, left Canada in good stead to deal with the financial crisis which happened a couple of years ago. And in some respects this is ongoing.

• (1205)

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Liberal Party's finance critic is hiding behind the Supreme Court's decision. Much like his leader, he is saying that they plan to wait, and once they find a way out, they will take it. They do not know what they will say or do, but they will do something. The Liberals are trying to come up with a way out, and when they find it, they will take it.

I would like the member to tell us his opinion now. As he said, the banking system and regulations weathered the crisis, so nobody would consider changing that system now. The securities system also weathered the crisis. So why change it? Why apply different reasoning to that?

I am appealing to his sense of reason as a financier. We come from the same background and we have the same training, though not the same political allegiances. Why consider changing something that is working very well? We do not even need to know what the Supreme Court has to say. He could just say that if the Liberals form the government one day and he becomes the finance minister, they would try to fix things that are broken and not mess with this. Why not say that right now?

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, I remember that back when I got my start in politics 10 years ago, I answered a hypothetical question and my old boss, Mr. Chrétien, told me quite seriously that I should never answer hypothetical questions. This is clearly a hypothetical question. The Supreme Court will not be ruling on this for a year or more. I criticized the government because it spent over \$300 million before knowing what the Supreme Court has to say. In other words, the government could lose that \$300 million of Canadians' money if the Supreme Court says no. In my opinion, what we should do is wait for the Supreme Court's decision. Everything depends on that decision, and once we have it, we can decide what to do.

[English]

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate this member's work on the finance committee.

However, I think the finance critic for the Bloc Québécois, the member for Hochelaga, has pinpointed exactly what is wrong with the Liberal position. The Bloc Québécois has a position. I do not share that position, but it has a very clear position.

What is the position of the Liberal Party of Canada on a national securities regulator? Does it support the conclusion of the Hockin report? Does it support what the IMF and OECD have said? Does it support what former Alberta treasurer Jim Dinning has called for in terms of a Canadian securities regulator?

The Liberal Party cannot hide behind a Supreme Court decision. It has to come out now and state exactly what it stands for. Does it support a national regulator, or does it stand with the Bloc and say it is entirely under provincial jurisdiction, and we should have the passport system?

The Liberal Party needs to stand up today and state where it stands on this very important national issue.

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, the Liberal Party has been clear that it agrees with the preamble of the Bloc motion, to the effect that the Prime Minister has been a failure in terms of federal-provincial relations.

However, we stand by the position that we enunciated before the Conservatives and that is to say, refer it to the Supreme Court. I do not think there is much point having detailed plans of precisely what to do before we hear from the supreme court. We will hear from the Supreme Court in about a year. After that decision, the Liberal Party will have a clear plan.

Business of Supply

What I would criticize is the Conservative Party for taking a huge gamble with a third of a billion dollars of taxpayers' money that it is spending on this project before it even knows whether this project is constitutional.

I think the prudent action, what is prudent from the standpoint of Canadian taxpayers, is to spend modestly on consultation, not a third of a billion dollars, and just wait for the year or so that it will take before the Supreme Court makes its decision.

As I said in my speech, we have debated this thing on and off for 56 years. I do not think one more year of waiting for the Supreme Court decision is a high price to pay.

• (1210)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think the member has correctly pointed out in his speech that the United Kingdom and the United States have a single regulator, and they still had to bail out their banks.

This really gets to the point that while Canada has tough laws to combat fraud and unfair practices, what we need is proper enforcement. I have always observed and said that if we keep hiring the regulators from the companies that they are supposed to be regulating, then we will essentially have an insider system, a system that is basically asleep at the switch. That is essentially what has happened here.

It is not so much the structure that we are dealing with; it is the people who are in the structure. Regardless of which system we have, if we do not hire enforcement-oriented people, and we simply hire industry insiders to be the regulators, then we are going to continue to have these problems.

The fact of the matter is that either side can present good arguments. There are jurisdictional issues here. This issue has been going on for many years. I predict that it will be decided in favour of the provinces because that is where it has been for the last 100 years.

I would like to ask the member, would he like to comment on that whole question about the type of enforcement, and whether or not it is the people who are doing the enforcing that is the problem?

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, if the member is right about the Supreme Court, then the Conservative government will have thrown a third of a billion dollars of Canadian taxpayers' money down the drain. However, I will not try to guess what the Supreme Court will say.

In terms of the member's question, I do not really think that because regulators might have worked at a bank before that they would condone embezzlement or fraud. I do not think that. I do not really agree with him on that.

The reason why we have been relatively unsuccessful in dealing with white collar crime, as compared with the U.S., is mainly due to the fact that the Conservative government has not put sufficient resources into the RCMP. I do not think the RCMP has sufficient resources to deal effectively with all of these issues. In my view, that would be a big part of the solution.

[Translation]

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a brief question.

[English]

I am just concerned about the blind faith that seems to be placed in a free market system. That seems to be the mantra that goes behind the Conservatives. When I look at some of the decisions that people are looking at, both Conservative and New Democrat, they seem to know what is coming up in the future. There is a clairvoyance there that I am not sure is founded.

The concern I have is the \$300 million that is being spent prior to a decision coming up and relating that to the blind faith in the free market system that the Conservatives have. Maybe the member would like to comment on the Conservatives' view of the future and how they are spending money, and making decisions not based on fact, but based on this blind faith that they have in the market, and how that leaves Canadians vulnerable, not only locally, not only nationally, but internationally.

• (1215)

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, it is clear that the government is playing Russian roulette with \$300 million of Canadian taxpayers' money. That is imprudent and irresponsible.

In response to the questions, as I said in my speech, in terms of blind faith in markets and no regulation at all, thank goodness the Conservatives were not in power in the 1990s. They would have allowed bank mergers. They would have deregulated banking and we would now be in the soup, just as they are in the U.S. and the U.K.

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, I am pleased to rise here once again in support of the Bloc Québécois motion on the securities regulatory system.

I will be giving much of my speech and making most of my comments in English, which is unusual for me, because it seems to me that for many people in the rest of Canada, it is much easier to follow in English.

It is important for people to understand that this is not a petty federal-provincial squabble. It is not that we are determined to maintain a system in opposition to the federal government. So I will begin in English and I would like to come back to what my hon. Liberal colleague just said, although I have to ask myself the question I often ask myself when the Liberals speak: will they walk the talk? Will their fine words lead to any concrete action?

[English]

The Liberal member of Parliament for Markham—Unionville, who just spoke, called the Conservatives' spending of large sums of public money on this issue imprudent and irresponsible. He is right. One does not spend public money on a crapshoot.

Business of Supply

This issue is before the Quebec Court of Appeal right now, which is where the Quebec government referred it. The federal government is saying that it will be referring it to the Supreme Court of Canada. I heard the Conservative chairman of the finance committee, the member for Edmonton—Leduc, speak a little bit earlier and he said that the Supreme Court would rule in about a year.

That is not possible. It is absolutely impossible to formulate the reference to the Supreme Court, give appropriate time for the preparing of facta, hear the case and render a decision. It will not take place in a year. That is totally unrealistic. The money that is being spent, to quote the Liberals, imprudently and irresponsibly on this uniform securities regulator, risks being totally wasted.

That is on the pure public policy angle of it. Does it make any sense, therefore, to have this draft bill and to be spending that money? The Bloc motion simply calls for the government to withdraw the draft bill. That is good common sense to the extent that even the Conservatives are admitting, by their reference to the Supreme Court, that it is an open question whether the federal government has jurisdiction in this field. I will give arguments as to why I believe it does not. It follows, therefore, that the very least it should do is stop spending public money on it until that issue is clarified.

I have just said that the New Democratic Party of Canada will be backing this motion because we believe that the essence of the motion is to withdraw the draft bill before the House and we agree with that.

I have only one question for the Liberals. If they indeed feel that the government is spending taxpayer money imprudently and irresponsibly, will they vote for this motion to withdraw the draft bill? Unfortunately, I did not get the slightest indication from the Liberals as to what they will do at the end of the day on this important motion.

In any field of modern life and in a democracy such as ours that is a federation, there will be those who argue that the initial federative pact, in our case one that dates from 1867, contains lacunae. It cannot contemplate all of the realities of today. I will use that as my starting point to say that one of the big mistakes we make in our society is to assume that it is just normal to have a democracy that has been functioning. The American constitution has life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, but to use the bromide from our own Constitution, we talk about peace, order and good government.

A lot of people make the mistake of believing that 150 years of peace, order and good government have come naturally, that they are a given and that they are to be expected. In fact, if we look at the world and the hundreds of countries in the world, we realize that 150 years of peace, order and good government cannot be taken for granted because it is quite rare on the world stage not to have gone through a revolution, a civil war, an external invasion or an attack of some kind.

That is the good fortune of Canada, but it is not only good fortune. It is because the structure we put in place in 1867 as we created our country took into account certain realities of the partners who were coming together. One of the realities was that the province of Quebec was the only province in the newly formed country that not only had

French as its majority language but it also had the French civil law as the basis of its legal system. We often talk about a country that is both bilingual and bicultural, sometimes forgetting that we are also bijudicial.

Certain things that crossed boundaries were spelled out in the founding pact of the federation. At the time, we would talk about railways or telegraphs, but that expanded. The understanding of that federative pact led the Supreme Court to say that telecommunications, which is something that has to cover the whole country, would fall under those general headings. That is how the Constitution evolved and that is good common sense

• (1220)

However, since the beginning, property and civil rights understood, not in its 1960s connotation from the U.S. and in the battle for civil rights, but understood in its 1860s connotation of the civil law that covers the relations between people, the contracts and the property rights, that was left to the provinces.

There are those who would say that we need to follow the American model here, but it should be borne in mind that U.S. states individually guard just as jealously their jurisdiction as do Canadian provinces for very similar reasons. The United States, the most successful democracy in the history of the world, has shown that the institutions laid down, in its case it will be over 225 years that they have functioned effectively, it laid down its institutional rules.

Interestingly, in the United States, the state policing power, which is a key power, determines all aspects of licensure, enforcement and regulation for the professions, as does our federative pact with regard to education. For example, even though the dental, architectural and medical professions have their licensing exams in each of the provinces and could work together in their own associations across Canada, it is the individual provinces that deliver licences just as licensure is a subset of the state policing power in the United States.

Furthermore, in the U.S., criminal law is determined on a state-by-state basis. In Canada, we have always had a uniform Criminal Code for the whole country, a very fundamental difference between the two of us. Application of the criminal law can be either at the federal level or it can be provincially or municipally. The reflex we are dealing with on the Conservative side is a reflex born of a certain conceit that somehow, despite the federative pact, despite 150 years of peace, order and good government based on the original deal, that somehow when problems arise Ottawa just knows best.

Let us look at the facts. The OECD ranks regularly the relative performance of its member countries in important policy areas. In recent years it has rated competition laws and policies, the regulation of the banking industry and the quality of securities regulation and investor protection. Now let us look at banking regulation and the four countries that are covered.

Business of Supply

In the U.S.A., U.K., Australia and Canada, banking is and always has been a federal jurisdiction. Canada is ranked eighth for its banking regulations. It is ranked, for example, behind Australia but it is ranked ahead of the U.K. and the U.S. On securities regulation, the OECD says that Canada's extant rules are the second best in the world. We are ranked ahead of the U.S., the U.K. and we are ranked well ahead of Australia. That is not the opinion of the Bloc Québécois, nor the opinion of the New Democratic Party. That is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, an extraordinary group that has produced these objective studies.

How is it that we have come to the stage where the federal government keeps trying to take away jurisdiction that has been with the provinces for 150 years. What is the rationale behind it, other than the prejudice I just spoke about, this feeling that somehow Ottawa knows best? Again, let us look at the facts.

Recently there was a case of an alleged \$100 million mortgage fraud in Alberta. The first thing we heard from the RCMP was that it did not have the resources to take on the case. That is an interesting admission. There is something called the Integrated market enforcement team, IMET. It has been a complete failure. That is not our opinion. That is the result of objective outside analysis.

• (1225)

One of the issues that is raised constantly, and I often hear the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance use it as one of his touchstones, is the Earl Jones case. For people from outside Quebec who might not know the name immediately, Earl Jones was a criminal who is in jail now under the Criminal Code. He was not registered, certified or licensed anywhere. He was a criminal pure and simple, a fraud artist, a con man. In the proper sense, he took people's money based on the confidence that he established with them.

In other words, Earl Jones, a criminal, would have got around any regulatory scheme, be it federal or provincial, because he never registered anywhere. That has not stopped the Conservatives from trying to use that sad case as an illustration of the need for the federal government to invade an area of provincial jurisdiction.

I am an attorney and I have been dealing with corporate and commercial law for most of my career, so I will read an official court document from the Superior Court of Quebec. The case involves Virginia Nelles, one of the many people who were defrauded by Earl Jones and the Royal Bank of Canada. Now, as we all know, the regulation of Canadian banks is the exclusive purview of the federal government.

On November 7, 2001, in an official exhibit filed in court in this case, we learned that the Royal Bank specifically identified the irregular operation of the Earl Jones in trust account in an internal note written by someone from the Royal Bank summarizing the account. It reads as follows:

Mr. Jones returned my call. I offered him our ratelink essential package service because his fees are over \$150 every month. He is using this account for business purposes as an In Trust account, however, I told him this is not a formal trust account and he could get himself in trouble because this is just a personal account in his name alone, the In Trust does not mean anything in this case.

What the regulatory authorities responsible for regulating Canadian banks did in the case of Earl Jones was nothing. What

the Royal Bank did with regard to Earl Jones after that official note in its own file in November 2001 was nothing. What the people who were defrauded to the tune of \$50 million by Earl Jones got as a result of that was nothing.

In the most literal sense, the federal government should mind its own business. It should start taking care of its areas of responsibility, something that it does not do. That is the fact of the matter.

I used to be the president of a large regulatory agency in Quebec. I was president for six years of the Office des professions du Québec. I met firsthand this reflex in Ottawa that somehow if they could get enough federal bureaucrats to look at any issue in the country somehow things would be better.

I remember coming to the office one day in Quebec City when I was president of the Office des professions du Québec, which is the large regulatory agency that is responsible for all of the regulated professions in the province, to find out that the gnomes in Tunney's Pasture, which is where the health department hides out, had decided that they would take over the regulation of pharmacies in the province of Quebec, much to our surprise because, as in every other province, pharmacies had always been the object of regulation by the provinces, a subset to education and the regulatory structure I referred to earlier for individual professions that come under the provinces.

Therefore, I called them in and met with them trying to understand what they were up to. They said that the rules for what requires a prescription vary from province to province, such as what can be behind the counter, what can be on the open shelf or what can be behind the counter with a signature, and that they found this to be a bit of problem so they decided they would take over this particular area of jurisdiction. That is interesting because, of course, health is also a provincial jurisdiction.

• (1230)

I remember sitting down with a wonderful man named David Skinner, who was with a group that was then called the Non-prescription Drug Manufacturers Association of Canada. I remember saying to him that this was not on.

The French word for jurisdiction is "compétence", and it has the double meaning of jurisdiction and the ability to do something.

I went to one of the meetings of this group in Toronto, after I had met with Mr. Skinner. I said that it was not going to be allowed to invade an area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction just because some civil servants in Tunney's Pasture woke up one morning and decided that they were going to do that. Of course, we did not allow them to do it. We were able to block them. They had organized a big colloquium on this in Toronto. It was absurd to see lots of taxpayers' dollars being spent on this futile effort.

This did not stop the provinces from talking to each other. I remember that a network was established among the provinces for matters of professional regulation. We were working together to find the result, because it was their exclusive area of jurisdiction.

Business of Supply

How did Canada wind up being evaluated by the OECD as having the second best regulatory structure in the world for securities regulation? It is because we put together a regime that allows the provinces to create a passport system, which has been producing results.

People in the rest of Canada might not know the name Norbourg. Norbourg was the name of a company owned by another fraud artist, named Vincent Lacroix. Lacroix was behind bars serving an eight-year sentence after prosecution by the Autorité des marchés financiers in Quebec, the financial markets regulatory authority in the province, before the first federal criminal prosecution even began.

The provinces have no lessons to receive from the federal government with regard to the regulation of financial markets. It has worked. The provinces have done their jobs. The federal government has not done its job. It is astounding to hear the federal government simply affirm that we should just allow the federal government to move into an area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction and that it is something that would be better for the country. It is wrong. We know that it is wrong.

Interestingly enough, some newspapers have tried to say that Mark Carney, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, is somehow in favour of the federal government moving into this sphere. I would like to read what Mark Carney says. I have had the pleasure of meeting him quite often. I have never heard Mark Carney come out four-square in favour of what the federal government is trying to do. I have heard him talk about the importance of having a regime that produces results. That is what we have.

Some journalists interpret Mr. Carney's remarks as an affirmation that he is in favour of the federal government imposing itself in this area. I have never heard Mr. Carney say any such thing. I defy them to prove to me, in Mr. Carney's own words, that he has ever given his support to this scheme. He has always talked about the need for a regime that works, and that is what we have.

The passport system works. There has never been a problem with it. As the old saying goes, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it", but that is not going to stop the federal government from continuing to try to destabilize the confederation, to break the federative pact, and to go after the provinces.

If it were only the province of Quebec that was screaming bloody murder in this case, one could imagine how easy it would be for the Conservatives and the rest of Canada. However, two other major provinces are onside with Quebec. We are getting an interesting vibration from British Columbia, which seems to be about to say the same thing. The two other provinces that are saying the same thing are Manitoba and the Prime Minister's own home province of Alberta. We will see—

• (1235)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. Questions and comments. The hon. member for Hochelaga.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Madam Speaker, the member used a French expression "bottines suivant les babines" that brings some particular movies to mind, but I am sure the hon.

member for Outremont was not referring to Quebec cinema, where the image would then be about a skunk trailing along after a simpleton. All joking aside, this is where we see the two solitudes within Canada.

I wonder if he could repeat his arguments in French. We recognize the area of expertise but not the jurisdiction. The members across the floor, probably innocently, are giving a false impression, which has become a false representation, saying that if they had been there, Earl Jones would not have had any victims and none of it would have happened. The hon. member for Outremont has very clearly demonstrated that this is false. I wonder if he could repeat that in French.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, indeed I made my comments in English this morning for the innocents across the way, as my friend from Hochelaga referred to them. However, I am pleased to repeat in the language of Molière what I said in the language of Shakespeare.

The documents filed with the courts show that the Royal Bank of Canada, which comes under federal jurisdiction, knew since November 2001 what Earl Jones was doing. It did nothing.

Those in charge of regulating the banks in Canada have known about this since the documents were filed and they have so far done nothing about it. To date, the victims of Earl Jones have received nothing. This comes under federal jurisdiction. No one is disputing the fact that the banks are the federal government's responsibility.

Let them mind their own business, figuratively and literally. Regulating the banks is their business; let them take care of it. However, they are doing a poor job, a very poor job, and they have the gall to claim that they are going to take over a provincial jurisdiction—property and civil law—that has been part of our federative pact for 150 years.

The Conservatives are talking out of both sides of their mouths. First they say they recognize the nation of Quebec and then they proceed to invade a provincial jurisdiction like this. They are going to reduce Quebec's political weight in the House of Commons.

Everything they do is against the provinces, especially Quebec, but when they speak in the House, they say they are here for the public good. That is false. The OECD considers Canada's current system to be the second best in the world. Let us not fix it if it is not—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am not sure whether I qualify for the previous speaker's comment about being one of the simple-minded across the way, but let me try a question.

Many times during his speech he said that it was wrong for the federal government to move into this sphere.

Business of Supply

I wonder if the hon. member would also say that these particular groups are also wrong, then, for showing strong support for this initiative: the Canadian Labour Congress; the National Union of Public and General Employees; CUPE; the *Toronto Star*; and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which noted in a report that “[the lack of a national securities regulator is a clear “black hole” in Canada’s financial regulatory system”.

Perhaps it includes his former NDP finance critic, the member for Winnipeg North, Judy Wasylycia-Leis, who called this a worthwhile goal, or maybe his leader, who indicated at a Board of Trade meeting just this past January that he would like to see us moving toward national securities regulation. Which of these is wrong? Are they included with the simple-minded on this side?

• (1240)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Before I turn it over to the member for Outremont, I would just like to remind all members to be mindful of the language used in the House and to use respectful language to all members, regardless of their opinions.

The hon. member for Outremont.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, I thank you very much for calling him to order on his choice of language, because I used the same term as he did, innocent, which means that they are not guilty. Somehow he decided that it meant that he was simple-minded. If that is what he thinks about himself, there is not much I can do about it. However, I will defend him from calling himself simple-minded, and you will too. I think that is a very good thing in this House. You are completely right, Madam Speaker.

It is quite clear if one reads the case the government always cites as the example of why, somehow, big brother from Ottawa knows best and can come in and take over the field of securities regulation. It is Earl Jones. On November 7, 2001, the Royal Bank knew that Earl Jones was defrauding his clients. It is here in black and white in the official court documents. The federal government is responsible for banks. It did nothing. The federal regulator responsible for banks did nothing. The Royal Bank of Canada did nothing.

Before the government tries to take over somebody else’s jurisdiction, why does it not start taking care of what it is responsible for but that it is misadministering and is incompetent in. The government is not capable of taking care of its own things, yet somehow, it imagines itself being better.

It is not an argument about the *Toronto Star*. What a surprise. The *Toronto Star* wants Toronto to become responsible. What a surprise.

Look at the objective elements here. The objective element is that the OECD says that Canada’s current regulatory structure in the field of securities, the passport system, is the second most efficient in the world. That is why the Liberals say that it is imprudent and irresponsible to be spending money, and we should withdraw this bill. That is why the Bloc is proposing to withdraw the bill. That is why we agree that the bill should be withdrawn.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from Outremont on his fine presentation and his insight. This adds to the importance of our motion today. This morning, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance

listed all the good reasons for establishing a single regulator. He said that it was in the best interests of what is good for the country as a whole.

Given that 155,000 direct financial sector jobs in Montreal, Quebec, and another 300,000 jobs in the financial sector as a whole are being jeopardized by this government initiative, could the member sum up the government’s thinking, which is basically that it wants our money and will get it?

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, that is about it in a nutshell. But seriously, I should remind my colleague that one of the reasons why Canada is such a great success is that it was always understood that the different components that came together to form this great country had their place in the Constitution.

It is because of the room provided to the provinces that Quebec was able to develop its own bodies, its own financial institutions and so forth. More specifically, the only predominantly French-speaking province, with its civil law, was able to develop and to uphold its institutions.

[English]

I am going to switch to English to end, in response to my colleague, to say this to the Conservatives. Not only are they making a mistake historically, legally, institutionally, and constitutionally, they are making a mistake politically. What they are doing is providing more arguments to people who say that the only way for Quebec to survive and keep its talent and great people is to separate.

What the government is proposing to do will destroy a large section of economic activity in Montreal. It will withdraw from Montreal some of its most capable diplomats from HEC, Hautes Études Commerciales, the MBAs and the like, who will no longer be able to stay and work in Quebec in these fields. They will have to expatriate to where people are saying it is a great idea to send them.

That is what the government is not thinking about, but that is typical of the Conservatives. They never think any further than the ends of their noses. They are such ideologues. They believe that simply by affirming that the federal government can do it better, that somehow it is true. Objectively, as we have demonstrated today, it is false.

• (1245)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

This morning, my colleague from Hochelaga, with whom I have the pleasure of sitting on the Standing Committee on Finance, moved the following motion:

That this House denounce the government’s unrelenting efforts to marginalize the Quebec nation, in particular by depriving it of the major economic lever of securities regulation, a matter that is under the exclusive legislative jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces and for which they have established a harmonized regulatory system recognized for its effectiveness by the OECD and the World Bank, among others, and that it demand, along with Quebec’s National Assembly and the business community in Quebec, that the government immediately withdraw its draft bill.

Business of Supply

The elected members of this House must have their say on this issue, because as we know, on May 26, 2010 the Conservative government introduced proposed legislation that would create a Canadian securities commission. The Bloc Québécois is strongly opposed to this attempt by the federal government to interfere in Quebec's jurisdictions. Under the Constitution, Quebec and the provinces have exclusive jurisdiction over securities regulation. The federal government's proposed Canada-wide securities commission ignores the fact that Quebec has responsibility for property and civil rights.

In addition, the current passport system works. With this system, a company that registers in one participating province can do business with people in all the other participating provinces.

This Canada-wide commission will strip Quebec of a very important economic tool. Major decisions will be made outside Quebec. As everyone knows, the Autorité des marchés financiers, Quebec's securities regulator, has a knowledge of Quebec's distinct nature and needs that a single commission in Toronto will not have. Jobs in the financial sector are threatened. This is a key sector of Quebec's economy that accounts for 155,000 direct jobs. In all, 300,000 jobs in Quebec are connected with the financial sector, which gives an idea of the impact of creating a Canada-wide commission.

With their proposed Canada-wide commission, the Conservatives are trying to do Montreal out of what it has for Toronto's benefit and are encroaching on Quebec's jurisdictions. For these reasons, the National Assembly and the business community in Quebec reject the proposal.

Voluntary membership is a ploy. By destroying the passport system and counting on conflicts among the regulatory bodies, the Conservative government is creating a reason for issuing organizations to turn to the national commission. Contrary to what the Conservative government is saying, the existence of such a commission would not have prevented investors from being fleeced by white-collar criminals such as Earl Jones. He was a criminal who was not registered anywhere. In Montreal or in Toronto, he would have committed his crimes the same way. It is up to the RCMP to hunt down criminals. Similarly, the existence of a single commission in the United States did not prevent Bernard Madoff from defrauding investors of over \$50 billion.

It is obvious that this commission will also be detrimental to the use of French in business. It is unlikely that companies registered with the single national commission, whether or not they are from Quebec, will be required to publish in English and French.

The Bloc Québécois reiterates its opposition to the creation of a national securities commission. The Bloc Québécois supports the current harmonization of the rules governing the financial system. The passport mechanism maintains the autonomy and jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. This mechanism has existed since 2008 and is also used in the European Union.

● (1250)

Creating a national securities commission goes against the wishes of the National Assembly, which unanimously adopted a motion in that regard on May 27, the day after the introduction of the

Conservative government's draft legislation to create a national securities regulator:

That the National Assembly denounce the obstinacy of the federal government in tabling unilaterally a bill to create the Canadian Securities Commission; that it denounce this invasion into the fundamental jurisdictions of Quebec; that it recall the opposition of the Quebec business community; that, finally, it urge the Canadian government to reconsider this decision and, failing that, the Canadian Parliament not to pass such an act.

The Bloc Québécois position also acknowledges the growing concern of the business community with regard to the Canada-wide commission. The president of the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec, Françoise Bertrand, said:

In addition to potential job losses resulting from this project, we are also concerned about a significant transfer of decision-making positions and expertise out of Quebec. Montreal, as a financial centre, and Quebec will be weakened.

A coalition of representatives from Quebec's business community is opposed to a national securities commission

Here are just a few of them: the Québec Mineral Exploration Association, the Québec Bar, the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, Cascades, the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, the Québec City chamber of commerce, the Chambre des notaires du Québec, the Chambre de la sécurité financière, the Conseil du patronat du Québec, the Fédération des Chambres de commerce du Québec, the Power Financial Corporation, the Solidarity Fund QFL and Le Groupe Jean Coutu. I will not go on because the list is too long. The entire business sector is opposed to a centralized securities regulator.

I would now like to read a Government of Quebec news release dated May 13, 2010. I think this is important because it sums up the Government of Quebec's official position and is not subject to interpretation.

Quebec's Minister of Finance, Raymond Bachand, condemned statements by a number of Conservative government ministers and members who are using weak, questionable arguments in an effort to sell their proposal for a centralized securities commission and denigrate the perfectly functional existing system.

The minister pointed out that, in Canada, securities regulation falls under the constitutional jurisdiction of the provinces and territories. The minister emphasized the fact that, "The OECD has ranked Canada second in the world [as previously mentioned] with respect to the quality of its securities regulation, while the World Bank has ranked it fifth for investor protection, placing it ahead of the United States". He added, "Given these international organizations' approval of Canada's financial system, it is clear that the provinces are fulfilling their responsibilities under their constitutional jurisdiction. Provincial commissions, which are in touch with consumers and work with their counterparts, provide the best possible protection to consumers in Quebec and the other provinces".

The minister noted that the federal government has structured its disinformation campaign around a document filled with unfounded hypotheses. The government is falsely suggesting that Canada's current system increases the cost of raising capital, claiming that this leads to major financial losses and a negative impact on employment in the sector. Mr. Bachand emphasized that several analyses show that costs in Canada are equal to or even lower than those in the United States.

● (1255)

In conclusion, Minister Bachand said:

I am appealing to the sense of responsibility of the federal Conservative government's ministers and members, whose negative and irresponsible comments about this matter have created instability and tarnished Canada's reputation for securities regulation.

I ask the members of the House to support this motion if recognizing the Quebec nation means anything at all to them.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is really not surprising that a Bloc member is not interested in strengthening Canada's economy.

There have been a number of reports that show that a national regulator would better protect investors. It would reduce unnecessary costs and, therefore, attract new international investment. A Colombia University study showed that Canada loses \$10 billion a year in economic output and 65,000 jobs because of our fragmented securities system.

It has been pointed out many times that this new regime would be voluntary. I would like to ask my colleague, why would he be opposed to a voluntary system that would strengthen Canada's economy?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Carrier: Madam Speaker, I believe that the Bloc Québécois wants a positive and functional approach for the country as it exists now. We know and our colleagues have often described it: Canada is a large country with 13 securities commissions. And all the observers and all the users say that the system works very well. There is no reason, no urgency and no need to change the system.

The government's bill does not mention the fact that it has recognized the Quebec nation. If the Conservatives were serious about this distinction, they would accept that it could perhaps be useful for this nation to choose how it will function because, after all, the current system is working for Quebec. What is more, Quebecers, their government and all the business communities want the system to remain as it is. It is the government that is opposing the current, properly functioning system in this country.

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before asking my question, I would like to congratulate the Portuguese community because today, June 10, is Portugal's national holiday. I would also like to congratulate a number of people, including Joe Eustaquio, who has organized a festival, a very big feat in my neighbourhood. I would also like to congratulate Frank Alvarez, who was honoured by the City of Toronto. He has had a street in Toronto named after him. It is a very important holiday for Portuguese communities around the world.

I would simply like to point something out to my dear colleague. The Bloc motion indicates that it is very much against the idea of a national system wherein each province has the right to a strong presence in the system, as the government is proposing.

Could my colleague clearly explain why the Bloc is against a system whereby the province would maintain its own jurisdiction as well as the right not to participate in this system?

• (1300)

Mr. Robert Carrier: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. It is also my pleasure to join with all those celebrating Portugal's national holiday. Many of my constituents are originally from that country, and I am pleased to join in that celebration.

Now, to answer his question, which is a pertinent one and is somewhat similar to one that was put to me earlier, with respect to the fact that, even if a single regulator were established, Quebec could go it alone and keep its own system. It is a fantasy to think that

it could work. It is easy to say that we can keep apart if we want to. I think, however, that all security issuers will want to be part of the overall system that was put in place for everyone. Since the current system is working, I see no sense in breaking something that is working, and risk introducing malfunctions that do not exist right now.

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Madam Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to speak on our opposition day, on a topic that gets a lot of coverage in the newspapers. Members will understand that it is very important for the Bloc Québécois to have a debate on the importance of respecting Quebec's jurisdiction over securities.

By moving forward with a Canada-wide securities commission, the federal government is going after Quebec's economic leaders. The Bloc Québécois sees this as a veritable attack on the Quebec nation and its institutions. The commission favours the Toronto Stock Exchange at the expense of the Montreal Exchange.

Since it was elected in 2006, the Conservative government has been paving the way for the creation of a Canada-wide securities commission. By claiming that a company will be able to operate under the Quebec securities commission if it chooses to, and by saying that it will prevent Vincent Lacroix and Earl Jones from victimizing more people, the Conservative members are distorting the debate and using false and twisted logic to justify their decision.

Such a commission would not have changed anything for the victims of Earl Jones, and the government knows that full well. The federal government currently has complete authority to protect investors under the Criminal Code. These are false pretexts.

Worse yet, by introducing such a bill, the Conservative government, through the Minister of Finance, is ignoring the protests from across Quebec and rejecting the opinions of organizations like the World Bank and the OECD, which believe that the current system is inexpensive and very efficient.

I would like to quote from an analysis by Yvan Allaire and Michel Nadeau that appeared in *Le Devoir* on January 30, 2009. They were talking about an important aspect of creating a national securities commission.

We can understand why the Minister of Finance wants to spend to stimulate Canada's economy, but spending \$154 million to create a national commission puts the lie to the argument that having a single securities commission would save money.

However, \$154 million will seem like nothing if all the companies regulated by a federal, national agency are required to communicate with Canadian investors in both official languages.

How could anyone justify preventing a francophone investor anywhere in Canada from receiving a French version of all annual reports and other financial documents issued by a publicly traded, federally regulated company? Canadians who eat cereal for breakfast are informed in both official languages of the contents of their cereal box, no matter where they live. So why would it be any different when it comes to a national organization that is supposed to ensure Canadian investors are adequately informed in their official language?

Let us look at a concrete example. In the spring of 2008, Visa Inc. became a publicly listed company in Canada. To avoid the costs and time involved in translating the prospectus that was required... Visa decided not to distribute and sell its shares to Quebec investors. How would that be possible with a national commission? How could a federal agency endorse a scenario that would deprive francophone investors outside Quebec as well as in Quebec of information in French?

Business of Supply

At this time, even among the 253 largest listed companies in Canada, the companies making up the TSX/S&P Index, only 81 (37%) publish their annual report in French as well as in English. And only 60% actually provide a French version of the all-important management information circular, the proxy document that provides information on executive compensation, on board members proposed for election as well as on any special resolution submitted to a vote at the shareholders' meeting.

• (1305)

A greater number of the thousands of small and medium-sized companies listed in Canada would have to pay the significant cost of translating all their documents provided to investors. Proponents of a national securities commission must answer this question before continuing much further with this controversial plan.

Maintaining the current situation, which is satisfactory for everyone outside Toronto and Ottawa, would save \$154 million and spare Canadian companies, which have other priorities, tens of millions of dollars in translation costs.

Mr. Allaire and Mr. Nadeau make an important point and I would like to use my speech to ensure that members of the House of Commons are well aware of this problem.

The Bloc Québécois has chosen this topic for its opposition day because it is an important issue. Securities regulation is an exclusive constitutional jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. The federal proposal for a national commission does not respect Quebec's responsibility for property and civil rights.

In reality, authority over securities is given to the provinces by virtue of their jurisdiction over "property and civil rights" under subsection 92(13) of the Constitution Act, 1867.

I will provide a short summary of five reasons why we oppose a national securities commission.

First of all, this Canada-wide commission would divest Quebec of a very important economic tool. All major decisions would be made outside of Quebec. The *Autorité des marchés financiers* du Québec is sensitive to Quebec's needs, and this would not be the case with a Canada-wide commission.

Furthermore, it would jeopardize thousands of jobs in a key sector of the Quebec economy, which consists of 150,000 direct jobs in the financial sector. All together, 300,000 jobs in Quebec are linked to the financial sector. Although we do not know exactly how many jobs would be affected, it would have a definite impact.

Third, by going ahead with this, the Conservative government is sending a clear message to Quebec, taking this away from Montreal for Toronto's benefit, and infringing on Quebec's jurisdictions. That is why the National Assembly and Quebec's business community so strongly oppose this plan.

The Minister of Finance can pretend otherwise all he wants, but voluntary membership is a sham. By destroying the passport system and counting on conflicts among the regulatory bodies, the Conservative government is creating a magnet to encourage companies to turn to the Canada-wide commission.

Lastly, contrary to what the Conservative government is saying, the existence of such a commission would not have stopped white-collar criminals like Earl Jones from fleecing investors. Earl Jones is a criminal who was not registered anywhere. Whether in Montreal or Toronto, he would have committed his crimes all the same.

The National Assembly passed a unanimous motion claiming exclusive jurisdiction over this matter. At this time, there is a general outcry among all economic players in Quebec to oppose the federal

government's plans. Worse yet, federal Liberal members from Quebec, like their Conservative colleagues from Quebec, support the creation of this single securities commission.

• (1310)

I will close by saying that we in the Bloc Québécois strongly oppose this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have two very quick questions. My colleague quoted the OECD in his remarks, which is important. In fact, with respect to security regulations, it stated:

—each province has its own securities regulator...increases the risk that firms will choose to issue securities in other countries. A single regulator would eliminate the inefficiencies created by the limited enforcement authority of individual provincial agencies.

Why does he disagree with the OECD with respect to Canada having a national regulator?

Also, there have been some real success stories in the province of Quebec and in Canada. *Couche-Tard* and others have made a lot of investments outside of Canada, namely in the United States. Would the member encourage other countries like the United States to adopt a more regional method of regulating securities like we currently have in Canada or would he want the U.S. to maintain a national regulator to make it easier for companies like *Couche-Tard* to invest and grow outside the province of Quebec and outside of Canada?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

I want to remind the hon. member that there are two nations in Canada: the nation of Quebec and the nation of Canada. Let us remember that in the Constitution Act, 1867, this responsibility was assigned to the provinces.

He mentioned the OECD. The OECD is not the only body to state that Canada's current passport system works well. The World Bank says that the system currently in place in Canada and in Quebec is efficient and effective. That is why we are opposed to the Conservative government's bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is very clear that the federal government is simply taking advantage of the economic crisis to push this argument. We all know that the idea of a national securities regulator has been around since 1935 with the royal commission. That was some 75 years ago. It has been discussed. There was a five-year study done in 1973. In 1988 there were more initiatives in this area and then again in the mid-1990s. There is nothing new here.

Business of Supply

The fact is the passport system, which many members have spoken about, only came into effect in 2006. Manitoba joined the passport system in 2006. It has been mentioned many times that the passport system works very well in this regard. The Manitoba government is 100% in favour of it. However, the Manitoba government has been dead set against the idea of getting involved with a national securities regulator for about 10 or 15 years now.

This is not only a Quebec issue; it is a Manitoba issue and an Alberta issue. In fact, last week, some major corporate executives in Alberta came out strongly against this idea because there would be job losses in Alberta. For those members of the Conservative Alberta caucus, who are looking over their backs at the wild rose chasing after them, they ought to pay some more attention to this. A lot of business people in Alberta are not supportive of what the government is doing. The government is gradually losing touch with the voters who it claims to be representing.

• (1315)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

He is right to say that the Conservative government is taking advantage of the economic crisis to push this plan to interfere in the jurisdictions of the provinces and Quebec, as a number of previous governments have done before it. We are in fact going through an economic crisis. It seems to me that the government should think about that before investing \$150 million.

I also want to thank the hon. member for mentioning that it is not just Quebec that is opposed to the federal government's intentions and its bill. That is something worth thinking about. I think the Conservative government should give this more thought. The Liberal members should also give this some more thought. In Quebec, we are against the bill because this aspect of the economy is a responsibility of Quebec and the provinces.

[English]

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand today with yet another chance to debate another Bloc opposition day on securities regulation in Canada, a topic I very much enjoy debating. This is either the fifth or sixth such opposition day that the Bloc has introduced on the exact same subject. We are hearing some of the same arguments, but it is always worth revisiting these issues again.

I would like to address my comments to a particular aspect of this debate that members have referred to and focus especially on my home province of Alberta. However, before I do, I would like to briefly address two items.

First, in my capacity as chair of the finance committee, I would like to note for the benefit of the House that the finance committee has endorsed a national regulator on numerous occasions, most recently in its prebudget consultation tabled last December in which the committee again recommended that the government should continue to move forward on a national securities regulator.

Second, I would like to take to task, frankly, the Bloc and other opponents of a national securities regulator for repeatedly attempting to suggest that both the IMF and the OECD believe Canada's

security system is without flaw. This is clearly not supported by fact and in the spirit of fair and reasoned debate among learned individuals, we should not allow this to continue.

Both the IMF and the OECD have been crystal clear that the lack of a national regulator is a key and significant flaw in the Canadian financial system. The OECD has said:

The current diversity of regulations, for example, each province has its own securities regulator, makes it difficult to maximize efficiency, and increases the risk that firms will choose to issue securities in other countries. A single regulator would eliminate the inefficiencies created by the limited enforcement authority of individual provincial agencies.

The IMF sounded a very similar warning when it said:

A federal regulator could coordinate more readily with other regulators in monitoring risks and responding quickly to a crisis, and could also have an enhanced focus on the issues that securities markets may pose for national financial stability.

Neither statement is open to interpretation. Both the IMF and the OECD clearly support a national regulator. What is more, both of these organizations are not alone. Countless groups in Canada and beyond have joined their call. While the list is too long to mention, I will note a few.

The list includes everyone from victims groups like the Earl Jones Victims Organizing Committee, unions like the National Union of Public and General Employees, financial service groups like the Canadian Bankers Association, nearly every major newspaper editorial board in the country, investor groups like the Canadian Foundation for the Advancement of Investor Rights, retiree groups like the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers, pension plans like the Municipal Pension Board of Trustees, and the list goes on and on.

However, as impressive as the list of supporters is, it unfortunately has not yet swayed opponents of a national regulator. Unfortunately, one of those opponents is the government of my home province of Alberta, which is what I want to focus on in the rest of my remarks.

I underline that the government of Alberta is in opposition and, I emphasize, not necessarily the people or businesses of the province. In fact, even my friend, Alberta finance minister Ted Morton, was recently forced to concede that Albertans were not of one mind on this issue.

I would further note that a recent Canada West Foundation survey of 300 economists and financial analysts in the four western Canadian provinces found nearly 70% support for a national securities regulator, including a solid majority of 68% support in Alberta. As Canada West Foundation policy analyst Dan Gibbins noted, "From an economic perspective, it is still seen as a positive — even in Alberta".

Business of Supply

Moreover, many prominent Alberta leaders or public interest groups have spoken out in support of a national securities regulator. I think I should recognize the efforts by Hal Kvisle with TransCanada, who was with the Hockin panel that did an awful lot of work in terms of producing a report that spurred the government to act in this manner.

I would also like to point out other people. For instance, Heather Douglas, president and CEO of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, has strongly registered her support for the initiative. She stated:

—our member companies continued to express a great deal of frustration with the multiple regulators' insufficient enforcement, lack of technical expertise, conflicting regulations, and high costs to raise money on Canada's multiple stock markets. The Chamber calls on the provincial government still opposed to a sole regulator to reconsider their stance. Our startup member companies need capital to take their innovative goods and services to the marketplace. Our profitable businesses will be choked if they continue to waste investor money complying with conflicting legislative demands.

• (1320)

The Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada has also recognized the “urgent need for a common securities regulator and for proportionate-based regulation”. It has also noted that “giant sized rules for junior companies create poor conditions for companies that help open up economic opportunities, particularly for communities in Canada's northern and more remote regions”.

I would like to quote another friend and someone who played an instrumental role in getting Alberta back on a fiscal track, perhaps the person who did so more than any other, former Alberta treasurer Jim Dinning, who wrote an excellent article recently on a national regulator. He declared:

We need our financial regulators to better monitor these peril-creating events and act quickly to protect Canadians and their marketplace. But a system of 13 securities regulators can't keep up; it's almost built to frustrate effective action...[W]e need a regulatory framework that can speed up reforms required by structural changes coming at us, largely from rapidly evolving technologies. The existing system is not designed to accommodate that, lacking both co-ordination and depth of expertise.

I encourage members on both sides of the House to read the full article by Jim Dinning, the former treasurer of Alberta. It is an excellent argument in favour of a national regulator. I would also like to quote from newspaper editorials.

A recent *Edmonton Journal* editorial stated:

We remain the only country in the developed world to lack a national regulator of financial markets....Let's get on with having a common regulator, like adults elsewhere.

A *Calgary Herald* editorial was quite forceful in stating:

A single regulator should lead to a smaller, simpler, less costly and more efficient system, making it easier and cheaper for companies to raise capital....Today, Canada is the only developed country in the world without a single regulator, much to our competitive disadvantage globally.

The irony is that Alberta companies have long left that territorial mentality behind. Like TransCanada, Alberta has no business being a holdout. However, while noting the many supporters of a national regulator in Alberta, I concede that, like Quebec, some have remained skeptical and opposed. I would further suggest that most of that opposition is based on fears that a national regulator will not recognize the unique characteristics of regional markets and a legitimate interest in promoting vibrant local markets. That is why I want to address some of these concerns.

I strongly suggest and will outline why what is being proposed by our Conservative government actually dispels those fears by acknowledging the importance of regional input and by prompting strong local markets. Again, to quote former Alberta treasurer Jim Dinning:

This is a national regulator that's being proposed, not a federal regulator. The DNA of provincial and regional markets must be integrated into the decision-making process, right from the outset.

First and foremost, our Conservative government when developing the securities act, did not do so unilaterally in Ottawa. This was not a made in Ottawa top-down exercise. We invited all willing provinces to the table. We set up a transition office which was not headed by, as the Bloc will often point out, someone from Toronto. This was headed by the chair of the British Columbia Securities Commission. In fact, I want to thank Douglas Hyndman for all his excellent work to date. This is what he did. He made an effort to work with the provinces to get the federal government and the 10 provinces and territories to work collaboratively on this initiative.

As one participating province, through the head of the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission recently confirmed, “We've enjoyed some pretty good dialogue with the Canadian Securities Transition Office on the development of the act”.

Indeed the proposed Canadian securities act goes to great effort to stress that. To start, it would not force any province or territory to participate in a Canadian securities regulator. It would be strictly voluntary. Provinces and territories would have the complete freedom to opt in or not.

What is more, far from being an intrusion into provincial jurisdiction, it actually respects constitutional jurisdiction, regional interests and local expertise. For instance, the proposed act would establish a federal-provincial-territorial council of ministers consisting of the minister of finance and other members appointed by and representing each participating province and territory. The council would have a statutory mandate to facilitate consultations and the exchange of information with respect to the administration of the act and securities regulation policy in general.

In addition, the council of ministers would advise on appointments of the board chair and members and other members of the Canadian securities tribunal. The council of ministers would also be directly involved in the development of regulations and policies.

• (1325)

To further understand that to be effective the national regulator will fundamentally require the support and expertise of the best talent in Canada's financial markets from across the country. Likewise, we recognize that local offices and staffing were areas of particular interest to all provinces. Accordingly, we committed that local offices will remain in place and that all current staff in the provinces and territories will be offered jobs with the new regulator to ensure that that expertise stays in the local markets.

Business of Supply

This will permit the new regulator to build on that existing infrastructure and the expertise of participating provincial and territorial securities regulators.

What is more, we additionally committed to ensuring that local offices have the authority they need to make the regulatory decisions that they should. This is in keeping with the proposed act which charts an organization with comprehensive national standards made up of strong local offices with both an understanding of regional economies and that have the confidence of local businesses.

Finally, to respect our provincial and territorial partners to the fullest extent, we also referred the proposed act to the Supreme Court of Canada to obtain an opinion on whether it is within the legislative authority of Parliament before proceeding further. This will clear the air, we will get direction from the highest court in the land and it will provide certainty for all concerned provinces and territories, market participants and individual investors.

Benoit Pelletier, the former Quebec intergovernmental affairs minister in the Charest government himself has admitted, “The fact that the federal government decided to ask the court for an opinion in my view is something that is fair”.

Clearly and without a doubt our Conservative government is working and is committed to keep on working collaboratively with willing provinces and territories to establish a national regulator that is responsive to the distinct needs of regionally based sectors and market participants. We also continue to invite all other provincial partners, including Alberta, Quebec and Manitoba, to participate in the process, even if it is in an exploratory manner.

Charlie Spiring, CEO and founder of Wellington West Holdings, Inc., yet another western Canadian supporter of a national regulator lamented Manitoba's non-participation recently by stating, “Coming to the table now doesn't mean you are committed to it. It just means you want to be at the table when they are making the cake”.

Before concluding, I would like to briefly address the issue of the passport system. Some have suggested a national regulator is not necessary because the provinces have already adopted a passport system to regulate securities. However, we have heard time and time again that that does not go far enough.

With the passport system, Canada would still have 13 securities regulators, 13 sets of laws, however harmonized, and 13 sets of fees. As Ian Lee from the Sprott School of Business at Carleton University has noted, “This is still an unnecessary frivolous duplication of expenditures as companies have to pay extra fees and go through extra paperwork to complete the process”.

Or as the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* editorial has pointed out about the passport system:

...that piecemeal approach doesn't begin to address the kind of concerns raised by the IMF, reduce duplication, confusion, red tape or costs for investors or offer the centralized oversight and rules enforcement a single regulator provides.

I believe that not only should we reject today's opposition motion but that provinces like Quebec, Alberta and Manitoba should reconsider their opposition and should work as partners with the federal government on this very important initiative going forward.

Our Conservative government's plan to create a national Canadian securities regulator is long overdue. It represents a common sense approach with principles of clear accountability that will reduce overlap and duplication, strengthen enforcement and more. We can no longer accept the current system. We owe Canadians better.

* * *

● (1330)

POINTS OF ORDER

USE OF CAMERA IN CHAMBER

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Last evening at the moment of the unanimous passing at third reading of Bill C-475, the private member's bill initiated by the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, a bill which will significantly help police and our courts protect Canada's young people from the dangers of street drugs and notably methamphetamines, in this wonderful moment for Canada, I inadvertently broke a rule of the House in taking the member's picture as members of the House congratulated him. This was to present to him at a later date, perhaps at his retirement 20 years from now.

The Conservative members, including myself, are so proud to have him as a member of our caucus, a member who dedicated himself to this cause.

I note that in the last six months there have been two important occasions when many members took pictures in the House, first, when the Olympic athletes visited with the flame in December, and more recently when they visited the House again.

As well, I thought the House was adjourned at the time.

Nevertheless, I accept the point of order and I apologize for my inadvertent breach.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I understand a point of order was raised last night and I believe that addresses the issue.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SECURITIES REGULATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Madam Speaker, the member for Edmonton—Leduc asked the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord a question a few minutes ago. He is not listening to me now, but I would still like an answer to my question. He asked why Quebec did not agree that there should be one commission in Toronto for all of Canada. His question was relatively simple.

Is he aware that in Quebec there are 14 statutes at present that protect our commission? It goes back to 1867, and it is under our jurisdiction.

Business of Supply

If there were to be one commission in Canada and the Americans in Chicago asked Canadians why they didn't join with them, what would the member for Edmonton—Leduc say to that?

[English]

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, I never said why one securities commission would be in Toronto. It has not been decided. Obviously, the legislation has not even been introduced. However, it is not certain that the national commission would be in Toronto. There are other options. I would encourage the member to have Quebec participate and fight for Montreal to be the centre. I would fight for somewhere in Alberta, or perhaps in Ottawa, wherever.

We have said with our proposal that we would keep the expertise in the local offices. One of the concerns from Alberta is the issue of junior capital pools. They want to keep that local expertise in Alberta because they feel that people in other regions do not understand that expertise, so the proposal that we are putting forward, if the members are actually interested in it, is that we keep that local expertise there and we would rely on that.

The concern here is that we are the only nation of the G7 that has a security system with 13 different regulators. The intent is to have a uniform system across the country for better enforcement, for better protection of market participants, and for better protection of investors so that we can have one uniform system.

In terms of whether we should have one between Canada and U.S., I would still fight for a Canadian securities regulator and it would be up to Parliament, if it adopted the Canadian securities regulator, to protect and ensure it remained in place.

This is the one area of our financial regulatory system, in my view, that is not up to the level it should be. Every other area of our financial regulatory system, in my view, is tops in the world, but this is the one area that does need to be improved. The member just has to read the reports from the IMF and the OECD, including the most recent reports, to recognize that Canada should follow this path.

•(1335)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to know what the member would have to say to his very own Conservative senator from Alberta who is leading the charge against the national securities regulator, and who points out that over time, there will be a job loss in Alberta, and that a national securities regulator will not be sensitive to the financial community as it exists in Alberta right now and where it plans to go.

This is a question that, over time, Alberta will lose jobs. We know that this will be headquartered in Toronto. Everybody knows that. The fact that the Conservatives say they have not decided yet is just a big joke. We know that is where it will be headed and over time those jobs will move from Montreal, from Edmonton, from Winnipeg, and will be concentrated in Toronto.

What would he say to the people in Alberta about that?

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, in fact, it does not have to be headquartered in Toronto. It is possible that we could have a system that could actually be headquartered in Ottawa with regional offices in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, and Halifax. That is a very viable system.

If the member wants to get more information on this, he should talk to the chair of the body that has been overseeing this, Douglas Hyndman from British Columbia. He was initially an opponent of this proposal, but has come around and says that he wants to be a part of this. He wants to be at the table actually defining what this regulator could possibly look at. He wants to be defining the rules and regulations that would be in place across the country.

That is what provinces like Manitoba, Quebec and Alberta should do. They should state what their concerns are, bring forward their concerns, and see whether they can be accommodated within the legislation. Then they can choose whether or not they wish to participate. This is a voluntary system. If Manitoba chooses not to participate, that is up to the province of Manitoba.

The member talked about a Conservative senator who he did not name. I would just point to the former treasurer of Alberta, Jim Dinning, who spoke very forcefully in the *Financial Post*, May 27 of this year, saying that we need a national regulator, not a federal one. He wrote very eloquently in terms of why we do need a regulatory framework. He wrote:

But a system of 13 securities regulators can't keep up; it's almost built to frustrate effective action. Canada came through the past financial crisis in reasonably good shape. We may not be so fortunate next time. We need to streamline the structure to help make rapid decisions.

He went on to write:

Take for example, the regulatory response — or lack of one — to the six electronic alternative trading systems operating in Canadian equity markets for the past three years or so. These platforms have captured more than 30% of trading volume from the Toronto Stock Exchange. Yet regulators—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. I see many members who are rising to ask questions, so I will give them the opportunity. The hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca.

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are eliminating duplication and unnecessary costs. There are going to be no office closures and no job losses. It is a voluntary membership. It is a competitive advantage because we are competing against the world.

I would like this regulatory office, if it happens, to actually be located in Fort McMurray, since I understand some 30% of the TSX is related directly to the oil sands.

My question to the member is this, why is the passport system not working as effectively as it could be to compete against the rest of the world, which is our competitiveness in this case?

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, there was a lot in there. I appreciate the member's comment in terms of clarifying that this proposal would keep the local offices, the expertise and the infrastructure. They would be part of the national system, after they chose to.

Business of Supply

The issue in terms of the passport system is there is still 13 different sets of laws, despite how harmonized they are, there is still 13 different sets of regulations, and there is a need for companies that are willing to invest to have 13 different sets of documents. That is in fact true. The member can talk to any company dealing with this system.

There is also more than 30% of the Canadian equity market not involved in that passport system. The province of Ontario is not participating in that system.

This is one reason why we need a national regulator to cover the entire country, to reduce overlap and duplication, attract investment, and protect Canadian investors.

• (1340)

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we in the Liberal Party have continuously advocated for mechanisms that make for a freer flow of trade, commerce and people. One of the things that we have done is we have always been respectful of the processes that are impacted by the Constitution. That is one of the reasons why we made the first suggestion to refer this to the Supreme Court.

If the government is going along already and trying to establish the infrastructure, which as I understand it will cost some \$300 million, and the Supreme Court suggests that it would be inconsistent with the Constitution, is the member's plan then to simply say that the \$300 million is blown and it is not a problem? Does the member not think it would be a little bit more prudent to just simply wait until the decision comes down?

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, I think a government and political parties must show leadership and choose what they decided to support.

There has been the Hockin report, a panel that was commissioned to produce a report on this, that recommended a national securities regulator. We in this party, in this government, believe that this would be in the interests of Canadians. The Bloc feels opposite. The NDP used to and now has changed its position to oppose it.

However, the Liberal Party of Canada has to decide whether it supports a national regulator, whether it would be in the interests of our country, our citizens, in terms of protecting our investments better, in terms of attracting capital better. If it believes that, then it is prudent to prepare for the day in which we can hopefully make that happen.

We referred it to the Supreme Court, a specific question, to ask whether it is within the jurisdiction of Parliament. We hope that will happen within the next 12 to 18 months. Then we will proceed with legislation if we get a positive response.

However, it is incumbent upon political parties and governments to state where they stand on important issues like this and try to move the policy ball forward in order to protect Canadian investors, and to ensure that we attract as much investment to this country as possible.

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be splitting my

time with the charming member for Jeanne-Le Ber. I will be very happy to do that.

I am also very pleased to speak to the question of a single securities commission that is the Conservatives' present proposal, unfortunately supported by the Liberals.

To us in Quebec, this is a very important question. It is not just a question of jobs. Since Confederation, in 1867, this has been one of our rights, under our jurisdiction. It is in the Canadian Constitution, in section 92(13), which clearly says that securities are matters assigned to the provinces.

A few seconds ago, the member for Edmonton—Leduc told us something else completely false. He said that under the passport system, there are 13 different sets of regulations, and there is no agreement. That is absolutely false. There is set of regulations for all 13. Passports are managed in one place. So these kinds of falsehoods mean that the people who are listening to us actually think that it would be a good thing to have a single office for all of Canada.

Why are they saying the passport system is not working? Perhaps because Ontario has not joined it. That might be it. However, has Ontario not joined it precisely so that it will ultimately be able to show that the passport system does not work? Then the people from that province could say that clearly it does not work, because they are not participating in it, it is not a Canada-wide system and they want to give us a Canada-wide system.

So there are a lot of falsehoods being spoken on that side. I would not want to rate the experts, who are better at this than me. Pierre Lortie, who wrote "Challenging Conventional Wisdom", has said how well the Quebec system works, as do the other provinces'. Henri Brun says this is federal trick. Mr. Brun is a very well known constitutional expert, perhaps one of the greatest in Canada.

I would also just like to point out that someone like Jeffrey Macintosh of Toronto has said this bill might not pass muster with the Supreme Court. When someone like Mr. MacIntosh says that, we can imagine there is a significant chance that the Supreme Court will have to go back to what is in the Constitution.

When I hear the Conservatives opposite and the Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister of Finance, who was in fact joking with the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup while my colleague was laying out the Bloc Québécois' positions, positions that represent the ones taken by all of Quebec, I do not understand how they can look us in the face and laugh at our critic, when for 20 years we have represented a majority of Quebecers in this House. I do not understand it.

Actually, I think the Conservatives from Quebec were elected on false representations. When the Conservative leader was not yet prime minister, he came to Quebec and made a big speech, and said: "If you vote for me in Quebec, I will respect your jurisdiction." Everyone said yes. They are barely in office and the first thing they do is introduce a bill that very much does not respect our jurisdiction over securities.

Business of Supply

●(1345)

It is amazing that the government said one thing to get elected and now totally forgets it. That could even be called misrepresentation. It said it would respect the jurisdictions of the provinces, and it should do so. When promises are made, they should be kept.

The government's position on securities regulation is not very good at all. It is just trying to please some voters. These are the same voters the Liberals do not want to lose. That is why the Liberals are going to vote in favour of a single securities commission located in Toronto.

The government says it is absolutely necessary to harmonize all the rules and regulations in a single place. Europe is an economic union and not a cultural or social one. Yet it does not do this. It has harmonized its rules and regulations. The 13 commissions that developed the passport system are already harmonized. If they need further harmonization, I am sure that Quebec, Alberta and the other provinces would be willing to do so. It is shameful for the government to say the existing commissions are not necessary and it is going to create another one because there are no examples elsewhere. They say we are the only ones in the world who do it our way. I fail to see, then, why the European Union does not have a single securities commission. All the countries kept their own commissions. So it can work. The European Union did not try to centralize them, as the Conservative government is doing. The Conservatives are obsessed with centralization just to please certain people.

When they mandated Purdy Crawford to do a study, they could have asked him for an objective or comparative study or to examine what already exists. But no, he was clearly asked to do a study with a view toward a single system. The purpose of the study was not to examine what was done previously.

The government's position is false and deceitful because it did not try to establish a better system. It just tried to establish a centralized system, full stop.

As long as the government wants to steer profits into Ontario, I do not see how the arguments could be any stronger. No one seems to care that we are going to lose 100,000 or 155,000 jobs. The government says we say the same thing over and over, but what else can we do? So long as it does not drop this bill, we are going to repeat ourselves again and again.

We wonder why the Conservative government does not have the wisdom to say officially that it is withdrawing the bill. It has asked the Supreme Court for an opinion. I think the honest thing to do would be to say this, but the government does not do it.

I will finish by repeating that the Quebec National Assembly—I am not talking about a sovereignist National Assembly but the one that was elected with a federalist party in power—voted unanimously on October 16, 2007 on a resolution to save these 155,000 jobs. The National Assembly told the government its bill was crap and the commission should be kept in Quebec. The National Assembly said again on May 27, 2010 that it did not want this bill.

●(1350)

It seems to me that we should respect the sovereignty of the National Assembly.

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened quite intently to the member's speech. There is one thing I would point out that is really quite remarkable. The hon. member from the Bloc indicates that Europe has an economic union. Canada is not an economic union. Canada is a country. Establishing a national, not a federal, securities regulator is consistent with a nation. We are a nation. We are a country from coast to coast to coast. The member neither supports nor understands that.

This is the crux of the situation. As a G7 country, we are the only one that does not have this kind of system. Every credible witness who has come before the federal finance committee, certainly in the time I was there since 2006, has insisted it is important that we get this established. It is voluntary. That is the other thing I do not understand about the Bloc position. It is voluntary. Those members have never quite been able to square the problem they have with a voluntary system.

In the market system today, whether it is corporate investors, personal investors or banks, people have a concern of confidence. We should do everything we can within our ability to instill confidence in the system. That is what a national securities regulator would accomplish. I cannot understand why the member would not want to see more investment into Quebec and all parts of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Madam Speaker, I was very surprised to hear the hon. member say that Canada is a nation. It seemed to me he voted that we too are a nation. Did he vote for that, yes or no? Yes, he voted for that.

So we are two nations. It is not one nation, but two. That is one of the reasons why we want to keep our securities commission in our nation, in Quebec.

Next, the example of Europe is an excellent one. Even though Europe is just an economic union, the fact is that in the end many countries easily come to an agreement on securities. We do not see why, in Canada where there are two nations, we too should not be able to agree on each of us having our securities bodies.

●(1355)

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the government is at war with one of its own senators on this very issue. One of its senators, representing the province of Alberta, is explaining to the public what the government is up to. At the end of the day, we will have a transfer of jobs out of Alberta. We will have a diminution of the financial services sector in Alberta.

The government cannot even get its own senators on side on this issue. How in the world does it expect to convince anyone else?

Statements by Members

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Madam Speaker, it is indeed a fact that their senators, as my colleague says, are not in agreement on this. Neither do they agree that membership will be voluntary.

They are not the only ones not in agreement. The Lortie report says that the alleged freedom to join or not join the future Canada-wide commission is a con job. It seems to me that something is not working here, and we have to look into that.

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to call upon my colleague's wisdom. He spoke of a con job. Across the way, they are saying that this would be voluntary.

However, when we look at their behaviour, do the people opposite not give the impression that they simply want to open the door, twist our arm, and then ignore the National Assembly? They have even forgotten the Quebec nation. Basically, this is nothing but an open door so that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi has the floor.

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Madam Speaker, I totally agree with the statement by my colleague from Hochelaga. Indeed, they are going to present this, and then they will completely withdraw, saying that, in any case, now it is organized. But we are going to be stuck with this. We are going to lose a jurisdiction we have had since 1867. They do not respect that, and they ought to, because it is in fact the basis of what they call “our two nations”.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

RAYMOND DESROCHERS

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, we often take inspiration from the people of our communities who stand out. It could be from their determination or courage, from their passion for community or simply from when they will not give up when all hope seems lost.

My riding lost such a person this past April. He was a champion for the francophone community of my riding and for minority language rights across the country.

Raymond DesRochers leaves his many achievements as tangible reminders of his life's work.

[Translation]

He was a force to be reckoned with, unstoppable, unforgettable, one of a kind.

I invite all hon. members to join me in extending our sincere condolences to his wife, Sandra, and their family. Rest assured that his charm and tenacity will continue to be an inspiration to his community for years to come. Thank you, Raymond.

● (1400)

[English]

STANLEY CUP

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, last night, the Chicago Blackhawks won the Stanley Cup in overtime in game six. It is their first championship since 1961.

The Blackhawks are a team of young stars, none more impressive than their 22-year-old captain, Winnipeg's own Jonathan Toews. He is this year's winner of the Conn Smythe Trophy as the most valuable player of the NHL playoffs. Nicknamed Captain Serious, he is the youngest captain in the NHL and the second youngest winner of the Conn Smythe.

He has proudly represented Canada on the world stage: an all-star and gold medallist at the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver; a gold medallist at the 2008 world championships; a double gold medallist at the world junior championships; and now, a Stanley Cup champion.

Jonathan Toews is the son of Winnipeg and the pride of Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

JOURNALISM AWARDS

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to acknowledge the outstanding work of two journalists in my riding who have contributed considerably to the quality of information in the Lower St. Lawrence region.

Freelance journalist Marc Fraser from *L'Horizon* was awarded first prize in the “Interview/Portrait” category last May 2, at the 29th annual convention of the Association des médias écrits communautaires du Québec.

Jean-François Bouchard, who works for *L'Avantage* newspaper, won first prize in the “Editorial” category last May 29 at the Grands Prix des Hebdomadaires 2010, earning him the Jean-Vigneault trophy.

I would like to congratulate all the journalists and editorial writers from my region, especially those two men, who are doing a fine job of keeping the public of Lower St. Lawrence accurately informed.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, thanks to the Conservative government's economic action plan, Canada is rising out of the global recession faster and stronger than any other nation.

Under the economic action plan, Oshawa received record levels of funding for Durham College and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology.

Statements by Members

Don Drummond, senior vice-president and chief economist of the TD Bank, stated that these investments would separate Oshawa from the rest of Durham region in economic growth and were vital for keeping post-secondary graduates in Oshawa with high-paying and skilled jobs that focus on research.

I am happy to say that since Mr. Drummond's speech, in its ranking of 4,500 cities, towns and municipalities, *Maclean's* magazine named Oshawa one of Canada's smartest cities based on our opportunities for lifelong learning.

More important, since that speech, GM added a third shift in Oshawa, recalled approximately 600 workers and repaid its loans ahead of schedule.

I know I can speak for the rest of Oshawa in saying that, thanks to the Conservative government's handling of this economic crisis, the future is once again looking bright.

* * *

[Translation]

EDUCATION FOR ALL

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with the start of the World Cup, I am pleased and proud to acknowledge the great collaborative efforts of the Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes (ICÉA) and the Montreal Impact in developing the campaign "1 Goal: Education for All".

Inspired by UNESCO's Global Campaign for Education, which is itself supported by FIFA, those two organizations decided to focus their efforts in Quebec in order to spread a very important message.

ICÉA and the Montreal Impact have set as their objective to remind Canadians about the ambitious target that Canada and 188 other countries promised to achieve by signing the Dakar Declaration in 2010. The target is education for all by 2015. In Quebec, 800,000 people do not know how to read or write. It is for them and for future generations that those organizations decided to take action.

I would like to use this opportunity to congratulate the organizers and wish them the best of luck.

* * *

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the many representatives here today from the Assembly of First Nations as part of their advocacy day. This is a day to raise awareness on issues such as first nations education and treaty and aboriginal rights.

In the Speech from the Throne in March, Canada committed itself to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The government must honour this commitment. The relationship with first nations, Métis and Inuit must be based on justice, democracy, respect for human rights, equality, good governance and good faith.

Here in Canada, we must put education first. Aboriginal youth are the fastest growing segment of our population. They are our future and will inject billions into the economy over the next few years.

Co-operation, consultation and partnerships must be the cornerstones in resolving issues and strengthening relationships.

I salute the Assembly of First Nations on its work here today and hope all members are listening to its message.

* * *

● (1405)

[Translation]

SAINT-ÉMILE OPTIMIST CLUB

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight the exceptional work that the Saint-Émile optimist club has been doing in my riding of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, bringing out the best in kids for the past 15 years.

Every year, the Saint-Émile optimist club organizes a youth appreciation activity to recognize the contributions of young people at school and in the community.

For four years, the club has been hosting an awards ceremony for students who improved the most over the school year.

I had the pleasure of attending the ceremony this year, at which 47 students, from grade one to six, received a certificate outlining their achievements. The students came from three primary schools in Saint-Émile: École du Beau-Séjour, École de l'Accueil and École du Vignoble.

Congratulations to Maurice Cyr and his team of volunteers on this wonderful initiative. Their work helped make this event a success. I also thank Diane Jalbert for facilitating communications.

* * *

QUEBEC TOURISM AWARDS

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again the region of Lanaudière has been honoured, this time with three awards, at the Grands Prix du tourisme québécois gala in Montreal on May 7.

The gold medal winner in the outdoor and leisure category was Arbraska Rawdon, a business that has been running forest adventure parks in Quebec and Ontario since 2002. An interesting aside: in 2009, during a year marked by a general economic downturn, the company not only maintained its number of visitors and its business figures, but it also diversified the services it offers.

The silver medal in the accommodation—camping category went to Camping La Baie in Mandeville. This company, which is open year-round, has already had a taste of success as it won in the same category in 2005.

And finally, Benjamin Vallée, who works at the l'Auberge du Lac Taureau and the Saint-Michel-des-Saints condos, won a silver medal in the human resources category for tourism leaders of tomorrow. His work resulted in four times as many international clients.

Congratulations to the award winners.

Statements by Members

[English]

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian industry and environmental groups alike welcome and strongly support our new Bill C-36, the Canada consumer product safety bill.

With an average of 300 products that are subject to recall per year, there are many stakeholders who welcome the opportunity to finally have legislation that will provide the government with the needed tools to do this.

The hon. Minister of Health tabled this legislation yesterday in response to many requests from Canadians.

We have often heard stories from victims' families recounting accidents or deaths that could have been prevented had we had legislation. Our commitment is to them, as well as to all Canadians who deserve to be represented and protected from those who continue to sell unsafe products in our country.

On this side of the House, we look forward to and encourage the support of all members of the House and the Senate in getting this done as soon as possible. Canadian families deserve it.

* * *

NATIONAL HOLOCAUST MONUMENT

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 70 years ago, the first transports began arriving at death camps like Auschwitz, sites of the worst government-sponsored genocide in history.

A publicly funded national Holocaust monument in the national capital is one way that all Canadians can be part of honouring the Holocaust's victims.

This House, reflecting that wish, unanimously supported Bill C-442 to accomplish that and yet, at committee, the government introduced nine amendments, one for each article, signalling that it was walking away from its commitment and withdrawing its support for a publicly funded national Holocaust monument.

Instead, the Conservatives told a small segment of our population to raise the money, build the monument and then, when and if it is done, they will take ownership and credit.

However, there is no need. The Minister of Transport already has the authority and the means to direct the National Capital Commission to build this monument on behalf of all Canadians.

I ask the minister and the government to respect the will of the House and get this monument out of the political arena and onto ground where it belongs.

* * *

[Translation]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned recently that the Liberal leader and the NDP are preparing to form a coalition government.

This reminds us of the statement made not so long ago when the Liberals tried to form a coalition with the Bloc and the NDP. At that time, the leader of the Liberal Party said: "I'm prepared to form a coalition government and to lead that government."

While Quebeckers and Canadians are worried about our economic recovery and about jobs, the leader of the Liberal Party cares only about himself.

The Liberals' plans are unacceptable to all Quebeckers and all Canadians. Ignoring the results of an election and bringing in a party and a leader that were rejected by voters are also unacceptable. Managing the economy with the NDP is unacceptable. It is quite simply unacceptable.

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, federal policies restricting RCMP detachments from replacing officers on leave are placing hardships on communities in the Boundary area of my riding.

According to the mayor of Midway, Randy Kappes, only one of four local officers has been on duty in the last two weeks, and local citizens are concerned that crime is increasing.

Mayor Colleen Lang of Greenwood stated that this lower level of policing is causing concern in her community and that officers on leave should have a replacement.

According to Grace McGregor, the Kootenay Boundary regional director for Christina Lake, which is a tourist-dependent community, there is a desperate need for increasing the police presence.

Once again our rural communities are being deprived of vital services. According to Staff Sergeant Jim Harrison, the detachment used to have a budget that would cover overtime hours needed during periods of extra workload, but this is no longer the case. This funding needs to be restored to ensure that rural communities have sufficient resources to provide adequate police protection.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, citizenship fraud is becoming a serious issue here in Canada. There are a number of ongoing police investigations across the country into the practice of crooked citizenship consultants. These consultants actually sell packages on how to create bogus proof of residency here in Canada to obtain citizenship. They even encourage people to use post office boxes to prove residency.

Our government believes that citizenship is far more than the right to carry a passport or the right to vote. It defines who we are as Canadians, including our mutual responsibilities and shared common values rooted in our history.

Oral Questions

I am pleased to say that our government introduced legislation today to crack down on crooked consultants and strengthen the value of Canadian citizenship. Our citizenship is highly valued around the world. More than 156,000 people became proud citizens of Canada last year. We are taking action to ensure that our valued citizenship is not taken for granted ever again.

* * *

[Translation]

GEORGES GAGNÉ

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute to Georges Gagné, who has spent 60 years of his life serving the people of Delson, in Montérégie.

A municipal councillor from 1949 to 1973, he served nine consecutive terms as mayor of Delson, from 1973 to 2009.

His longstanding commitment to political life and the excellence with which he served make him a real model of perseverance for all elected representatives in his area and all across Quebec.

Among his achievements was the creation of the Delson industrial park, which today is home to more than 250 businesses.

On behalf of all my constituents, I want to thank Mr. Gagné for everything he has done for our community and wish him a happy retirement.

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STUDENT GALA OF EXCELLENCE

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 18, the Outaouais celebrated the success and talent of its young people during the eighth annual student gala of excellence.

This annual event is organized by Les amis de l'Étudiant Outaouais. This year's host was Patrice Bélanger. The gala is an opportunity to present local and regional awards to our young people who have distinguished themselves in the field of journalism.

This year, there were three award recipients. Elena Chudzia-Conde, from Collège Saint-Joseph, won gold for her text, *Le chaos nauséeux du français*. Vanessa Marroquin, from the Nicolas-Gatineau school, won silver for *La grande demande*, and bronze went to Florence Bolduc, from Collège Saint-Alexandre for her text, *Perle de vie*.

I want to congratulate these three award winners and all the finalists. I also want to congratulate all the organizers for their outstanding dedication and the entire team at Transcontinental's *La Revue* for a job well done.

* * *

●(1415)

[English]

OPPOSITION COALITION

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how far have the political fortunes of the Liberal Party sunk under the Liberals' current leader? The party of Laurier and Trudeau has sunk so low that everywhere we turn, Liberals are now talking about forming a coalition with the Bloc and NDP.

The members for Ottawa South and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine sure like the idea. Jean Chrétien and the Liberal Party president see the writing on the wall and now support a coalition too.

Yesterday, the Liberal leader tried to deny that there were secret talks, but his denial was short-lived. Now there are sworn affidavits from senior Liberals, such as Warren Kinsella, that secret talks are indeed under way.

Let me remind the Liberals that this coalition is as unacceptable to Canadians today as it was in 2008, and to give the NDP co-management of the Canadian economy would be disastrous. This coalition would provide a veto to the Bloc, a party whose sole purpose is to break up our country.

Will the Liberal leader deny the coalition talks again, or is he afraid that another affidavit—

The Speaker: Order. Oral questions, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

G8 AND G20 SUMMITS

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, six Nobel laureates are calling on this government to put the environment on the G20 agenda. The Mexican president and the UN Secretary-General called for the same thing here in Ottawa a few weeks ago.

Why is the Prime Minister the only person in the world who thinks that we can talk about the economic recovery at the G20 without talking about the environment?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, that is not our position. Our position is clear. Obviously, the G20 is the primary forum for international economic talks, but at the same time, we will discuss other things related to the economy, like climate change. I expect there will be discussions to help Mexico prepare for its summit on that subject in November.

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, now I am hearing a change in position after the pressure they have been under in recent weeks. That is a good thing.

[English]

Even France is saying that the costs of this summit are getting out of control, and France knows something about extravagance. Its foreign minister is making jokes about the lake.

How can the Prime Minister preach austerity and restraint to Canadians and his G20 colleagues when he has lost control of the cost of his own summit?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, as has been observed by many people, the cost of these summits in this age is very expensive because of the security demands placed on the summits. Well over 80% of the cost for our summit are, of course, for security, and this is similar to all similar types of summits.

As for extravagance in France, I would not know about that, but perhaps the Leader of the Opposition, at his home in Provence, could tell us all about it.

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: More, more.

The Speaker: Order, order. Yes, we are getting more.

The Leader of the Opposition has the floor. We will have some order, though. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Michael Ignatieff: Mr. Speaker, this summit could have been practical, could have been focused, could have been modest, could have been oh so Canadian, and instead, it has morphed into a kind of monster.

Perhaps the Prime Minister could explain how he managed to lose control of Canada's moment in the sun, because everybody knows that the only thing anybody is going to remember from this summit is "Lake Wastamataxes".

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as for extravagance in France, I think the Leader of the Opposition has set himself up.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, in terms of security costs, we consulted the same people who did such a good job on the Olympics. I know that the Liberals criticized them on the Olympics. The Olympics were a great success.

Canada is demonstrating, as I said, and everyone in the world recognizes it, economic leadership, not simply through the holding of summits but through an example of a country with the lowest deficits of any major developed economy, the lowest debt, the lowest taxes on business investment, the strongest job growth, the strongest economic growth, and the strongest banking system, and we will continue to lead.

• (1420)

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after reading about obscene Conservative summit waste on the front pages of German papers, CNN, or other international press, some tourists might be tempted to take a fake lake tour or a boat cruise on a \$400,000 ship stuck on land. There is only one hitch. We now learn that the government is banning all sightseeing for 15 kilometres around the summit. One cannot even fly a kite.

At the height of the tourism season, it is shutting down Toronto and banning sightseeing in Muskoka. This is not a marketing opportunity; it is a \$1 billion private circus. Who approved this mess?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we have said on numerous occasions, a large portion of the costs that are associated with both summits are directly imputable to the security. As we have mentioned throughout the last number of question periods, these costs have been vetted. We have consulted with experts. These costs are in line with comparable summits that have been held elsewhere.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no one is allowed near the \$20 million fiddlers, singers, flowers or the

great wall of plants, except maybe the President of the Treasury Board, who can see dew on the fake lake.

The fake lake was apparently not enough for the Conservatives' photo ops. We have now learned the government is blowing \$1.1 million on fake backdrops. I guess if the fake lake is too far away or the \$23 million empty media centre is not available, they need \$1 million for wallpaper.

After Conservatives have run up the biggest deficit in Canadian history, have they completely forgotten that this is the public's money?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to set the record straight.

The costs quoted covered signage and backdrops for four international events, the G8, the G20, the B20 and the youth summit. In total, the backdrops will be used at seven summit venues, three hotels and over thirty rooms. Costs include production, installation and take-down of 130 signage items ranging in size from one piece over 100 feet long to pop-up banners that are 2x6 and include stands, plus 150 nameplates. I have not finished.

International summits—

The Speaker: Unfortunately the time has expired.

The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is telling us today that, at the G8 and G20 summits, which are clearly about the economy, other matters related to the economy will be discussed, such as the environment.

If that is the case, why does this not appear on the agenda? Why is there no formal proposal on the subject? Why was there no preliminary meeting of the G8 and G20 environment ministers?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in preparing the agenda, we consult very actively with our guests. Clearly, a number of topics will be discussed, including some matters dealing with climate change. By the same token, the intent of the G20 is not to replace the UN process.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on a number of occasions, the government has told us that this was not the place to discuss the environment, but rather the economy, as if one could be separated from the other. Today, they are changing their tune, probably after reading some of the polls. In a letter to the Prime Minister, a number of Nobel laureates quite rightly reminded him that "failure to address climate change will put the global economy at further risk".

Having made the economy the priority at the G8 and G20, does the Prime Minister realize that he cannot discuss the economy without discussing the environment, since the two are so closely linked?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we always try to discuss agenda items with the other participants in order to come to a consensus. Of course, environmental issues are linked to the economy, but I would say the same thing to the leader of the Bloc. Environmental issues are linked to the economy, which is why we always keep in mind the balance between the environment and the needs of the economy.

• (1425)

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in addition to the environment, the government is excluding abortion from the G8 discussions for purely ideological reasons. In the view of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the G8 should not assume the right to decide which aspects of maternal and child health will be funded. That is the very opposite of what the Conservatives intend to do.

When will this government realize that its backwards ideology is jeopardizing women's health?

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that I just attended the Women Deliver Conference in Washington. At the conference, Melinda Gates said "we finally have the world's attention" on maternal health issues. She said that it was not that the world did not know how to save the lives of mothers and newborns, it was we had not tried hard enough until now. She says that the world is changing because there is a government that is listening and acting, even when others were previously deaf and dormant. Canada is proposing a bold, achievable platform—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government still refuses to be specific about its commitments in the area of maternal health but there is no lack of detail about the extravagance of its preparations for the G20. Foreign affairs will spend \$1.1 million on some backdrop to showcase the dignitaries.

Could the foreign affairs minister stop worrying about the decorations and start giving us the details of the government's maternal health plan?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since my colleague is insisting, I will start all over again. The amounts that are mentioned cover signage and backdrops for four international events: the G8, G20 and B20 and the Youth Summit. In all, the backdrops will be used in seven places at the summits, in three hotels and on 30 premises. The costs include the production, installation and disassembly of more than 130 signs of various sizes. Some are 100 feet long and the banners are two feet by six feet. International summits require clear signage to ensure the safety of the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first we should offer France our apologies for the unacceptable comments of the Liberal leader.

The government has lost control of its spending on the G8 and G20 summits: \$1 million for signs and panels, \$2 million for a fake lake and its scenery, \$5 million for a fence and more than \$1 billion for security. It makes no sense.

This money could have gone to women and children. Why spend

The Speaker: The Right Honourable Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP leader said a number of things that are totally wrong. The cost of these summits is simply the cost of summits of this kind. It is their nature. We saw the same kind of security at other summits. All these costs are in the budget, and it was passed by the House.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, six Nobel laureates called on the Prime Minister to make climate change a priority at the G20. Here is what they said to the Prime Minister:

Environmental degradation and global warming, and their impacts, are economic and security issues as well as environmental ones.

They say that failure to act is going to put the global economy at risk and plunge millions, who are already living on the economic margins, into deeper poverty.

Today, the Prime Minister pretends that he is going to put climate change on the agenda. Why will he not really do it by cutting the subsidies to the big oil companies right now?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that all three partners in the coalition that everybody denies exists have asked the same questions today.

We consult widely on the summit agenda. In the past, there have been discussions of the climate change issues at the G20 for the purpose of trying to assist, not replace, the United Nations process. As I indicated to President Calderón during his visit, we will continue the same practice here.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems as though the Prime Minister's priority with regard to these international meetings has been to save the banks. When I have talked to Canadians to ask them whether they think the most important thing we should be addressing is saving the banks, I do not get a resounding stampede of support for that agenda because the banks are gouging Canadians each and every day. They say that they want climate change to be addressed as a priority, but here we see it sloughed off. They want to see maternal and child health as a priority, but we are spending more on the summit's security—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I guess I have different discussions with Canadians than the three coalition partners over there. Canadians certainly do not tell me that they think they want to pay banking taxes for bailouts in other countries. That is not the position of Canadians.

While I am on my feet, we know the three coalition partners voted last night to take Canadians' hard-earned EI premiums and give them to people who go on strike voluntarily. That is not what Canadians want either.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives will end up drowning in their fake lake because of the real waste of money. We learned today that they paid \$1.1 million for backdrops, \$1.1 million for cardboard displays. The security fence in Toronto is going to cost \$5.5 million compared to \$800,000 in Montebello.

Considering that they have a \$54 billion deficit, will they admit that they are totally, completely, and absolutely incapable of managing a budget?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have already stated that the vast majority of costs associated with holding these two summits are security costs. We consulted experts, obtained information and followed recommendations.

We are going to ensure that these two summits provide the utmost security for all participants.

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has made Canada the outcast of the international community and now, with his \$2 million fake lake, we have become a laughingstock. We have gone from international outcast to international laughingstock.

Even CNN and the *LA Times* are talking about the \$2 million fake lake. Even finance minister Bernard Kouchner said he was surprised by this \$1 billion boondoggle.

Does the Prime Minister still believe that a fake lake inside a convention centre is going to help restore our international reputation?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, you will naturally allow me to introduce testimony from third parties, in particular that of Bill Allen, president of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, who said that the G8 and G20 will make it possible for Ontario to promote tourism in the same way that the Olympic Games made it possible for British Columbia to gain international recognition. It will not be just 20 leaders who discover Ontario, but hundreds of national media representatives accompanying them as well. This is an opportunity to have the world discover Ontario. This is an opportunity we should not miss.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the town of Saint-François has undertaken a project to renovate its arena. The Province of New Brunswick and the town are ready to start this project, but for months now they have been waiting for the federal government's share of \$250,000.

The Conservatives are spending \$1.1 billion on the G20. Why are they not capable of taking 58 seconds to fund this project?

Yes, 58 seconds from the G20 would renovate the Saint-François arena because that 58 seconds is equal to \$250,000.

Oral Questions

The question is simple: where do Conservative priorities lie?

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the hard work of six strong members of Parliament on the government side from New Brunswick, New Brunswick is finally getting its fair share in terms of infrastructure spending. We are very pleased with the significant investments not just in infrastructure stimulus, not just in building Canada but also with the great investments that we are particularly making in northern New Brunswick.

* * *

LIGHTHOUSES

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to pay for the \$2 million fake lake equipped with a fake lighthouse, which will guide a \$400,000 dry docked boat safely to the convention centre floor, I mean shore, hundreds of historic lighthouses along real waterways throughout Canada will either be shut down, sold off or destaffed.

With that in mind, will the minister tell us how much of the security money will go to conduct fisheries patrols of the fake lake by armed fisheries officers protecting Canada against foreign overfishing by international journalists, instead of protecting real waterways and seas?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think that should probably have started with once upon a time.

The new Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act is an act that will provide a vehicle to ensure strengthened protection of those lighthouses that are considered heritage structures are maintained.

* * *

[Translation]

SECURITIES

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the financial world, hosted by Quebec's AMF, is meeting in Montreal.

All of the securities regulators are there. The attendees, including Paul Volcker, the presidents of the securities commissions in Australia and the United States—the SEC—and the presidents of France's AMF and of Standard and Poor's, all recognize the AMF and provincial securities commissions as THE Canadian partner on the international stage.

Why does the Minister of Finance not do likewise?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to securities commissions, we will respect provincial jurisdiction. This is a new, voluntary system for Canada's provinces. As I said, we will respect provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the international players have made up their minds, and the current system is working.

Oral Questions

The AMF and other commissions have signed international agreements with France and the United Arab Emirates concerning co-operation between regulators as well as mobility of investment industry professionals.

These new international agreements, and we can assume they will not be the last, prove that the financial world has made up its mind and recognizes the worth of the current securities system.

Why is the minister ignoring this proof?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said a moment ago, the proposed federal system is a voluntary system. This is an opt in system. There are 10 provinces and territories that are working with the Government of Canada on the project. As I have indicated before in this place, Canada is the only major industrialized country in the world without a common securities regulator.

* * *

[Translation]

COPYRIGHT

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the chair of the Société professionnelle des auteurs et compositeurs du Québec, Mario Chenart, is bitterly disappointed in the Conservatives' copyright bill. He condemns the government's refusal to extend the private copying levy to digital platforms, thereby depriving songwriter-composers of a major source of income.

Because of the bill's imbalance in favour of American commercial interests, Mario Chenart has this question, which I put to this government: where is the heritage minister?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are here. After the last election campaign, we made a commitment to Canadians in our throne speech to strengthen our system of copyright laws, which we have done. We have introduced our Bill C-32 here in the House to improve our copyright laws. This bill is balanced, and it serves the interests of consumers and creators.

• (1440)

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the minister had reversed the words “consumers” and “creators”, we might have thought he was a real heritage minister.

The SPACQ also deplores the fact that the government continues to place the burden of taking legal action on creators, who lack the means to assert their rights.

How can the government claim to be supporting creators when it did not invite the Union des artistes or the SPACQ to its consultation and it has introduced an imbalanced bill that clearly favours American companies?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not true. They were consulted. They made a presentation to the government, and we listened to everyone. We listened to the needs of consumers and the needs of creators.

The Canadian Recording Industry Association and the Canadian Independent Music Association said that Canadian artists need better protection against piracy to build a successful digital music market. They thanked us for this bill, which protects the rights of artists who make a living from their art.

Those are results for artists.

* * *

OIL AND GAS SECTOR

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources continues to deny reality when it comes to accountability for a major oil spill.

Current rules are clear: corporate liability is limited to \$30 million on the east coast and \$40 million elsewhere.

If the minister read the regulations instead of sticking to Dimitri Soudas' deceitful script, he would know that.

When will the minister correct this legal loophole?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is indeed absolute liability across Canada, but one thing is certain, and my colleague did not mention it: there is unlimited civil liability.

The member should stop scaring Canadians. One thing is clear: no drilling proposals in Canada will be approved unless Canadian regulators are convinced that there will be no harm to workers' health or to the environment.

[English]

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister was advised to read section 167 of the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act. He has obviously failed to do his homework.

Maybe he can scan section 162 of the accord implementation act for Newfoundland and Labrador. This provision is also clear. Absolute liability is limited to \$30 million on the east coast where deep water drilling is currently under way.

Why will the minister not protect Canadian taxpayers and ensure oil companies are 100% liable in the case of an offshore disaster?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to read the regulation, but it is good to understand it too, and I am not sure that my colleague does.

What I said yesterday, indeed there is an absolute liability, but there is an unlimited civil liability, so he has to stop frightening Canadians with that.

We enforce world-class standards. Let me be clear that Canadian regulators will not allow any offshore activity unless they are convinced that the environment and the safety of workers will be protected.

*Oral Questions***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government talks big on defence, but refuses to support the people who have actually defended us. This minister, the first part-time veterans minister in half a century, has not offered a single new program, benefit or idea since taking this job.

Now, even his own senior adviser, the Veterans Ombudsman, is heaping criticism on the half-time minister. Should Colonel Stogran be worried about keeping his own job, like everyone else who has been critical of this government?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course we are taking Mr. Stogran's recommendations and comments very seriously. I also want to remind that party that since coming to power, we have invested over \$2 billion in various programs to help and provide services to our veterans. Naturally, we care deeply about the honour of those who defend our country and ensure peace and freedom. That is why we support them.

[English]

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every new dollar that has been spent on Veterans Affairs has been legislated and has been required. Nothing is new. Colonel Stogran has been travelling the country listening to veterans. He knows that despite the rhetoric, this Conservative government is neither willing nor able to effectively help our soldiers when they come home.

Programs, care, and treatment are denied the very people who put their lives on the line for us. When will this part-time Minister of Veterans Affairs take the advice of his own ombudsman?

• (1445)

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member that the Liberals refused to deal with the agent orange issue, but our government took action.

First, we made *ex gratia* payments of \$20,000 to veterans affected by agent orange. Second, we restored benefits for allied veterans, benefits that the Liberals eliminated. Third, we doubled the number of clinics for veterans affected by post-traumatic stress disorder.

We implemented those three measures since coming to power because we want to help our veterans.

* * *

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thousands of people are obtaining Canadian citizenship fraudulently, by lying about how much time they have spent in Canada.

The *Globe and Mail* found 300 people claiming to live at the same address in Mississauga and Radio-Canada exposed a similar scheme going on in Quebec.

Will the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tell us what the government is doing to crack down on those who obtain their

Canadian citizenship illegally, even though they live permanently abroad?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question and her hard work on these issues.

It is true that we see many very troubling criminal investigations into citizenship fraud, sometimes hundreds of people applying for citizenship registered at the same false address.

We are taking action on this to preserve and protect the value and integrity of Canadian citizenship. We will be regulating citizenship consultants. We will be clarifying that residency in Canada requires actual physical presence here, rather than just a post box. We will be increasing penalties for citizenship fraud to \$100,000 or five years in jail, and we will be streamlining the process to revoke citizenship from those who obtained it fraudulently.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is rushing into a multibillion dollar fighter jet procurement, just after modernizing the fleet. It is forging ahead with what amounts to a sole source contract, cutting out competitors, and sidetracking a transparent bidding process that would have produced strong industrial and regional benefits, creating jobs and supporting aerospace industry in Canada.

Does the Minister of National Defence still plan to go ahead with the advanced contract award notice, and can he explain the rush and the recklessness of this deal?

Mr. Laurie Hawt (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has committed to acquiring the next generation fighter capability as part of the Canada first defence strategy. This represents a key capability in the Canadian Forces. The government has not yet made a decision. The procurement process will conform to government rules.

I can assure the member that whatever procurement process is followed, it will benefit the Canadian Forces and benefit Canadian industry.

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a military contract like this one could be a lifesaver for Canada's struggling aerospace industry.

Oral Questions

While many subcontracts for civilian aircraft are awarded internationally, military contracts are more resistant to this kind of transfer to other countries. What defies understanding is that the Conservatives are about to give a \$10 billion contract to the Americans, without going to tender and with no guarantees regarding regional industrial benefits.

If the Americans can impose their ITAR rules in our factories, why can we not at least have our fair share of the pie for our own planes?

[English]

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is absolute rubbish. Whatever contract is signed is going to benefit the Canadian Forces and Canadian industry.

That is a bit rich coming from those members who did not want us to buy the C-17. The soldiers in Afghanistan who depend on it are happy. The people of Haiti whose lives we saved are happy.

Those are the same guys who did not want us to buy the Leopard tank. The Taliban may agree with that, but members of the Canadian Forces whose lives have been saved in Afghanistan are sure glad we did that.

* * *

[Translation]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 74% of Quebecers and 85% of young people aged 18 to 24 believe that the firearms registry should be maintained. The Bloc Québécois is the only party to represent Quebec's interests, since the Conservatives and half the NDP want to dismantle the registry. Furthermore, we have no guarantee that all Liberal members will show up to vote.

Will the government reverse its plan to eliminate the firearms registry, a registry that saves lives?

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that our government is committed to the elimination of the wasteful long gun registry. We want to focus on effective measures that will actually keep crime rates down rather than criminalizing farmers and hunters in my riding, and other ridings across rural Canada.

I would invite those members of the NDP and those Liberal members who voted in favour of Bill C-391 to vote for it again to ensure that we eliminate the wasteful long gun registry.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, gun control is universally supported in Quebec. The National Assembly has confirmed this on three separate occasions through unanimous votes. Police forces, public health officials, the Barreau du Québec, the families of victims of crime, women's groups and 67% of Quebecers from the Quebec City region are calling for the registry to be maintained.

How can the Conservative members from Quebec claim to represent Quebec when they oppose the broad consensus reached on this matter?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that while we support the licensing of people, and the registration of prohibited and restricted weapons, we do not support the wasteful long gun registry.

If that member actually communicated truthfully with her constituents about what the implications are in terms of the long gun registry, I believe that there would be a dramatic change in even those who presently support the long gun registry.

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ETHICS

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservative political staffers have been caught illegally interfering with requests made under the access to information law and no one is being held accountable.

As part of its investigation, the ethics committee has exercised its right to call Dimitri Soudas as a witness. But the Prime Minister seems to think his director of communications is somehow too delicate a butterfly to answer questions about his conduct.

If the Prime Minister really believes accountability is more than an empty election slogan, would he instruct Mr. Soudas to respect the legal summons and appear before the committee?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, political staff members are merely respecting a decision of the cabinet of this country, which is to continue with the three centuries old tradition of ministerial responsibility.

The Liberal Party continues to throw mud and tries to destroy reputations. I have a letter here that was sent to a Liberal member from Montreal who had originally filed an ethics complaint against the Minister of Industry when he tried to support small business in his riding. It indicates: "I will not be conducting an inquiry or an examination into this matter at this time". The reason that she cites is that there simply is no evidence whatsoever of wrongdoing.

We have a terrific industry minister who upholds the highest standards of—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Random—Burin—St. George's.

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that no one has the right to block a committee from calling a non-parliamentarian as a witness, neither the Prime Minister nor his cabinet. What is happening here is that a committee is being frustrated for no good reason.

Will Mr. Soudas' boss, the Prime Minister, agree to appear before the ethics committee and explain why he is ordering his staffer to break the law and not respect a legal summons?

*Oral Questions***FIREARMS REGISTRY**

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are relying upon hundreds of years of parliamentary tradition that originates deep in the history of the British Westminster model of democracy, wherein ministers who are members of this House of Commons are responsible for the actions of their staff and their departments and answer on their behalf.

We are taking responsibility. We are upholding accountability and we are doing so right in front of these parliamentary committees. Leadership starts at the top.

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RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's hand-picked president at Rights & Democracy has paid himself \$57,000 for less than two months work. At that price, the Conservatives could have bought another fake lake, I suppose. However, in his short reign, the interim president wasted over half a million dollars to manage this self-induced crisis, hired a fellow board member and paid him off too.

Does the government still have confidence in this current board and these members after this massive waste of taxpayer dollars and this flaunting of accountability?

• (1455)

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members know, Rights & Democracy is an arm's length organization. The government is not involved in the organization's day-to-day operations. The man in charge of the organization's day-to-day operations is Mr. Latulippe, and my hon. colleague did have the opportunity of asking him questions not very long ago.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we get the same tired answers.

This board is serving at the pleasure of the Prime Minister and its members are government's appointees. The message we are getting from the government is that if one is a friend of the Prime Minister, it is okay. It can ignore waste and mismanagement, no worries.

Money for human rights and democracy is what is being left out here. That money should be going for human rights development and ensuring we have accountability.

Where is the accountability? Where is the government's notion of the pleasure of the Prime Minister's service? Right now the board is flaunting that and the Prime Minister does not seem to care.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with my hon. colleague. Canada is leading the way in terms of defending human rights, and we do that on a daily basis. We have done it in Myanmar and in Afghanistan. We are doing it all around the world. We are standing up for human rights in Iran.

The young gentleman over on the other side should stand up with this government when we defend human rights around the world.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, former Liberal MP, Hec Clouthier, gave a scathing rebuke of the Liberal leader's decision to whip his party's vote on the long gun registry and said that the Liberal leader was forgetting about rural Canada. That is very divisive politics.

Justice ministers from Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Yukon have spoken out against the long gun registry, along with many police officers.

Why will the Liberal leader not allow his MPs to vote with the best interests of their constituents in mind and truly respect democracy?

Could the Minister of Public Safety explain to opposition members why their constituents deserve to be properly represented?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his strong support of our efforts to scrap the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry.

Comments by the former Liberal MP, Hec Clouthier, go to show that not even members from his own party agree with the decision to whip the vote and ignore rural Canadians. It is more evidence that the Liberal leader is not in it for Canadians. Indeed, he is just in it for himself.

The choice is clear: vote to scrap it or vote to continue it.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, National Chief Atleo of the Assembly of First Nations has renewed his call for firm action on education for first nations youth.

The typical first nations student receives \$2,000 less in educational support than the Canadian average. This gap has serious consequences: lower educational attainment, lower employment levels and lost opportunities for first nations people, communities and the Canadian economy. The government's priority though is corporate tax breaks and fake lakes.

Where is the compassion and where is the action for the future of first nations education?

Mr. John Duncan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government understands the importance of education, which is why we have taken action since coming to office to improve the outcomes for aboriginal students.

Business of the House

Since 2006, our government has invested \$395 million, resulting in the completion of 94 school projects. Our economic action plan provided for ten new schools and two major renovations. The building Canada plan provides for eight new school projects. We have worked closely with British Columbia, Manitoba and New Brunswick and regional first nations. And budget 2010 provides for more.

* * *

[Translation]

ISAN CANADA

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, film and documentary producers must now register with ISAN Canada to be able to request funding from the new Canada Media Fund. The registration forms are only available in English, and producers are unable to get service in French if they phone ISAN Canada.

Can the minister tell us why French-speaking producers from Quebec, Acadia and the rest of Canada do not have the right to be served in French?

● (1500)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are aware of this, and it should not be the case. The new Canada Media Fund must serve Canadians in the official language of their choice.

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[English]

FOREIGN AID

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, helping out a neighbour in need is always a good idea but when the government pitched in to help protect U.S. beaches from the BP spill, it inadvertently exposed how badly prepared it was for a disaster here in Canada.

Here are the facts. The U.S. government made available more than 1,500 kilometres of boom for the cleanup. The Canadian government says that it has a total of six kilometres of boom stockpiled. This would be pathetic if the risks were not so great.

Does the oil-loving government have any plans whatsoever to boost our dangerously low supply?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we were very happy to help out the United States in its time of need.

As members know, we share oceans with the United States. This is a very important issue to us. We know that the United States would help us in our time of need.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has demonstrated continued leadership in science, technology and innovation. From the Canada excellence research chairs and post-doctoral fellowships, to the Centre of Excellence for Commercialization of Research, this government is a world leader in attracting and retaining top researchers.

Would the Minister of State please inform this House about the latest world-renowned scientist to come to Canada and to my riding of Kitchener—Waterloo.

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it brings me great pleasure to welcome internationally accomplished physicist, Stephen Hawking, to Canada. Professor Hawking has joined the Perimeter Institute in Waterloo as a distinguished research chair.

Our government is leading the pack when it comes to developing, attracting and retaining top researchers to Canada. It is our government's historic investments in science and technology that are attracting the world's most distinguished researchers. We are proud of creating a brain gain.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as is the practice in the House, I would like to ask the government House leader about his plans in terms of government business for the next week.

I also have two very quick questions, the first one about Bill C-34 concerning the museum of immigration at Pier 21. The Liberals fully support the bill and are ready to expedite it immediately. I would like to know when the government intends to schedule the debate so we will see the bill passed at its earliest opportunity.

My second question concerns a report on the Order Paper and Notice Paper relating to Bill C-391, the long gun registry, which means that we could have a debate and a vote before summer recess. I would like to know if the government intends to take the necessary steps, working with you, Mr. Speaker, to ensure this happens.

I look forward to the minister's response.

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, the deputy House leader for the Official Opposition, for her questions.

When I get into addressing the issue of the upcoming government legislation that I intend to call, I will make reference to Bill C-34, which was her first additional question. The other question dealt with private member's Bill C-391 and the report that came back from the committee about that legislation. I am sure the member is well aware of the process of private members' business. It has nothing to do with the government business and therefore those negotiations and consultations will take place between yourself, Mr. Speaker, and the sponsor of that legislation.

We will continue today with the opposition motion. Tomorrow we will call Bill C-2, the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement, which is at third reading.

I would also like to designate pursuant to Standing Order 66(2) tomorrow as the day to complete the debate on the motion to concur in the third report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

Next week we will hopefully complete all stages of Bill C-34, Creating Canada's New National Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 Act. I would like to thank the opposition parties for their support of that legislation and for allowing it to pass expeditiously when we do call it.

There may also be some interest to do something similar for Bill C-24, First Nations Certainty of Land Title Act; Bill S-5, ensuring safe vehicles; and Bill S-9, tracking auto theft and property crime act.

I would also like to complete the remaining stages of Bill C-11, Balanced Refugee Reform Act.

In addition to those bills, I would call Bill C-23, Eliminating Pardons for Serious Crimes Act; Bill S-2, Protecting Victims From Sex Offenders Act; and Bill C-22, Protecting Children from Online Sexual Exploitation Act.

I would also like to announce that on Monday we will be having a take note debate on the subject of the measures being taken to address the treatment of multiple sclerosis. I will be moving the appropriate motion at the end of my statement.

Pursuant to Standing Order 66(2) I would like to designate Tuesday, June 15, as the day to conclude debate on the motion to concur in the first report of the Standing Committee on International Trade.

Finally, I would like to designate Thursday, June 17, as the last allotted day.

At this time I will be making a number of motions and asking for the unanimous consent of the House for them, starting with the take note debate motion.

* * *

•(1505)

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

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

That a take note debate on the subject of the measures being taken to address the treatment of multiple sclerosis take place pursuant to Standing Order 53.1 on Monday, June 14.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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

That the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development be the committee for the purposes of the Statutes of Canada, 2003, chapter 9, section 32.

Business of the House

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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CREATING CANADA'S NEW NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IMMIGRATION ACT AT PIER 21 ACT

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my third motion deals with the bill I referred to and that my hon. colleague, the deputy House leader for the official opposition referred to, Bill C-34.

I would seek unanimous consent for the following. I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practices of the House, when C-34, An Act to amend the Museums Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts is called for debate, a member from each recognized party may speak for not more than 10 minutes on the second reading motion of C-34, after which C-34 shall be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole, deemed considered in Committee of the Whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at the report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is my fourth motion. I seek the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, in accordance with subsection 54(1) of the *Access to Information Act*, Chapter A-1 of the Revised Statutes of Canada, 1985, this House approve the appointment of Suzanne Legault as Information Commissioner.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Speaker's Ruling

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am feeling bad that I only have one motion left. Perhaps I should keep going with more legislation, but I will save it for next week. I do appreciate the indulgence of all members in this process.

I seek the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, the debate pursuant to Standing Order 66 scheduled for tomorrow be deemed to have taken place and all questions necessary to dispose of the motion to concur in the Third Report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration be deemed put and a recorded division be deemed requested.

● (1510)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

● (1515)

*[Translation]***PRIVILEGE**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on June 3, 2010 by the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster concerning events which took place in the Standing Committee on International Trade on June 1, 2010.

[English]

I would like to thank the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster for having raised this matter. I would also like to thank the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the member for Calgary Centre for their comments.

The member for Burnaby—New Westminster argued that the manner in which the Standing Committee on International Trade conducted its clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-2, the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement implementation act, violated his rights and the rights of two other members of the committee.

Specifically, he complained that the chair had not informed the committee that it was reverting to a public meeting from its in camera status and that the chair and the majority of the members on the committee had systematically frustrated his attempts to speak, intervene on points of order, and have access to the procedural resources of the committee.

[Translation]

While recognizing that traditionally the Speaker does not get involved in matters that should be dealt with in committee, the member argued that this clearly constituted an abuse by the majority in the committee of the privileges bestowed on it by the House, and as such was a contempt of the House. For his part, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader contended that a prima facie question of privilege did not exist as there was no report to the House from the committee on this matter. The member for Calgary Centre, the chair of the standing committee, reiterated this and stated that the committee had conducted its meeting fairly and in keeping with the rules of procedure.

All members who have intervened in this matter have acknowledged that the Speaker does not sit as a court of appeal to adjudicate procedural issues that arise in the course of committee proceedings. Indeed, on numerous occasions, Speakers have restated the cardinal rule that committees are masters of their own proceedings and any alleged irregularities occurring in committees can be taken up in the House only following a report from the committee itself. There have been very few exceptions to this rule.

[English]

The ruling of Mr. Speaker Fraser on March 26, 1990, to which the member for Burnaby—New Westminster alluded, does state:

—that in very serious and special circumstances the Speaker may have to pronounce on a committee matter without the committee having reported to the House.

However, having reviewed the evidence submitted, there is little to suggest that in the case before us the circumstances warrant the chair breaking with the entrenched practice of allowing committees to settle issues related to their proceedings, particularly since the member himself stated that “the chair had the support of the majority of the members of the committee”.

Thus, as Mr. Speaker Fraser declared in that same ruling, on page 9,758 of the debates:

I have chosen not to substitute my judgment for that expressed by a majority on the Finance Committee, unless that majority decides to report its dilemma to the House.

While it is clear to the chair that the member is unhappy with the decisions taken by the committee, the committee has not reported this matter to the House. It may be of assistance to the member to refer to pages 149 to 152 in the chapter “Privileges and Immunities” in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Second Edition*, where the procedural steps associated with bringing committee-related privilege issues before the House are fully described.

In the meantime, I regret to inform the member for Burnaby—New Westminster that unless he can persuade the committee to take some of those procedural steps, there is little the chair can do and there is certainly no basis for finding a prima facie question of privilege at this time.

[Translation]

I thank hon. members for their attention.

Business of Supply

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order coming out of today's question period, when I put two questions to the Prime Minister. These questions had to do with the Prime Minister's refusal to allow his director of communications, Dimitri Soudas, to appear before the ethics committee.

I have a letter dated June 1 and signed by the Prime Minister, who stated:

The purpose of this letter is to inform the Committee of my instruction to Mr. Soudas that he will not appear before the Committee.

He went on to say:

Next week I will be present in Question Period on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Questions about these matters can be directed to me there.

Today is Thursday. I put the questions directly to the Prime Minister, and today he did not respond to those questions directly. I am asking if in fact the Prime Minister misled the House when he wrote this letter and indicated that he would be here today to respond to questions with respect to Mr. Soudas not being allowed to appear before the committee.

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will have to check *Hansard*. Yes, the question was directed to the Prime Minister, but I do not recall in the letter that the hon. member just read out that he said that he would respond personally.

The questions could be directed to him. They were directed at him. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, as I recall, gave an excellent reply to those questions.

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, let me just read it again. It says:

Questions about these matters can be directed to me there.

Unless one is to believe that the Prime Minister misled the House, then I would expect that he would have taken those questions as the employer of Mr. Dimitri Soudas.

The Speaker: I will look at the matter, but I do not know that there is a question of privilege here.

It is a long-standing practice in the House that although questions may be directed to certain individuals, others sometimes respond. We see that daily in question period. Sometimes the Prime Minister answers. Sometimes we hear the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities answer. There are even times the government House leader answers questions that are directed to the Prime Minister. It is just a matter of which item someone is ready to answer and that the person is prepared to give answers and has understood the question and so on, which we have happen in the House on a regular basis.

I do not think that it is a matter the Chair can make a decision on, given the long-standing practice in the House

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SECURITIES REGULATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I too rise to speak in support of the Bloc Québécois motion denouncing the efforts of the Conservative government, with the traditional complicity of the Liberals, to invade an area of Quebec jurisdiction by establishing a Canadian securities commission that would deprive Quebec of its powers over the area.

I would like to begin with a slight aside. People listening to us or reading our debates may find that the securities commission issue is quite boring and unimportant, given the difficulties we are currently facing. They may believe that it is not a major issue. I would like to tell them that, in my view, such is not the case, quite the contrary. I can concede that it may be boring, but that does not mean that it is not extremely important and pivotal.

Everything about this commission has very much to do with issues in the world of finance and the place where that financial sector is to be located. The question before us today is whether we agree that most, if not all, of the financial sector should be moved to Toronto. That is what this government really wants. Recently, we have seen that this government has no support. Its proposal has been almost universally condemned in Quebec. International organizations that have studied different systems show that the Canadian system works very well. The government has told us about cases of fraud. This is clearly nothing more than a red herring, a smokescreen. It has nothing to do with the matter. The reality is that they want to concentrate the financial system in Toronto, and that is extremely detrimental to Quebec.

We must look backwards. Before, during and after the Quiet Revolution, Quebecers worked to free themselves from the English domination of their economy that existed at the time. Francophone Quebecers, who made up the overwhelming majority of the population, saw that the control of the economy was entirely out of their hands. They had no control over it, and a tiny minority had its hands on all the levers. For decades, the Quebec people and their government have worked to change things.

I really liked Jacques Parizeau's explanation. He said that the Quebec government, when it was looking for funding, thought it was humiliating to have to beg for money from the Canadian financial community and be turned down. It then had to turn to the United States for capital.

Today, Quebec has strong, effective, useful and modern tools. It has come a long way. But we have noticed in recent years that it has started to slip. Montreal has already lost its stock exchange. The derivatives exchange is still there. Now, the federal government wants to pull out everything that is related to securities and move it to Toronto.

Business of Supply

Obviously, that has significant consequences. The companies negotiating with the commission in Toronto will have to do so in English. We can see that this will be more complicated. Right now, if we want to meet with someone, we can take public transportation or our own vehicles and we can go to the Autorité des marchés financiers. We can have a meeting that way. But, if it is in Toronto, we would have to take the plane. It would be a bit more complicated. This process has started. Today, we have a federal government that wants to weaken Quebec's financial world.

• (1520)

Ultimately, we could understand them and see where their interests lie. What is more disappointing is seeing servile Quebecers supporting them, sometimes even enthusiastically. We saw someone this morning laughing out loud at the comments of his ministers from the rest of Canada and taking pleasure in this weakening of Quebec.

We have a long list of people, and a coalition was even formed to denounce the government's plan. Here are some of the members of the coalition against the federal securities regulation plan: the Association de l'exploration minière du Québec, the Barreau du Québec, the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, Cascades, the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, the Chambre de commerce de Québec, the Chambre des notaires du Québec, the Chambre de la sécurité financière, the Quebec Employers' Council. They are not bearded socialists, communists or separatists.

There are also the Fédération des Chambres de commerce du Québec, Fondation, the QFL Solidarity Fund, the Groupe Jean Coutu, the Institut sur la gouvernance d'organisations privées et publiques, the Institut québécois de planification financière, Jacques Saint-Pierre, who is a professor at Université Laval, Jean La Couture, Corporate Director and Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the Regroupement des assureurs de personnes à charte du Québec, Jean-Marc Fortier, partner at Robinson Sheppard Shapiro, La Capitale Financial Group, Pierre Lortie, former chair of the Montreal Stock Exchange, Quebecor, the SSQ, the Société d'assurance-vie, the City of Montreal and the City of Quebec. We also heard from the media that Power Corporation and Desjardins are against this plan. All Quebec Inc. is.

In the National Assembly, the consensus is extremely strong. The four parties, from those on the far left to those on the far right, from the most federalist to the most sovereignist, all agree that this scheme is unacceptable. Unfortunately, 25 Quebecers are defending the indefensible. There are only about 25 of them in Quebec, and they are in this House. These are the servile Quebecers in the Conservative and Liberal Parties who are neither able nor willing, as we in the Bloc Québécois are, to work for consensus in Quebec, to defend it and to bring it to this House.

Some members of this House are not part of this fight. We were even criticized this morning for putting the securities commission on the agenda again. We were told that we were going to lose again. But we will not give up.

It is like the battle for nationhood; motions to recognize the Quebec nation were introduced in this House numerous times, and we finally won. We are going to continue to fight because we are

neither servile nor submissive. We are here to defend the strong Quebec consensus, and we will continue to do so.

The government likes to think that we will fail again. If we do fail again, it will demonstrate the limits of federalism and the dead end that Quebecers see it as. When we have an institution that is clearly in Quebec's jurisdiction, and we have to fight, not in order to make headway in Canada, but in order to not be pushed back, that shows that the best Canada can offer us is to not lose ground.

There are Quebec members of this Parliament who, servile federalists that they are, are going to defend the indefensible in the face of everything that is being done economically, politically and socially in Quebec. This shows that Quebec has no future in Canada and that, in the end, the solution for Quebecers is to take the plunge, to decide on our collective future and to become a country, a sovereign Quebec.

Until that time, until such time as Quebecers make that democratic choice, the Bloc Québécois is going to continue working passionately to defend the interests of Quebec, even if that annoys the Conservatives, and the Liberal members from Quebec.

• (1525)

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is trouble in the Conservative heartland of Alberta on this issue. None other than Ted Morton, Alberta's finance minister, wrote an article on June 1 in the *Calgary Herald*, in which he said:

This is not just about securities, but all financial services that have been regulated by the provinces under their Section 92 jurisdiction over "property and civil rights"—including pensions, credit unions and insurance.

When it comes to diversification of the Alberta economy, financial services is one of the fastest growing sectors — with the potential for much greater growth. The job-multiplying effect of having a provincial-based securities commission has been well documented by Quebec. As Canada and the rest of the world emerges from recession, Alberta will lead the way. If we let the Alberta Securities Commission get scooped up and transferred to Toronto, we can say goodbye to thousands of spin-off jobs in investment banking, law, accounting and financial analysts.

Why would Albertans want to do this, especially when it is not even necessary?

That was written by the finance minister of Alberta. Today when the parliamentary secretary was asked about Ted Morton, Alberta's finance minister, he pretended that it was just a minor difference of opinion, that he had just seen and spoken with him this past weekend and they were very close on the issue. All we have to do is read the article in the *Calgary Herald* to see that they are miles apart.

• (1530)

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Mr. Speaker, we see that Quebec is not alone in its concerns about this issue. The advantage of having a system where each province has its own regulatory authority, its own authority issuing passports so that people can move from one authority to another, is that the different authorities can take account of their particular reality.

Business of Supply

One does not need two postdoctorates in finance or economics to understand that the economic structure of Alberta is not the same as that of Prince Edward Island or Quebec. That is why the current system is much more flexible and why many other provinces want to keep their system. For Quebec this is even more important. It is not just a matter of economic structure, but also of culture, language, and our capacity as a nation to have access to the economic levers that allow us to develop.

It is a little pathetic to see the government having to invoke the cases of Earl Jones or other fraud artists to justify its commission. It is as if I were to say that there are lots of murders in Canada and that proves that the Criminal Code should not be a federal responsibility. There is lots of speeding on our roads, but that is no reason to transfer the highway safety code to the federal government. Just because the system is not perfect and we are not able to catch every single case does not mean we must transfer the responsibility to someone else. We must leave that sort of logic behind and get serious.

The cases that have been submitted in the House, notably that of Earl Jones, concern people who were not even registered with the Autorité des marchés financiers du Québec. Even if we had an intergalactic securities commission, if those swindlers were not registered they still would not have been caught, and people would still have been duped.

We have to remain reasonable and take this seriously. The issue before us today is whether we should allow Quebec, and surely other provinces, to be stripped of a good part of its financial community for the benefit of Toronto.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.)
Mr. Speaker, I am going to share my time with the hon. member for Charlottetown.

Out of respect, I will start by reading the motion introduced by the hon. member from the Bloc:

That this House denounce the government's unrelenting efforts to marginalize the Quebec nation, in particular by depriving it of the major economic lever of securities regulation, a matter that is under the exclusive legislative jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces and for which they have established a harmonized regulatory system recognized for its effectiveness by the OECD and the World Bank, among others, and that it demand, along with Quebec's National Assembly and the business community in Quebec, that the government immediately withdraw its draft bill.

Since the constitutionality of a national securities commission has, as we know, been referred to the Supreme Court, I do not see the relevance of this motion, which appears to me to be a semantic exercise only. However, to put it all in context, let me give you an overview of the general situation.

First, let us remember that securities legislation in Canada and throughout the world has two main objectives: to protect investors and to ensure that financial markets are efficient, fair and transparent.

In general, the agencies that regulate securities oversee four important areas:

First, capital leveraging through the sale of securities such as private offerings and primary distributions.

Second, corporate transparency and the continual disclosure of relevant information to investors.

Third, enforcement of the securities regulations and prevention of deceptive or fraudulent behaviour.

Fourth, the qualifications of securities traders and their good reputation and accreditation.

As for the provinces, Alberta, Manitoba and Quebec are currently opposed to a single securities regulator. Ontario, on the other hand, is in favour. British Columbia has made it known that it would be part of such a program only if provincial jurisdiction were respected. In October 2007, as we know, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion asking the government to drop its plans for a national securities regulation commission.

One of the arguments made by the provinces is that securities are a provincial responsibility under section 92(13) of the Constitution on "property and civil rights", and that the federal government should not interfere.

Under the current regulations, securities in Canada are subject to directives from 13 provincial and territorial authorities.

In order to make a balanced presentation, I must set out the arguments on both sides of the issue.

These are the main arguments against the current system.

It is very expensive for corporations that want to attract capital to comply with all the provinces' regulations. Time is an important factor in leveraging capital, and compliance with multiple provincial regulatory schemes delays the start of negotiations.

Investors in the less populous provinces may be denied access to certain investments. Because of differences and disparities in the existing regulations, it is sometimes difficult to ensure they are enforced. More resources would have to be devoted to this.

In support of the present "multijurisdictional" model, the provinces make the following arguments:

First, it allows innovative ideas to be developed that can be adapted and be more responsive to the specific features of regional markets. Second, regulations can be more effectively administered, as the agencies with that authority acquire experience and knowledge in their regional markets.

● (1535)

Third, a common regulatory agency might impose compliance rules that were designed for larger multinational users and might exclude the small regional businesses, which would not be good, and thus cut them off from financing.

Fourth, the multijurisdictional model protects regional securities infrastructure that the provinces and territories have created with accountants, notaries, underwriters and other professionals.

In response to the criticism, all the provinces and territories, with the exception of Ontario, formed the Canadian Securities Administrators, a forum that allows the various securities regulators to coordinate and harmonize the regulation system in Canada.

Business of Supply

The Canadian Securities Administrators have developed a number of initiatives, including a passport system allowing for a single wicket and the ability to participate in all the regional capital markets.

On March 17, 2008, the securities passport system introduced the next stage, as a result of which any prospectus approved in one province would be recognized in all the other provinces, except Ontario. The Canadian Securities Administrators also introduced a harmonized electronic data system for analysis and research to make information available, called SEDAR, and a simplified national registration system for securities traders.

Once again, since we do not expect a decision to be made for another 18 or 24 months, the Bloc is trying to score political points with this motion today. We completely agree with the Bloc that the existing expertise in the different regions of Canada, particularly in Quebec and Montreal, should not be sacrificed or displaced in order to create a single commission. The Autorité des marchés financiers du Québec has a very good reputation and is recognized around the world.

Furthermore, the Conservative government's divisive approach is completely unacceptable. This is another example of the Prime Minister's poor track record on provincial-federal relations.

However, since we are still waiting to hear from the Supreme Court on this issue, and since the issue will not likely budge for another year and a half, the Bloc's motion is completely useless.

One thing is certain: the provinces are divided on this issue. So it would be counter-productive for Parliament to vote prematurely, when it is the Constitution, as interpreted by the Supreme Court, that must set the boundaries of the discussions between the provinces and the federal government. Just like Quebec, we are completely opposed to displacing the financial expertise we have in the Montreal region.

Why does the Bloc not want to wait to hear the Supreme Court opinion? Why does it want to open this debate now, when there is no serious bill on the horizon?

I am getting to the key point of my speech. Liberal governments have long been recognized for their solid financial leadership. Our stable financial system, developed by the Liberals, became an international model during the economic crisis. The best approach is to protect investments and to ensure that each of the regions does not lose its specific knowledge.

The Liberals agree that when it comes to provincial-federal relations, the Prime Minister has failed, and we are opposed to the Conservatives' unilateral approach that just results in tensions. On many occasions we have urged the government to get the opinion of the Supreme Court. Now that it has, we just have to wait to hear from the court.

So let us wait for the Supreme Court's opinion.

• (1540)

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie. There are different kinds of members in the House. Some are career MPs, while others come here after a brilliant career. I have to say, in all

seriousness, that our colleague has had an admirable international career in the space program.

However, in his speech, he did say a number of things that were not true, such as when he said it was more expensive and more problematic. Clearly, the financial system is not his area of expertise, but he went on to answer questions. It was a fairly balanced speech.

I have just one question for him, and it has to do with his career and mine. What would he have said if, when humankind began to conquer space, the Americans had told Canada that because there was so much at stake, they were going to control everything. I am sure he would have stood up for the Canadian Space Agency as a Canadian institution and made a case for its competence. I am making a case for our competence just as he would have done for the agency.

Mr. Marc Garneau: I thank my colleague from Hochelaga for that lovely compliment. I believe he is in the same category as me. He has come to federal politics somewhat late, after distinguishing himself in his previous career.

I presented both sides of the coin without giving my personal opinion. Those are the arguments made by the people who want a single commission and those who think it is better to keep the provincial commissions. I wanted to present the arguments openly, and that is what I did. I hope he got the main point I was trying to make, which was that the Supreme Court will examine the Constitution and issue an opinion. We should wait for the result of the Supreme Court review before moving motions like the one put forward today.

• (1545)

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Senator Elaine McCoy from Alberta is not the only Albertan who thinks this measure is a misplaced one. In fact, Ted Morton, the finance minister, is certainly attacking the government for this very thing. On June 1, in the *Calgary Herald*, he said:

—exactly what is Ottawa trying to fix that hasn't already been addressed by, or couldn't be fixed within, the current passport system?

He indicates that the criticisms of others have been others have been resolved through 10 years of harmonization efforts to create the passport system. He said:

It is a system that works well both on a local and a national level. Internationally, Canada's passport system is recognized as among the best in the world, with the OECD and the World Bank Group rating it ahead of both the United States and the United Kingdom. And two years in a row the Milken Institute ranked Canada...as having the "best access to capital".

It seems to me that the Conservative finance minister, the parliamentary assistant and Mr. Morton are in two different spaces. They have two diametrically opposed views of what is going on.

What are the members comments regarding the opposition from Alberta to this measure?

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, the member for Elmwood—Transcona has illustrated that this is an extremely complex matter and certain provinces, and he points out Alberta, have very clearly indicated they do not favour one national securities regulator. Quebec has made that quite clear. I believe Manitoba has also expressed similar reservations.

Business of Supply

Given the fact that this matter has been referred to the Supreme Court, it seems to me that at this point we should allow provinces to continue to express themselves and we should wait for the Supreme Court. There is a healthy debate going on and we will find out, in due course, when the Supreme Court pronounces itself. Then we will have a solid basis on which to continue and make a decision.

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate. The member for Westmount—Ville-Marie who just spoke said that there is a healthy debate going on. I want to remind the members in the House that a healthy debate on this issue has been going on for, I believe, 56 years. This issue has been debated on and off.

Of course there are strong arguments on the merits of a national securities system, that it perhaps would be more efficient, less cumbersome and less costly. It would certainly be of great assistance to the six or seven smaller provinces that do not have the capacity to come forward with a very robust system of securities regulation.

On the other hand, we have very strong arguments, to which the member referred, regarding the autonomous nature of some of the businesses in certain areas of our big country, especially the province of Quebec with its unique culture and unique business and, I would consider, a very robust system of securities regulation, and also in Alberta, which relates perhaps more to oil and gas, and in British Columbia, which is more directed to mining. These are unique markets with their own autonomous systems.

There are arguments on both sides. The government has made it part of its policy and it has, and I suggest wisely, referred the matter to the Supreme Court to decide whether or not it is constitutionally legitimate, whether or not it is within the legislative authority of the Parliament of Canada. It is my position before this House today that the debate really should not take place until that decision is rendered by the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Supreme Court of Canada could come back and say that it is certainly well within the legislative authority of the Parliament of Canada and the debate could continue. I also should point out that I believe that references have been started in the courts of appeal both in the province of Quebec and in the province of Alberta, which of course would carry on most likely to the Supreme Court of Canada.

If the Supreme Court of Canada states that the Parliament of Canada has no legislative authority to be involved in this matter, then my context in this debate would change dramatically.

Maybe the Supreme Court of Canada would come back with a hybrid decision that it is within the legislative authority of the Government of Canada but that there are caveats and conditions as to what we can or cannot do. Again the whole tenor and nature of the debate would change.

The motion reads in part, “a matter that is under the exclusive legislative jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces and for which they have established” et cetera. Says who? That is a statement that originates from this motion. I believe it is a statement that was also made in the legislative assembly of the province of Quebec. It is a statement that has been made by other commentators, but there is a whole host of other commentators, scholars and lawyers that state the opposite.

It is my position that this debate really should take place after the decision is received from the Supreme Court of Canada. There are very contrasting and conflicting opinions on this particular issue. When we do get the opinion back from the Supreme Court of Canada, then I would suggest that the debate continue and we can debate the matter on the merits, based on the constitutional ambits as set down by the Supreme Court of Canada.

I suggest that was the right thing to do. It is not the way the Conservatives have always gone, especially in some of the crime bills and some of the bills dealing with Senate reform, but in this case we are getting an opinion from the Supreme Court of Canada as to the proper perspective for the debate.

Even if it did come back that it was within the legislative authority of the Parliament of Canada, it is very clear from the legislation, and it has to be pointed out, that provinces, if they want to protect their own autonomy, if they want to, for their own political reasons, retain the securities infrastructure and system and the regulatory framework that they have, they are certainly entitled to do that. I do not think it would be in anyone's best interest to unilaterally take over the regulation of securities, if there are certain provinces, and I assume these would be the larger provinces, not the smaller ones, that wanted to retain the legislative jurisdiction.

• (1550)

As far as I am concerned, right now it is somewhat of a phony debate as to whether someone supports it or does not support it. We cannot have an intelligent debate not knowing the correct constitutional framework in which the debate will occur. A decision, as the previous speaker indicated, will be tabled by the Supreme Court of Canada within the next 12 to 24 months, at which time I suggest this debate could continue. Individuals from the different parties could bring forward their respective arguments and then we could go forward on a political basis.

Having said that, I am certainly not going to support the motion. With the matter presently before the Supreme Court of Canada, I believe the debate should be tabled. A bill has not been presented by the government House leader. There is no legislation before the House right now. I do not know why we are continuing to debate this.

Maybe the intent is to stop it in its tracks, but the whole issue ought to be subject to a full debate. However, it should be subject to a full debate within the correctly established adjudicated and constitutional framework so that people cannot make statements that it is a matter under the exclusive legislative jurisdiction of Quebec. It may or may not be correct and depending on whether it is or is not correct would very much frame the debate in the House.

Having said that, I have followed this issue and some of the comments made by the second-last speaker were about efficient securities regulation. I am not going to disagree with that, but one issue I have found troubling for at least 20 years is the apparent lack of capacity right across Canada to enforce our securities regulation. I could list 50 or 60 cases where there was what I consider to be very serious fraud carried out on investors right across Canada. They are not Quebec situations; they go right across Canada. The provincial securities regulators just did not have the capacity, the wherewithal or the legislation to deal with the situation.

Business of Supply

Perhaps the most grievous one that comes to everyone's mind, though it is a little old now, is the Bre-X case. I believe there were something like \$2 billion of investors' money that disappeared. It just went. It was certainly fraudulent securities regulation, trading, everything, but in hindsight, was anyone ever convicted of a criminal offence? No. Was anyone ever convicted of any securities offences regarding this situation? No. Was there ever any money paid to any investor? No.

That repeats itself in the Michael Ritter and Earl Jones situations, et cetera. When one reads about it in the papers, one comes to the very stark conclusion that right across Canada, the provinces do not have the capacity to deal with these situations.

Studies have been mentioned. Someone previously talked about an efficient system. I have in my hand a study from November 2009 in which Pricewaterhouse ranked Canada as the fourth most fraudulent country out of 54 countries. The countries that were more fraudulent were Russia, Kenya and South Africa.

To summarize, this debate has been going on for 56 years. Legislation is not before the House. The matter has been quite correctly referred to the Supreme Court of Canada and I would like to continue the debate once the decision is rendered by that court.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was quite saddened to hear the hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie reduce this debate to a purely legal issue, namely whether the Supreme Court of Canada will say that the federal government has the right to interfere in securities, as it intends to.

We can almost be certain that the court will side with the government, especially since every one of the court's judges is appointed by the Canadian government, which makes it not a Canadian institution, but a federal institution.

It is like a federal institution asking another federal institution whether the federal government has the right to interfere in this area. The real question from Quebec's perspective is: will this serve the interests of Quebec or not? That is the concern of the Bloc Québécois. It is obvious that it will not.

All the stakeholders in Quebec, the National Assembly, the major business groups, the major financial groups, know that tens of thousands of good jobs will be lost in Quebec and that English will become the only language of work in the financial sector and—

• (1600)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. The hon. member for Charlottetown.

[*English*]

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, the member prefaced the question whether it is good for Quebec, but he asked why we would refer this to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The third sentence of the motion states, “a matter that is under the exclusive legislative jurisdiction of Quebec”, and my question is, says who? That has never been adjudicated on by the Supreme Court of Canada. That statement may be correct, or it may be incorrect, and

based upon whether it is correct or incorrect would very seriously determine the parameters of this debate and the opinion of every person who participates in the debate. I think it is quite legitimate to get whether or not it is within the legislative jurisdiction of Quebec or it is within the legislative jurisdiction of Canada.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the bad news for the Conservatives does not stop on this national securities regulator issue. Senator Elaine McCoy has a lot to say about how this will be bad for people and companies, the financial services industry in Alberta. In addition, Ted Morton, Alberta's finance minister, has a lot to say about the subject. He said:

This is not just about securities, but all financial services that have been regulated by the provinces under their Section 92 jurisdiction over “property and civil rights”,— including pensions, credit unions and insurance.

—in fact for 100 years—

When it comes to diversification of the Alberta economy, financial services is one of the fastest growing sectors—with the potential for much greater growth. The job-multiplying effect of having a provincial-based securities commission has been well documented by Quebec. As Canada and the rest of world emerges from the recession, Alberta will lead the way. If we let the Alberta Securities Commission get scooped up and transferred to Toronto, we can say good-bye to thousands of spinoff jobs in investment banking, law, accounting and financial analysts.

This is what the Alberta treasurer had to say about this measure.

I would like to ask the member what his comments would be vis-à-vis his province of Prince Edward Island.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, again, this highlights the debate. The member talked about a political issue. He quoted a senator and he quoted Ted Morton, whether it is good for Alberta or bad for Alberta, but these are political discussions which should be had after we get the ruling from the Supreme Court of Canada.

To answer his last comment, Prince Edward Island is a province with 134,000 people. It does not have the capacity to deal with the sophisticated fraud that is going on in Canada now. As for the two people from Alberta that he quoted, I refer the member to the recent Michael Ritter situation in which \$270 million was bilked, mostly from U.S. investors. I think that very little was done by the Alberta Securities Commission. These situations repeat themselves right across Canada.

Again, this is a political debate that should be had after the Supreme Court renders its decision.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ) Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to speak on this opposition day. The hon. member from Hochelaga introduced a motion that, in my opinion, is completely relevant to the Conservative government's offensive for a Canada-wide securities commission. I thank him for this initiative and I want him to know that he will have my vote on Monday evening.

Business of Supply

It is important to read this motion since it contains all the arguments brought forward by Quebec's business and political circles, as well as by journalists and observers. Seldom have we seen a consensus like this in Quebec with respect to a federal initiative. The whole Quebec nation is against the Conservative government's offensive on the financial sector, which is, moreover, very remarkable and surprising, given the very technical nature of the debate. Sometimes, the public has a hard time understanding all the ins and outs. Despite everything, the consensus in Quebec is very strong.

Both the elected members from Quebec in Ottawa, including the Bloc Québécois members, and the members of the National Assembly played a very important role in this matter by taking leadership and explaining the dangers of the draft securities commission bill proposed by the Conservative Minister of Finance. While it does not happen often, business people are joining forces against this completely unacceptable bill.

Here is the motion:

That this House denounce the government's unrelenting efforts to marginalize the Quebec nation, in particular by depriving it of the major economic lever of securities regulation, a matter that is under the exclusive legislative jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces and for which they have established a harmonized regulatory system recognized for its effectiveness by the OECD and the World Bank among others, and that it demand, along with Quebec's National Assembly and the business community in Quebec, that the government immediately withdraw its draft bill.

In starting by saying, "That this House denounce the government's unrelenting efforts to marginalize the Quebec nation...", the hon. member for Hochelaga describes very well the context in which the Conservative offensive in the financial sector occurs. If this were the Conservative government's only attack on the Quebec nation, we might think it was an *idée fixe* of the finance minister or of the Prime Minister when he studied economics and after doing a paper on it made it his pet subject. If that were the case, we might think we could make them see reason.

It is very clear, though, that this is just one piece of the puzzle, a part of a greater whole, a strategy that is being implemented but has not succeeded thanks to the Bloc Québécois, which is there to block it. The attempt to weaken, undermine and marginalize the Quebec nation can be seen in Bill C-12, which reduces the political weight of the Quebec nation in the House by increasing the number of seats in Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta while the government refuses to make any promises about the proportion of MPs from Quebec in the House, as well as in the draft legislation on a Canada-wide securities commission.

Other initiatives are cut from the same cloth, for instance the dismantling of the firearms registry. In question period, my colleague from Ahuntsic reminded the House that three-quarters of Quebeckers are in favour of the firearms registry. Among young people 18 to 24 years old, this proportion rises to 85%. There is a strong consensus therefore. This government, as well as members from other Canadian parties, support the idea, though, and are trying to dismantle what the Quebec nation considers an essential tool. Refusing to listen to Quebec is just another way of marginalizing it.

There is also the bilingual judges issue. The debate currently unfolding in the Senate is surrealistic in tone. Even some francophones have been heard to say that competent people would

be held back, when we know very well no unilingual francophone has ever sat on the Supreme Court.

• (1605)

There is something surrealistic about it. The strangest thing, and this is a real paradox, is that very often the Bloc Québécois is the only party that makes a real effort to uphold the 1867 Constitution. The other Canadian parties no longer care about it at all. We do not believe in the Official Languages Act, but at least we push to have French recognized as the equal of English.

In theory, the Official Languages Act should lead all members of the House to support this bill, but it no longer counts. Or it only counts one way. It is a bit like the Supreme Court, as my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher said, which like the tower of Pisa always leans one way. We do not have any illusions, therefore, about the decision the Supreme Court will reach on the draft securities commission bill.

In any case, this is not a legal debate but a political debate. It is part of the federal government strategy, especially the Conservative government, to marginalize and weaken the Quebec nation.

I want to finish by saying—and this will certainly please the Transport Minister—that the purpose of the entire economic development strategy orchestrated from Ottawa is also to weaken and undermine Quebec.

This strategy has two pillars. First, oil, the big oil companies—the friends of the Minister of Finance—and traditional motor vehicles using gasoline or hydrocarbon products. Then the financial system, which absolutely must be centred in Toronto. Those are the two pillars of Canada's industrial strategy. Against that background, the concerns and interests of Quebec are marginal and matter little. That is the context for this bill.

In the first part of the motion that the hon. member for Hochelaga put forward, it is very clear that this draft bill is one more aspect of the government's unrelenting efforts to marginalize the Quebec nation, in particular by depriving it of the major economic level of securities regulation, a matter that is under the exclusive legislative jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. Everyone acknowledges that, even the Minister of Finance. It is perfectly clear in the Constitution of Canada. To be precise, powers in securities matters are given to the provinces as part of their jurisdiction over property and civil rights set out in section 92(13) of the Constitution Act, 1867.

As a result, it is quite obvious that this bill is an attempt to do indirectly what cannot be done directly. There have been a number of attempts along these lines. This is not the first time that a federal government or a minister of finance, whether Liberal or Conservative, has tried to establish a Canada-wide securities commission. They always run up against the very clear statement in the Constitution. I have just mentioned the specific section of the Constitution Act, 1867, which makes it clear that this is under the legislative jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

Business of Supply

So they have invented a scheme: voluntary membership in the commission. The scheme fools no one. It is exactly the same method which the Conservatives are now using to change the Senate. They introduce Bill C-10, seeking to limit senators' terms. Then, in the Senate, another bill is introduced saying that senators should be chosen from a list of people who have been publicly elected. They know that the Senate cannot be substantially changed in a direct way without entering into constitutional negotiations with Quebec and the provinces. So they are trying a backdoor way of doing what they cannot do directly. That is exactly what this bill is doing; it is trying to impose a Canada-wide securities commission, contrary to Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction over the area.

As I mentioned earlier, and as a number of experts have also said: the Minister of Finance's voluntary membership is a con job, and it fools no one. Mr. Lortie, a former CEO of the Montreal Stock Exchange, even said so in his report.

●(1610)

They will try to balkanize the system that exists at present. They will ensure that pressure is brought to bear by the financial centres themselves for there to be one securities commission, which is not necessary at present because the system is working very well. That is what is in the motion before this House. This field is under the exclusive legislative authority of Quebec and the provinces, and the provinces and Quebec have put a harmonized regulatory system in place, the effectiveness of which is recognized by the OECD and the World Bank, among others.

It took several years to put this very sophisticated system in place, we have to acknowledge that. It was not easy, but it has been done. We are in the second phase of implementing the passport system, which means that once an issuer has a licence in a province or in Quebec, it may issue in other jurisdictions. That is then recognized by the authority in the other provinces or territories. It is a plan whose effectiveness has been recognized by the OECD. It has identified the Canadian system as the second best system in the world. I will give you the reference. It might be worth it for the Conservatives, particularly those from Quebec, to familiarize themselves with it.

I would also like to take this opportunity to clarify something. When we see that bills of this nature are plainly contrary to the interests of the Quebec nation and members or ministers from Quebec are being used to sell them to Quebeckers, we cannot refrain from stating a fact, and it is not an insult. These Quebeckers are serving a purpose in the sense that they are here to sell a plan that is contrary to the interests of the Quebec nation and could not be sold by a minister who came from Ontario or Alberta.

The Minister of Finance would have no credibility if he tried to sell this plan in Quebec, whether to the business community or to the people of Quebec as a whole. In fact, he was the Minister of Finance of Ontario, which is the only province that is not participating in the passport system. At present, he is the black sheep in our system of securities regulation in Quebec and he would have no credibility. So they have to use Quebec Conservatives. I think that is somewhat unfortunate for them. Their strategy is not working, but it is still sad to see these Quebeckers stoop to that level.

So I said there was an article in issue 43 of the OECD Journal of Economic Studies published in 2006. Since then, the passport system has made enormous progress. Four authors wrote an article entitled *Regulation of Financial Systems and Economic Growth in OECD Countries: An Empirical Analysis*. It is well worth reading; it is very well documented and very rigorous. They conclude that the financial regulatory system in Canada is the second best in the world. I will give another example. The American system is ranked fourth. The system in the United Kingdom, the leader in the development of the financial sector worldwide, is in fifth place, and Australia is seventh.

This is an extremely effective system and, as I said, it is recognized by the OECD and the International Monetary Fund. It is totally fallacious to talk about the need for a Canada-wide commission on the ground of effectiveness. We have a harmonized regulatory system at present, the passport system, the effectiveness of which has been recognized by the OECD and the World Bank, among others.

As the National Assembly of Quebec has done, the Bloc calls for the bill to be withdrawn.

On May 27, 2010, the day after the Minister of Finance unveiled his draft legislation, a motion was unanimously adopted by the Liberal Party of Québec, a federalist party, the ADQ, an autonomist party that needs to define itself more, and by the Parti Québécois. The motion reads as follows:

That the National Assembly denounce the obstinacy of the federal government in tabling unilaterally a bill to create the Canadian Securities Commission;

That it denounce this invasion into the fundamental jurisdictions of Quebec;

That it recall the opposition of the Quebec business community;

[That, finally,] it urge the Canadian government to reconsider this decision and, failing that, the Canadian Parliament not to pass such an act.

●(1615)

It echoed a first motion unanimously adopted in October 2007, after a document was tabled. If my memory serves me well, it was the finance minister's economic statement in which he first outlined the concept of a national securities regulator. The National assembly unanimously adopted that motion, which read:

That the National Assembly ask the federal government to abandon its Canada-wide securities commission project.

Therefore, the National Assembly, which represents the Quebec nation, is very clear on this matter. There is no doubt about it—it will be a hard-fought battle if the federal Conservative government continues to press on.

In the motion moved by the member for Hochelaga, there is a reference to the fact that the business community wants the bill to be withdrawn. I believe it is worthwhile naming those opposed because not just the member for Hochelaga, the member for Joliette and all Bloc members are against this bill. It is not just the members of the National Assembly who are against this bill. The Association de l'exploration minière du Québec, the Barreau du Québec, the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, the Cascades Group, the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, the Quebec City Chamber of Commerce, the Chambre des notaires du Québec, the Chambre de la sécurité financière, the Conseil du patronat du Québec, the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec, Fondation CSN, the QFL Solidarity Fund, the Jean Coutu Group, the Institute for Governance of Private and Public Organizations, the Institut québécois de la planification financière, Université Laval professor Jacques Saint-Pierre, Jean La Couture, corporate director, president of Regroupement des assureurs à charte du Québec, are also opposed. And there are others, such as Power Corporation—

An hon. member: Canam, Quebecor.

Mr. Pierre Paquette: And others.

Constitutional expert Henri Brun has also spoken out against this. There is also Michel Nadeau, who was a journalist with *Le Devoir* and then worked for the Caisse de dépôt et placement. There is also Canam, Quebecor, Mouvement Desjardins, Power Corporation, La Capitale Financial Group, Transat, Transcontinental, Molson Coors, Alimentation Couche-Tard, I already mentioned Cascades, the SSQ, an insurance company. Once again, I spoke about Pierre Lortie in my speech. I already mentioned Jean La Couture. There is also Jean-Marc Fortier, an associate of Robinson Sheppard Shapiro, a very reputable law firm, with whom I have worked before. And there are many more.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, it is extremely rare for business people to get involved in politics. They fear it and know little about it. I think this is a sign of cohesiveness in the Quebec nation. Therefore, this bill should be withdrawn. If the Conservative government persists, it is clear that there will be a major crisis, especially since, as I mentioned, this is not the only problem in the relationship between the federal Conservative government and the Quebec nation.

As well, Quebec's constitutional jurisdiction is obvious. It has been acknowledged by the Minister of Finance and the Conservative government. And when they use the argument that participation is voluntary, they are conceding that we are correct in saying that this is Quebec's jurisdiction and that of the provinces.

Their argument of a more effective system does not hold water either because the passport system works very well. Once again, if Toronto and Ontario participated, it would work even better, but we will not punish those who work to make it function and reward those who throw a wrench in the works.

As I said, it is obvious that the plan is to strip Quebec of its financial sector. We have already lost a part of the Montreal stock exchange activities to Toronto. This must stop somewhere and it will stop with the Minister of Finance's draft bill concerning the national securities commission. It is a bill that will not pass and I can

Business of Supply

guarantee that the Bloc Québécois will work to that end along with all of Quebec's socio-economic stakeholders.

● (1620)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance pretended that he and the Alberta finance minister were very close on this issue. I decided to check into what the Alberta minister of finance had to say about this whole idea. Here is one of the things he said:

Internationally, Canada's passport system is recognized as among the best in the world, with the OECD and the World Bank Group rating it ahead of both the United States and the United Kingdom. And two years in a row the Milken Institute ranked Canada first as having the "best access to capital".

That is a far different story than what we heard from the parliamentary secretary just a couple of hours ago. The minister went on to say:

The federal government has yet to identify any needed improvement that could not be accommodated within the existing system.

And further he said:

—a single national regulator in the U.S....certainly didn't stop Bernie Madoff...not to mention Enron or WorldCom

Most important, he pointed out that there are a number of financial services that have been regulated by the provinces for 100 years and these will be at risk, and jobs will be moved out of Alberta and to Toronto as a result of this measure.

I would like the member to make some comments.

● (1625)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right and I would like to thank him for his question. There will be significant job losses in Alberta as well as Quebec. My colleague has mentioned the quality of regulations and protection for investors, which is of very strong in the current system. In fact, I was the one who gave him the reference.

Our system, which is not federal or national, but is administered by the provinces and territories, is ranked second in the world, according to the OECD. It is interesting to note that sectors under federal regulation are ranked lower. For example, when it comes to regulating the banking sector, which is under federal jurisdiction, Canada stood ninth, whereas the United Kingdom ranked second. As for regulations concerning the Competition Act, Canada placed fourth while the United States was first.

It seems that a passport system that works well produces better results than a centralized regulatory system in Ottawa would, be it in terms of the banking system or the Competition Act.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate our colleague from Joliette on his excellent speech. With their bill, the Conservatives hope to centralize the securities market in Toronto.

The hon. member for Joliette and the many members who spoke during today's opposition day have demonstrated that the current system works very well. It is effective and one of the best in the world. This is recognized by the OECD and the World Bank.

Business of Supply

Can my colleague tell me how a Canada-wide commission might give investors less protection when it comes to securities than the current system, which is very effective?

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, no argument justifies implementing a Canada-wide securities commission. The current system works and is recognized around the world. Constitutionally speaking, this matter falls under provincial and Quebec jurisdiction. So some other explanation is needed. Why does the Conservative government, the federal government, want to create a Canada-wide securities commission?

As I explained earlier, this is an economic and industrial development strategy they have developed based on the interests of the Canadian nation. This strategy targets two main sectors: the automotive and oil sectors—in Ontario and western Canada—and the financial sector.

At present, Quebec, Montreal, Toronto and Alberta all share the pie. The portion regulated by Ontario is only 22%. The larger part is regulated elsewhere. To destroy that system, the Conservatives are going to create a problem by implementing this Canada-wide securities commission. This will cause such a mess that the business community, even in Quebec—particularly because of the need to ask for a permit and the elimination of the passport system—will lobby for a single securities commission.

That is the ultimate goal of the Conservative government, all for Toronto's benefit.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased again to discuss this issue today. Once again, I am going to quote from the article written by the Alberta minister of finance. He said that all financial services have been regulated by the provinces for the last 100 years. We are talking about credit unions, insurance and pensions. There is a lot of jobs at stake.

He said:

When it comes to diversification of the Alberta economy, financial services is one of the fastest growing sectors...The job-multiplying effect of having a provincial-based securities commission has been well documented by Quebec. As Canada and the rest of the world emerges from the recession, Alberta will lead the way. If we let the Alberta Securities Commission get scooped up and transferred to Toronto, we can also say goodbye to thousands of spinoff jobs in investment banking, law, accounting and financial analysts.

I assume that will be the same argument that will apply to Montreal. I assume that will be the same argument that Manitoba will use and has used for the last 10 years.

Would the member like to add any further comments to that?

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, that is quite right. I have the figures here. For Montreal, we are talking about 97,000 direct jobs and 150,000 direct and indirect jobs. For Quebec as a whole, we are talking about 155,000 direct jobs and 300,000 direct and indirect jobs.

We have already seen job losses in this sector resulting mostly from the transfer of stock exchange activities from Montreal to Toronto. In Quebec, between 1991 and 2008, 8,000 jobs were lost,

whereas 52,000 jobs were created in Ontario, as well as in Alberta, considering that the oil boom also had an impact. The same thing happened in British Columbia. However, Quebec is especially threatened by the future establishment of a national securities regulator since jobs are already moving from Montreal to Toronto.

I did not finish the list of those who want the federal government to withdraw the draft legislation on the securities commission. The cities of Montreal and Quebec are part of the coalition and for good reason. They are very aware of the effect of the Minister of Finance's major move.

I will close by stating that they already plan on spending \$150 million to establish this commission even though we already have a very efficient system in place. That is throwing money out the window. It is like the fake lake, the cardboard decorations and the money being spent to prepare for the G8 and G20 meetings.

I am convinced that the battle is just beginning and that we can only be victorious.

Mr. Guy André: Mr. Speaker, I think that this bill simply aims to steal from Montreal's financial sector to strengthen Toronto's.

Can my colleague from Joliette explain how the Conservative and Liberal members elected in Quebec can go against the unanimous consensus of the National Assembly? It has told the federal government to maintain our current financial system because it works and it supports our economic initiatives.

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is the most blatant proof that the Bloc Québécois members are the only ones uncompromisingly defending Quebec's consensus and the National Assembly's unanimous motions. We do not ask if it will be bad for such and such a group. We are here to serve certain interests and we will not compromise on that. It is sad to see that the Quebec members from the national parties are sometimes forced to compromise just so they can keep their seat in the Conservative caucus.

However, in the end, the voters will decide. If I were in the same situation as many of them, I would look ahead and see that the future does not look promising. Many of them will lose their summer job.

* * *

[*English*]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following public bill to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-203, an act respecting a National Philanthropy Day.

[*Translation*]

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 Vancouver Quadra, Access to Information; the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Persons with Disabilities.

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SECURITIES REGULATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me an opportunity to respond to the motion presented by the member for Hochelaga.

The Bloc Québécois' finance critic has the right to express his point of view on a Canadian securities regulator, but he cannot twist the facts to suit his purposes, which is something he does very well.

This is not the first time that an opponent of a Canadian securities regulator has quoted the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) selectively to back up his position.

The OECD supports creating such a body in Canada. In its survey of Canada, it said the following:

The current diversity of regulations—for example, each province has its own securities regulator—makes it difficult to maximize efficiency, and increases the risk that firms will choose to issue securities in other countries. A single regulator would eliminate the inefficiencies created by the limited enforcement authority of individual provincial agencies,

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) noted the following in its report on Canada: 2009 Article IV consultation.

A federal regulator could coordinate more readily with other regulators in monitoring risks and responding quickly to a crisis, and could also have an enhanced focus on the issues that securities markets may pose for national financial stability.

If the Bloc Québécois finance critic refuses to acknowledge what the IMF and the OECD have said, then he should at least listen to Earl Jones' victims, who also agree with this proposal. Joey Davis, the spokesperson for Earl Jones' victims, stated that they support the Minister of Finance's initiative and that he wants Mr. Bachand and Premier Jean Charest to work with Ottawa instead of against it.

Canadians know that we are going through tough times, and they want the government to do everything it can to ensure the country's stability and economic growth, which is exactly what our government is doing very well.

We all know that in 2007 and 2008, the global economy was on the brink of disaster for reasons that were not under Canada's control and were due primarily to bad decisions made in the United States. The stock markets plunged and many multinational banks went bankrupt, only to be saved by the state, or in other words, by taxpayers.

The turmoil that the capital markets were thrown into around the world has had a real impact, and not just on prosperous bankers and fund managers. Whether it was small investors, retirees or families setting money aside for the future, everyone felt the effects of the crisis when the value of investments like RRSPs and mutual funds literally collapsed.

During the global crisis, access to credit became the main problem facing Canadians. After all, if families and households could not obtain the financing they needed, Canada would be unable to promote the strong growth needed to get out of the recession.

Business of Supply

That is why the government created a \$200 billion extraordinary financing framework to facilitate access to financing for Canadian households and businesses during this extremely difficult period.

This was a robust initiative with several components. Under the framework, we launched the Insured Mortgage Purchase Program to respond to the global credit crisis. We expanded financing support through two Crown corporations: Export Development Canada (EDC) and the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC).

We also established the Canadian Lenders Assurance Facility (CLAF) and the Canadian Life Insurers Assurance Facility (CLIAF), which are both designed to help Canadian financial institutions gain access to global credit markets by providing loan guarantees similar to those offered in other countries.

This speedy and energetic response meant that Canadian banks and other financial institutions remained very solid, well capitalized and less dependent on leverage than their foreign competitors. Clearly, our plan has worked.

Today, global capital markets are relatively stable, and the Canadian financial system is on solid footing. The World Economic Forum considers our banks to be the most solid in the world. We can be proud of this.

However, there is a major flaw in our system that the global economic crisis brought to the forefront: Canada is the only industrialized country that does not have a single securities regulatory authority.

The debate about creating a Canadian securities regulatory authority has gone on for years. In 1935, the Royal Commission on Price Spreads recommended that a national securities commission be created. Since then, Canadian and international studies have recommended that a single regulatory body be created.

● (1635)

Unfortunately, things have changed little over the decades. The result is that our country of 34 million people has 13 regulatory agencies, 13 sets of rules and 13 fee schedules. In a world characterized by the interconnectedness of capital markets, where investors can invest billions of dollars virtually instantaneously, we have to lower barriers rather than raise them.

International organizations like the International Monetary Fund and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development believe this fragmentation is a major flaw in our system. And the government is taking measures to remedy that flaw.

Creating a Canadian securities regulatory body was a key commitment in each of the budgets we have introduced to date. Working with the provinces and territories, we were the first to call for a more efficient and simpler system of securities regulation. And today we are closer to the goal than any government that came before us.

Business of Supply

Since the 2006 election, the government has been preparing to establish a Canadian securities regulatory body. We have made more progress than all of the previous governments.

In February 2008, the government established the expert panel on securities regulation, tasked with providing independent recommendations and advice to federal, provincial and territorial ministers on how best to improve securities regulation in Canada.

According to the expert panel's final report:

While the terminology has differed over the years...the conclusion of virtually every study has been the same: Canadians are ill-served by such a balkanized system. It is worth noting that Canada is the only developed country without a national securities regulator.

In July 2009, we announced the creation of the Canadian Securities Transition Office, with the mandate to lead the transition to a single Canadian securities regulator and to develop a proposal for draft Canadian legislation to be known as the securities act.

In collaboration with the 10 participating provinces and territories, the transition office has developed a draft Canadian securities act. It is presently preparing a comprehensive transition plan and will soon begin to develop the regulations and procedures that will accompany the draft securities act.

The Bloc must know that a few months ago the government of Quebec decided to make a similar referral to the Quebec Court of Appeal.

It is therefore appropriate for the Government of Canada to refer the matter directly to the highest court in the land in order to obtain a definitive decision on the constitutional power of the Parliament of Canada to legislate in this area.

Benoît Pelletier, a professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa, who was the Quebec minister of Canadian intergovernmental affairs from 2003 to 2008 says that "deciding to ask the [Supreme] Court for an opinion is just and fair in my opinion".

I believe this measure is raising concerns in Quebec. I can tell you that, over the years, studies have consistently shown that having 13 regulatory bodies, 13 sets of officials and 13 legal standards, let alone all the attendant paper shuffling and red tape, causes very high costs for companies all over the country, including those in Quebec. Those costs will go down when all these various regulatory bodies have been combined into one.

To draft the legislation, the government already had the firm support of the provincial-territorial advisory committee made up of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut. We thank them for their vision and their desire to create a better system.

The proposed Canadian securities act that resulted from their efforts will lay the foundation for a new Canadian securities regulator, which will provide better and more consistent protection for investors across Canada. Furthermore, it will also improve regulatory and criminal enforcement in order to better fight white collar crime. People who commit securities fraud will face a stricter,

more thorough system, and more importantly, one that is easier to enforce.

More specifically, the proposed legislation will cover securities-related offences currently covered by the Criminal Code, including securities fraud, market manipulation, insider trading and misrepresentation of the facts. And these provisions will apply across Canada.

● (1640)

At present, provincial securities regulators hand nearly all cases over to the police for investigation any time criminal conduct is suspected. Giving the regulatory body the opportunity to investigate these crimes will allow it to take on a role that complements that of the police, bringing in new expertise, providing additional resources and increasing the field staff in order to combat securities-related crimes.

The proposed legislation also gives new powers to gather evidence in order to reduce the time and resources needed to investigate securities-related crimes. In short, a Canadian securities regulator will have the mandate, structure and powers needed to intervene on a national level. We will fill in the gaps. This is a major step forward for Canadian investors.

The legislation will also establish new powers to gather information from market participants in order to ensure financial stability.

The provinces, including Quebec, could choose to continue with their own securities regulator. I will repeat that because it is important: the provinces, including Quebec, could choose to continue with their own securities regulator. We will respect the jurisdiction of the provinces that choose not to take part and we will continue to invite them to contribute to setting up a better system.

The Government of Quebec could very well decide to keep its own securities regulator, but we hope it will embrace the wisdom behind creating a new Canada-wide regulatory body, especially given the interconnectedness and the great complexity of modern capital markets.

With the proposed Canadian securities act, the government has taken a significant step toward filling a major gap in our system and ensuring that our securities regulatory system serves as an example, as our financial system does, to the international community. I hope that all the provinces and territories will eventually see the benefits of these efforts and will work with the Government of Canada on implementing a Canadian securities regulator.

In closing, I would like to come back to a statement by Marcel Boyer, vice-president and chief economist of the Montreal Economic Institute and Bell Canada professor of industrial economics at the University of Montreal:

A single securities commission with a strong regional presence would favourably resolve the complex issue of regulating securities in Canada: keeping decentralization beneficial, where businesses remain free to deal with either office, while providing regional or industrial entities with a strong voice within a single national body that defines and applies uniform standards and regulations. With decentralized non-exclusive offices [again, non-exclusive offices] that are nevertheless able to influence for the better, a single securities commission would promote innovation and efficiency in terms of financial market regulation while at the same time ensuring de facto mutual recognition of regional sensitivities and distinctive features.

• (1645)

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for a former printer, a missing character makes a bad impression. I hope he will get over it. He will need to when he returns to his trade after the next election.

He did manage, though, to read his text reasonably well. I would like to point out to him that he admitted that Canada came to the help of the banks, something the government has always refused to say. He also mentioned EDC and said that Canada had set up insurance facilities and loan guarantees. So it was part of the system.

He said we have to reduce barriers. But there are no barriers now. The passport system means there are no longer any barriers. Fifteen years ago, there were 13 different commissions and 13 sets of rules and regulations, but that is no longer the case. He said very clearly that his government would not respect Quebec passports. It is the government, therefore, that is erecting barriers.

When he goes back to his business and wants to issue securities, he will need to have his passport in Quebec but will not be able to go abroad, to Canada, to find financing, whereas he can now.

• (1650)

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, the member for Hochelaga is a very good actor. If he were in the Gala des Olivier in Quebec, I am sure he would win some incredible awards. He is a fabulous actor, not just in the House but also in committee. I really must congratulate him because he is really very good.

The member for Hochelaga is trying to make Quebecers think that, being in Canada, we would not be winners if we were on a national leveraging effect. I would like to draw to his attention, though, that until there is evidence to the contrary, Quebec is part of Canada, to the great annoyance of the Bloc members here today. Quebec must therefore respect the other Canadian provinces that want to be part of a regulatory system like this. Every province can choose whether to be part of the system or not. We say it over and over: the system is not being imposed. In return, the other provinces must also show respect for Quebec. That is why the government plan is a voluntary one.

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member who just spoke is at odds with his fellow Conservative finance minister from Alberta, Ted Morton, who is asking what Ottawa is trying to fix that has not already been addressed or could not be fixed within the current passport system.

Why is the Alberta finance minister asking questions about why it is that we have gone through 10 years of harmonization efforts to create a passport system that is working very well? Why is he saying that the Canada passport system is recognized as among the best in the world, with the OECD and the World Bank group rating it ahead

Business of Supply

of the United States and the United Kingdom? Two years in a row the Milken Institute ranked Canada first as having the best access to capital.

Why is the Conservative finance minister in Alberta asking these questions and attacking what the government is doing?

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, the system that our government currently wishes to implement will protect Canadian investors. I sincerely believe—and I mentioned this in my speech—that the victims of Earl Jones support this bill.

I would also like to speak about Mr. Lacroix's victims because this morning I heard a colleague opposite say that 900 people in Quebec had been compensated by the AMF. I can say that 900 out of 6,000 is not very many. If we could go back in time a bit to Mr. Lacroix's heyday when he caused all sorts of problems for his investors, we could ask people if they thought the AMF did extraordinary work on this issue. The AMF was accused by all sides. I sincerely believe that the AMF, like any other system in Canada, can be strengthened and improved.

[English]

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to thank the NDP member across the way for supporting a Conservative finance minister. I hope he does that for more than just the province of Alberta and supports the federal Conservative finance minister, the number one finance minister in the world.

We will eliminate duplication and unnecessary costs through this process. It is a situation where there will be no office closures and no loss of jobs. It is voluntary. I do not know what the member does not understand about it being voluntary, but it is a voluntary system and it gives Canada a competitive advantage.

My interest is in what we would lose as a result of not going ahead with the system. I have looked at some of the reports by, for instance, the Canadian Bankers Association and the Investment Industry Association of Canada and they have clearly said that we are losing opportunity in Canada.

I am wondering if the member could comment on John Coffee's Colombia University study which shows that Canada loses about \$10 billion a year in economic output and 65,000 jobs. Why has this not been done before? Could the member elaborate a bit on what we are losing as an opportunity cost?

• (1655)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the very good question.

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In fact, the people of Alberta know how to count. I can actually say that Mr. Coffee's study states in particular that, with a national regulator, there could potentially be additional investments of more than \$10 billion in Canada, which is not peanuts. With these investments, we could potentially create 65,000 jobs in Canada.

Therefore, the work we are doing will improve conditions in Canada so that investors will invest in Canada. Canada's population of only 34 million is equivalent to that of California.

I sincerely believe that it is in our interest to work together to establish a national commission.

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, thank you for letting me speak to this issue again.

The member talks about respect for Quebec. But if they respect the people of Quebec and those who were swindled by Earl Jones, I want to remind them that they are responsible for going after criminals. Prosecuting criminals comes under their jurisdiction. Earl Jones was not registered and would not have been registered with a Canadian securities commission either.

A member said that the Royal Bank comes under federal jurisdiction, yet the federal government has done nothing about this since 2003. Mr. Coffee's study was also mentioned. Has the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup read Mr. Coffee's PowerPoint presentation? Mr. Lortie, the former president of the Montreal stock exchange and Bombardier Transport, tore apart Mr. Coffee's study. I hope the member will have the chance to read it and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague from Hochelaga that we were elected at the same time in by-elections. He was elected in Montreal, and I was elected in the most beautiful region in Quebec, if not Canada, in Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup. What is more, I replaced the Bloc after it had held the riding for 16 years.

So I do not think the member for Hochelaga is in any position to lecture me. The voters in La Pocatière and Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup are as smart as those in Montreal, and they made a choice. I respect their choice, just as I respect the choice his constituents made.

That said, in all sincerity, we are putting this system in place to protect Canadians like the victims of Earl Jones and all the others.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

It is with a great deal of interest, and concern, that I am rising on this Bloc Québécois opposition day to strongly condemn this government's unrelenting efforts, and even obsession, to marginalize the Quebec nation, in particular by depriving it of the major economic lever of securities regulation. This is shameful.

Let us be clear—and I hope that all Conservative and Liberal members from Quebec are listening—securities regulation is an exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

The federal plan proposed by the Minister of Finance destroys Quebec's exclusive responsibilities with respect to property, civil rights and jurisdiction. In fact, with his national commission, the Conservative finance minister who introduced this legislation wants to do Montreal out of what it has for Toronto's benefit.

A Quebec coalition made up of a very large number of stakeholders is opposing this single securities regulation system. They include Quebec City, the City of Montreal, Quebecor, Pierre Lortie, La Capitale, professor Jacques Saint-Pierre of Université Laval, the Institut québécois des planificateurs financiers, the Groupe Jean Coutu, the Solidary Fund QFL, the CSN's equity fund, the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec, the Chambre de la sécurité financière, the Chambre des notaires du Québec, the Chambre de commerce du Québec, the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, Cascades and many others. Moreover, the Quebec National Assembly is unanimously opposed to this bill.

And what do we see in the House? It is a disgrace. Members from Quebec come to Ottawa to work against the will of those who elected them. Indeed, Quebecers are overwhelmingly opposed to this legislation.

Let us also not forget that this new hostile takeover attempt by the federal government is unanimously opposed by all elected members of the Quebec National Assembly.

The plan to have a single securities regulator goes against Quebecers' will. The federal government wants to create a single securities regulator. Quebecers are asking the government not to proceed with this legislation.

How can Conservative members, including newly elected Conservative members, vote against the will of their own voters? I am referring to the member who just spoke, the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup. He was just recently elected, and he has opposed, in the House, all of these socio-economic players in Quebec. Just newly elected, and he has gone ahead and voted against the will of the Quebec National Assembly. He is voting to strip Quebec of its financial system for Toronto's benefit. That is unbelievable.

Furthermore, the Liberals have not learned their lesson over the years. They were punished. They have been in the opposition for a few years, but they are still not doing any better. They are still in favour of centralization. They still do not take into account the interests of the Quebec National Assembly and of Quebecers. They simply defend the interests of the people of Ontario, in this case. The members from Quebec, both Liberal and Conservative, will once again vote with the federal government to create this single institution, which will weaken Quebec's financial system and which will lead to the loss of jobs.

• (1700)

With the complicity of the Liberals, the Conservative government is just as determined to strip Quebec of its authority over securities, ignoring the will of the National Assembly.

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Since June 2009, the Liberal leader has been showing a lack of leadership on the securities issue. Instead of speaking out, he has hidden behind the argument that a Liberal government would have referred this issue to the Supreme Court of Canada before taking action. We are not discussing a legal issue in the House; it is a political issue.

In Quebec, it is the Bloc Québécois that has the support of the National Assembly, the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, Cascades, the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, the Quebec City Chamber of Commerce, the QFL Solidarity Fund, Power Corporation, Quebecor, Transat, Transcontinental, Industrielle Alliance, and many other economic institutions in Quebec. All of the members from Quebec in this House will vote in favour of a bill that all of these socio-economic players have unanimously criticized. It is absolutely disgraceful, and for the Conservatives, it is so petty.

All of Quebec's economic, financial and business stakeholders have formed a strong coalition against the plan of the federal government.

That is significant. Mouvement Desjardins applauded community mobilization and is urging the federal government to shelve this proposal, which everyone recognizes as authoritarian, harmful, centralizing and failing to respect Quebec's jurisdiction.

Why is the government so determined to dismantle a system that, according to the OECD, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, is a model for the rest of the world? The system works. It is efficient. Let us not forget that the OECD, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund support our passport system, calling it better than that of the Americans and the English.

Moreover, the OECD has ranked Canada second in the world with respect to securities regulation. What reason could there be for changing an efficient system? That makes no sense.

That is not so bad for a system that some people here say does not work well. All of a sudden, the Minister of Finance woke up with a brilliant idea to create a single securities commission, claiming that the current system, which is recognized internationally, is no longer efficient. The new system will require major investment. Already, \$150 million has been invested to implement a system that they say will be better than the one we have now. But there is no proof that it will improve things. Quite the opposite.

In addition to maintaining well-paid jobs in Montreal in the financial, legal and administrative sectors, the Autorité des marchés financiers allows us to retain expertise that is important to Quebeckers and to the proper functioning of our financial system. We want to keep it. The AMF is our last bastion against the complete disappearance of stock market activities from Montreal since Toronto acquired the exchange.

To sum up, this Conservative power grab with Liberal support will inevitably cause high-ranking positions and value-added activities to leave Quebec for Toronto.

• (1705)

That is not what Quebeckers want, and the Bloc Québécois will oppose this proposal to the bitter end.

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have demonstrated, through dozens of speeches today, that the passport system works. No less a figure than the Alberta minister of finance, a fellow Conservative to the Conservatives here, is onside against his own party on this issue. He used all the same arguments that the member just made, that this system works and it has worked for 100 years. A more recent version of the passport system is a big improvement over the past and it works very well.

People suspect that, at the end of the day, this is all about the transfer of jobs to Toronto. It will be great for Toronto because it will concentrate more jobs there. However, there will be a loss of jobs in Montreal, Winnipeg and Alberta because of what the government is up to.

My prediction is this will probably never happen. Why the government is embarking on an initiative like this in the first place is beyond me.

• (1710)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy André: Mr. Speaker, it just does not make sense that the Conservative Party is putting in place measures such as this when it boycotts measures that could provide more support for people, such as the unemployed or seniors. It is not too interested in that. It wants to mess with a system that works. We all know that by destroying the passport system, the Conservative Party expects to benefit from conflicts among regulatory bodies. The Conservative government is inevitably creating a reason for Canadian corporations to turn to the national commission, which will obviously be located in Toronto.

How can the Liberal and Conservative members from Quebec meekly stand by as power is taken away from Quebec and given to Toronto? That is the question raised by our NDP colleague.

We are pleased that the NDP supports our motion because, as the member mentioned in his speech, the effects will be felt not only in Quebec, but also in Winnipeg, which is in his riding. This bill must be defeated in the House once and for all.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak about the Bloc Québécois opposition motion. First, I want to congratulate my colleague from Hochelaga who has done an excellent job all day trying to defend the interests of Quebeckers and to make the rest of Parliament understand that it is not true that Canada is always number one.

I have been pressured since my arrival at the House of Commons in 2000. The first lobbyists I met as a member were from the banks. They tried to make us understand that the banks in Canada needed to merge and grow in order to acquire other banks. They had the support of the Conservatives and some of the Liberals. The Liberals have always been divided on this issue. There was the pro-Martin camp and the pro-Chrétien camp. The pro-Martin camp was in favour of merging the banks, but the pro-Chrétien camp was not. The Bloc Québécois fought hard and managed to put off those decisions until an election was called. Since then, it has not been brought up again, which saved Canadian banks.

Adjournment Proceedings

Moreover, as recently as last week, the new president of Power Corporation said he had made a mistake in 2000 when he supported bank mergers. He stated that the government was right not to allow the banks to merge, because they obviously would have bought a lot of bad debt. They would have bought American banks, which would have made Canada much weaker.

At the time, the Conservatives were in favour of mergers. I remember that the current Prime Minister, who was on the opposition side back then, fought for bank mergers. Today, I did not hear him say anything. He should have done the right thing, like the new president of Power Corporation, and apologized for the mistake he made back then.

The Conservatives are making a second mistake by trying once again to centralize. That is what the banks wanted to do in 2000: expand, centralize and be able to make acquisitions. Now the government wants to do the same thing, even though we have a passport system managed by the provinces that works quite well.

That is the reality and that is what our colleague from Hochelaga—a renowned economist and former minister in the Quebec government—has been trying to convey all day. Furthermore, he tried to make them understand that not only is this a mistake, but it will deprive Quebec of some of its powers. The Conservatives are trying to expand the system's administration in Toronto, while weakening Quebec, but more importantly, weakening the entire system that was created in Canada.

I thank my colleague for trying to make them understand the situation and I hope all hon. members will realize that when we defend Quebec, often we are also defending Canada, and we are trying to get them out of an impasse that will only lead to more mistakes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Monday, June 14, 2010, at the end of government orders.

The hon. Minister of State for Democratic Reform on a point of order.

• (1715)

[*English*]

Hon. Steven Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-280, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (qualification for and entitlement to benefits), as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): There being no motions at report stage the House will now proceed without debate to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): 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 yea.

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 nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Pursuant to Standing Order 98 the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 16 immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am here to talk tonight about the enabling accessibility fund. Serious questions have been raised about the administration of this fund.

Adjournment Proceedings

The enabling accessibility fund was announced in budget 2008 and the stated purpose of the fund is very noble. It was set up to provide funding for buildings to become accessible. Two different funds were set up, one was called major projects and the other was for smaller projects. This fund provided \$45 million over two years, yet \$30 million of that was to go to two projects and two projects alone, both in Conservative ridings.

As soon as this project was announced and the application criteria was set out, the disability community knew something was wrong. There were headlines in papers such as “Program 'tailor-made' to send cash to [Finance Minister's] riding: critics”. Another headline read “Critics Claim Finance Minister is in a Conflict of Interest”. The Montreal *Gazette* stated that the program was geared to the finance minister's riding and critics alleged that the finance minister's wife and aide on board of project stood to benefit from \$45 million in funding.

Very clearly, there was a problem with this funding. Why would a fund of \$45 million that had been set up for the entire country provide \$30 million, or two-thirds, to two projects? As it turned out there were significant problems.

That \$30 million went to two Conservative ridings, including the riding of a cabinet minister. The other \$15 million was left to be allocated. The first part of that was allocated in 2008-09. Of 166 projects, 107 went to Conservative ridings. That is unbelievable. Of the total dollars allocated for a national project, 5.8% went to all the opposition ridings. There is absolutely no way that makes sense. I can see members opposite aghast at this. They cannot believe these numbers and I do not blame them. It is unbelievable.

This year we found out about the second round of funding to complete the \$45 million. This time it was worse. There were a total of 169 projects and 113 of them went to Conservative ridings.

The reasons we heard for this were unbelievable. The minister stood up and asked what I am complaining about because Iona Presbyterian Church received one grant. That seems fair. One for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour in the amount of \$50,000, one for the Minister of Finance in the amount of \$15 million, and he asked me what I was complaining about. It is probably not a great surprise.

The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development does not even have an accessible constituency office. We all get a budget for our constituency office. I, like most members I am sure, ensure that my office is accessible. We are dealing with constituents. But it is particularly egregious when the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development does not bother to ensure that her office is accessible. Even six years after being elected she would have had to renegotiate the lease. Then she comes back with this cockamamie story of how under the Liberals some office was not accessible.

This is the biggest abdication of responsibility one can imagine. This is a fund designed for people with disabilities. It is not a fund designed for people with disabilities in Conservative ridings. There is no way that 95% of any fund could be allocated fairly and end up in Conservative ridings. This is taking advantage of many of the most marginalized people in Canada, people with disabilities who deserve a break, who deserve an opportunity, who deserve assistance regardless of where they live. What they received is political

manipulation, cronyism. It is an offence not only to the people with disabilities but an offence to all Canadians who believe in fairness.

• (1720)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that member and members of his party, along with the NDP, voted against successive budgets that contained a number of provisions to help Canadians with disabilities.

We have done a number of things for Canadians with disabilities, including ensuring that there was a fund called the enabling accessibility fund. It was created in 2007 with an investment of \$45 million over three years. It has supported over 300 community-based projects across the country, making buildings and vehicles more accessible. Yes, it helped create two comprehensive ability centres, but it has helped Canadians with disabilities all across this country, including, as the member has mentioned, in his own riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

I would like to point out that the member is complaining about a program that, if it were up to him and the Liberals, would not even exist. They voted against the budget. They voted against the enabling accessibility fund, a fund that has been so well received that in budget 2010 we announced that we would extend it by a further three years and invest another \$45 million to ensure that even more communities were able to benefit.

I do not know what the member has against that, but, yet again, the member and his party voted against the budget containing this program and the significant investments to help Canadians with disabilities. Canadians can learn a lot by looking at the record of the different parties in the House and at the actions they have taken when it comes to supporting Canadians with disabilities.

Let me be clear. No federal government has done more for Canadians with disabilities than our Conservative government. We support Canadians of all abilities all across this great country and the proof is in the action we have taken since forming government and the several investments we have made, in addition to the enabling accessibility fund.

He had better look at the full picture because a number of actions have been taken. For example, our government introduced the registered disability savings plan, the most historic savings vehicle since the RRSP was introduced decades ago. The RDSP helps parents and others save for the long-term financial security of a child with a disability.

We also ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We have increased funding for training to help Canadians with disabilities join the workforce. We have invested \$75 million for affordable housing specifically for persons with disabilities. Time does not permit me to go through all the things we have done.

Adjournment Proceedings

Al Etmanski from the Plan Institute said:

I believe [this] Government is hands down the most effective Federal champion people with disabilities and their families have ever had.

He went on to say, “the...Government's commitments are impressive”. I guess that is why the organization presented the Prime Minister with a lifetime membership for making a positive difference in the lives of Canadians with disabilities.

Let us compare that to the record of the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and the Liberal Party. They have consistently voted against provisions that would help persons with disabilities. For example, they voted against the RDSP, the enabling accessibility fund and the increased skills training money.

The record is clear. Our Conservative government is providing unprecedented support to Canadians with disabilities while the Liberals have shamefully voted time and time again against all of our support for Canadians with disabilities and their families. I do not know how they can justify that. Those budgets were clear and they had specific provisions in them but they chose, for one reason or another, to oppose them.

Rather than looking at the big picture and the millions of dollars that have been invested, they are trying to make some political hay out of one factor alone that is neither here nor there. They should have been supporting those initiatives because they are good initiatives and they help Canadians with disabilities. He should get behind them and not oppose them.

• (1725)

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, surely one of the most laughable lines I have ever heard is that no federal government has ever done more for persons with disabilities. That is absolute hogwash. I will give a quotation since he used one.

The national director of the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres, one of the great organizations in this country, accused the finance minister of “pork-barrel politics”.

That is absolutely true. This fund has become a political weapon, a political tool for the government to use for people with disabilities who are disproportionately poor. The government has refused to even come up with an anti-poverty strategy. It refuses to do anything for people with disabilities unless it suits its own political needs.

People with disabilities across this country need, deserve and warrant assistance but what they get from the government is wedge politics, partisan politics and nasty, pork-barrel politics. That is what people in the communities are saying. It is a disgrace to Canadian society and a disgrace for people with disabilities that they have to put up with that kind of partisan, pork-barrel politics. That is not how it should be.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, I will give two quotations. It is that member who is trying to make political hay out of something that should not have political hay made out of it. Al Etmanski of the Plan Institute had this to say. Maybe he will listen to him.

He said:

I believe the Harper Government is hands down the most effective Federal champion people with disabilities and their families have ever had. The Harper Government's commitments are impressive—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. parliamentary secretary knows that he cannot use names of members in this chamber, even when he reads a quote. He cannot do indirectly what he cannot do directly.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, the government's commitments are impressive. The establishment of the world's first registered disability savings plan, the establishment of the enabling accessibility fund for community centres across Canada and now the ratification of the convention of the rights of persons with disabilities are all significant actions for Canadians with disabilities. Those who have to do with those organizations say that these actions are good.

The member disagrees with that. I would like to know why he disagrees with the comments that are made here, why he disagrees with what has been said. He should get behind these initiatives and support them, not play politics with them.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rose on April 26 to bring attention to a growing problem that weakened the democracy of our country, and that is the current government's increasing secrecy, lack of transparency and obstruction of presentation of information. This is a deliberate chill that it is placing on the civil servants and civil society and one that is very unhealthy for our democracy. Instead of getting an answer about my question, I received some pontification about the gun registry.

Therefore, I will first spend some time addressing the question I raised.

The government has a track record of thumbing its nose at the public and the transparency that it promised to the public. I refer to the Information Commissioner, who recently commented that there was a lack of will on the part of the government to be transparent and that Canada was no longer an information leader. She recommended legislation to force the government to comply with requirements to prevent delays in the release of public information.

It is worse than that because the government not only obfuscates and delays, it is breaking its own laws. In one of the worse offences, the office of the former public works minister stopped the release of a 137-page report that had been requested by an applicant to ATIP, ordering the public service officials to unrelease this report after the access to Information office at the department had okayed it.

We have a worrisome trend here. Beyond that, the government is actually hiding information that it statutorily is required to release. This brings me back to the gun registry. A report on the gun registry, which the government must, by law, table, was held until after a vote on the gun registry.

Adjournment Proceedings

Let us discuss a bit further why the members opposite are promoting an action that flies in the face of the evidence of the police chiefs, the police associations that represent the police members and the police boards that represent the community. All those organizations, as well as a cross-section of organizations across our society, are clear that the gun registry is a vital component and tool in protecting the health and safety of Canadians and the police. On an ideological basis, the government is pursuing a path that is destroying a life-saving registry that society needs and wants.

There is a pattern with the government of firing independent officers of Parliament, ideologically cutting funds to groups and hiding information to promote its own end.

I invite the member opposite to explain to the constituents of West Vancouver why they should want more guns on the streets, which would put their lives at risk as well as the lives of the police officers they value.

• (1730)

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to remind my hon. colleague that actually I represent the riding of North Vancouver, not West Vancouver. It is just across the river.

I would like to thank the member for Vancouver Quadra for raising the important issue of access to information. The member seems to be preoccupied with this issue and has asked a number of questions about how our system works. Allow me to take this opportunity to explain how requests for information are decided by the government and released to the public.

First, as has been explained many times by our government, requests for information are never handled by ministers or their political staff, not today, not yesterday, not ever. In fact, they are handled and responded to by dedicated and professional public service employees who have the delegated authority under the Access to Information Act to do that work.

In addition, each federal institution is responsible for ensuring that it complies with all relevant laws, guidelines and directives. This includes laws such as the Access to Information Act, which gives Canadian citizens, permanent residents, or any person or corporation present in Canada a right to access information that is contained in government records.

This is how our system of government works and I know that there has been a lot of confusion about this.

Many believe or think that everything should be run by a single organization. Some would like to see one big central governing body put in charge of all federal organizations and institutions. This central body would tell institutions what to do, how to do it and when to do it. It would also be able to answer every conceivable question about what is happening in every single institution in the federal government, right down to the number of paper clips in stock.

Such an organization simply does not exist in our system. I can understand that it would make our lives as parliamentarians a lot easier. Whenever we want to get to the bottom of something, we would simply summon officials from this central body and bombard

them with questions. Fortunately, that is not how things work. If we ran the government in this way, it would be hugely impractical. After all, we are talking about the largest enterprise in Canada by far. There are over 250 organizations in the federal public sector working in organizations such as departments, separate agencies, crown corporations and agents of Parliament, and I would add that the vast majority of these organizations are now covered by the Access to Information Act, thanks to this government.

When our government took power in 2006, we made a commitment to improve transparency and accountability, and we delivered with the Federal Accountability Act. The act contained the most extensive amendments to the Access to Information Act since it came into force in 1983. Most importantly, it broadened the reach of the act to more public institutions, including agents of Parliament such as the Information Officer and the Auditor General, and crown corporations such as the CBC, Canada Post and VIA Rail. All told, the Federal Accountability Act added 70 additional public institutions to the list of those covered by the legislation.

As a result, there are now some 255 public organizations subject to the access to information law, and let me repeat my earlier point that each one of these organizations is responsible for complying with the Access to Information Act. This is not to say that they do not have any support or that they are allowed to do whatever they want. The Treasury Board Secretariat provides the policies, directives, best practices and training needed to support the access to information community, and each department must report to Parliament on its activities. These detailed reports include statistics on the number of requests received, completed, processed and released, as well as the compliance rates.

Our government also continues to work with the Information Commissioner to ensure that Canadians have access to information about their government. We welcome the member's suggestions to Parliament on how and where we can improve the management of access to information.

• (1735)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend an invitation to the member for North Vancouver to talk to his constituents about why he is advocating flooding the streets with unregistered guns, the very guns that are used to attack and kill women and their police.

The idea that the member is talking about, one large government or something like that, is exactly the direction in which the government's activities are leading by undermining the power of Parliament to access documents, with the government's secrecy, lack of transparency and obstruction. Staff that he claims do not handle these requests actually block the requests. There is a shutting down of democratic voices, the independent officers of Parliament and independent organizations of civil society. It is a shameful pattern by the government.

I would like to invite the member across the way to come to our round table on Monday of the 13 groups doing important work for society, the ones that make for an independent democracy. They are coming to talk about how their funding was slashed by an ideological government that does not like anyone saying something that the government might not like to hear.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, what a turn of events, coming from a member of a party that opposed expanding access to information when it was in power, opposing even its own members' bills.

In 2005, the Liberals voted against a Conservative Party motion to extend access to information laws to crown corporations. We had to get rid of a system used by the Liberals to control and centralize access to information.

Our government passed historic changes to the Access to Information Act, making 70 new crown corporations and institutions accountable to Canadians, something the Liberals refused to do. We increased the Information Commissioner's budget by 26%.

This government has worked hard to improve transparency since the Liberal years, and our record is clear. We will continue working to improve transparency for Canadians, and that party should do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 5:37 p.m.)

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