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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

The House met at 2 p.m.

[*Translation*]

Prayers

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand in this House today to draw attention to the challenges being faced by many Peace Country farmers this fall.

Many Canadians have heard a lot about the flood conditions in parts of Alberta but have heard little in the media about the drought conditions in the northwest region of the province. In my tours of the driest areas of my constituency, I have come across some of the worst crop failures I have ever seen.

The drought this year comes on the heels of four years of poor crop yields that have already significantly impacted the financial stability of many producers. For this reason, we are very thankful for the announcement of assistance that will aid local farmers.

The announcement of an estimated \$170 million that will be distributed through the agri-insurance, agri-stability and agri-recovery programs to Peace Country farm families came as a major relief and a much needed encouragement.

Peace Country producers, like all Canadian farm families, know they can count on this Conservative government to stand with them in times of disaster and in times of need.

CENSUS

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reaction about the census is extremely clear. We know that the list of organizations that disagree with the government's decision is growing every day. Here are some more: the Association des statisticiens et statisticiennes du Québec, the Canadian Bar Association, the Association des Soeurs du Canada, the Association canadienne-française pour l'avancement des sciences, the Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale, the Association francophone pour le savoir, the Association of Canadian Map Libraries and Archives—there are still more—the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Association of Educational Researchers of Ontario, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, Quebec's Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse and the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

And that is only a fraction, only some of the organizations that are furious with the government. I will stop there, but I could go on and on.

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JEAN-GUY SAINT-GELAIS

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Jean-Guy Saint-Gelais has a most impressive list of achievements. For the past few decades, he has been volunteering his time to work with youth and seniors, in addition to being a member of the board of directors of the Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, in Canada and internationally.

Mr. Saint-Gelais received the Quebec Lieutenant Governor's Seniors Medal and a certificate of achievement from the Quebec National Assembly, and he is well known by people in the Ascot neighbourhood of Sherbrooke for his dedication to Ascot's public health organization and to the newspaper *Regards*.

On behalf of the community of Compton—Stanstead, I salute all of the work Mr. Saint-Gelais has done, and thank him for the hundreds of hours he has invested in the well-being of his fellow citizens.

Statements by Members

[English]

SENIORS

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this summer, I had the opportunity to knock on doors in various communities throughout my riding. One thing was clear: constituents, like Frank Rainville from Sturgeon Falls, are deeply anxious about their future and their retirement prospects, for good reasons.

The Conservative government can spare millions of dollars on television and billboard ads but can only spare a \$1.50 increase to old age security, after a two year freeze.

Our seniors are facing mounting costs in every aspect of their lives. Whether it is their medication or the unfair McGuinty-Harper HST, life is becoming harder. Limited access to long-term care is adding insult to injury. Those who are fortunate to be employed are deeply worried about their pensions.

I am proud of the work of the NDP. We are listening and acting on their concerns.

With concrete plans, such as improving the Canada pension plan, increasing the guaranteed income supplement to lift seniors out of poverty, to lowering drug costs through a national drug strategy, we are fighting to ensure Canadians retire with dignity and security.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an unimaginable evil is happening in parts of Africa. Body parts of people with albinism are being hacked off and sold to witch doctors with deadly results. They believe that the body parts of albinos have magical powers, capable of bringing riches. In one instance, a Tanzanian trader was caught with the head of an albino baby. He was to be paid for the head by its weight.

Under the cover of darkness, a group of vicious hunters in northwestern Tanzania charged into the room of another victim. Bibi-ana's pale young body was pinned down and one of her little legs was hacked off as her sister screamed in horror.

Albinos are known as *zeru zeru*, meaning invisible, inhuman, a ghost. They are being hunted and sold to witch doctors for lucrative profits.

I ask each member of this Parliament to please help me and others to stop this horrific evil.

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● (1410)

CENSUS

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the list keeps on getting longer of Canadians who oppose the government's decision to stop the long form census: the region of Peel; the city of Brampton; the town of Caledon; the town of Halton Hills, the town of Milton; the town of Smiths Falls; the city of Fredericton; the city of greater Sudbury; the city of Hamilton; and the city of Kelowna.

There is also: the Canadian Catholic Council of Bishops; the Burlington Chamber of Commerce; the Transportation Association of Canada; the United Steel Workers; United Way of Canada; the Canadian Historical Association; the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association; the Canadian Public Health Association; the Chinese Canadian National Council; and the Canadian Association for Business Economics.

These are only a fraction of the people who oppose the decision. The consensus on the census is that Canadians do not agree.

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INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, October 1 is International Day of Older Persons. This Friday, Canadians will celebrate Canadian seniors and recognize the important contributions they continue to make.

One in seven Canadians today is a senior. Today's diverse group of seniors assumes many different roles. Seniors are remarkable business leaders, devoted mentors, energetic athletes and exemplary volunteers.

Budget 2010 invested an additional \$5 million per year in the new horizons for seniors program, bringing the total overall budget to \$40 million. This additional funding will support projects that encourage seniors to volunteer and mentor other generations, as well as initiatives that aim to increase awareness of financial abuse.

The government also introduced several cost-saving measures, including pension income splitting, doubling the pension income credit, increasing the age credit and reducing minimum RRIF withdrawals.

Much still needs to be done. We will continue to work hard to meet the needs of Canadian seniors.

For strengthening our yesterday and continuing to shape tomorrow, let us honour Canadian seniors today.

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[Translation]

INFORMATION RIGHTS WEEK

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this week is Information Rights Week in Quebec and Canada. Information rights are critical to any democracy because they tell us how healthy a democracy is and reflect the authorities' willingness to be transparent.

Since the Conservatives came to power, there has been widespread criticism about the government keeping too tight a lock on information and having a culture of secrecy. Examples of this are many: Parliament was prorogued to prevent access to the Afghan detainee file, many senior public servants who dared to criticize the government have resigned, organizations that criticized the government have had their funding cut, and a unilateral decision was made to scrap the mandatory long form census to make it easier for the government to impose its ideology.

Statements by Members

I should also note that three ministers, including the Prime Minister's Quebec lieutenant, have been the subject of priority investigations by the information commissioner.

According to the commissioner, “delays threaten to render the entire access [to information] regime irrelevant”. This government has to drop its obsession with controlling information—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint John.

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[*English*]

NEW BRUNSWICK ELECTION

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to congratulate premier-elect David Alward and his Progressive Conservative team on their decisive victory in the province of New Brunswick on Monday.

New Brunswickers have chosen an extremely talented team of MLAs to work for them at the Legislative Assembly in Fredericton.

This marks the first time in New Brunswick history that an incumbent government has not been re-elected to a second term.

On a more personal note, I have known Premier Alward since 1999 when we were first elected and served together in the provincial legislature. He is an honest, decent and hard-working individual whose passion and commitment for New Brunswick is unwavering.

On this side of the House, we look forward to working with Premier Alward and his team on issues important to New Brunswick.

Together, we will get things done and deliver for all New Brunswickers.

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CENSUS

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the list of those whose advice to keep the long form census, which the Prime Minister rejects, continues to rise. It includes: Tom Flanagan, his former chief strategist and political plotter; Alex Himelfarb, former clerk of the Privy Council; the Canadian Jewish Congress; the Social Planning Council of Toronto; the Toronto Association for Business Economics; the Toronto Board of Trade; the Toronto Board of Health; the Toronto immigrant and employment data initiative; Toronto Public Health; Toronto social research data; Toronto Women's Housing Co-op; Transportation Association of Canada; United Way of Toronto; University of Toronto; Volunteer Toronto; West Hill Community Services; West Toronto Support Services; York Community Services. The list goes on.

Why does the Prime Minister not open up his ears to those who give him good advice?

● (1415)

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, we have expressed our government's strong opposition to the plan by the Liberal leader's coalition for a massive, permanent increase to EI premiums to support a 45-day work year.

At a time when Canadians can least afford it the Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition is proposing drastic changes to the EI program which would cost Canadians and Quebecers more than \$6.6 billion annually.

Working for just 45 days and collecting EI for the rest of the year is irresponsible and offensive to hard-working Canadians.

This initiative would cost Canadian taxpayers billions and result in a massive, permanent increase in payroll taxes that would hurt workers and small businesses.

The Liberals shamefully raided the EI surplus when they were in government to pay for their pet political projects.

Our Conservative Government believes that the best solution is to get Canadians back to work.

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[*English*]

CANADA POST

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, successive Liberal and Conservative governments slashed social programs and it is now up to family members to pick up the slack when health care, long-term care and social services fail to deliver. Most often, it is women who become the de facto social safety net in this country and it is leaving them overstretched. The least we could do is ensure that government policies support a better work-family balance.

Sadly, Canada Post is adopting exactly the opposite approach by forcing regular letter carriers to work overtime. Not only does this undermine a healthy work-family balance, but it also threatens the health and safety of workers.

This summer, a woman letter carrier in Hamilton suffered heat exhaustion because of the extra hours on the job. Someone could get seriously hurt.

In these tough economic times, why would we allow a crown corporation to adopt a policy that is detrimental to existing workers and undermines new jobs for more Canadians? Why would Canada Post pay overtime rates to regular employees who do not want it when other employees would gladly do the same job for regular wages? Is Canada Post really just trying to deplete CUPW's strike fund before its collective agreement expires?

Oral Questions

The Minister of Transport has responsibility for Canada Post. When will he take that seriously and defend the interests of hard-working Canadians against a crown corporation run amok?

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's investment in the F-35 program is a win-win for the Canadian Forces and the Canadian economy.

The forces will benefit by replacing the CF-18, an aircraft that will soon reach the end of its useful life, and Canadians will benefit from well-paying, highly skilled jobs for decades to come.

However, do not just take my word for it. Yesterday, CEOs from major Canadian aerospace companies confirmed that this investment would create thousands of high-quality jobs and investment across Canada for years to come. In fact, CEOs warned that delaying or cancelling this program would be devastating for Canada's world-class aerospace industry.

Greg Yeldon, president of Esterline CMC Electronics, said it best:

We want all parties to support the government's decision because it is in the best interest of all Canadians.

We urge all parties to put Canadian jobs first, support Canada's economy and get behind this crucial project.

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[Translation]

THE MEMBER FOR BROME—MISSISQUOI

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on June 24, my colleague, the member for Brome—Missisquoi, was named an honorary fellow by his Royal Architectural Institute of Canada peers.

An architect with a masters in building engineering, the member for Brome—Missisquoi has almost 50 years' experience. The 1973 oil crisis sparked his interest in green, bioclimatic architecture, an area he pioneered. He incorporates renewable energy as well as renewable and recyclable materials in his building designs, which are inspired by nature and respect the natural environment.

The member for Brome—Missisquoi is also a speaker in his area of expertise, green architecture, and has been a commentator on radio and television as well as a columnist in the print media.

As the critic for affordable social housing and the assistant environment and sustainable development critic, the member for Brome—Missisquoi has championed geothermal energy.

All members of the Bloc Québécois join me in congratulating him.

* * *

CENSUS

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the list of those who support the census does not end there. We have a number of other examples: the Federation of Canadian Demographers, the Fédération des associations étudiantes du campus de l'Université de Montréal, the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec, the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du

Québec, the Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec, the Fédération canadienne des municipalités, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec, the Fédération québécoise des professeurs et professeurs d'université.

That is not all. Also on that long list are the department of demography at the Université de Montréal, the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, the Société franco-manitobaine and the Société de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick.

* * *

● (1420)

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader is trying to have his cake and eat it too, but he cannot fool Canadians. By flip-flopping on today's Bloc bill, he thinks that Canadians will forget that he supports a \$4 billion, 45-day work year. Yet even though the Liberals admit that the bill is costly and irresponsible, the Liberals' own official critic is in support of it. Who is the irresponsible one: the Liberal leader or the Liberal critic?

The fact is that the Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition supports EI changes that would cost workers and businesses \$7 billion and would result in massive and permanent hikes in EI premiums. Canadian families and small businesses just cannot afford the tax and spend schemes of the Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

CENSUS

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over 350 experts and organizations agree that the government's decision to scrap the long form census is a mistake. Now the governments of Quebec and Ontario are saying the same thing.

Will the Prime Minister admit that he made a mistake? Will he support the Liberal motion to save the long form census?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the long form will be distributed to more households, but our position is clear. When the government asks people questions about private matters, it cannot threaten to punish them in order to get the information. That is not how we do things in the 21st century.

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have never known any citizen to have problems with the census. I have never seen anyone put in jail because of the census. Refusing to correct a mistake is pure stubbornness.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the chambers of commerce, the Bank of Canada all say the same thing: scrapping the long form census is a mistake.

Why will the Prime Minister not listen to these Canadians?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe the leader of the Liberal Party once said that he had never met a single Canadian opposed to the gun registry.

Our position is very clear. There will be a long form that will be distributed to more households than ever before. We encourage people to complete it. We understand when some people have reticence about giving out personal information. The way to deal with the public in this day and age is not to threaten them with fines and jail terms or with taking away their employment insurance, as some in the opposition have demanded. We will treat the public like adults. That is how we are going to conduct business in this country.

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal motion precisely removes the penalty of imprisonment, which removes the Conservatives' excuses.

Small businesses need the census. Medical professionals need the census in order to deliver health care. Canadians need the census.

What no one can understand is why the Prime Minister is the only person in Canada who seems to believe that it is permissible to vandalize an institution that Canadians care about.

Why will he not listen to Canadians? Does he believe that he makes the rules?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I understand, and what we understand on this side, is that if we want accurate information from the Canadian population, we do not threaten them with jail terms or fines or with taking away their passports or their employment insurance. We deal with the reasonable concerns of the population. We work with the population. We are confident that the population will give us the information we need if we treat them like the responsible adults they deserve to be treated as.

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● (1425)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while other partner countries in the joint strike fighter project are hitting the brakes because of costs rising from \$50 million to \$92 million per plane, the Conservative government is going full throttle and is planning to stick Canadians with the bill.

Why can Britain, Norway, the Netherlands, and the United States re-evaluate their need for stealth aircraft and Canada cannot?

Why does the Minister of National Defence not act responsibly, slow down, and yes, meet the needs of the air force, but at best value for the taxpayers?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is referring to Norway. Norway, upon consultation with Canadian authorities, has decided to defer its purchase to be in sync and in line with the Canadian strategy.

The bottom line is that our action to purchase this plane has opened the door for Canadian aerospace industrial partners to gain priority access to the F-35 program, to jobs and opportunities and to be part of building 5,000 planes, not 65 planes. Members do not have to take my word for it. Experts in the industry, including the president of Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, have said—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Beauséjour.

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was not the question.

The price of the fighter planes keeps going up, but the Conservatives still want to give Lockheed Martin a blank cheque.

Other partners in the project are starting to back away. Norway is hesitating, and the Netherlands, too. British Conservatives are not sure, and even the United States will be buying fewer planes.

Why are all of these governments protecting their taxpayers while the Conservatives are forcing Canadians to pay for an untendered contract with borrowed money?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe that we are actually getting a discount on the planes.

Here is what Claude Lajeunesse said. He is the president and chief executive officer of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada. Here is what he said yesterday: "We are calling on political leaders from all parties to support the government's decision. We do not want to repeat the mistakes of the past, because they will surely be more costly than ever before for our industry, for our military, and ultimately, for the nation".

When are the Liberals going to end their political games and stand up for Canadian industry and stand up for Canadian jobs?

* * *

*[Translation]***INFRASTRUCTURE**

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec Treasury Board President, Michelle Courchesne, is forecasting a shortfall of \$200 million if Ottawa refuses to extend its deadline and carries out its threats to withdraw funding for any infrastructure projects not completed by March 31, 2011. Projects are well under way, but things are reaching the boiling point; everyone wants to have their projects done by March 31. As a result, certain materials are becoming scarce and labour costs are increasing.

Why not simply extend the deadline, as everyone is calling for? Why is the Prime Minister insisting on this point? It would not cost him a penny more.

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, regarding the deadline, the government and our ministers have already been quite clear, saying that we will be reasonable in order to ensure that those projects are completed. We have another six months before the end of this fiscal year and we want to see these projects completed if possible. We are still in a recovery period and it is critical that governments work together to complete the projects as quickly as possible. We are working with our partners in that regard.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservative government insists on maintaining the March 31, 2011, deadline, this will leave the Quebec government and the municipalities facing a shortfall of \$200 million. But perhaps this is exactly what the Prime Minister wants: to pass part of the bill on to Quebecers?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly, this government will be reasonable in order to make sure these projects are completed. What is unreasonable is the Bloc Québécois' position. The Bloc voted against all of these projects for the people of Quebec and Canada. The Bloc has taken a completely irresponsible position during this global recession.

• (1430)

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister should clarify what he means by “reasonable”.

The deadlines for the infrastructure work are threatening a number of projects. In East Angus and Martinville in the Eastern Townships for example, projects approved under the PRECO program cannot be completed on time simply because no contractors are available to bid on them.

Why are the Conservatives stubbornly and ideologically insisting that work on sewers and water mains be completed by December 31?

[English]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are being fair and reasonable.

In fact, when the Preco program was put together specifically with Quebec, the Government of Quebec insisted on a December 31 deadline. I do not know why that was. We said that March 31 was what it was for the country, but if Quebec wanted to do it by December 31, we would work with it to do that. Now it wants to change that deadline.

Of course, we will continue to work with Quebec and other provinces to be fair and reasonable. By all means, if the December 31 deadline the Quebec government itself put in place needs to be changed, well, we did not put it there. We are going to be fair and reasonable with the people of Quebec to make sure that those projects get done.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a number of projects funded by the infrastructure stimulus fund risk going down the drain on March 31 if the federal government is not more flexible. That is the case for the

Monique-Corriveau library in Sainte-Foy, the pool in McMasterville and the 2-22 Ste-Catherine complex in Montreal.

The Fédération Québécoise des Municipalités is holding a convention that starts tomorrow in Quebec City. Why does the federal government not take this opportunity to announce that it is pushing back the deadline for the infrastructure projects? Let the government take action.

[English]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think we know now why the Bloc members are all worked up. I think there is a meeting tomorrow that they want to do something at. There is a little political work going on here.

Here is what we do when we are in government. I have been working with a minister of the Quebec government. He has been working with me saying that he hopes to get information on the number of projects, the status of those projects. He promises to share those numbers with us, in the government, within the next few days. We look forward to this. Working together will allow us to make good decisions.

Yesterday, when I was in Montreal, I spoke to Premier Charest. I told the premier, “We will be fair and reasonable, Premier. Don't worry about it. We are working with you. I am working with your minister”.

That is what we do when we are fair and reasonable, unlike the opposition.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government has made a string of bad decisions.

Thanks to G20 spending, the Conservatives will have enough bug spray and glow sticks to dance around in the dark for years. And with the support of the Liberals, they have cut billions of dollars in taxes for the largest profitable corporations and major banks, while throwing crumbs to seniors and the unemployed.

When will the Prime Minister realize that he is making bad decisions for ordinary people.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is very proud of its record of reducing taxes not just for corporations but also for small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as reducing the GST and personal income taxes for consumers. The truth is that the NDP voted against such benefits and reduced taxes for our citizens.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that the banks do not need big tax cuts to give bonuses to their executives. Not only that, the strategy is not working.

The Canadian economy is now descending faster than the American economy, so this whole approach is not working for Canadians.

Oral Questions

The Conservatives are still barrelling ahead with their tax cuts to their friends in the big banks, who do not need them. At the same time, they are gutting the census data that businesses say they need to launch a real middle class recovery for everybody.

It is not just the NDP saying this. Quebec and Ontario are saying it, too. When are we going to see action to fix this?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. The Canadian economy is performing well above the rest of the advanced countries in the world, in part because of the stable, low tax environment that this government has created, not just for business, but also for seniors, consumers, and ordinary working families.

When it comes to cutting taxes for ordinary working families, I wish the NDP would vote for those things instead of against them.

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CENSUS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, instead of giving pennies to the seniors who could stimulate the economy if they got some real help to get lifted out of poverty, what does the government do? It gives billions to banks.

[Translation]

With regard to the census, the Government of Quebec, the Government of Ontario, Mark Carney, the FCM and the first nations want it reinstated.

In its letter to the Minister of Industry, the Government of Quebec stated that an optional questionnaire has a lower response rate than mandatory questionnaire. The Conservatives have made a mistake. Will they correct it?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is clear. The long form will be distributed to more households and we are encouraging people to fill it out.

In this era, we do not threaten people with sanctions if they are reluctant to disclose information about their private lives. We do things differently; we treat people like adults in the 21st century.

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[English]

G8 AND G20 SUMMITS

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have disclosed, after being forced to do so, only about 15% of the total bill for the G8 and G20 summits. There was wasteful, excessive spending at a summit that was supposed to be about containing spending; this at a time when Canadians are worried about their cost of living, when seniors are worried about money, when students are struggling with high debt, and hundreds of thousands of Canadians are out of work.

Why did the Conservatives think they could go on a spending spree with taxpayers' money? Who authorized these expenditures and who is responsible?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are proud of the accomplishments of the G8 and G20 summits.

Canada is leading the global economic recovery as well as international efforts to aid developing countries.

These were legitimate expenses, the majority of which were for security. There were approximately 20,000 security personnel on the ground during the summits. The violence and destruction that occurred proved the need to ensure that those who attended the summits were protected.

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we now know the Conservatives spent \$200 million on things like rent-a-car, rent-a-fence, and rent-a-lake. Canadians are still waiting to hear about the over \$1 billion more that was spent for the 72-hour meeting; this at a time when Canadians are struggling to make ends meet.

Why is the Conservative government not open, transparent, and accountable for the hundreds of millions, over \$1 billion, it spent? When will Canadians see the receipts? What are the Conservatives trying to hide?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from the outset I said that the Auditor General was welcome to go through the books. Indeed, the Auditor General has said she will be reviewing summit expenses, and we look forward to seeing her report.

The Liberals should stop trying to score political points on the back of Canada's international reputation. They did it regarding our efforts at the UN Security Council, and they are doing it again on the G8 and G20 summits.

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this party does not need a lesson from the member on standing up for Canadians abroad or maintaining our international reputation.

The Conservative government spent 40 times more on security than the U.S. did at the Pittsburgh G20 summit. Incredibly, the Minister of Public Safety approved a \$27.5 million RCMP command centre that could have been bought for \$3 million. Instead, it was rented for \$1.5 million, incurred another \$24 million in operational costs, and then, after just 72 hours, cost another \$2 million to tear down.

Would the minister not agree that this high-priced farce is a threat to Canada's economic security?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member is going to use facts and figures, he should use the correct ones. This was a \$2.2 million lease for a 24-month period, and it was a competitive lease.

Oral Questions

The Liberals should stop trying to score political points on the back of Canada's international reputation and on the backs of the police officers who were providing the security at these summits.

● (1440)

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the recent facts. The minister authorized \$27 million on a command centre that stood in Barrie for just 72 hours. Just a few hours ago, this minister told reporters he was not even aware of it. Talk about ministerial irresponsibility.

If the minister wants to talk about police, that kind of money could have been used to purchase 400 police cruisers, or to hire 225 RCMP front-line officers. It is enough to run the entire Barrie Police Service for over nine months.

Canadians cannot afford the government's egregious waste. How can this Conservative government be so incompetent? How can it be so derelict with taxpayers' money?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was not aware of a \$27 million expenditure, because it was not made. There was a \$2.2 million lease for a 24-month period. It was a competitive lease.

I am wondering why that member would stand up and deliberately say what he knows is not true.

* * *

[Translation]

CENSUS

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a unanimous motion of the Quebec National Assembly calls on the federal government to reconsider its decision to eliminate the mandatory long form census to meet basic requirements in terms of socio-economic data. The Conservative government's ideological and illogical decision will result in additional costs for the Institut de la statistique du Québec.

Does the minister realize that by eliminating the mandatory long form census, he is taking away essential tools that policy makers need to make the best choices to serve the public?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, our fair and reasonable solution is to find the best balance between the collection of the necessary data and the privacy of Canadian citizens. However, the Bloc might have another solution. A few months ago, the Bloc leader said, "We can tell people, 'Well, if you refuse, certain government services won't be provided to you for as long as you refuse.' A passport, for instance. Employment insurance, for instance." That is not our government's solution.

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec and Ontario wrote to the Minister of Industry, asking him to bring back the mandatory long form census as quickly as possible. They said that the quality of services provided to the public will be impacted.

Will the minister reconsider, listen to the urgent calls from Quebec and bring back the mandatory long form census as soon as possible?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I already said, we must respond to the demands of Canadians, not

all Canadians, but those who want the Government of Canada to protect their privacy. Our solution is a fair and reasonable balance between the need for information and the privacy of Canadians. We are proud to be implementing this solution.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the employment insurance system is not responding to the needs of workers. It needs a complete overhaul, which is why we have introduced a bill to improve the employment insurance system and facilitate access to it, notably by establishing a single, universal threshold of 360 working hours.

Does the government plan to support this bill, which will be voted on tonight, to ensure that workers' employment insurance premiums are not used for other purposes?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the recession, we added and extended benefits that unemployed people needed. What the Bloc is proposing is irresponsible and would permanently increase employment insurance costs and premiums by 35%. That is unacceptable for hard-working Canadians.

● (1445)

Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a number of pilot projects to help unemployed people deal with the infamous "spring gap" are coming to an end this fall, notably the initiative that provides five supplementary weeks of benefits.

How can the government claim to not have any money to help workers who lose their jobs when it is ready to pilfer \$20 billion from the employment insurance fund?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, through our economic action plan, we increased payments and other benefits for unemployed people who were hit the hardest during the global recession. At that time, we said that these measures would be targeted and temporary, for the duration of the recession. Luckily, Canada is leading the world in terms of recovery and the programs must be temporary.

* * *

[English]

G8 AND G20 SUMMITS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know now that the Conservative government has spent more than \$1 billion on things such as a fake lake, snacks, and hand lotion at the G8 summit. Meanwhile, over 200,000 seniors are living below the poverty line in Canada. That \$1 billion could have given seniors \$5,000 each, enough for groceries for the year.

Oral Questions

My question is quite simple. As the Prime Minister was attending his caviar summits, did he even once, just once, think about how he could have helped those thousands of seniors to make ends meet?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has done a lot to help seniors over the last four and a half years. We have seen the poverty rate drop to record lows compared with what they were under the previous Liberal government.

We have introduced pension income splitting. We have raised the age credit limit, not once but twice. We have made it possible for them to defer withdrawals from their RRSPs. And we have reduced taxes for all Canadians, giving them more money in their pockets to do the things they want to do in their retirement.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have wasted millions of dollars on ridiculous expenses, such as building a fake lake for the G20 meeting. Now they want to borrow billions and billions of dollars to give tax cuts to big corporations. Yet they are not doing anything for the 2.7 million family caregivers in Canada, over 40% of whom have to dig into their savings to take care of their relatives.

I would like to ask the government what its priorities are. Does it care more about fake lakes or about Canadian families?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe the member was not here, but we have done a lot to help families, especially families of parents and children.

[*English*]

We have introduced the universal child care benefit so that families can have the choice of raising their children at home. We also introduced tax credits to help with the expenses of family members who are ill and who need to be at home. We also brought in and extended the compassionate care benefit under employment insurance.

We are doing things to help Canadian families. It would be nice if the Liberals supported some of those things.

* * *

CHILD CARE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government's priorities are completely out of touch with Canadians.

Families in British Columbia are struggling with the high cost of living and day to day concerns like high tuition fees, caring for aging parents, insecure pensions and access to child care. In fact, the day care at UBC alone has over 2,000 children waiting for a space.

I ask the minister, why does the government consider G8 glow sticks and trinkets more important than the basic needs of families?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the very first initiatives of our government four and a half years ago was to introduce the universal child care benefit, which put \$100 a month in the hands of Canadian parents so they would have the choice in child care that

they deserved, whether they wanted commercial day care or whether they wanted a parent to stay at home and raise the child.

The other thing we did was provide funds to the provinces, which after all have jurisdiction and responsibility for providing child care spaces, to create new spaces. So far, the provinces have reported that they have created over 62,000 new spaces.

● (1450)

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister does not understand the word “universal”.

Families in my riding are desperate for child care spaces. If they are to find a space, it is often more than their mortgage payment each month. They are asking me how the government can justify its excessive spending of \$300,000 for bug spray and sunscreen when that money could have gone toward helping Canadian families make ends meet.

How can the government justify valuing bug spray and sunscreen more than Canadian children?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have done a lot to help families, particularly low income families, meet the challenging financial demands of these days, including, as I mentioned, the universal child care benefit.

But there is more. We introduced the working income tax benefit, better known as WITB, to help people get over the welfare wall. We increased that. We also augmented the national child tax benefit and credits.

We have provided a number of things to help families financially. It is a shame that the Liberals just do not support any of them.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's decision by the Ontario Superior Court on the Bedford prostitution challenge struck down key components of our anti-prostitution laws and was deeply troubling to a number of Canadians.

Could the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada please update the House on what action our government is prepared to take on this very important issue?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, prostitution is a problem that harms individuals and communities. That is why I am pleased to indicate to the House that the government will appeal and will seek a stay of that decision.

*Oral Questions***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to say that the Department of Veterans Affairs is in a mess would be an understatement. From the government appointing its friends to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, to the many years of bureaucratic delay it takes for a veteran's appeal, now we have members of our veteran community, Sean Bruyey and Colonel Stogran, the ombudsman himself, who are fearful about their medical information being released to the minister.

My question for the minister is quite clear. How many other people is he aware of whose medical and psychiatric information has been shared among the department and with the minister? Has the minister himself seen any personal file—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, protection of privacy is extremely important to us, sacred even. It is so important to us that when I found out the day before yesterday that more information about our veterans had been disclosed to individuals who were not entitled to that information, I made sure that my staff called the commissioner to find out if she could broaden her investigation, given that the problem was systemic. She was happy to agree to do so.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is one thing for the Privacy Commissioner to look into DVA, but the problem is that the Privacy Commissioner has no legislative ability to change the structure of DVA.

What is required, and what many veterans across the country are asking for, is a public inquiry into the practices and policies of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

My question for the minister is quite clear. Will he now stand in this House and ask for a full public inquiry into the practices and policies of the Department of Veterans Affairs?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, I want to emphasize how important it is to protect our veterans' privacy. I asked the Privacy Commissioner to look into everything that is going on right now because these problems appear to be systemic.

The reason I made an effort to contact the commissioner about this is that I want to know what she recommends. The department will make changes based on what she tells us. We will not just sit back and wait. We are already taking action to make changes in the department so that we can protect our veterans' privacy.

* * *

●(1455)

RADIOACTIVE WASTE

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission is holding public consultations on the request by an Ontario company to use the St. Lawrence

to ship radioactive waste. Officials at the commission have already come out in favour of the plan.

How can people have any confidence in these public consultations when the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission already seems prepared to authorize the use of the St. Lawrence to ship radioactive waste?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission decided to hold a public consultation yesterday and today. No decision has been made. The process will follow its course and then a decision will be made accordingly.

The members should stop attacking the credibility of this commission, which has a spotless record. The opposition should be ashamed of itself.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is against the plan by the Bruce Power nuclear power plant in Ontario to use the St. Lawrence Seaway to ship nuclear waste, on the principle that every region should manage its own waste. Ontario chose to speed up the development of its nuclear energy; let it live with the consequences of that choice.

Does the Minister of Natural Resources, who is the Prime Minister's Quebec lieutenant, agree that Quebec should not have to suffer the risks associated with Ontario's nuclear industry? Which province is the minister defending, Ontario or Quebec?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that question is totally out of context. We have a Canadian regulator—the hon. member does not like that because he prefers to be divisive—that is conducting scientific studies, organizing public hearings and listening to the public and its employees and that will make a decision accordingly. They are experts. They are not politicians in Ottawa who are trying to divide opinion. It is shameful to undermine the credibility of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission.

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just because he is the Minister of Natural Resources, that does not mean we will believe everything he says.

It is not a question of Quebec against Ontario; it is a question of what the public wants. The public does not want this, yet a commission has already ruled on this and said it does not have any concerns related to safety.

Why does this government not put an end to its phoney commissions? Why does the minister not assume his responsibilities and say “no” to the shipment of this kind of waste on the St. Lawrence Seaway? Is that clear enough?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what does the member opposite have against the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, which is made up of competent scientists, has a flawless record and will examine this matter carefully to make a logical decision based on science, after consulting the public?

What more does he want?

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the same minister and the same department that just muzzled scientists and decide what they will say on television. Next he will say that he respects scientists.

Speaking of the St. Lawrence, there is another important matter. Last night, there was a three-kilometre diesel spill at the Suncor facilities. While little deals are being made on the nuclear side, I would like to know what the federal government is doing to protect the interests of the people living in Montreal East.

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was a spill of oil products at the Suncor facility in Montreal. That is true. Environment Canada promptly arrived at the scene and worked with the emergency response team from the Quebec environment department. I have been assured that the leak has been stopped. We thank them for their co-operation. The exact cause of the spill of 35 barrels of light diesel is not known, but an investigation is under way.

* * *

[English]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, modern-day robber barons are gouging prairie farmers and the government is asleep at the switch. The rail magnates are making out like bandits, charging two and three times what the fair rate would be under the grain transportation act.

Why will the minister not stand up against the railway monopoly that is sucking the lifeblood out of the prairie economy? Could it be because Conservative Party poster boy Tim Powers is the chief lobbyist for the railways? Just what does the minister hear from Tim Powers when he is up there in the PMO darkening the towels?

• (1500)

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid to even venture into the dark halls that the member comes from.

We are not only in the middle of a rail service review, which allows farmers and other users of the railways to put forward their case, we are seeing changes in the railroad right now in the commercial contracts with everybody from the ports to lumber producers and grain producers.

The objective of the review is to increase services not only to farmers, but to all users of the rail services across the country.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, producers all over the prairies are calling for a genuine review, but the minister has done nothing to legitimately protect grain producers from being fleeced by the rail monopoly. Now we know why.

In fact, he has more in common with rich Uncle Pennybags than prairie farmers. If he had a monocle and a top hat, he would fit right in with the robber barons who are conspiring to gouge prairie farmers.

Oral Questions

There was \$275 million in excess profits, \$30,000 per farm. Why will he not listen to grain producers instead of uber-lobbyist Tim Powers and call for an immediate meaningful review—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transport.

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very sorry to hear that Tim is wearing a monocle. I had no idea he had problems with that one eye.

I do not know what the hon. member is talking about. I have never met with Tim Powers on an issue like this. He has never been in my office.

But what is important is that a system has been in place not only for farmers, but for other users of the rail system, to go through an appropriate rail review. That rail service review is already starting to have an impact on services for farmers and for other users of the railway system. It is a positive system.

If the hon. member wanted to do one more positive thing, the member would help us reform the Canadian Wheat Board and we would get back down to business.

* * *

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday CEOs from some of Canada's leading aerospace companies held a news conference to tell Canadians of the economic benefits that will be generated from our government's investment in the F-35 aircraft program.

We heard that Canada's world-class aerospace industry is ready and willing to bid and win contracts for the global supply chain estimated at 5,000 planes. They also said thousands of jobs will be created and billions of dollars will be generated in benefits.

Can the Minister of Industry explain why the Liberal leader wants to put Canadian jobs and benefits to Canadian industry at risk by simply playing politics?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are proud of our commitment to the Canadian aerospace industry and indeed to our men and women in uniform. The F-35 investment means billions of dollars for the aerospace industry, which translates into stable, long-term high tech jobs for Canadians.

We agree with all the CEOs who met yesterday, including Maurice Guitton from Composites Atlantic, who said:

We have a short window of approximately 24 months to maximize our participation in the full rate production for this aircraft, and any uncertainty or delay creates risks for our industry.

We will not create that uncertainty or delay.

*Oral Questions***SYDNEY HARBOUR**

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for two years the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso and I have been urging the government to fund the dredging of Sydney harbour. It has the gall to claim that it is not budgeted.

The government has spent \$20 million on fancy hotel suites for the G20, but it cannot send \$19 million to Cape Breton to dredge our harbour and create real jobs. The province is on side. The municipality is on side.

Will the Prime Minister stop the political games and step up to the plate with the government's share of the money so we can get this project done by March 31?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the investments our government is making in Atlantic Canada. We know there is a great deal of interest around the dredging of Sydney harbour. However, it is a complex and costly undertaking of some \$38 million that will require the involvement of the province and all levels of government, the private sector included.

That being said, we have had meetings with the province and other interested parties. We will continue to work with them to move the project along.

* * *

• (1505)

[Translation]

IRAN

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Iran has just sentenced an Iranian-Canadian blogger to 19 years in prison. He was accused of propaganda against the Islamic Republic for critical comments he made on the Internet. In addition, the Iranian government is refusing to allow officials from Ottawa to visit him in the same prison where Montreal resident Zahra Kazemi was killed in 2003.

What does the government plan on doing to get Iran to release this Canadian blogger?

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has been very active on this file for a while. We are deeply concerned about the news of this potentially severe sentence. Our embassy in Tehran is following up to seek confirmation of these reports.

If this is true, it is completely unacceptable and unjustifiable. Canada believes that no one should be punished anywhere for simply exercising one's inherent right to freedom of expression.

Our government's position has been very clear. Iran must release Mr. Derakhshan and other journalists who have been unjustifiably detained and sentenced.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, friends of the Conservative government have created a new divisive group on immigration and it is sowing fear about visible minorities and immigrants.

One member of this group claimed "the need for police patrols in school hallways is a clear indication of failed immigration policies". Another said that immigration is "making Canada a kind of Islamic extremist aircraft carrier for the launching of major assaults against the U.S. mainland".

Instead of handing out moon cakes in Chinatown, will the minister distance himself from this blame the immigrant group?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the hon. member has against moon cakes. Perhaps she does not like the fact that I was visiting her constituency.

I was there to celebrate the fact that our government has maintained the highest level of immigration in the developed world. We have done so because we understand that newcomers are essential to our future prosperity.

We have tripled the investment in settlement services for newcomers. We cut the right of landing fee in half. Our action plan for faster immigration has reduced Liberal waiting times from six years to several months for immigrants to come to Canada.

We are proud of Canada's record of being a country of openness and opportunities.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a member told the *Globe and Mail* that he would vote for the Bloc bill on EI, even though he agreed that it was fiscally irresponsible.

What can the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development tell us about this Bloc bill?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do think it is notable that the Liberal leader's critic is contradicting his own leader now in terms of voting on this issue.

Bill C-308 would cost Canadians \$7 billion each and every year and would result in a permanent increase in the EI premiums of a whopping 35%.

This is irresponsible. Canadians cannot afford it. We will not support it.

* * *

WAYS AND MEANS

MOTION NO. 9

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among all parties and I believe that if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, all questions necessary to dispose of Ways and Means Motion No. 9 be put immediately.

The Speaker: Is there agreement to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC) moved that a ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures, be concurred in.

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.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

The Speaker: I have the honour to table the 2009-10 annual report on the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act from the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

• (1510)

[English]

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

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PETITIONS

PASSPORT FEES

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my petition calls upon the Canadian government to negotiate with the U.S. government to reduce United States and Canadian passport fees.

American tourists visiting Canada are at their lowest levels since 1972. It has fallen by five million in the last seven years, from sixteen million in 2002 to only eleven million in 2009. Passport fees for multiple member families are a significant barrier to traditional cross-border family vacations. The cost of the passports for an American family of four can be over \$500. While over half of Canadians have passports, only a quarter of Americans do.

At the Midwestern legislative conference at the Councils of State Governments, attended by myself and 500 other elected representatives from 11 border states and three provinces, a resolution was passed unanimously, stating:

RESOLVED, that [the] Conference calls on President Barack Obama and the Prime Minister...to immediately examine a reduced fee for passports to facilitate cross-border tourism;

...we encourage the governments to examine the idea of a limited time two-for-one passport renewal or a new application; and be it further

Routine Proceedings

RESOLVED, that this resolution be submitted to appropriate federal, state and provincial officials.

To be a fair process, passport fees must be reduced on both sides of the border. Therefore, the petitioners call upon the government to: (a) work with the American government to examine a mutual reduction in passport fees to facilitate tourism, and (b) promote a limited time two-for-one passport renewal or new application fee on a mutual basis with the United States.

• (1515)

PASSPORT FEES

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my petition calls on the Canadian government to negotiate with the U.S. government to reduce U.S. and Canadian passport fees.

Passport fees for Canadians on fixed incomes and multiple member families are a significant barrier to the traditional cross-border family vacations and our tourism industry is suffering as well. The number of American tourists visiting Canada is at its lowest level since 1972 and has fallen by 5 million in the last seven years, from 16 million in 2002 to only 11 million in 2009.

At this summer's Midwestern legislative conference of the Council of State Governments, attended by representatives from 11 border states and 3 provinces, a resolution was passed unanimously, that reads, be it:

RESOLVED, that the...Conference of The Council of State Governments calls on President Barack Obama and [the] Prime Minister...to immediately examine a reduced fee for passports to facilitate cross-border tourism;—

...we encourage the governments to examine the idea of a limited time two-for-one passport renewal or a new application; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this resolution be submitted to appropriate federal, state and provincial officials.

To be a fair process, passport fees must be reduced on both sides of the border.

Therefore, the petitioners call on the government to: (a) work with the American government to examine a mutual reduction in passport fees to facilitate tourism; and (b) promote a limited time two-for-one passport renewal or new application fee on a mutual basis with the United States.

ANIMAL WELFARE

M. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NPD): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by petitioners in Thunder Bay—Rainy River, like Joyce Redden, and petitioners from right across this country who are calling upon the House of Commons to bring forward and adopt into legislation Bill C-544, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act and the Meat Inspection Act, thus prohibiting the importation of exportation of horses for slaughter for human consumption, as well as horse meat products for human consumption.

Routine Proceedings

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions to present.

The first petition is from a group of individuals who wish the House of Commons to understand that it is estimated that 58% of all women over the age of 15 are part of the paid workforce and still are not getting equal pay for work of equal value; 56% of these are single parent families headed by women and half of unattached senior women, and they live below the poverty line, in addition to aboriginal women, women of colour, seniors, poor women and women with disabilities. They all face a deeper discrimination with regard to unemployment, lower wages, poverty and the despair that comes with that.

They call upon the Parliament of Canada to pursue policies that would ensure adequate funding and support for six fundamental areas that would dramatically improve the status of women in Canada: fairness for women at work; a better work-family balance; an end to violence against women; ensuring women are heard in public and in politics; fairness for marginalized women; and they wish us to champion equality for women around the globe.

• (1520)

CIVILIAN PEACE SERVICE

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the next petition is from individuals who draw attention to the fact that there is no department in the Government of Canada or no minister in the federal cabinet with a mandate to encourage a culture of peace and non-violent conflict resolution.

The petitioners ask that Canada consider the lack of a specialized force of peace professionals trained in conflict prevention and reconciliation in Canada and globally, and respectfully request that the Parliament support Bill C-447, which would establish a department of peace and a civilian peace service for Canada.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is from a number of francophone women who ask that this Parliament demand that the government implement the recommendations of the 2004 task force on pay equity and preserve the rights of women in this country and those working in the public sector.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, finally, I have the honour to present a petition from a group of people who wish the House of Commons to support a universal declaration on animal welfare. Because there is scientific consensus and public acknowledgement that animals can feel pain and can suffer, efforts should be made to prevent animal cruelty and reduce animal suffering.

Over a billion people around the world rely on animals for their livelihoods and many others rely on animals for companionship. They petition the Government of Canada to support a universal declaration on animal welfare.

ABORIGINAL HEALING FOUNDING

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition in which the petitioners state that the Aboriginal Healing Foundation is making a difference in the lives of residential school survivors and that the healing from the impacts of residential schools is far from complete after 10 years.

The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to leave a true legacy of action to residential school survivors and support the process of healing through an extension of funding for the Aboriginal Healing Founding.

HOUSING

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions regarding Bill C-304, an act for affordable housing in Canada.

The petitioners, some from Nova Scotia and some from Newfoundland and Labrador, are calling for an increased federal role in housing through investments in not for profit housing, housing for the homeless, access to housing for people with different needs and sustainable and environmentally sound design standards.

The petitioners and I look forward to the minister's response.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, my apologies, but I rise on a point of order to ask for consent to revert back to private members' bills? I was absent for about 30 seconds when you called that item.

The Speaker: Is it agreed to revert to introduction of private members' business?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-565, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (arrest without warrant by owner).

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present this bill to amend the Criminal Code so small business owners can protect themselves.

David Chen, the owner of Lucky Moose grocery store who caught the thief who had repeatedly stolen from his store, was charged with forcible confinement, assault and kidnapping because he caught the criminal an hour later outside the store and held him until the police arrived.

Many store owners experience the same frustration as the Lucky Moose owner, Mr. Chen. Just in my riding I have nine concrete examples.

My amendment to the Criminal Code would allow owners to arrest criminals without warrant so they can be turned over to the police.

In support of David Chen, I am calling this bill, the Lucky Moose bill. I also want to thank Chi Kun Shi who is here today, and the 10,000 good citizens who signed the petition in support of this change.

Government Orders

My mother shops at Lucky Moose every day and said that it was about time Parliament protected these small business owners. I call on all parties to support this bill so it can become law.

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

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1525)

[*English*]

CANADA-PANAMA FREE TRADE ACT

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC) moved that Bill C-46, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Panama, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Panama and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Panama, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in the House today to the Canada-Panama free trade act.

[*Translation*]

Pursuing trade agreements is essential to bringing continued prosperity to Canadians. And this is why the implementation of free trade agreements is a priority for the Government of Canada and demonstrates our commitment to helping Canadian businesses compete in markets abroad.

[*English*]

As the world economies recover, expanding trade and investment relationships to improve market access is more important than ever. By opening our markets and pursuing greater market access abroad, we are sending a clear message that protectionism is not the way to achieve global stability and prosperity. By improving access to foreign markets for Canadian businesses, we are supporting domestic economic growth and creating new opportunities for Canadian workers.

Our government knows that Canada's long-term prosperity is driven by the ingenuity and creativity of hard-working families, small business owners and entrepreneurs across the country.

[*Translation*]

Canada's exporters, investors and service providers are calling for these opportunities. Business owners and entrepreneurs want access to global markets, and this government is listening.

[*English*]

Canada made the big jump into free trade with our free trade agreement with the United States. Many in the House will remember the 1988 election and how that very much gripped the country. It was perhaps the only election in my lifetime thoroughly dominated by policy, not personalities, not advertising campaigns, but by substance, and one policy in particular, that of free trade.

As a result of that great debate and the subsequent results, the success of free trade with the United States, that debate is very much a settled question in Canada now. Canadians embrace free trade. Our trade with the United States has doubled since that time and our trade with Mexico, as part of the North American Free Trade Agreement, has increased almost five times.

There are true Conservative roots in the commitment to free trade. After we ceased to be government, for the next 13 years our predecessors were somewhat reluctant to embrace free trade, notwithstanding its apparent success. Three new free trade agreements were negotiated, however, in that time with Chile, Costa Rica and Israel.

Since we formed the government again in 2006, we have pursued an aggressive and ambitious free trade agenda, including commencing renegotiation of our free trade agreements with Chile and Costa Rica to make them much more comprehensive and ambitious.

We have also concluded, in just a little more than four years, new free trade agreements with Peru, Colombia, Jordan and the European Free Trade Association countries of Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Lichtenstein. We also have seen, through these agreements, in a very short period of time significant victories for Canadian workers and Canadian entrepreneurs.

We are continuing to look ahead to other key global partners, including, for example, the European Union. Our free trade agreement with the European Union would represent the most significant Canadian trade initiative since the North American free trade agreement.

The study that was done before we began our European Union negotiations indicated an annual benefit to the Canadian economy of some \$12 billion a year from such an agreement. That is a boost that our Canadian workers and our Canadian economy really need to see. That is why we are excited that that negotiation is proceeding very positively. A fifth round of negotiations will take place next month right here in Ottawa. We are optimistic that we will have an agreement in place by the end of 2011.

Government Orders

What will be notable about that agreement is that it will be the very first free trade agreement the European Union will have negotiated with a developed economy, putting Canada in the very enviable position of being the only major developed economy in the world with a free trade agreement with both the United States and the European Union, the two biggest economies in the world, a tremendous platform on which our businesses and our workers can succeed.

However, we are also committed to advancing our ongoing free trade negotiations with other partners, including Ukraine; the Central American four of Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador; the Caribbean community countries; and the Dominican Republic.

Last Friday, I had the pleasure of hosting here in Ottawa my counterpart, Anand Sharma, the minister of commerce and industry from India. At that time, we released publicly a study into the possibilities of a comprehensive economic partnership agreement, a free trade agreement between Canada and India. That study showed that if we were successful in achieving such an agreement, the annual boost to the Canadian economy would be between \$6 billion and \$15 billion a year with similar annual benefits to the Indian economy. We are in the process now of putting together the negotiating mandate we need to be able to undertake those kinds of discussions.

As members can see, our government is firmly committed to free trade. However, the United States will remain, certainly for my lifetime, the major priority of Canada in free trade as 70% of our trade is with the United States and it is a relationship we must constantly tend to. We did that when we became the only country in the world to achieve a waiver from the buy American provisions of the U.S. stimulus program, and we continue to stand up for Canadian businesses and protect our access to that critical market. That will remain our number one priority.

However, we have three major initiatives underway: first, the European Union free trade talks, as I addressed; second, our initiative with regard to India, which looks very positive at this point in time; and third, an effort to carve out for Canada a role in the Americas, not dissimilar to the one Australia already has with regard to the Asian marketplace.

• (1530)

We can see that falling into place. We have our existing free trade agreements with Chile and Costa Rica, which are being improved and enhanced by this government. We have the free trade agreement implemented with Peru and the recently passed free trade agreement with Colombia. We have had negotiations with the Dominican Republic, the countries of the Caribbean community, and the Central American four. Altogether, we can see that Canada is working very hard to achieve that special, privileged position of having a dominant free trading position within the Americas.

Indeed, it is as part of that overall strategy of being a key trading country in our hemisphere, on which the Prime Minister has spoken, that we also now add the concept of a free trade agreement with Panama.

I was very proud and pleased to sign that agreement in May with Roberto Henríquez, my counterpart, and now I am pleased that we are commencing debate on it in the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

The government is dedicated to pursuing trade relationships that work for Canadians. In addition to these markets, Canadian businesses have long been asking for closer ties to Panama—an innovative, dynamic economy, and a gateway to Latin America and the Caribbean.

That is why we have negotiated, concluded and signed last May a free trade agreement with Panama.

[*English*]

Panama has had one of the fastest growing economies in the Americas. Its real gross domestic product growth in 2008 was 10.7%. Even during the economic downturn it posted positive growth in 2009. Panama's real gross domestic product is expected to rise even further in 2010.

Panama is also a strategic hub for the region. It is also an important logistical platform for commercial activity. As a link between two great oceans, Panama, and of course the historic and well-understood Panama Canal, is vital to global trade.

[*Translation*]

We know that Canadian businesses and workers across a number of sectors can compete and win in the Panamanian marketplace. And the Canada-Panama free trade agreement will help them do that. This agreement is a good deal for Canadian companies, in particular for goods exporters.

[*English*]

Our exporters have been active in the Panamanian market. In 2009, Canada's two-way merchandise trade with Panama was \$132.1 million, and our trade has been largely complementary. Upon implementation of the free trade agreement, things will improve significantly. Panama will immediately lift tariffs on some 99.9% of all non-agricultural imports from Canada, with the remaining tariffs to be phased out over five to 15 years. Tariffs will also be lifted immediately on 94% of Canada's agricultural exports to Panama.

These outcomes directly benefit a number of sectors that already have established business ties in Panama, including agriculture and agri-food products, pharmaceuticals, pulp and paper, vehicles, machinery, and information and communications technology products, among others.

We are also pleased that Panama has recognized Canada's inspection systems for beef and pork and has removed its previous ban on Canadian beef.

Government Orders

•(1535)

[*Translation*]

Canadian service providers will also benefit from the Canada-Panama free trade agreement. Panama is a service-oriented economy. Canada has expertise in sectors such as financial, engineering, mining and petroleum extractive services, construction and environmental services—areas where there are opportunities for growth into the Panamanian market. And the agreement ensures the secure, predictable and equitable treatment of service providers from both countries.

[*English*]

With the Canada-Panama free trade agreement, we are helping Canadian service providers thrive.

Panama is also an established destination for Canadian direct investment abroad. At the end of 2008, the stock of Canadian direct investment in Panama totalled \$93 million.

[*Translation*]

Canadian companies are choosing to invest in this market in areas such as banking and financial services, construction and mining. And they will benefit from the Canada-Panama free trade agreement. This deal will provide greater stability, transparency and protection for Canadian investments in Panama.

[*English*]

Government procurement has also been a key priority in our deepening trade relationship with Panama. One of the key drivers is the ongoing Panama Canal expansion and its associated projects. The Panama Canal makes Panama a natural centre for global trade. In fact, Panama handles 5% of global trade and has some of the world's largest export processing zones. The planned Panama Canal expansion, which is actually under construction, is only reinforcing its position as a nexus for international importers and exporters.

The canal expansion is a \$5.3 billion project. It provides numerous opportunities to Canadian businesses through subcontracts and satellite projects, which will be further consolidated by this free trade agreement. We are calling on the opposition to consider and approve this free trade agreement very quickly so that our workers and our businesses can profit from the opportunities that exist right now.

The government procurement provisions in the Canada-Panama free trade agreement guarantee that Canadian suppliers will have non-discriminatory access to a broad range of procurement opportunities, including those under the Panama Canal Authority. Projects, including those associated with the canal expansion, may also lead to increased goods exports from Canadian manufacturers that have expertise in infrastructure.

We are also proud of the work done to protect labour rights and environmental responsibilities. Of course, in general, freer trade and increased prosperity have been shown to aid in improving human development indices. Of course, we have with this agreement, as we have had with others, parallel accords dealing with labour and the environment.

For all these reasons, the Panama agreement is a good deal for Canada, but it is also a good deal because it ensures that Canada

remains competitive in the Panamanian marketplace. Panama has an active trade agenda with many partners, including the United States and the European Union. For this reason, time is, as I said, of the essence. Any delay of this bill would hurt Canadian businesses that are eager to compete and capitalize on the opportunities in Panama.

If Canada can establish access to the Panamanian market before our competitors take hold, it will give our companies an advantage, a real foothold, in doing business there.

Panama is also negotiating a trade agreement with Colombia and is exploring trade deals with the European Free Trade Association, the Caribbean community, Peru, Korea, and others.

[*Translation*]

Clearly other countries are noticing Panama's potential, and they are looking to take advantage of this strong and growing market. That is why it is important for this government to take action now. And it is why I ask for the support of all honourable members for the Canada-Panama free trade agreement, and the parallel labour co-operation and environment agreements.

[*English*]

I am a great believer that free trade is one of the reasons Canada has been performing better than many other major competing economies. We have been leading the major developed economies of the G7 in economic growth. We are unique among those economies in having replaced or restored, through our job growth, all of the jobs that were lost at the start of the economic downturn. We are again in the distinct position of having the lowest debt and the lowest deficit, as a proportion of our economy, of any of those major economies.

We have, of course, as we all know, the soundest banking system in the world, as has been confirmed repeatedly by the World Economic Forum.

The reason for this success is not just the sound policies adopted by the government on fiscal responsibility and appropriate stimulus when required. It is also because of our approach to opening marketplaces and opportunities for our workers and our businesses.

Free trade is a reason for Canada's prosperity and Canada's success. It is the reason we are working so ambitiously to put in place opportunities for Canadian workers all around the world. Our free trade agreement with Panama is part of that plan. It is part of our strategic approach to the region of the Americas and to this hemisphere, and it is one reason Canadian workers and businesses can expect to succeed more in the future and enjoy greater prosperity in the future.

Those are all good reasons why this should be supported in the House of Commons.

•(1540)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to make some observations regarding this free trade agreement.

Government Orders

Panama, as the minister likely knows, is regarded as a tax haven by OECD countries, including the United States. In fact, in 2008, Panama was one of 11 countries that did not have tax information exchange agreements signed or in force. It is one of three states, with Guatemala and Nauru, that will not share bank information or any tax information for exchange purposes. In fact, there are over 350,000 foreign-registered companies registered in Panama.

Fifty-four democratic congresspeople in the United States have called on President Obama not to ratify the agreement until Panama signs an agreement to forward information on these tax evaders. I would like to ask the minister why the government is proceeding when 54 congresspeople in the United States have said that unless Panama signs on and allows the Americans to get information on these tax evaders, they will not sign this agreement.

The minister wants to basically reward Panama. I would like to know what efforts he is making to get Panama to sign on so that we can find out who is hiding out in tax havens such as Panama.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Madam Speaker, I am always impressed by the creativity and the ingenuity of the New Democratic Party in finding new reasons to oppose any free trade agreement that comes along. It is part of its ideological commitment, and I understand that, but I did not think it would be reaching for the argument that we should do what the Americans say they would like us to do. We actually let our trade policies be made here in this country. We are pursuing this trade agreement because it represents opportunities for Canada.

However, with regard to the issue he raises, the issue of tax-sharing informing for tax purposes, it was addressed by G20 leaders, under Prime Minister Harper's leadership, in June, here in Toronto. It is something on which they are working together and to which we are firmly committed. I will note that Panama has committed to implementing the standard developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development for the exchange of tax information to combat international tax evasion. We will continue to work with them to make sure that it happens.

I can tell the member that I actually wrote to my Panamanian counterpart in July of this year to express our interest in pursuing such a tax information exchange agreement with Panama, and I look forward to that happening very soon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I know that the minister did not intend to name the Prime Minister.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for York South—Weston.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am sure that the House agrees that the dependence on our American trading partner over the next decade, or several decades, has to have a counterbalancing strategy with respect to our trade relationships with the world, in particular in relation to capital flow, investment, and so on. We need to look at a new regime.

The minister tangentially touched upon the issues of the environment and fair labour practices. That was of great concern to members of this House during the debate on the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement. I wonder if the minister could elaborate a little more on how the trade agreement will encompass fair labour

practices and positive environmental strategies, given that these have been concerns and in fact would be concerns to Panamanians.

We have a private member's bill that is looking at fair labour practices in the mining industry where there is Canadian investment in mining.

I wonder if the minister would just make a comment on that.

● (1545)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to elaborate a bit further on the parallel agreements on labour and the environment.

The parallel agreement we have with Panama on labour principally requires that both countries respect the International Labour Organization's 1998 declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work.

To further protect the rights of workers, both countries commit to providing acceptable protection for occupational health and safety, including compensation in the case of injuries and illnesses, as well as acceptable minimum employment standards regarding hours of work, minimum wage, and overtime pay.

They also agree to ensure that migrant workers are accorded the same legal protections.

I could go on, but essentially both countries have agreed to significant consequences for infractions and a dispute settlement process.

On the environment front, we have a commitment to respect each other's environmental laws, to ensure that, in an effort to attract investment, trade, or jobs, there will be no reduction of environmental standards. Both sides have agreed to respect their commitments under the United Nations convention on the diversity of species.

These examples represent the basics contained in both of those agreements. They ensure that the things we value in Canada, like protecting our environment and the basic rights of our workers, will be respected by both countries under this agreement.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to express my shock at hearing that the NDP is taking its foreign policy leadership from the U.S. Congress and allowing American politicians to influence their decision-making process.

We are going to make decisions based on what is best for Canada. I have to thank the Minister of International Trade and Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food for negotiating this free trade agreement with Panama.

I have had the opportunity to travel to Panama on a number of occasions. Every time I go down there I see the country moving ahead. It is still going through some major development. I can see that the middle class continues to grow and expand, to become more wealthy.

It is this type of opportunity that presents the greatest chance for recovery of our agriculture sector here in Canada, especially on the prairies.

Government Orders

Panama is a major trading nation. At the Panama Canal, which I have visited a couple of times, one sees volumes of trade going through the canal, from sea to sea, day in and day out, night and day. That presents us with an opportunity to make use of its connections in addition to feeding its market.

They are huge users of pulse crops and red meats. I know that cattle producers, hog producers, and grain and pulse growers in Selkirk—Interlake and throughout the province are pleased with this government and its efforts. For this I want to thank the Minister of International Trade publicly.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Madam Speaker, I note the ongoing interest in agriculture of the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake.

As I said, 94% of Canada's existing agricultural exports to Panama will immediately become duty free. That includes pulses: peas, lentils, and the like. Also, there are high-quality beef cuts, live animals, animal genetics, a wide variety of pork and pork products, malt, linseed, canola, sunflower seeds, maple syrup, Christmas trees, and frozen French fry products, which are important for some from Atlantic Canada.

I could go on. All this is good news for farmers, producers, and agricultural workers across Canada.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wanted to ask the minister a question, since he has focused on which industries are going to benefit from this. He talked about 90% of all the agricultural goods becoming immediately excise free.

I am wondering whether he would quantify that percentage. How many thousands of dollars are we talking about? Are we talking about millions, and if so, how many millions? If this is good for agriculture, is there a strategy in place for the manufacturing sector in southern Ontario, or is the minister just hoping?

• (1550)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Madam Speaker, there were about 17 questions there.

The hon. member will be interested to know that we already export \$23.4 million of agricultural products annually to Panama. We expect this to grow significantly once this agreement gives Canada an advantageous position vis-à-vis our competitors such as the United States.

As to manufacturing, 99.9% of the existing manufacturing goods and other goods that we export to Panama will immediately become tariff-free upon the implementation of this agreement. That includes equipment, machinery, and other common exports to Panama.

Overall, our exports are in the range of \$80 million to \$90 million a year. It varies somewhat, but we expect to see significant growth once we secure an advantageous trade position.

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his graciousness in welcoming me as his new critic for international trade.

I rise to speak today in support of Bill C-46, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Panama, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Panama and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation

between Canada and the Republic of Panama, and to having it reviewed at committee.

I am pleased to participate in a debate that, unusually for this House in recent times, should be relatively free of heated partisan rhetoric. As the representative of the official opposition, we support the passing of this bill for many of the same reasons that members sitting on the government's side of the House support it.

Indeed, this is the second time in only three days that we have had this opportunity. It mirrors our recent debate on similar trade agreements with Jordan, which have now been referred to committee. We should take advantage of these opportunities to agree when they come along, as they so rarely do.

However, I will also be raising some concerns about the government's lack of action on increasing U.S. protectionism and its failure to seize trade opportunities in China, South Korea, and other countries.

Canada is now experiencing the first trade deficits it has seen in 30 years. Indeed, the country set a trade-deficit record this July, \$2.7 billion. Something is going seriously wrong and we must challenge the government hard on why this is and what we can do about it.

I will also mention that, although we in the Liberal Party want to see even harder work on multilateral trade negotiations, we also recognize the practicalities and challenges this task entails. In the absence of progress on the multilateral level, we in the Liberal Party encourage Canada to work at the bilateral level to enhance our trade with as many other countries as possible.

Canada is a nation that supports free trade. Our origins are those of a trading nation, starting with fur, wood, and other natural resources. The portion of our economic activity attributable to trade is greater than that of most other nations. Indeed, 80% of our economy and millions of Canadian jobs depend upon trade and our ability to access foreign markets.

Canadian exporters benefit from the reduction and elimination of tariffs on their goods destined for other countries. Canadian manufacturers benefit from the reduction and elimination of tariffs at the Canadian border of the various materials that go into their products. Canadian consumers benefit from lower prices of imported goods when tariffs on those goods are reduced or eliminated.

Although there will always be debate about protectionism and what steps best promote Canadian business success and generate Canadian jobs, most Canadian businesses that serve domestic markets benefit from free trade in being forced to innovate and compete with others from abroad, provided that those abroad comply with international rules on trade, tariffs, and non-tariff barriers.

Government Orders

In the long run, Canadian businesses are more than capable of being strong, innovative, and competitive without hiding behind protectionist walls.

[*Translation*]

I am proud to rise here today to take part in this debate and show my support, on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada, for Bill C-46, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Panama, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Panama and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Panama.

The Conservative government's mismanagement of Canada's trade relations has led to the first trade deficits we have seen in over 30 years. We need to increase our efforts and our engagement in order to improve the situation and increase international trade between Canada and other countries around the world.

Canada depends on trade. It is worth noting that 80% of our economy relies on access to export markets. The Liberal Party supports the principle of free trade, and it also supports any initiatives that will improve access to foreign markets for Canadian businesses. Although Panama has a small economy and Canada's existing trade with that country is relatively limited, there are opportunities for Canadian businesses.

In 2008, Panama had one of the highest real GDP growth rates in the Americas at 10.7%. Despite the global economic downturn, Panama posted positive growth in 2009 at 2.4%, a trend that is expected to continue in 2010.

The expansion of the Panama Canal is currently under way and is slated to be completed by 2014 at a projected cost of \$5.3 billion. This expansion is expected to generate opportunities for Canadian companies in such areas as infrastructure and construction, as well as environmental, heavy engineering and consulting services, capital projects, human capital development and construction materials.

Like the free trade agreements between Canada, Chile and Costa Rica, the North American Free Trade Agreement and the free trade agreement with Jordan, the Canada-Panama free trade agreement includes side agreements on labour co-operation and the environment.

The Canada-Panama labour co-operation agreement recognizes both countries' obligations under the International Labour Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which requires both countries to ensure that laws, regulations and national practices protect the following rights: the right to freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the abolition of child labour, the elimination of forced labour and the elimination of discrimination.

The Canada-Panama labour co-operation agreement and the agreement on the environment both include complaints and dispute resolution processes that enable members of the public to request an investigation into perceived failures of Canada or Panama to comply with these agreements.

• (1610)

[*English*]

The free trade agreement with Panama is another opportunity to increase access to more markets for Canadian farmers and business.

Yes, Panama is a relatively small economy. In 2009 we exported \$90 million in goods to the country, which is not as large as with some trading partners. It is, however, a stable country which has made significant progress in recent years in terms of development and democracy, which Canada is well-placed to continue to encourage.

In spite of the global economic downturn, Panama's GDP grew at 10.7% in 2008, one of the highest in the Americas, and is forecast at 5.6% for 2010. In 2009 bilateral trade between the two countries totalled \$132.1 million, Canadian exports making up \$91.4 million of that and imports, \$40.7 million.

Primary Canadian merchandise exports to Panama include machinery, vehicles, electronic equipment, pharmaceutical equipment, pulses and frozen potato products. Canadian service exports include financial services, engineering, information and communications technology services. Merchandise imports from Panama include precious stones and metals, mainly gold, fruits and nuts, fish and seafood products.

The existing Panama Canal, vital for the international trading system, is undergoing a massive expansion, with completion slated for 2014. The \$5.3 billion expansion is already generating business for Canadian companies in construction, environmental, engineering and consulting services, capital projects and more, and is expected to generate even more over the next while, helped by this free trade agreement.

Canada will immediately eliminate over 99% of its tariffs on current imports from Panama.

The free trade agreement also addresses non-tariff barriers by adopting measures to ensure non-discriminatory treatment of imported goods, promoting good regulatory practices, transparency and the use of international standards.

On labour and environment, like most of Canada's free trade agreements, this free trade agreement includes agreements on the environment and labour co-operation that will help promote sustainability and protect labour rights. The Canada-Panama labour co-operation agreement recognizes both countries' obligations under the International Labour Organization, the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, including the protection of the following rights: the right to freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the abolition of child labour, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour and the elimination of discrimination.

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Both the labour co-operation agreement and the agreement on the environment include complaints and dispute resolution processes that enable members of the public to request an investigation to perceived failures of either Canada or Panama to comply with these agreements.

I have a few words on human rights.

Although it is not the issue here, as it was in the debate over free trade with Colombia, the question of human rights will always come up in the House when we debate free trade agreements, and rightly so, sometimes more than others. As I have said in the House a number of times, it is a good thing that Canadian members of Parliament are concerned about international human rights and I have noted that, regardless of what party we sit for, we all want full human rights for everyone around the world.

We do, however, from time to time disagree on what Canada can do to further that goal. Some of my colleagues will say that putting up walls and preventing more open trade and engagement will somehow help, that somehow, Canada wagging its finger at other states rather than fully engaging will miraculously be listened to. I am afraid that that is not how the world works.

Freer trade encourages freer flow of information and freer flows of ideas. Rather than building walls, freer trade opens windows through which light gets in and opens doors through which Canadians can engage on all sorts of levels with others. If we isolate a country, our capacity to engage in human rights is in fact reduced.

Economic engagement increases our ability to engage in other areas, such as education and culture. All of that engagement increases the capacity to engage in the area of human rights. It gives Canadians a greater opportunity, through businesspeople, customers, clients and other engagements that can flow from those relationships, to show by example, not in a paternalistic, finger-wagging, we-know-best attitude, but rather showing by examples how things work so well for us in Canada and our willingness to share, on a friendly basis, those examples.

As I have said many times, it is the citizens of a particular state who are responsible for improvements in their state, not Canada. Canadians have a wonderful opportunity to engage with those citizens, in exposing what works in other parts of the world, in particular here, where we are proud of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, our successfully pluralistic society and our peace, order and good government approach to governance.

Although we do not have the heightened level of concern with respect to Panama as we had with Colombia, I will take the opportunity to commend my Liberal colleague, the member for Kings—Hants, my predecessor in the role of critic for international trade, for the excellent work he did with the human rights amendment to the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act. Under that Liberal-negotiated deal, Canada and Colombia must publicly measure the impact to free trade on human rights in both countries, the first trade deal in the world that requires ongoing human rights impact assessments. Again, I commend my colleague from Kings—Hants for his excellent work in this regard.

All of this goes to my support and my party's support for Bill C-46 and the free trade agreement with Panama. Greater economic engagement helps us all economically, for more jobs and more prosperity for Canada, yes, but for both countries, and free trade is, in this case, a win-win opportunity.

At this point, however, I wish to highlight some real concerns about the Conservative government's approach to international trade. We are losing the concept of free trade with our biggest trading partner to the south, the United States. When the recession hit, the United States government responded with protectionism, in putting forth its buy American policies and tighter rules. The Conservative government initially stood by watching, as if it did not know what hit it. It engaged in photo ops in Washington, not realizing the battle needed to be fought all across the states, at the state level.

By the time a so-called exemption was worked out, which in and of itself required significant concessions by Canadian provinces, the protectionism in the United States had already hurt many Canadian businesses, costing Canadian jobs. Even the so-called exemption only covers 37 states, a great example of how it is not just Washington that must be engaged.

Despite our vociferous efforts to get the Conservative government to engage much more forcefully at the state level, the government just did not seem to understand either the whats of the negative effects on Canadian business, or the hows of fixing the problem, and here we are again. The United States is threatening more protectionist legislation, the foreign manufacturers legal accountability act, which although not technically aimed at Canada, would significantly hurt many Canadian businesses and affect many Canadian jobs.

However, the minister's response was no action whatsoever. Instead he says, "Gee, it's too bad, we're always collateral damage in the battles between the United States and China". Then he says, "We're hoping that it does not reach the vote state before the U.S. elections". Then he says, "If it passes, we'll probably seek an exemption for Canadian companies".

With all respect, it simply is not enough to dismiss Canada as collateral damage, or to merely hope that protectionist legislation will not pass. Just like last time, we urge the government to get its hands dirty, to get on the ground, not only in Washington but across the states, to ensure that Canada is exempted from this very damaging proposed legislation before it happens. Canadian businesses need something done to prevent this from happening, not just some vague hopes and prayers.

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I also want to use this opportunity in the debate on the merits of free trade to exhort the government to do much more in its dealings with China, South Korea and others. I acknowledge the announcement and production of the report this last week between Canada and India, and I am encouraged this as moving in the right direction. However, having just returned from China and Korea, I am overwhelmed by the growth, the size, the pace and the scale of what is happening over there. At the same time, I am dismayed by how little the Canadian government is doing to capitalize on the extraordinary growth and scale that presents such fantastic opportunities for so many Canadians.

There are incredible investments being made in infrastructure, water, sewage treatment and public transit. We have been told repeatedly by the Chinese that they are looking for green technology, for forestry products, for investments in the financial services industries. There are tremendous opportunities for trade in educational services, in co-operation and engagement not just at the Canada-China level, but provincially and municipally. My colleagues should understand that I do not suggest for a minute that the federal government impinge upon those jurisdictions, but rather stress that we in Canada could work much more co-operatively and productively by engaging all orders of government in a concerted effort to take much more advantage of the opportunities that these extraordinary economies offer to Canadians.

We in the Liberal Party have stressed and will continue to stress the importance of Canada in the world. In support of this, we have proposed the concept of global networks. We say that the older, simpler concept of trade and commerce on its own, of simple export and import of goods and services, should be expanded to include all kinds of engagement on all levels, such as education, culture and environmental co-operation, a much greater engagement, a much broader engagement, and exchange of people and ideas.

Canada should be taking advantage of these extraordinary opportunities that the world and other growing, bustling economies and societies offer, opportunities which the Conservative government just does not seem to understand.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I had another question for the minister that I was unable to ask, but maybe the Liberal critic would have some comments on this.

I pointed out for the minister that 54 United States congressmen had demanded that President Obama forgo the agreement with Panama until Panama signed the tax information exchange treaties. The minister said that he did not follow what the United States did.

The fact is the Americans know that Panama is a tax haven. I would like to know where the minister has been since he is obviously not aware of it. For example, the U.S. justice department says that Panama is a major financial conduit for Mexican and Colombian drug traffickers and money laundering activities. Surely, the minister and the government would not want to help drug traffickers and money launderers. We all remember Manuel Noriega, the president of Panama a few years ago. He is now doing time in a Florida jail for drug trafficking.

As long as Panama refuses to sign these tax agreements, why would Canada support this type of essentially illegitimate and

criminal activity? The government has an opportunity to get its signature on those agreements before it signs. That is what the Americans do. That is best practice. It is just plain common sense. If Panama is prepared to sign those agreements, then perhaps the government could proceed with the agreement.

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay: Madam Speaker, God forbid that I should presume to speak for the minister in this regard, so I will not.

My colleague has raised a legitimate concern. The minister mentioned the fact that Panama had agreed to make significant movements in this regard. However, I would suggest for my colleague that this is exactly the type of thing we look forward to discussing when the bill gets to the international trade committee. I look forward to the member's contribution in that regard during those discussions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Madam Speaker, even though I did not hear her entire speech, I believe my colleague did not touch on a certain impression we get in all this. Does she not get the impression that the government is being hasty in passing various bills on free trade agreements it has concluded?

There was the one between Canada and Jordan, and now it is presenting an agreement between Canada and Panama. Is the hon. member not afraid that the government's secret goal is to speed things along? This all seems to be going very quickly. It might be better to take a bit more time to assess the repercussions, both positive and negative, of these free trade agreements.

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question. I do not believe that we are moving too quickly in concluding these free trade agreements.

The Liberal Party is in favour of free trade and agrees with concluding free trade agreements with more countries. What bothers me is that the government is concluding such agreements with smaller economies that do not necessarily represent the best opportunities for Canada.

In my speech I said that Canada was not really involved in China's economy. What is happening in China is incredible and yet the Conservative government is not doing much with that country.

The United States is the largest foreign economy we trade with. That country makes an effort to protect its market, which can make life difficult for Canadian companies. I therefore do not believe that the government is trying to conclude other free trade agreements too quickly, but I do take issue with what it is not doing.

• (1615)

[*English*]

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, as my colleague will know, for us the issue is not so much about being for or against trade. The issue is whether one is for free trade or fair trade. For us that is what the central focus of the debate ought to be.

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I am pleased to tell members of the House that the member for Burnaby—New Westminster will soon be tabling a bill in the House on fair trade. For us it is absolutely key that in any free trade agreements there be respect for the environment in all of the trade dealings. There must be respect for the economy; trade agreements must be economically viable. Trade agreements also must have respect for human rights and social justice.

In July there was a new wave of anti-union repression in Panama, resulting in several workers killed, over 100 injured and over 300 arrested. When I look at the labour side agreements that are part of all of these bilateral agreements the Conservative government is signing, it really worries me because labour is never a part of the formal agreement. It is always in a side agreement.

Much like we saw in the trade agreement with Colombia, what we see here again is a provision that says, “kill a worker, pay a fine”.

Does the hon. member really think that the labour side agreement is enough to persuade her that this is not just a free trade agreement, but that it is a fair trade agreement as well? Does she have enough concerns about these issues to deal with them effectively in committee?

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay: Madam Speaker, of course we are concerned about fair trade. Of course we are concerned about human rights. I will say two things. That is exactly the kind of thing I look forward to having discussed at committee. That is exactly what the committee process is for, but I will also say that we do not rely just on the fact of specific words in a specific agreement or a side agreement. We of course do that. That is why we do them. That is why we encourage agreements on labour specifically. That is why we encourage agreements on the environment. We want to have those agreements. They are part of the discussion.

However, I cannot stress enough to my colleague that the fundamental philosophy we have here is that when we engage in free trade, the freer trade encourages a freer flow of information, a freer flow of ideas, a freer exchange of people, whether it is through business, whether it is through clients or whether it is through education exchanges that are spurred on by those business activities.

The situation in Panama in terms of labour rights and all of the things that happen domestically is up to Panamanians. The opportunity Canada has is to open those doors and windows wider so that we can engage even more fully. The people of Panama can themselves see the opportunities and the examples that Canada has to show. Again, as I said in my speech, not in some paternalistic way, not with some we know best attitude, but by showing by example there are opportunities for improvement and that it is not just coming from specific language and specific agreements, it comes from the entire philosophy that greater engagement will encourage greater exchange of people, of ideas, of information. That will give Canada and Canadians an opportunity in their engagement with Panama and Panamanians to have the Panamanians look for improvements wherever those improvements can be found.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Bloc Québécois to Bill C-46 to implement the agreement negotiated by representatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Interna-

tional Trade with the Government of Panama. We oppose this free trade agreement. It is not that the Bloc Québécois is against free trade and free trade agreements, but in this case, there are strong reasons that justify our opposition.

Panama has one of the most well-developed economies in Central America. However, the Bloc Québécois does not believe we should ratify a free trade agreement with Panama when it is still on the OECD's grey list of tax havens. Every country turns to that organization for that list; it is used as a reference. People at the OECD evaluate different criteria with regard to tax havens, which I will say more about later.

We asked departmental representatives a few questions. They said that Canada is currently negotiating a tax treaty with Panama in order to tighten the rules on banking transparency to better combat tax evasion. However, there is no mention anywhere of such a treaty with Panama in the Department of Finance's register of tax treaties currently in effect or under negotiation.

It is clear to us that Panama is still on the OECD grey list and France's blacklist of countries that promote tax evasion. That is the major reason we oppose such an agreement.

The other reason we object to implementing this free trade agreement is that we do not get the impression that workers' rights are very well protected in Panama. In June 2010, the right-wing government of Ricardo Martinelli passed Law 30, which is considered to be anti-union. This law is said to include labour code reform that is seen as repressive since it would criminalize workers who demonstrate to defend their rights.

On August 5, the Panamanian government agreed to review this law, but we have every reason to be concerned about the desire of the Martinelli government to respect the conventions of the International Labour Organization integrated into the side agreement on labour standards.

For these two major reasons—which we will look at again in more detail—we believe that we should delay the ratification of the free trade agreement, in light of the adoption of Law 30, with which the Panamanian government has taken a real step backwards.

Although two days ago we were talking about the Canada-Jordan free trade agreement—Bill C-8—which we were in favour of, we do not agree with the Conservative government's strategy of focusing on bilateral agreements instead of multilateral ones, which are preferred by the Bloc, as we said yesterday.

● (1620)

The Bloc Québécois believes that a multilateral approach is more effective for the development of more equitable trade that protects the interests of all nations.

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I would like to come back to the issue of respect for human and labour rights in Panama. Human rights are guaranteed by the Constitution, and in general, they are respected. That is a fact. However, the judicial system still has a number of problems in Panama, including the conditions of imprisonment, the length of preventive detention, corruption, and the lack of independence of the judicial system. In rural areas, there are problems with child labour and with indigenous communities and marginalized ethnic minorities, as well as discrimination against women.

In recent months, Panama has seen a wave of what is considered to be anti-union repression. Sources estimate that between two and six people died, and about a hundred were injured during violent protests that followed the June 2010 adoption of Law 30, known as the “sausage bill”, because it contains all kinds of reforms, such as reforms to the labour code and to environmental legislation.

The reform of the labour code is seen as repressive, because it would make it a crime for workers to demonstrate to defend their rights.

Some of the country's environmental groups submitted an application for support to the UN environment program to convince the Panamanian government to review changes that will diminish the state's ability to preserve its natural resources.

Unions have asked for support from the international labour federations while the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights is asking for an investigation of police brutality during protests against Law 30 in July 2010. According to our sources, the Panamanian government is conducting its own investigation.

On July 14, 2010, the International Trade Union Confederation, together with its affiliated organizations in Panama, firmly condemned violent repression of the strike movement by workers and demanded the immediate repeal of “the controversial Law 30, which has become a licence to kill for the police, creating a climate of extreme violence” among the people. I am quoting from the article entitled “New Panamanian Law Threatens Environment and Human Rights.”

On August 5, the Panamanian government agreed to review the law. We should monitor this issue before going any further. Otherwise, after signing the agreement, Canadian corporations may find that they are damaging the environment or contravening the International Labour Organization's core convention, C87. That is rather important.

I will now return to the issue of Panama being a tax haven on France's blacklist and the OECD grey list. The latter lists countries that have committed to exchanging tax information but that have not substantially implemented the rules.

Section 26 of the OECD model tax convention provides the most generally accepted standard for the bilateral exchange of tax information.

There is no indication, on the Department of Finance web site of treaties and conventions, that an information exchange agreement is being negotiated with Panama.

Before entering into the Canada-Panama free trade agreement, the Conservative government absolutely must sign a tax information

exchange agreement with Panama and this agreement must not allow subsidiaries located in the targeted jurisdictions to be tax exempt.

Obviously, it is important that this agreement be concluded, negotiated, drafted and signed before finalizing the free trade agreement. It is also clear that, under such an agreement, corporations cannot use their presence in Panama to justify tax evasion. For the Bloc Québécois, it is entirely inconceivable that we would be associated with such a practice.

• (1625)

With this free trade agreement, we will likely see more trade and a significant increase in Canadian investment in Panama. We will see more taxpayers, both individuals and businesses, earning income in both Canada and in Panama. That is why it is essential for the Government of Canada and Panama to sign the type of information exchange agreements I was talking about earlier.

Since Panama is a tax haven, such a free trade agreement would become an invitation to evade taxes, or use loopholes in the law to help a taxpayer avoid paying a tax he or she normally should.

At the end of the day, should a free trade agreement promote tax evasion? It is a very serious question because we would not want Canada to inadvertently promote investments that encourage tax evasion under the pretext of concluding more trade agreements and lowering taxes. That makes absolutely no sense.

For example, a company whose income would be legally taxed according to the rate in effect in Panama would be tempted to set up a business structure to take advantage of this near-zero tax rate.

The Conservative government is already signing tax treaties with tax havens and we all know it. The Bloc Québécois absolutely believes that we need to be vigilant because in June 2010 the government signed tax information exchange agreements based on the OECD model with eight jurisdictions: Bahamas, Bermuda, Dominica, the Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

This information tells us that we absolutely must be careful; the Conservative government absolutely must avoid putting Canada in a position, once again, of promoting tax evasion, when there are plenty of workers in Quebec and Canada who can barely manage because they have to pay their taxes.

In *La Presse* on July 6, 2010, we read:

In return for these agreements, Canada seems to have given these jurisdictions an advantage. Subsidiaries of active Canadian companies domiciled in these islands can effectively repatriate their foreign profits to Canada tax free.

Bermuda, Bahamas and the other islands will thereby have a similar status to Barbados, which has been the only tax haven to have this privilege.

It is high time we gave ourselves a real policy of multilateralism.

The current course of globalization, a phenomenon bearing both great hope and great injustice, must be redirected. Disparity between rich and poor, the failure to respect rights and freedoms and the lack of regulations on the environment and labour give rise more to despair than to hope.

Openness to trade and the establishment of international regulations to counter protectionism and protect investment are good things that the Bloc supports. That does not mean that trade rules should have precedence over the common good and the ability of governments to redistribute wealth, to protect their environment and culture and to offer their citizens basic public services such as health care and education. These fundamental elements must always take precedence over any trade that we establish in order to increase our exports. These basic criteria must guide our negotiations and intentions to sign free trade agreements with other countries.

Quebec is a trading nation. Our companies, and especially our cutting-edge companies, could not survive on just the domestic market. International exports account for one-third of Quebec's GDP. If interprovincial trade is added, exports represented 52% of Quebec's GDP in 2005.

• (1630)

Protectionism is not in our interests, and that is why Quebec, and Quebec sovereignists in particular, massively supported the free trade agreement with the United States and then NAFTA.

That is also why the Bloc Québécois was the first party in the House of Commons to call for a free trade agreement with the EU.

Then again, it would be naive and false to claim that everything is just fine, in the best of all possible worlds. While freer trade has led to greater wealth overall, it has also produced its share of losers. And that is unfortunate.

The trade environment has worsened considerably over the last few years, and we must take that factor into account. Between 2003 and 2007, Quebec went from a large trade surplus to a \$13 billion deficit. In 2006, every Quebecker therefore consumed \$2,000 more than he or she produced. And this only covers our international trade balance; another \$5 billion deficit must be added in interprovincial trade, which also made us considerably poorer.

The result of this trade deficit is that our manufacturing sector has become dangerously weak. Between 2003 and 2007, it lost nearly 150,000 jobs, which was nearly all the jobs lost in this sector in Canada, including 65,000 lost since the Conservatives came to power, mainly because of foreign competition and a strong Canadian dollar. Trade liberalization can only be profitable if it is guided by certain rules; otherwise, it is a race to the bottom.

For a long time, Canada's trade policy was simply to improve access to foreign markets. From that perspective, it has been very successful. Today a majority of products, over 80% of world trade, flow freely.

However, we are now beginning to see the downside of unbridled liberalization: heavy pressure on our industry, offshoring and trade agreements that amount to a licence to exploit people and the environment in developing countries. The trade environment has changed in recent years and as far as Quebec is concerned, it is not for the better.

Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Prize winner in economics and former vice-president of the World Bank, had this to say when he received his honorary doctorate from Université de Louvain on February 3, 2003:

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As our interdependence has increased, we have discovered that we need rules to govern the process of globalization and to create institutions to help it function. Unfortunately, these rules are too often established by the rich countries to serve their own interests and especially individual interests within these countries.

The Bloc Québécois is proposing a change in Canada's trade priorities. Canada should now shift its focus from trade liberalization to creating a more level playing field. The Bloc Québécois believes that our trade policy must focus on fair globalization, not the shameless pursuit of profit at the expense of people and the environment.

That is the Bloc Québécois' position on Bill C-46.

• (1635)

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I understand the Panamanian government is planning a \$5.3 billion expansion of the Panama Canal. This is in addition to \$13.6 billion in investment planning, including \$1.5 billion for a new metro system in Panama City.

I understand the hon. member plans to oppose the free trade agreement, even though it will provide Canadian companies, which are known all over the world for their great products, the guaranteed ability to bid on these projects.

The member says he thinks the government is moving too fast with this bill. I wonder if he would say the same thing to the workers, many of whom live in Quebec, employed by the companies he wants to prevent, by delaying or opposing this bill, from bidding on the nearly \$19 billion in government procurement contracts in Panama. Can he explain that to the people of Quebec? Can he explain it to me here in the House?

This is a great opportunity for Canadian companies, for companies in Quebec. Why would he object to that? Can he explain this to me?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is opposed to this free trade agreement because it does not completely safeguard the workers in Panama today. If implemented, this agreement will allow some companies to set up shop there to evade taxes. Quebec workers would see companies take advantage of a free trade agreement to avoid their obligation to pay taxes here in Canada.

Quebec workers and the people of Quebec know what is what, and they will have no trouble understanding why the Bloc Québécois is opposed to this free trade agreement.

• (1640)

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would simply like to ask my colleague whether the Bloc members are dead set against this agreement. Perhaps in committee we could try to determine where the problems are and fix them. Can my colleague tell me whether his party is completely unwilling to discuss this in committee? Perhaps there is a way to amend the agreement to address the issues my colleague spoke about.

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Will the Bloc Québécois completely reject this bill or will it participate in committee discussions?

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Madam Speaker, I do not get the impression that my colleague would be able to tell me whether the OECD will take Panama off the grey list of countries that promote tax evasion for companies investing in Panama.

All of these questions are hypothetical. The main objections we have voiced are in relation to that. I said that Panama is considered to be a country that openly promotes tax evasion. In addition, it has not yet passed laws or taken the necessary measures to protect all its workers.

[*English*]

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have listened to the Bloc, the Liberals, and the Conservatives talk about this trade agreement.

Let us keep in mind what is at stake here. Right now, as the minister said, the trade amounts to \$130 million. That is one-tenth of what it cost for security at the G8 and G20.

We are talking about an agreement that is fundamentally flawed, an agreement that gives rise to huge concerns about human rights, environmental protection, and fair trade. I do not think we need to blow this out of proportion and say it is going to be the be-all and end-all for saving the Canadian economy.

I want to ask the member about a concern that has been raised with respect to where some Canadian investments may be headed, namely, the mining sector. I have heard from many people who are actively engaged with the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, which has been following these trade agreements closely because they are concerned about what Canadian mining corporations are doing in the global south, particularly when it comes to environmental matters, indigenous peoples, and labour laws.

I wonder if the member has heard from any of his constituents, particularly from the organization I just mentioned, and whether he might be able to comment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question

Unfortunately, I did not hear the minister's presentation. I do not know how they make their plans, but the Standing Committee on International Trade was meeting just as the first debate got under way concerning this international trade bill. Perhaps they could have watched out for that kind of overlap, since they create the agenda. However, as for her question, even though I did not hear the minister, we have seen how the organizations that she mentioned, ones that defend people, see very dangerous gaps in terms of respect for human rights in various countries. We saw how the Conservatives acted during the debate about the free trade agreement with Colombia, when there were numerous presentations from people who came from all over, including Colombia. NGOs also came to testify that workers are under tremendous pressure and are also victims of relocation by mining companies. There are Canadian mining companies that are not respecting these workers' rights or the rights of the local populations in general. I cannot imagine that they

have changed overnight. I think that they still have the same listening technique, which means that they choose not to hear the pleas of these people.

• (1645)

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member raises questions about guarantees for workers. The provisions of this agreement do cover a wide range of issues that would protect workers, such as, the abolition of child labour, the freedom of association, the rights of collective bargaining, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour and many other initiatives that would protect workers.

Why would the Bloc member and the Bloc as a whole oppose guarantees for Canadian workers, like the guarantee that Canadian companies would now be able to bid on infrastructure projects in Panama, projects that could total as much as \$19 billion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Madam Speaker, with respect to workers' rights, I mentioned earlier that as long as we do not have proof that the government of Panama has backed off—although it has announced its intentions—on Law 30, which was passed last spring and is considered to be anti-union legislation that prohibits union protests, I think that we can say that there would be serious risks if the free trade agreement with Panama were adopted. If it were adopted, there is a serious danger that Canadian companies could be put in a situation where they would violate core convention 87 of the International Labour Organization.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned the free trade agreement with Colombia. Members will recall that in the beginning, when we examined this issue, the Liberals agreed with us. As leadership changes were made, the Liberals started disagreeing with the Bloc and supported the agreement. We see today that they support the free trade agreement with Panama, so they support the Conservatives as well.

Do they see a chance for power and want to meet the demands of industries, financiers and businesspeople?

I would like to ask my colleague whether an impact study was provided to members in committee, as it was with previous agreements, so that the members could carefully examine the impact on our businesses here, our businesses abroad, our businesses in Panama, human rights and the environment.

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Madam Speaker, very quickly, I have never seen a political party change its tune faster than what we saw this spring concerning the free trade agreement with Colombia.

To answer his second question, we have not received any impact studies or anything of the sort in committee. We are not yet in committee.

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[English]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Before resuming debate, 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, the environment; the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso, Public Safety.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

• (1650)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to the Canada-Panama free trade agreement.

I have to say at the outset, though, that I find it mind-boggling that we are yet again debating a bilateral trade agreement, as if such agreements will somehow magically give us a coherent and smart industrial and economic strategy.

On the contrary, there has been no economic strategy, no real focused trade strategy, and the result has been that most Canadians are worse off now than they were before.

The government simply cannot keep doing these ribbon cuttings for free trade agreements and then expect that its job is done.

This is no small issue. When we look at the last 20 years, since the implementation of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, the real income of most Canadian families has gone down, not up. The real incomes of the two-thirds of Canadian families that comprise the middle class and those of the poorest Canadians have gone down right across the country.

The only people who have actually profited and seen an increase in their real income over the past 20 years, when the first of these agreements was implemented, have been the wealthiest of Canadians. The wealthiest 10% have seen their incomes skyrocket. One-fifth of Canadians, the wealthiest 20%, now take home most of the real income in this country.

In fact, as I pointed out in this House on Monday when I spoke about the Canada-Jordan free trade agreement, I remember the arguments being used when the first free trade agreement was being signed between Canada and the U.S. At that time, the management of Stelco, which is now U.S. Steel, a steel manufacturer in my hometown of Hamilton, sent a letter to all the steelworkers in the plant telling them that in the upcoming federal election they should vote for the parties that support free trade because without such a trade deal their jobs would be at stake.

Well, that trade agreement has been in place for decades now and I would defy the government to find a single steelworker who would say that it has been good for his or her job. On the contrary, decent family sustaining jobs are disappearing and they are being replaced by precarious and part-time work.

To imply, therefore, that the free trade agreements that have been brought in by the Liberals and Conservatives have led to instant prosperity is simply false.

Statistics Canada data puts the lie to those pretensions that this is somehow a coherent and smart industrial and economic strategy.

Maybe the reason the government is so intent on doing away with the mandatory long form census is that it knows that solid statistical evidence will contradict its mantra of being a good economic manager.

We need to ask about the actual record of the government since it came to power. We saw the softwood lumber sellout, which killed jobs right across this country. We have seen the shipbuilding sellout, where the tiny European country of Liechtenstein actually outmanoeuvred the Conservative government. Of course, there was also the Canada-Colombia free trade deal. All of them point to the fact that the Conservative government's record is abysmal when it comes to protecting Canadian interests.

Meanwhile, our competitors are investing in export promotion support. The United States, Australia and the European Union are spending hundreds of millions of dollars every year in providing support for their export industries and promoting their exports.

In Canada, we spent paltry cents on the dollar compared to other countries like Australia. Australia's total budget for export promotion support is half a billion dollars. Our total budget is a few million. This is what is wrong with the government's approach: it simply does not provide the kinds of supports that other major industrialized countries, our competitors, do.

What we in the NDP have been saying ever since the Conservative government came to power is that it needs to change its approach. The government simply cannot go to these free trade agreement ribbon cuttings and expect that its job is done.

Even if these trade agreements were based on fair trade as opposed to the old NAFTA template, do the trade agreements themselves make a difference? Obviously not, because with a number of these bilateral agreements, our exports in places have actually gone down in those markets after the trade deals were signed. In every case, imports from the countries that we have signed with have gone up. In other words, other countries have managed to profit from the agreements signed with Canada but Canada's exports have actually gone down.

How can we sign an agreement and not have a follow-up strategy to bolster our exports?

The problem with the government's approach is not only that it has no industrial strategy but it also does not have an export oriented focus and it is not willing to invest Canadian government funds in the way that other countries do to bolster their industries.

Instead, our government is allowing the wholesale sell-off of Canada's strategic industries: Stelco, Inco, Alcan, Nortel, Falconbridge, and the list goes on. Canada has already ceded control over aluminum, steel and nickel, and now potash is inching its way toward a foreign sale. It is way past time for the Prime Minister to stop rubber-stamping foreign takeovers and start protecting family supporting jobs and our communities.

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•(1655)

I am proud that my NDP colleagues and I have been advocating a buy Canadian strategy. We are the only party in the House to do so. While the Liberals and Conservatives make facile attempts to ridicule us for it, countries like France, the United States and Germany are focused on making precisely such investments in key industries. They are essential for ensuring a strong foundation. Without such a foundation, Canada will continue to lose from the trade deals it signs.

Let us look specifically at the Canada-Panama free trade agreement.

As the NDP labour critic, I will begin by focusing on the labour co-operation agreement, which grandly declares that both countries have committed to ensuring that their laws respect the International Labour Organization's 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

The declaration aims to ensure that social progress goes hand-in-hand with economic development and covers the right to freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the abolition of child labour, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. That sounds great, except the labour co-operation agreement contains no provisions that would force the signatories to implement the UN's labour standards.

Moreover, the agreement does not prevent Panama from weakening or reducing the protections afforded in domestic labour laws in any future effort it may make to encourage trade or investment. The Canada-Panama FTA contains only one enforceable labour provision: a requirement for the government to adhere to its own labour laws. Unfortunately, there is a significant canard involved in this language.

Panama's labour track record is not good. While unions and collective bargaining are permitted in export processing zones, the International Labour Organization's committee of experts questioned the government as to whether these workers actually have the right to strike.

In August 2007, two construction union members were assassinated while demonstrating for worker's rights. This summer there was a new wave of anti-union repression in Panama, resulting in several workers killed, over 100 injured and over 300 arrested.

Panama's law regulating the EPZs does not include arbitration or specify procedures to resolve labour disputes. Moreover, the U.S. state department noted that child labour continues to be a problem, with violations occurring most frequently in rural areas at harvest time and in the informal sector where many children work as street vendors, shoe shiners, cleaning windows, washing cars, bagging groceries in supermarkets and picking up trash. Clearly, even if Panama plays lip service to upholding ILO and UN labour conventions, it does not walk the talk. This FTA's so-called "dispute settlement system" does little to change that reality. It serves as little more than window dressing.

The maximum government fine for labour violations is capped at \$15 million and, to add insult to injury, these funds, in the unlikely

circumstance that they will ever be collected, are paid to a joint commission to improve labour rights enforcement, which, in turn, could easily be funnelled back into the Panamanian government's coffers.

Given that the Panamanian labour code does not even apply in export processing zones and that approximately two-thirds of Panamanian workers operate in the informal economy, the remedial power of any labour provisions that might be included in the agreement would be severely limited. In fact, this FTA would ultimately exonerate the signatories from meeting an acceptable human rights standard. To put it in a nut shell, this free trade agreement is bad news for labour.

However, it gets even worse. The agreement is bad news not just for labour, but for every Canadian because Panama is an offshore tax haven for companies that want to evade their Canadian tax obligations. A free trade agreement between Canada and Panama would be a bonanza for big business while leaving individual Canadian taxpayers with an ever-increasing burden for picking up the costs of federal government programs.

Let us take a closer look.

For decades, Panama has adjusted its laws in order to ensure that its business climate is one of the most unregulated in the world. Such lax regulation offers tremendous opportunities for foreign companies interested in dodging fair taxes, exploiting malleable labour regulations and taking advantage of less than transparent reporting requirements.

Panama's level of foreign direct investment has skyrocketed since legislation was passed in 1992, which established export processing zones in a number of locations across the country. Companies from all over the world are welcome to establish factories in these zones from light manufacturing, assembly, high technology and specialized and general services. Companies operating there are exempt from all taxation on imports and exports, sales tax and taxes on capital and assets.

•(1700)

In addition, EPZs are free from all restrictive national labour and immigration standards. Instead, they operate under provisions that are more favourable to foreign companies than the current Panamanian code.

In April 2009, the U.S.-based Public Citizen released a report highlighting Panama's banking secrecy rules and lax financial regulations. Ever since then, there has been much discussion in the media about Panama's status as a top tax haven. All foreign corporations conducting business in Panama are exempt from national taxes, making the country a 100% tax haven, according to the report. It comes as no surprise that over 350,000 foreign registered companies nominally operate from Panama.

In addition to tax exemptions, Panamanian law also makes it easy for multinational corporations to cook the books. According to the Public Citizen report, Panama has one of the world's most restrictive information exchange regimes, which allows the country to withhold information, even within the framework of a criminal investigation. Moreover, extremely strict slander laws can be used to arrest journalists for reporting facts and figures if they do not reflect well on business interests.

This lack of transparency, coupled with a lenient regulatory system governing the country's banking and financial sectors, enables corporations to conceal their financial losses and to engage in off-balance-sheet activities.

Evidence also links Panama's Colon Free Zone, or CFZ, with trafficking of narcotics and other illicit substances, in addition to offshore activities carried on by foreign corporations. Panama's CFZ, which is the second largest free trade zone in the world, provides a centrally located transit area for drugs and related money laundering activities moving up through Mexico to its northern border, according to the International Monetary Fund.

The illicit matters have grown even more controversial since the G20, at its recent conference, decided to crack down on tax havens and to step up financial regulation as key steps toward global financial recovery. In response, the Canada Revenue Agency is working on a new set of rules for voluntary disclosure here in Canada of offshore earnings.

I have criticized these rules elsewhere before. Not only will these rules allow individuals and corporations to admit that they have earned income in offshore bank accounts without facing prosecution for tax evasion, but under the new rules, auditors will only go back 10 years, and account holders will no longer have to explain where the original capital on accounts more than 10 years old came from. That, of course, means that money laundering is now legal in Canada as long as one is patient.

A free trade agreement with Panama would actually make it even more difficult to crack down on tax evasion and money laundering in Panama. The proposed FTA contains provisions that forbid cross-border regulations on financial transactions between Canada and Panama. It would also provide subsidiaries operating in Panama enhanced investor rights that would enable them to challenge any attempt by the Canadian government to monitor or limit financial transactions. In short, if one has tax evasion or money laundering needs, try Panama.

It is time to rethink our approach to global competitiveness. The measure should not be the profitability of Canadian multinational corporations abroad but rather the ability of Canadian-based producers to compete and thrive on Canadian soil in a dynamic global economy. What Canada needs and Canadians deserve is an overall national economic strategy that delivers on the promise of good jobs at home and shared prosperity abroad. The patchwork of trade agreements the Conservatives have brought to this House to date delivers neither.

It is time to stop the ad hoc ribbon cutting across the globe and start afresh in the recognition that our trade policy requires deep reform. In fact, Canadians understand that need better than the

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Conservative government, and they are getting active on the issue. There is a growing fair trade movement in Canada that is being embraced by individual citizens, schools, academics, unions, activists, religious organizations, and more, all unified by their desire to make the world a better place.

Fair trade is really about making changes to conventional trade, which, as I pointed out, often fails to deliver on promises of sustainable livelihoods and opportunities for people in the poorest countries in the world. Poverty and hardship limit people's choices, while market forces tend to further marginalize and exclude them. This makes them vulnerable to exploitation, whether as farmers and artisans or as hired workers within larger businesses. That two billion of our fellow citizens survive on less than two dollars per day, despite working extremely hard, makes it painfully clear that there is indeed a problem.

Fair trade seeks to change the terms of trade for the products we buy to ensure that the farmers and artisans behind those products get a better deal. Most often this is understood to mean ensuring better prices for producers, but it often includes longer-term and more meaningful trading relationships.

Clearly, Canadians are taking this concept to heart. I want to applaud everyone involved in having their communities certified as Fair Trade Towns. The first city to be awarded Fair Trade Town status in Canada was Wolfville, Nova Scotia, on April 17, 2007.

● (1705)

Since then, additional cities, such as La Pêche, Quebec; Port Colborne, Ontario; Nakusp, B.C.; Golden, B.C.; Gimli, Manitoba; Olds, Alberta; Revelstoke, B.C.; Neuville, Quebec; Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, Quebec; Vancouver, B.C.; Barrie, Ontario; Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, Quebec; and Canmore, Alberta have all joined, allowing fair trade towns to stretch from coast to coast.

I am proud that my own home town of Hamilton is a fair trade town in progress. We are well on the way to meeting all six goals for achieving fair trade town certification. All of the credit goes to Environment Hamilton and its supporters, who have been tireless in promoting sustainability in our community.

Members of the House may be interested to know that the six criteria for certification are as follows. First is the support of city council. Council has to pass a resolution in support of fair trade and the local campaign including (a) a commitment to purchase only fair trade certified tea, coffee, and sugar and other fair trade certified products, where possible, for all meetings and in offices and cafeterias and (b) a commitment to assign fair trade town responsibilities to a member of staff or committee to ensure continued commitment to its fair trade status.

Achieving this goal has been interrupted by the current municipal campaign in Hamilton, but I am cautiously optimistic that getting the city to commit will not be the most daunting challenge. Of course, the outcome of the election may change that landscape.

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Second, communities have to demonstrate that fair trade certified products are available in stores and restaurants. Hamilton is already there.

Third, there must be support from community groups. Again, the support and commitment is already there in Hamilton, and we are now getting people organized around the goal of formal certification of the city.

Four, there needs to be demonstrated public support from both the media and the general public. Those pieces will certainly fall into place in Hamilton as we take the final steps toward certification of the city.

The fifth criterion is that a steering committee be convened that includes wide representation from the community and that commits to achieving two additional targets per year: submitting an annual progress assessment to TransFair Canada, and organizing events for National Fair Trade Week in May of each year. Environment Hamilton has already recruited representatives from local co-ops, faith groups, and retail outlets to join EH on the steering committee, so that is another criterion that has been met.

Lastly, there has to be a commitment to promote ethical and sustainable consumption. This will dovetail nicely with work already being done around the “eat local” campaign and the labour movement’s “sweatshop-free” campaign. Again, we are almost there.

I am confident that Hamilton will get its certification as a fair trade town in very short order. When we succeed, we will be the largest municipality in Ontario to have achieved that designation.

Let us put that into the context of the oft-cited phrase of environmentalists, “Think globally, act locally”. Clearly, Hamilton is already acting locally, but the phrase urges people to consider the health of the entire planet when acting in their own communities and cities.

Long before federal agencies began enforcing environmental laws, individuals were coming together to protect habitats and the species that live within them. Now, with respect to trade, grassroots activists are once again way ahead of the federal government. It is time to catch up. It is not overly complicated, and if we make the effort, it will be very easy to engage in fair trade.

There are only three pillars to fair trade: respect for the environment in all dealings, respect for the economy—agreements must be economically viable—and respect for the human rights of the societies involved in trade agreements.

If the Conservative government included these simple but profound guidelines and principles in its international trade policies, Canada’s image on the global stage would be transformed, and all Canadians would know that their federal government is finally embracing a trade policy that delivers on the promise of good jobs at home and shared prosperity abroad.

Instead, what I see in the Canada-Panama free trade agreement is a continuation of the patchwork approach of signing bilateral agreements that neither meet the goals of fair trade nor lead toward a comprehensive national economic strategy. In the absence of meeting those criteria, this is not a trade agreement that I can support.

Therefore, I move the following motion:

That all the words following “That” be deleted and replaced with the following: Bill C-46, An act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Panama, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Panama, and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Panama, be not now read a second time, but that it be read a second time six months hence.

• (1710)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): This amendment is deemed in order. Questions and comments.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to the member for Hamilton Mountain. First, I agree with her that today our country is in a trade deficit, after 30 years, and it is sad, because under the Liberal administration, we were doing quite well.

The hon. member talked about following examples, such as France and Germany. France and Germany generate a great portion of their revenue by being trading nations. They are also members of the European community, and they trade. This agreement is patterned on similar trade deals.

I want to ask a simple question. The member for Hamilton Mountain talked about an economic strategy to create jobs at home. What would the member say to farmers or to people in the greater city of Toronto, because we trade, for example, potato products, beans, lentils, pork, processed foods, and beef with Panama, and the duties will come down once this agreement is signed.

What will she tell the people in my area who engage in the manufacture of machinery, electronic equipment, pharmaceutical equipment, et cetera, or banking services, engineering, and information technology who are creating jobs for Canada?

This agreement might not be a big agreement. Nevertheless, it is working toward an agreement to reduce tariffs and to create whatever part of the economy we can generate for jobs in Canada. What do we tell these people?

Ms. Chris Charlton: Madam Speaker, I really welcome that question, particularly because the member started by focusing on Europe. My goodness, I wish that our trade agreements were like the EU’s. In the EU, they actually support fair trade. That is exactly the model we ought to be supporting here in Canada.

The member asked what he should be telling his constituents. I was not aware that Scarborough had such a huge farming community, but I certainly welcome his comments on that.

When I look at free trade agreements, if we actually do the analysis of the agreements we have signed, more often than not, after we have signed a trade deal, our exports actually go down.

If the member is interested in protecting manufacturing, I would encourage him to have a much, much closer look at what is before us in the House today.

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I said earlier, and the member may have missed it, that in my home town of Hamilton, the management at Stelco, which is now U.S. Steel, during the free trade election, told all of his workers that they had to vote for parties that supported free trade, because that is what would be good for their jobs. I would encourage members who were around at that time to come to Hamilton now and find a single steel worker who would say that free trade has been good for the manufacturing sector or for the steel industry in Hamilton. We are losing decent paying, family sustaining jobs. They are being replaced by precarious part-time work. I do not think that a whole lot of people who have actually given serious thought to the impact of free trade agreements on their jobs would agree with the member that they are good for their communities.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for an extremely expansive overview of the legislation.

I am not sure the member was here when my colleague, the representative for Willowdale, talked about the mechanisms that have been entrenched in the agreement that deal with occupational health and safety, that deal with the exploitation of children and their working conditions, that deal with fair labour issues, and that also deal with issues related to sustainable development under multi-lateral environmental treaties.

Entrenched in the agreement, the member for Willowdale reminded us, is the mechanism of appeal to the International Labour Organization and other suitable, established international organizations.

My question is on the human rights and fair trade issue. Is the member not satisfied with the concerns that have been raised and answered by the legislation and by, for example, the overview that was given by the member for Willowdale?

• (1715)

Ms. Chris Charlton: Madam Speaker, I welcome the question, particularly as I am the NDP's labour critic, and the opportunity to once again comment on the labour side agreement that is indeed part of the Canada-Panama free trade agreement.

Let me say first that it is a side agreement. Therefore, it is not entrenched in the main text of the trade agreement that is before us here in the House.

Second, there is only one enforceable labour provision, and that is the requirement for the governments to adhere to their own labour laws. These are their own labour laws that this summer saw workers killed in Panama, just in July, when over 100 workers were injured and 300 were arrested. These are the same labour laws that are now allowing for child labour. Clearly those protections are not enough. They certainly do not meet Canadian standards. They do not meet ILO standards, and they do not meet the standards of the UN Convention. No, I am not at all convinced that the labour side agreement does the job the member is hoping it will.

Moreover, this is akin to what we saw in the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement. Members will remember: kill a worker, pay a fine. Those same provisions are identical in the free trade agreement before us today.

On all of those grounds, I do not know how anyone who supports labour rights in this country could agree to engage in a free trade agreement with Panama under these conditions.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member for Hamilton Mountain has made a very compelling case in front of this House.

What the Liberals and Conservatives appear to be doing, yet again, is telling Canadians to swallow this because it is good for them. They said that about the softwood lumber sellout, leading to the loss of tens of thousands of jobs across the country. The shipbuilding sellout that was brought into this House has led to the loss of hundreds of shipbuilding jobs.

The Canada-Colombia free trade agreement is a complete repudiation of Canada's tradition of standing up for human rights, rewarding a regime that is tied to brutal paramilitary and military thugs and intelligent officers who routinely kill trade unionists and human rights advocates.

The Liberals and Conservatives, yet again, are making the same pitch to Canadians. They are telling Canadians to swallow it because it is good for them or it is good for Panamanians. However, none of them have done their homework. None of them have actually looked at what the export figures are after we sign these bilateral free trade agreements. In every case, exports have declined afterwards.

This is a dysfunctional trade policy. We have a dysfunctional approach from the Minister of International Trade, supported by the Liberals, despite the fact that it is very clearly not working and despite the fact that after 20 years of this free trade regime, or so-called free trade regime that has been very costly to Canadians, most Canadians are earning less. There is a problem. Our exports declined in those markets and Canadians are earning less.

What is wrong with this picture? Why is it only the NDP, as a national party, standing up in Parliament and telling Canadians that they do not need to swallow what the Liberals and the Conservatives are trying to force down their throats?

Why does the member for Hamilton Mountain think the Conservatives and Liberals are unwilling to do their homework, actually read the export figures, actually read the income figures and actually work with the NDP so that we can create a fair trade policy that is in the interest of all Canadians.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Madam Speaker, I do not know whether one can respond to a question in this House by quoting Pete Seeger, but the question really is, "Which side are you on?" In the answer to that question, we will find the answer to the member's question, as well.

The rich have been getting richer under the successive bilateral trade agreements that this country has been signing. If we look at the standard of living for the middle class or the poorest in our country, it is quite clear from the statistical evidence that they are much worse off.

Why would the Conservatives sign this? As we have said under so many other circumstances in this House, they are the friends of the banks, the wealthiest corporations, and they are, once again, protecting the interests of those wealthy friends.

Government Orders

It is imperative, though, that on this side of the House we stand up for those who are not able to advocate for themselves under these circumstances and that we fight for decent paying, family sustaining jobs.

Let us keep in mind, as the minister said earlier in this debate, that we are talking about an agreement that is contemplating \$132 million in trade. That is one-tenth of the amount of money that the current government spent on the security for the G8 and the G20 alone. Clearly, this is not an amount of money over which we would want to sell out human rights, environmental protection and labour rights. It is just completely insane that we would be signing these kinds of agreements without any protections in place.

• (1720)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak in the House today to labour co-operation in the context of the Canada-Panama free trade agreement.

In line with our previous free trade negotiations, labour and environmental issues were an important part of the free trade discussions with Panama. That is why Canada negotiated separate international treaties on labour co-operation and the environment to coincide with the free trade agreement talks with Panama.

With regard to labour, the Canada-Panama labour co-operation agreement is strong and comprehensive and it would help protect the rights of workers in both countries. In particular, Canada and Panama have committed to ensuring that their domestic laws respect the International Labour Organization's 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. This declaration covers a wide range of workers' rights; namely, the abolition of child labour, the right of freedom of association, the right to collect bargaining, the elimination of discrimination and the elimination of forced or compulsory labour. Through these provisions, Canada has shown its commitment to improving labour standards and to helping Panama protect its workers. It also demonstrates this government's firm belief that prosperity cannot come at the expense of workers' rights.

The labour co-operation agreement with Panama, however, goes even further than the International Labour Organization's 1998 declaration. More specifically —

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. A motion was moved on the floor of this House just a few minutes ago by the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain that essentially moves the debate and discussion of whether or not this bill should be read and heard six months from now.

Madam Speaker, could you just clarify for the minister that she is indeed speaking to the motion now and not to the bill itself?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I thank the hon. member for his comments. I am sure the hon. minister will take note of that.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Speaker, I am happy the hon. member is actually listening and paying attention. After what I have been hearing in terms of the inaccuracies and absolute untruths he has been indicating with respect to some of the accusations against Colombia, I do believe it is important for us to listen to what we have to say to one another.

Of course, everything I do say today applies now. It is even more important to ensure we have something like this in place between Canada and Panama currently and, going forward for more than six months, would make absolutely no sense in terms of labour co-operation agreements, specifically for the reasons I will be enumerating here.

As I said, the labour co-operation agreement with Panama goes even further than the International Labour Organization's 1998 declaration. That is why it is important to deal with it now and not deal with something in six months. We should take the opportunity to deal with these things as they appear before us and as they are meant to be.

This agreement commits both countries to protect workers by providing acceptable protections for occupational health and safety. I am sure the House would agree that it is something that should happen immediately and not six months from now. Allowing for compensation in cases of injuries and illnesses is important for workers and that should happen now, not six months from now.

Providing for acceptable minimum employment standards, such as minimum wage and hours of work, on which I assume the opposition would agree, is something that should happen sooner rather than later, not through a delay of six months.

Further, the labour co-operation agreement would ensure that migrant workers would be given the same legal protections as nationals in respect of working conditions.

In order to ensure that Canada and Panama comply with their labour obligations, this agreement does include a strong dispute resolution mechanism that is transparent, robust and easy to use. The model is in line with Canada's other parallel labour co-operation agreements with Colombia, Peru and, of course, with Jordan.

As part of this settlement process, members of the public can submit complaints to either government concerning any of the obligations contained in the labour co-operation agreement. These complaints can bring to light any concerns from the public that domestic labour laws or their implementation by Canada or Panama do not comply with the terms of the labour co-operation agreement. If the complaint is deemed valid, then either country can request ministerial level consultations with the other country to resolve the issue.

If the countries are unable to come to a mutually satisfactory agreement and the matter concerns a perceived failure to respect obligations related to the 1998 International Labour Organization's declaration or even the enforcement of domestic laws, the country that requested the ministerial consultations can request that a review panel be convened. If the matter cannot be resolved, the independent review panel may require that the offending country may face financial penalties. These penalties would be placed into a co-operation fund in order to resolve the matter identified, as well as to help ensure compliance with and respect for domestic and international labour obligations.

Moneys placed in the co-operation fund would be disbursed according to an agreed upon action plan, which would ensure that the matters under dispute are effectively resolved

Business of Supply

As we can see, under the labour co-operation agreement, both Canada and Panama will have an important tool to protect and improve the rights of workers, which, of course, would make more sense for them to have this now rather than six months from now at the very earliest.

That being said, it must be noted that this agreement also respects provincial jurisdiction on labour matters. At the same time, however, the federal government would have the ability to immediately use the dispute resolution process, if necessary, regardless of the level of provincial participation in the labour co-operation agreement.

In looking beyond the provinces, it is important to remember that this government is re-engaging with our partners across the Americas. An important part of this re-engagement is the promotion of the principles of sound governance, security and prosperity. A vital component of this strategy is the protection of labour rights, and this includes Panama. That is why Canada negotiated a robust and comprehensive labour co-operation agreement with Panama.

Our efforts to protect labour rights do not stop there. During the free trade negotiations with Panama, Canada requested that a principles based chapter on labour be inserted into the Canada-Panama free trade agreement. Panama agreed to this request and, as such, there is now a much stronger and much more direct reference to labour rights in the free trade agreement.

• (1725)

That is important because the chapter on labour reaffirms both countries obligations under the labour co-operation agreement. By inserting a labour chapter into the free trade agreement text, Canada has provided an additional confirmation of that vital link between economic growth, prosperity and the respect for labour rights.

In closing, I would like to emphasize this government's view that free trade can play a positive role in a country's economic and social life, but this positive role does not have to come at the expense of labour rights. In fact, as the labour co-operation agreement demonstrates, it is possible to liberalize trade while protecting the rights of workers.

The push to protect labour rights is also an important component of Canada's active engagement in the Americas. Under this labour co-operation agreement, Canada would be able to help support Panama in its efforts to respect both its domestic labour laws and its international labour obligations. These efforts in turn will benefit Panamanian workers.

For those reasons, I ask all hon. members for their support of the agreement in total and the parallel agreement on labour co-operation and implore that this happen sooner rather than later.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. minister will have about 11 minutes for comments if she chooses when this bill returns to the order of business.

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—LONG FORM CENSUS

The House resumed from September 28 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion relating the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1755)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 90*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Beaudin	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevington	Bigras
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brisson	Brunelle
Byrne	Cannis
Cardin	Carrier
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Coady
Coderre	Comartin
Cotler	Crombie
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Donnelly
Dorion	Dosanji
Dryden	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Faillie
Folco	Foote
Freeman	Fry
Gagnon	Gameau
Gaudet	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (St. John's East)	Holland
Hughes	Hyer
Ignatieff	Jennings
Julian	Kania
Karygiannis	Kennedy
Laforest	Laframboise
Lavallée	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemay	Leslie
Lessard	Lévesque
MacAulay	Malhi
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)

Private Members' Business

McTeague
Mendes
Mulcair
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau
Oliphant
Pacetti
Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Patry
Plamondon
Proulx
Rafferty
Regan
Russell
Savoie
Sgro
Silva
Simson
Stoffer
Thi Lac
Tonks
Valeriotte
Volpe
Wrzesnewskyj

Ménard
Minna
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murray
Neville
Ouellet
Paillé (Hochelaga)
Paquette
Pearson
Pomerleau
Rae
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Van Kesteren
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Warkentin
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Wong
Yelich

PAIRED

Members

Benoit

Roy — 2

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Arthur
Baird
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Cadman
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casson
Clarke
Cummins
Day
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Finley
Fletcher
Généreux
Goldring
Gourde
Guergis
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lemieux
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Paradis
Petit
Prentice
Raitt
Rathgeber
Richards
Rickford

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Armstrong
Ashfield
Bemier
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Flaherty
Gallant
Glover
Goodyear
Grewal
Harper
Hawn
Hill
Hoepfner
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Lobb
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Payne
Poilievre
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richardson
Ritz

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know you will appreciate this in the spirit in which it is delivered, but it is common practice in this House that if we are going to maintain a certain decorum, that we not use props.

The member for Saint Boniface used a Canadian passport as a prop, which is most undignified in its own right, but members of this House have a special passport. Could she explain why she is still in possession of the blue passport when she would have had to surrender it?

I wonder if you would ask the member to get her story straight.

The Deputy Speaker: I could not tell what the hon. member was holding up. I would remind all hon. members that there are lots of things that they are not supposed to do during voting. Using props is one of them. Calling out and yelling are also things they are not supposed to do.

I would just remind all hon. members to observe the rules of decorum at all times and then we could avoid things like this.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS*[English]***EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT**

The House resumed from September 22 consideration of Bill C-308, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (improvement of the employment insurance system), as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at report stage of Bill C-308, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (improvement of the employment insurance system) under private members' business.

•(1805)

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

(Division No. 91)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Beaudin	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Blais
Bonsant	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brunelle
Byrne	Cannis
Cardin	Carrier
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Coady
Coderre	Comartin
Crombie	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Donnelly
Dorion	Dosanjh
Dryden	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Faillie
Folco	Footé
Freeman	Fry
Gagnon	Garneau
Gaudet	Godin
Gravelle	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	Holland
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	Hyer
Harris (St. John's East)	Julian
Hughes	Karygiannis
Jennings	Laframboise
Kania	Layton
Laforest	Leslie
Lavallée	Lévesque
Lemay	Malhi
Lessard	Maloway
MacAulay	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Malo	Masse
Marston	Ménard
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Minna
Mathysen	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Mendes	Neville
Mulcair	Pacetti
Nadeau	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Ouellet	Patry
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Pearson
Paquette	Plamondon
Pearson	Proulx
Pomerleau	Rafferty
Rac	Russell
Rodriguez	Savoie
Savage	Silva
Siksay	St-Cyr
Simms	Thi Lac
Stoffer	Tonks
Thibeault	Valeriote
Trudeau	Zarac— 124
Vincent	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders

Abblonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders

Private Members' Business

Anderson	Armstrong
Arthur	Ashfield
Baird	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boucher	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Cummins	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dion	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Généreux	Glover
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
McTeague	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murray	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Oda
Paradis	Payne
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Smith	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Szabo	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young— 147	

PAIRED

Members

Benoit

Roy— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Routine Proceedings

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

The House resumed from September 23 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Finance.

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it I believe you will find agreement to apply the vote to this motion with the Conservatives voting yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Liberals will be voting yes, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois votes in favour of this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the NDP votes in favour of this motion.

[*English*]

Hon. Helena Guergis: I vote yes, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Arthur: Mr. Speaker, I vote in favour of this motion.

• (1810)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 92*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Welland)
Allison
Anders
André
Angus
Arthur
Ashton
Atamanenko
Bagnell
Baird
Bélanger
Bernier
Bezan
Blackburn
Blaney
Bonsant
Boucher

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Andrews
Armstrong
Ashfield
Asselin
Bachand
Bains
Beaudin
Bellavance
Bevington
Bigras
Blais
Block
Bouchard
Boughen

Bourgeois
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Byrne
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie
Casson
Chong
Christopherson
Clement
Coderre
Crombie
Cullen
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dechert
Demers
Desnoyers
Dewar
Donnelly
Dosanjh
Dryden
Dufour
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra
Eyking
Fast
Flaherty
Folco
Freeman
Gagnon
Gallant
Gaudet
Glover
Goldring
Gourde
Grewal
Guergis
Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Harper
Harris (St. John's East)
Hawn
Hill
Hoepfner
Holland
Hyer
Jennings
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laframboise
Lauzon
Layton
Lemay
Leslie
Lévesque
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malhi
Maloway
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Mayes
McLeod
Ménard
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Mulcair
Murray
Neville
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Ouellet
Paillé (Hochelaga)

Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Brunelle
Cadman
Calkins
Cannis
Cardin
Carrier
Charlton
Chow
Clarke
Coady
Comartin
Crowder
Cummins
Davidson
Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille
Del Mastro
Deschamps
Devolin
Dion
Dorion
Dreeschen
Duceppe
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Faille
Finley
Fletcher
Foote
Fry
Galipeau
Garneau
Généreux
Godin
Goodyear
Gravelle
Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Hughes
Jean
Julian
Kania
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Laforest
Lake
Lavallée
Lebel
Lemieux
Lessard
Lobb
Lunn
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Malo
Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
McColeman
McTeague
Mendes
Merrifield
Minna
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Pacetti
Paillé (Louis-Hébert)

Paquette
 Patry
 Pearson
 Plamondon
 Pomerleau
 Preston
 Rae
 Raitt
 Rathgeber
 Richards
 Rickford
 Rodriguez
 Savage
 Saxton
 Sgro
 Shipley
 Siksay
 Simms
 Sorenson
 Stanton
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Thi Lac
 Thompson
 Toews
 Trost
 Tweed
 Valeriotte
 Van Loan
 Verner
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Wong
 Yelich
 Zarac — 271

Paradis
 Payne
 Petit
 Poilievre
 Prentice
 Proulx
 Rafferty
 Rajotte
 Reid
 Richardson
 Ritz
 Russell
 Savoie
 Schellenberger
 Shea
 Shory
 Silva
 Smith
 St-Cyr
 Stoffer
 Strahl
 Szabo
 Thibeault
 Tilson
 Tonks
 Trudeau
 Uppal
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Vincent
 Warawa
 Watson
 Woodworth
 Young

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Benoit

Roy — 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The House resumed from September 23 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 513 under private members' business in the name of the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

• (1815)

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

(Division No. 93)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
 Aglukkaq
 Allen (Welland)

Ablonczy
 Albrecht
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)

Allison
 Anders
 Andrews
 Armstrong
 Ashfield
 Atamanenko
 Bains
 Bélanger
 Bernier
 Bezan
 Blaney
 Boucher
 Braid
 Brison
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Bruinooog
 Cadman
 Calkins
 Cannis
 Carrie
 Charlton
 Chow
 Clarke
 Coady
 Comartin
 Crombie
 Cullen
 Cuzner
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 Day
 Del Mastro
 Dewar
 Dion
 Dosanjh
 Dryden
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dykstra
 Eyking
 Finley
 Fletcher
 Foote
 Galipeau
 Gameau
 Glover
 Goldring
 Goodyear
 Gravelle
 Guergis
 Harper
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hiebert
 Hoback
 Holder
 Hughes
 Jean
 Julian
 Kania
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lauzon
 Lebel
 Lemieux
 Lobb
 Lunn
 MacAulay
 MacKenzie
 Maloway
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Masse
 Mayes
 McGuinty
 McLeod
 Mendes
 Merrifield
 Minna
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Murphy (Charlottetown)
 Neville
 Norlock
 O'Neill-Gordon
 Oliphant
 Paradis

Private Members' Business

Ambrose
 Anderson
 Angus
 Arthur
 Ashton
 Bagnell
 Baird
 Bennett
 Bevington
 Blackburn
 Block
 Boughen
 Breikreuz
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Brown (Barrie)
 Byrne
 Calandra
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Cannon (Pontiac)
 Casson
 Chong
 Christopherson
 Clement
 Coderre
 Cotler
 Crowder
 Cummins
 Davidson
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Dechert
 Devolin
 Dhaliwal
 Donnelly
 Dreeshen
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Easter
 Fast
 Flaherty
 Folco
 Fry
 Gallant
 Généreux
 Godin
 Goodale
 Gourde
 Grewal
 Hall Findlay
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hawn
 Hill
 Hoepfner
 Holland
 Hyer
 Jennings
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Karygiannis
 Kennedy
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Layton
 Lee
 Leslie
 Lukiwski
 Lunney
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Malhi
 Marston
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
 Mathysen
 McColeman
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 McTeague
 Menzies
 Miller
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Mulcair
 Murray
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 Oda
 Pacetti
 Patry

Private Members' Business

Payne	Pearson
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Proulx	Rae
Rafferty	Raiitt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Rodriguez
Russell	Savage
Savoie	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Siksay	Silva
Simms	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Stoffer	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Szabo	Thibeault
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Trudeau
Tweed	Uppal
Valeriot	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Volpe
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wong	Woodworth
Wrzesniewski	Yelich
Young	Zarac — 242

NAYS

Members

André	Asselin
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Blais
Bonsant	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brunelle
Cardin	Carrier
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dorion	Duceppe
Dufour	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Laforest	
Laframboise	Lavallée
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Malo
Ménard	Nadeau
Ouellet	Paillé (Hochelaga)
Paillé (Louis-Hébert)	Paquette
Plamondon	Pomerleau
St-Cyr	Thi Lac
Vincent — 43	

PAIRED

Members

Benoit	Roy — 2
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The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

● (1820)

CRIMINAL RECORDS ACT REVIEW

The House resumed from September 24 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 514, under private members' business, in the name of the hon. member for Surrey North.

● (1825)

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

(Division No. 94)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
André	Andrews
Angus	Armstrong
Arthur	Ashfield
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Beaudin
Bélanger	Bellavance
Bennett	Bernier
Bevington	Bezan
Blackburn	Blais
Blaney	Block
Bonsant	Bouchard
Boucher	Boughen
Bourgeois	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruninooge
Brunelle	Byrne
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannis	Cannon (Pontiac)
Cardin	Carrie
Carrier	Casson
Charlton	Chong
Chow	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Coady	Coderre
Comartin	Cotler
Crombie	Crowder
Cullen	Cummins
Cuzner	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	DeBellefeuille
Dechert	Del Mastro
Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Devolin
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dion	Donnelly
Dorion	Dosanji
Dreeschen	Dryden
Duceppe	Dufour
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Foote
Freeman	Fry
Gagnon	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Gaudet	Généreux
Glover	Godin
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Gravelle	Grewal
Guay	Guergis
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	Harper
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)

Hawn
Hill
Hoepfner
Holland
Hyer
Jennings
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis
Kennedy
Kent
Komarnicki
Laforest
Lake
Lavallée
Lebel
Lemay
Leslie
Lévesque
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malhi
Maloway
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Mayes
McGuinty
McLeod
Ménard
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Mulcair
Murray
Neville
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Oliphant
Pacetti
Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paradis
Payne
Petit
Poilievre
Prentice
Proulx
Rafferty
Rajotte
Rathgeber
Reid
Richardson
Ritz
Russell
Savoie
Scarpaleggia
Sgro
Shiple
Siksay
Simms
Sorenson
Stanton
Storseth
Sweet
Thi Lac
Thompson
Toews
Trost
Tweed
Valeriotte
Van Loan
Verner
Volpe
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Woodworth
Yelich
Zarac — 285

Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Hughes
Jean
Julian
Kania
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laframboise
Lauzon
Layton
Lee
Lemieux
Lessard
Lobb
Lunn
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Malo
Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
McColeman
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague
Mendes
Merrifield
Minna
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Ouellet
Paillé (Hochelaga)
Paquette
Patry
Pearson
Plamondon
Pomerleau
Preston
Rae
Raiitt
Ratansi
Regan
Richards
Rickford
Rodriguez
Savage
Saxton
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Silva
Smith
St-Cyr
Stoffer
Strahl
Szabo
Thibeault
Tilson
Tonks
Trudeau
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Vincent
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wong
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

NAYS

Nil

Private Members' Business

PAIRED

Members

Benoit Roy— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[Translation]

AN ACT TO AMEND THE IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

The House resumed from September 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-440, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (war resisters), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-440 under private members' business.

● (1835)

[English]

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

(Division No. 95)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Andrews
Ashton
Atamanenko
Bagnell
Beaudin
Bellavance
Bevington
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Brunelle
Cannis
Carrier
Chow
Coady
Comartin
Crombie
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Dewar
Dion
Dorion
Dryden
Dufour
Easter
Folco
Freeman
Gagnon
Godin
Gravelle
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Hall Findlay
Holland
Hyer
Julian
Karygiannis
Laforest
Lavallée
Lee
Leslie
Lévesque

André
Angus
Asselin
Bachand
Bains
Bélanger
Bennett
Blais
Bouchard
Brisson
Byrne
Cardin
Charlton
Christopherson
Coderre
Cotler
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers
Desnoyers
Dhaliwal
Donnelly
Dosanji
Duceppe
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Eyking
Foote
Fry
Gaudet
Goodale
Guay
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jennings
Kania
Kennedy
Laframboise
Layton
Lemay
Lessard
MacAulay

Points of Order

Malhi	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague	Ménard
Mendes	Minna
Mulcair	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Neville	Oliphant
Ouellet	Pacetti
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paquette	Patry
Pearson	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Proulx
Rae	Rafferty
Ratansi	Regan
Rodriguez	Russell
Savage	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Siksay
Silva	Simms
St-Cyr	Stoffer
Szabo	Thi Lac
Thibeault	Trudeau
Vincent	Wrzesnewskyj- — 136

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Arthur	Ashfield
Baird	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boucher	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooogee
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Cummins	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Finley	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guergis
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Oda	Paradis
Payne	Petit
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber

Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Smith	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young— — 143	

PAIRED

Members

Benoit

Roy— — 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER[*Translation*]

MACLEAN'S

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Outremont and I seek unanimous consent for the following motion:

That this House, while recognizing the importance of vigorous debate on subjects of public interest, expresses its profound sadness at the prejudice displayed and the stereotypes employed by Maclean's magazine to denigrate the Quebec nation, its history and its institutions.

I believe I have the unanimous consent of all parties.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?**Mr. André Arthur:** No.**The Deputy Speaker:** There is no unanimous consent.

Does the hon. member for Joliette wish to raise another point of order?

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I would like to let the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier know that he had better stick around for the rest of the week and all of next week because I will move this motion every single day. That should stop him from doing any sightseeing.**The Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

Does the hon. member for Joliette wish to raise another point of order?

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I think there may have been some confusion. I once again seek the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion.**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House for this motion?

Private Members' Business

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy 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 Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1840)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:41 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

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INSTRUCTION TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from May 27 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I seek the consent of the House to share my time with the member for Willowdale.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to share his time with the member for Willowdale?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Francis Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, today I will be speaking favour of Motion 517.

The motion seeks to revitalize parliamentary proceedings through reforming question period, so members of Parliament more effectively and meaningfully communicate their ideas to one another, encouraging us to be more transparent and accountable and to work collaboratively and effectively in this, the most widely reported aspect of parliamentary proceedings. In so doing, it is hoped that Canadians will become re-engaged in parliamentary affairs and less cynical about our ability to be meaningfully engaged with one another. The result will be discussions and policy that better serve Canadians and Canadians who are more deeply engaged in our democratic process.

Instead of speaking to the specific reforms proposed by the motion, all intended to heighten our level of conversation yet without dampening spontaneity, I will instead discuss why the motion represents an important step toward a stronger and more effective Parliament.

As a child, I remember going to my father's office and seeing a plaque on the wall behind his desk. The plaque was from the Rotary Club of Guelph, of which I am now an honorary member. It made reference to a four-way test used to inspire the way in which its members engaged with one another. The principles of the four-way test are: first, is it the truth; second, is it fair; third, will it build goodwill; and fourth, will it be beneficial to all concerned.

These are the very principles from which we have strayed and these are the very principles we must embrace if we are to accomplish a level of transparency and accountability that Canadians want and deserve. These are the principles we must use as a guide in

the statements we make to each other in question period. We must avoid language designed merely to make headlines or language only designed to embarrass or diminish a member of the opposite party. We need to attack problems and not people. Issues demand we act collaboratively and not divisively. Sadly, we do not.

Canadians are eager to have question period change. I have heard this everywhere I go, from my constituents in Guelph and from countless other Canadians. They have grown weary of the vitriol, the hate and the disrespect being spewed by their representatives. They are tired of our conduct, of the heckling and of the grandstanding that dominate our question period, and they are checking out. They are disinterested in the House's proceedings and I do not blame them. We have become bad examples and our conduct is appreciated by only the most partisan of politicians.

In my riding, I do not deny anyone the right to meet and speak with me because I believe that everyone's opinion has value. We need to create an environment during question period where we encourage a more thoughtful dialogue among members, a conversation where the opinions of people and parties are respectfully considered and valued, not shunned or degraded because of its source, a question period free from feigned transparency, showmanship or deceit. We need to create an environment in which the level of conversation achieves two things: it discloses to Canadians the state of our nation and where it stands on the important issues of the day; and second, fosters a constructive forum, free from name calling, labelling and accusations.

The motion effectively moves the elephant from the corner of the room onto the table. Because we are all responsible for this problem, we must all participate in the solution. To do that, we need to send this motion to committee so it can be properly analyzed and other ideas introduced to provide the solutions intended by its purpose: to help restore the value of question period and regain Canadians' engagement in parliamentary affairs.

We need to embrace a question period built upon truth, fairness and building goodwill and one of benefit for all. We need to begin to treat each other with greater dignity and with more respect, so Canadians can once again engage in our work and so our democracy is strengthened and made more effective. Canadians are intelligent and Canadians have an interest in meaningful debate. They have an interest in hearing relevant, honest and thoughtful questions and direct answers about the important issues of the day, and not in meaningless and one-sided bluster designed to catch headlines and designed to avoid openness.

By no means do I believe that the changes suggested in Motion 517 will immediately bring about the attitudinal changes about which I speak, but it represents an important step toward, first, admitting a problem exists, and then perhaps in achieving loftier goals.

Let us begin by sending the motion to committee. Let us get back to a question period of which we can be proud.

• (1845)

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House in support of the motion. In that regard, I commend my colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills for putting it forward.

Private Members' Business

I am proud to have been asked by my colleague to second his motion. I am even more proud to have done so and to have been one of only many members from all different parties to do so. The feedback I have received from my constituents in response to the motion and to our collective support for it has been positive and vociferous.

I am also pleased to see the attention that this issue has garnered among the media and the people who watch us. This is an opportunity for the media and those watching to take this in the right spirit and perhaps pay attention to the fact that we can engage in positive debate and do not necessarily focus on the negative.

I will speak at committee about the specifics of the motion, which will be a wonderful opportunity. Our party certainly encourages moving this to committee.

I also suggest that there is something more fundamental here. I will recall the words of the current Speaker when he was seeking re-election as Speaker the last time. Quite a number of people were running for the august office of Speaker of the House. Candidate after candidate promised to ensure there would be more decorum in the House. Everyone agreed that was necessary. It was encouraging to hear them say that.

I will never forget what the current Speaker said when he spoke about what he wanted to do as Speaker. He acknowledged that decorum had deteriorated. He turned to all of us in this chamber and said, "I recognize that you are asking the Speaker to be responsible for it, but the responsibility for decorum in this House lies with all of you". It struck me that this was exactly right. It is our collective responsibility.

Each one of us has the opportunity to show individually and collectively that we do not necessarily have to engage in partisan attacks and personal insults. We have the opportunity to engage in debate with respect and civility. We have the opportunity to listen to each other in this place. Heaven knows, if we manage to engage in debate with respect and civility and we manage to listen to each other from time to time, we just may learn from each other. That would enhance not only the decorum in the House, but the progress of government in its entirety.

I reiterate my personal support for the motion. My colleagues and I speak on behalf of our party in terms of our support for it. Again, I commend my colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills for moving this forward. I look forward to having good, positive discussions in committee. I also look forward to hearing this chamber engaging in much more decorous, civil and respectful debate.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the issue before us today is a serious one given that the decorum in the House has been subject to a great deal of criticism, particularly during the last session. There have been a number of ethical breaches by some members. To those who are watching us—and we also get observers in this chamber—we can say that it was in very poor taste and that it gave the impression that Parliament is not very respectable.

We must realize that the frustration caused by government responses on political issues bubbles up in question period. I believe

that the could-not-care-less attitude sometimes dished out to opposition members is cause for frustration and that we have reached new lows in terms of the lack of decorum and control in the context of a minority government. That has to be said.

There have been too many personal attacks, even outside the House, for example when MPs or ministers were in their home ridings. Frustration spilled over into question period. There were attacks during the law and order debate, for example. That is just one of many examples. The issue of the trafficking of minors also resonated in question period. A fair bit of rhetoric was addressed to the Bloc Québécois on that issue. I am saying that the government was rather partisan.

I can say that the proposal by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills is a reform that may be praiseworthy but, overall, will not have the desired effect of elevating decorum and ensuring that there is better information about issues. His proposal will not result in people being better informed about certain issues.

I will explain why I do not think that the objectives will be achieved. As I was saying, decorum in the House has seriously deteriorated. That, we know. There have been breaches of ethics in both words and actions. This is already being looked at. There is a parliamentary dialogue committee, which brings together members from all the parties to find solutions to elevate decorum. I attended one of the first meetings. There is not a single party that will say today that it does not support the part of the motion that calls for us to elevate decorum during question period. However, will this motion really achieve this objective?

I had to ask myself several questions. Can we deny that the lack of decorum is directly related to the format of question period? Is the lack of decorum limited to question period, or does it extend to all the debates in this House? Is this lack of decorum related to the fact that the public is becoming more cynical, because the rules during question period are not being followed? I can give a qualified answer and say that question period is not the only period in the House that lacks decorum. The lack of decorum cannot be blamed on question period alone.

I think that the lack of decorum is not just limited to question period. However, I must say that question period is when frustrations come out over the responses the government gives to the opposition. The ministers should not show disdain simply because the opposition has a different point of view or opinion.

I do not know whether it is a coincidence, but in a rather revealing article, Manon Cornellier, from *Le Devoir*, had this to say about decorum in the House of Commons:

It is not so much the tone of the public debate that puts people off, but rather the tenor of the debate....Disinformation, lack of logic, half-truths and omissions have all become staples on the parliamentary menu. All of the parties indulge, but the government appears to be the most partial to such nonsense. Even more worrisome, it seems to take pleasure in feeding this propensity....On many issues, the Conservatives ignore reality and try to impose their point of view....This denial of reality has rubbed off on all of the members, even the Prime Minister...

We have seen contracts awarded without tenders, and this raises a number of questions. The opposition parties have asked those questions in this House.

On another point, the fact of assigning a day—this request is in the motion—to certain ministers for question period will cause the opposition to miss out on opportunities to talk about key parliamentary issues on a given day. Thus, there is not enough flexibility.

For instance, an issue that makes headlines one day can be completely forgotten the next week. However, if it is the responsibility of a minister who is here only on Mondays, we will have to wait six days before we can ask a question.

• (1855)

Some degree of flexibility is needed in the definition of the strategy for question period so that it reflects current affairs. Consider the sponsorship scandal, when the opposition was putting questions to the minister in question every three or four days. What will we do with such a rigid framework in the House of Commons?

We must stop allowing any minister to answer any questions on any issue. That is common practice here, when ministers answer questions from the opposition. Each minister has his or her portfolio for which he or she is accountable and responsible. That is called ministerial responsibility. Since this government came to power, this ministerial responsibility for specific issues no longer exists. From now on, we could compel ministers to be accountable for only their own issues. We do not need motion M-517 for this to be adopted.

Most of the time, the Bloc Québécois assigns questions on a given subject to the critic for that file, who in turn addresses the portfolio holder. When a given region is particularly affected by an issue, the question is assigned to the member concerned. We must reinstate ministerial responsibility without requiring ministers to be present on set days, as this would limit the latitude of the opposition parties.

On another note, I believe that the framework proposed by today's motion is rigid and does not allow for much flexibility. I think that it would help muzzle the opposition in a number of ways. If we increase the time allotted for questions and responses and if question period continues to be 45 minutes long, what will happen to the time allotted to the other opposition parties? It could reduce the time allotted to the opposition party, especially when there is a majority government.

As suggested by the motion, proposing that half the questions be asked by a member whose name would be chosen at random and allowing all members to participate in the random draw—both those in power and those in opposition—could increase the number of questions that may be asked by government members. That would mean that the opposition would have fewer questions.

Those are our concerns about this motion. It is matter that needs to be brought before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, where we could debate it, but without placing too many restrictions in order to change the behaviour in the House. It is not by giving certain hon. members more questions that the issue of decorum will be resolved. Often it is a matter of personality. If the leaders or the whips do not come up with a strategy, then every MP is free to express their own personality.

We know full well that the parties—the governing party and the opposition parties alike—have strategies for getting their message across. The government limits both the opposition's attacks and its

own willingness to answer questions. I do not believe this will change anything.

In my opinion, part of the solution lies with the whips. It is their responsibility, in part, to see to the proper behaviour of their caucus. Certain ministers and hon. members are able to avoid mean-spirited behaviour, as we have seen. It is a question of personality.

Peer behaviour is important too. We are all responsible for intervening when a colleague goes overboard. We are responsible for telling our colleagues that they have gone too far and should apologize. Perhaps there should be penalties. When a member rises after going too far, he or she should simply retract his or her statement and apologize. Whips and leaders could help such colleagues think things over so that they develop a sense of responsibility for the things they did or said.

Attacks often take place off-camera. These may be personal attacks or hurtful behaviour or looks. Today, one Conservative member went so far as to pull out her passport. Maybe she thought it was still question period, but the rest of us were voting on another matter. That, too, is provocation.

• (1900)

Yet that member criticized the Bloc Québécois' attitude and some of its members' conduct when things got out of control last session. Today, her behaviour was inappropriate and frustrated the Bloc Québécois. We did not understand what was going on, but some members were really offended by what she did.

[*English*]

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this motion.

First, I commend my colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills. In the context of Canada, he is a neighbour from Hamilton. I must say that in the short time that I have known him, like many people here, the member has left a very positive impression, and this is just another indication of that. I give him a very non-partisan personal acknowledgement for bringing this forward and the thoughtfulness behind it.

I am someone who believes in this place and its tradition, having now served seven years here and, prior to that, serving at Queen's Park for thirteen years. During that time I had the chance to try different places around the House. I spent some time as a minister answering questions, as a backbencher watching others answer questions, as the House leader for a while and as a deputy speaker.

Therefore, the traditions and what this place means, like everyone here, touches me deeply. When we talk about this place and what we do here, it goes beyond any of us and our time here. I give every serious consideration to this.

I will be making some positive comments and some negative ones around the issue, not the motion, but around the issue. We will be supporting the motion to have it go to committee so we can have the kind of fulsome discussion that I know the member wants.

Private Members' Business

I have just a few thoughts because we will do the detailed work at committee. First, a lot of the outrageous behaviour depends on what is happening on the floor. Quite frankly, there are times when there is a bit of an uprising, and it is warranted. If somebody inadvertently, never mind if they meant it, insults someone, something, a province, a community, a body of water or a mountain and that negative impression is hurled across the floor, there will be a reaction.

Depending on what was said, particularly if it is borderline offensive to what we would call Canadian values and Canadian standards, the public would expect, in a case like that, that there would be some kind of reaction. Canadians would be mortified if certain sexist or racist comments, as unintentional as they may be, are mentioned on the floor of the House of Commons. I think the Canadian people expect us to at least react in some fashion that causes that to be corrected. If it is outrageous enough, then the reaction is instant and, in most cases, the member usually, not always, is on his or her feet apologizing because he or she did not mean it.

That would be an example of a bit of an uproar that would be, dare I say, appropriate or at least understandable in the context of this place.

I will tell the House what is not acceptable. I am in the fourth party so I am quite a way from the other end of the House. It is difficult sometimes to feel a part of the action when one is at one of the ends but so be it. However, I have every right, as does anyone else in the House, that when the Prime Minister of Canada stands up I should be able to hear him. When the Leader of the Opposition stands up in his place I ought to be able to hear him or her too. It is not that I should not be able to hear everyone, but when the leaders are speaking, and I apply that to the Bloc and, of course, to my own leader from Toronto—Danforth, I want to hear them. I am speaking now as a non-partisan parliamentarian.

It is wrong that we collectively would make so much noise that even with our earpiece we cannot hear the Prime Minister of Canada on the floor of the House of Commons answer a question. That is not right.

Equally, there are some members of the House who happen to be soft-spoken and all it takes is three or four people who can clearly gang up and drown them out. I have never had that problem. I am always heard. I am not always agreed with but I am always heard, so I am not in that category and I am not complaining for myself.

• (1905)

However, it is inappropriate for a member to feel that he or she is not being given sufficient time on the floor. It is even more worse if we cannot pick up an earpiece and hear what someone is saying.

All the power resides in the Speaker; the Speaker for the most part is sovereign. The Speaker has all the power at his or her disposal. The question is whether we will permit the Speaker to use those powers in ways that we have not before.

I have not seen anybody tossed out of the chamber since I have been here, not that it's a measure of anything, except when I add it up the number of times that I could not hear the Prime Minister. It is outrageous the number of times that I have seen members in the House, particularly women members but soft-voiced men as well,

drowned out as soon as they get on their feet and say one controversial thing. When that happens, for the next three minutes, we cannot hear a word. That is not right.

I hope we will agree that we want something done about this. When the Speaker stands up and brings things to order, even when I am the focus of being out of order, I am pleased. If I do not have the right to do what I am doing right now and no one else has that guarantee, then our democracy is not what we say it is.

Much of this has to do with the public reaction. For 20 years, I have been hearing that teachers do not want to bring their kids here, because of the decorum and the behaviour. But I would argue that the problem is not so much that members react.

My friend from Sault Ste. Marie, whom I have known since I was elected to Queen's Park in 1990, has been an advocate for the poor every day of his elected life. I do not think anyone would doubt the sincerity and hard work that this member puts in on the issue of poverty. If somebody on the other side inadvertently says something negative about the poor, or says something to the effect that it is their fault, the member for Sault Ste. Marie, who is soft-spoken by nature, when he meets with something that actually hurts people in poverty more than they are already suffering, will react appropriately. And when that happens, we would not want to be sitting close to him.

The second the Speaker sees something going beyond the moment of reaction, the Speaker needs to be on the floor, shutting that person down and asking for an apology. If he does not get it, the Speaker should threaten to throw the person out. If the person refuses to retract, then the Speaker should have the person thrown out.

Some people might think this kind of thing makes them a hero back home. I do not think, however, that anybody will be getting votes for getting thrown out of the House of Commons for conduct unbecoming a member.

I can understand the Speaker's reluctance to be heavy-handed, if he is concerned about where the House is. After all, as the Speaker says so often, he is a servant of the House. So it is always back to us. What are the boundaries that we want?

I do not believe for a minute that anyone expects us to sit like schoolchildren in grade 3 with our hands folded together, nice and neat, and not react at all. That is just not the real world. In days gone by, it was soldiers and blood on the battlefield. We wanted to change that in this place, with dialogue and rules.

Let us understand that there will be a motion, there will be reactions, but collectively, we need to recalibrate the parameters of what is acceptable and what is not, and I think the member, by putting this motion forward, has gone a long way towards helping us help ourselves to make a better House for the people we serve.

Private Members' Business

•(1910)

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by following up on one comment that was made by my predecessor from the New Democratic Party. His thoughts were well considered, but I disagree with him on the merits of throwing members out of the House.

One of the great strengths of the current Speaker of this House, who has served as Speaker throughout my entire career, nearly a decade, is that he has not thrown members out and has eliminated the grandstanding that so often goes along with such ejections. However, that is one of the things we can look at. There are other legislatures, like Ontario, where a different practice obtains.

I want to speak today to what I think is a well-considered and thoughtful motion put forward by my colleague, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, and, more particularly, to the amendment proposed by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons on May 27.

The motion, unamended, would have the procedure and House affairs committee on which I serve, as does my colleague from the New Democrats and most of the members who have spoken here, change the Standing Orders in a specific way.

The amendment put forward by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons proposes three changes. I want to talk today about those three changes one at a time and discuss their merits.

The first change would be to use the word “study”: that the procedure and House affairs committee study the Standing Orders and other conventions, as opposed to saying “recommend changes to”.

The second proposal would be to drop the wording, “examining the convention that the Minister need not respond”, in reference to questions that have been asked of a specific minister.

The third change would be to add words allowing us to examine, and encouraging us to examine, the practices in the mother of Parliaments in Westminster and in other Westminster systems. Although no other parliamentary bodies are specifically mentioned, we can guess that this would include such places as Australia, New Zealand, and the various provinces.

Let me go through and talk a bit about the changes I am proposing.

The first one deals with the roles and responsibilities of the procedures and House affairs committee. The wording of this motion, as originally put forward, would require the committee to recommend changes to the Standing Orders and the conventions regarding question period. Therefore, it presupposes a need for changes to the formal rules before the committee has actually had a chance to decide that for itself.

The amendment says merely that we are required to study it. We may make recommendations; I suspect we probably would make recommendations. However, we ought not to presuppose that those changes need be made.

Standing Order 108 gives each committee the authority to make recommendations on any issue within its mandate. So the requirement, in the original wording of Motion No. 517, that the committee make recommendations actually contradicts this Standing Order. The amendment would remove that problem. Perhaps it is only a technical problem, but it is an important one.

The second aspect of the amendment is a change regarding the proposed requirement that ministers respond to questions that are directed to them.

The amendment would remove the requirement that ministers be expected always to respond to a question that is directed toward the individual minister.

Speakers have always ruled that the choice of which minister responds to a question is a matter that is left to the government. That is not a just a tradition from this House. It goes back to the origins of the concept of responsible government in the 18th century in the United Kingdom.

•(1915)

In our current conventions, the practice is summarized by O'Brien and Bosc on page 508 of their manual, in the following words:

Questions, although customarily addressed to specific Ministers, are directed to the Ministry as a whole. It is the prerogative of the government to designate which Minister responds to which question, and the Speaker has no authority to compel a particular Minister to respond.

That is consistent with our system of government and there are several reasons for this salutary practice, which I would like to go through now.

The first reason is all members will understand that prime ministers have traditionally responded to a whole range of questions covering all aspects of the government's mandate. If a person asks a question of the Minister of Finance, it ought to be the prerogative of the Prime Minister to stand up, as the minister who is ultimately for all areas, and to respond in that area. Likewise the reverse, if the Prime Minister is asked about a question and the greater technical expertise for a fulsome answer falls within the purview of the actual responsible minister, it seems appropriate that the Prime Minister can avoid answering by having the relevant minister answer.

The second reason is there are frequently questions that fall within the purview both of a minister's portfolio but also within the purview of a regional minister. One can imagine an equalization question, for example, falling within the purview of both the finance minister and of a minister responsible for western economic development, or for ACOA.

The third reason is a minister may on occasion have a specific responsibility on an issue that falls outside that minister's normal departmental responsibilities. We ought to have the option of allowing ministers with such a special responsibility to answer the question.

Private Members' Business

The fourth reason is allowing a particular minister to respond to a question would be inconsistent with the principle of cabinet solidarity and the principle of responsible government, whereby all ministers support the government's policies and the ministry is actually responsible. This is a very important concept, which goes back to the 1720s in the United Kingdom, to the prime ministership of Walpole.

Prior to that time, ministers stood or fell at the King's pleasure, but they fell individually, and ultimately the King was the de facto executive and also the de jure executive. What has happened is the monarch remains in our system as the nominal executive, but in fact always acts on the advice of the prime minister. The prime minister represents the entire government and is the only minister who actually communicates directly with and in the formal sense advises the Governor General, or the Queen, as the case may be.

That is an extremely important concept. It fundamentally means that the responsibility is shared by the entire ministry in order that the House itself will have control over the system of government. It brings responsibility from the House by centralizing it in a single unit.

The final point that needs to be made is also very important. The Speaker in our system needs to be impartial and should not be transformed, as this rule would do, into an enforcer, a kind of policeman. This is a concept. The impartiality and the non-coercive nature of the Speaker's office is absolutely essential to the way the parliamentary system has developed in our country.

Under the congressional system in the United States, where the executive lies outside of the House of Representatives, it has an entirely different system. The Speaker is a highly partisan individual, but the Speaker is also emphatically not performing many of the functions the Speaker in our House does. At least to some degree that would be lost.

I also want to point out as my final note that we are looking and recommending in the amendment that other jurisdictions be looked at.

The third improvement, if one wants to call it that, or the suggested change, would be to have us look at the practices of the United Kingdom's parliament and other jurisdictions regarding question period and their appropriateness for the Canadian setting, specifically the federal Canadian setting.

There may be a variety of lessons. For example, I know the U.K. practice of having Wednesdays dedicated to questions to the prime minister is one option put forward in the motion.

We should also look at other Westminster style jurisdictions. As I mentioned earlier, there are Australia and New Zealand. I have seen question period in both countries. They are very different in their structure from either our system or the U.K. system, but they work well.

Similarly, there are the various Australian states. There are two Houses in each state. We have each of our provincial legislatures. There are numerous other jurisdictions within the Commonwealth, all of which could potentially provide us with very worthwhile alternatives to what we do now.

● (1920)

I will finish by saying that I think this is a good motion and I encourage members to support it. I also encourage members to support the amendment proposed by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues for their support, especially the 20 members from three different parties who supported the motion. I thank them very much.

[*English*]

I want to thank my colleagues in the New Democratic Party who have supported this motion, in particular the member for Victoria, who has talked about this issue with me over the last number of weeks and has participated with me in some public debates on this issue. Also, I want to thank members of the Liberal Party for supporting me, in particular the member for Guelph, the member for Willowdale and the member for London North Centre. In my own caucus, I want to thank the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the Minister of Canadian Heritage for their support and encouragement. As well, I want to thank the Minister of National Defence who advised me on some of the wording of the motion. Most importantly, I want to thank the members of my caucus who have been with me right from the beginning encouraging me to put this motion forward and, in many cases, for seconding the motion. I thank each and every one of them for their support on this. It means a lot to me.

I believe Canadians are hungry for change and reform. I am optimistic that this Parliament can reform itself and reconnect citizens with their democratic institutions. According to a recent Nanos policy options survey, the vast majority of Canadians are not happy with the way in which we conduct ourselves in Parliament, particularly in question period. Furthermore, in the last election, more than four out of ten Canadians refused to vote, a record low voter turnout. These two facts, the poll and the election turnout, are evidence of a growing disconnect between Canadians and their Parliament.

I do not think the behaviour in question period is because of a lesser class of people elected to this House. The problem with question period is fundamentally with its format, and the format drives the behaviour. I think the problem with previous attempts to reform question period is that it has been focused only on the behaviour when in fact the much deeper problem has been with its format. We need to address the format and I think the committee needs to take a look at that.

Some have argued that decorum has declined; others argue that decorum is much better than it used to be 40 years ago, or even 120 years ago. Regardless of who is right or wrong, the fact is what is different today from before is that television and the Internet have brought the floor of this House each and every day, live and instantaneously, into the living rooms and kitchens of the nation. Canadians now see which was once unseen. What they see is something they do not like and something they want us to change.

Another point I will make about question period is that it is not about turning it into high tea with crumpets. It is not about stripping question period of its passion, emotion, or its controversy. It is not about taking the cut and thrust of politics out of question period. It is about fixing the dysfunction of some of the aspects of question period.

How can we begin to close the gap between Canadians and their Parliament? We can begin by reforming question period and by passing Motion No. 517, a motion to reform question period.

There are six specific proposals in the motion for reform. I am not going to go through each and every one of them because many of them have been debated and discussed before. However, the motion, should it be adopted, simply asks the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to consider these reforms and to report back recommended changes to the House within six months.

The government, as the member from eastern Ontario has mentioned, has introduced an amendment that changes the wording but not the substance of the motion. I ask members to support the motion whether it is amended or not. I will be supporting the government amendment, but once again, I ask members who are thinking about voting on this motion that, whether the motion is amended or not, we support the motion.

There are those in the House who have reservations about voting for this motion and I would like to address that.

If adopted, the motion simply asks the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to study the issue. The committee may decide to reject, modify, or adopt all six proposals. It may decide to come forward with its own proposals. Whatever reservations members may have about the six proposals, it is up to the committee to decide, a committee that is controlled by the assistant House leaders and the assistant whips.

● (1925)

[Translation]

In closing, I would like to say to my Bloc Québécois colleagues that I know they do not agree with my six proposals. I empathize and sympathize with their colleague. But if the motion were to be adopted, the committee would merely have to study my six proposals. Neither the committee nor the House would be required to adopt all six.

[English]

I thank members for their consideration.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for debate has expired. The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Adjournment Proceedings

Some hon. members: No.

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

And five or more members having risen:

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 6, 2010, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

Shall I see the clock as 7:41 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 11 I rose in the House to get a clear answer from the government respecting the Pacific north coast oil tanker ban in place since 1972. Instead, the minister talked about a plan for offshore oil and gas drilling. In response to subsequent questioning on the same matter, various ministers talked about drilling, and talked about a tanker exclusion zone, which is a completely different policy. At times they said yes and at times they said no. Their answers were very confusing. I had to wonder whether we were witnessing deception or incompetence on this issue.

The government finally acknowledged that it has absolutely no intention of honouring this important policy which has been protecting B.C. and north Pacific inland waters for 40 years.

The Liberals believe it is important to end the ambiguity. We have made a clear commitment to a permanent legislated ban on tanker traffic in the Pacific inland north coast waters. That would cover Douglas Channel, Dixon Entrance, Hecate Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound. This is a very important area to protect.

Supertankers can carry up to 140 million hectares of crude oil. There is a possibility of a major spill. Modelling shows a spill from a tanker at the wrong time of the year could foul the coastline from the northern tip of Vancouver Island up to Alaska. The habitat of birds, fish, herring, marine mammals and endangered species could be fouled by crude oil from a tanker spill. Human errors do happen. Spills do take place.

The Liberals believe it is important to be clear. We would not allow tanker traffic along that part of the coast. The leader of the Liberal Party stated, "Canada has the longest coastline in the world, and our quality of life is closely connected to our oceans. The disaster in the Gulf of Mexico is a grim reminder that we must always be vigilant. While the Conservative government has left our coastal communities and oceans vulnerable, the Liberal Party is proposing innovative, decisive action that would make Canada a world leader in protecting our oceans and our coastal communities".

Adjournment Proceedings

This is an economic policy, not simply an environmental and social policy, respecting the wishes of all of the coastal first nations in that area.

I want to talk for a moment about jobs. Jobs and the economy always have been important to the Liberal Party of Canada. A proponent that has a project that would require supertanker traffic in that area has proposed that 560 long-term jobs could be created in British Columbia. That is important because jobs are important for that coastal area.

I want to point out that 100 times that many jobs would be at risk. In B.C.'s fishing industry, 26,000 jobs would be at risk. Thirty thousand jobs in B.C.'s burgeoning ecotourism sector depend on a healthy marine environment and those jobs would be put at risk by supertanker traffic in that area.

It is not acceptable to entertain that risk. We call on the Conservative government to join with the Liberals in supporting a moratorium on crude oil tanker traffic. British Columbians would support a policy like that.

I appreciated having this chance to clarify my question to which I have received such poor answers in the past.

● (1930)

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, we need to be clear about current provisions that protect British Columbia's coast. Tankers do not move unabated along the coast. In fact, a voluntary tanker exclusion zone, mutually agreed to by both Canada and the United States, does exist off the coast of British Columbia.

First, the member should apologize for suggesting that the minister has been deceptive in his answers. The minister is very hard-working. He is honest and works hard for the people of Canada. She should apologize for that remark. I am sure it was not meant at all as intentional.

I always find it humorous when a Liberal stands and says, "If only we get to be the government, we have an innovative and decisive plan". The Liberals were in government a very short time ago. I am sure if they were the government again, they would implement all those things they never had the chance to do time and time again.

Let us be clear. This Conservative government is keeping the coast of British Columbia clean and pristine. We protect all the coasts of Canada with real action, with real decisions and with real environmental policy and the funds to back it up.

The exclusion zone applies solely to loaded oil tankers moving between Alaska and the west coast of the United States. For example, tankers transporting U.S. crude oil from Alaska to Cherry Point in Washington State would remain west of a line that roughly parallels the coast of British Columbia. This line defining the zone varies between 25 and 85 miles off the British Columbia coastline.

This zone was designed to keep these tankers at a very safe distance from shore so in the event that a loaded tanker became disabled, there would be sufficient time for a salvage tug to reach the tanker and provide assistance before it could possibly drift and risk running aground.

Canadians know they can count on a Conservative government because of the great initiatives we have taken over the last few years while in government to set aside huge lands and national parks, to set aside money so our Coast Guard and other officials, including Transport Canada, can guard and keep safe our coastlines and have a plan in place to ensure we can clean up a spill if something happens.

While there is a federal moratorium in place that applies strictly to oil and natural gas exploration and development activities, this moratorium does not extend to the storage or the movement of tankers. I suggest the member is a little confused on this issue.

Tanker traffic is permitted along the British Columbia coast. In fact, oil tankers have been trading safely and regularly along our west coast for many years. I understand there has not been one incident of crude oil leakage thus far from any ship. We have a track record and clearly our laws are becoming better and more onerous for those tankers. I will get into that later on in my speech. Measures exist to ensure the safe transportation of petroleum products to and from Canadian ports.

The lead federal agency is Transport Canada and it strictly enforces pollution prevention regulations through ship inspection for compliance with international pollution prevention provisions and through incident investigation. Clearly Transport Canada is vigorous in its inspection and in its enforcement. Operators must maintain a minimum level of preparedness at all times and must have oil pollution prevention emergency plans in place.

● (1935)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, this is a perfect example of exactly the obfuscation that has gone on by the Conservative government on this issue all along. Once again, the member talked about the tanker exclusion zone in an attempt to confuse the matter. Yes, the tanker exclusion zone is on the exterior of Haida Gwaii and it is for supertankers going from Alaska to Washington. That has absolutely nothing to do with the policy of a moratorium preventing tanker traffic on the inland waters inside Haida Gwaii in the areas I mentioned. This is just more deception on the part of the member opposite. Sadly, we cannot have an honest answer.

In talking about oil tankers trading oil to the east, of course they have, through the Port of Vancouver, the southern part of British Columbia, not the north coast water. We support the strong economy in Canada. We support the ability to export oil products from Alberta to Asia, which occurs through the port of Vancouver—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the line defining the zone varies from between 25 and 85 miles off the British Columbia coastline.

Adjournment Proceedings

In addition, both the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships and the Canada Shipping Act regulations for the prevention of pollution from ships and for dangerous chemicals contain requirements. These requirements include, among other things, the double hulling of tankers, which further reduces the risk.

Finally, operators must contribute to Canada's national ship-source oil pollution fund, which will actually pay compensation for spills from ships of all classes, including the tankers the member speaks of. The fund is liable to pay claims for oil pollution or damage, even anticipated damage, which is amazing, at any place in Canada or in Canadian waters, including the exclusive economic zone of Canada.

Clearly, all Canadians can count on the Conservative government to keep Canadian shorelines safe and secure, just as they can count on us to keep all Canadians safe and secure.

● (1940)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the chamber this evening and speak on a topic that I have brought to the floor of the chamber on a number of different occasions, that being a tax credit for volunteer firefighters.

Anybody who lives in a rural community understands that volunteer firefighters stand apart from the rest.

I have a world of respect for those who volunteer. Whether they canvass or coach, if they put in time with any of the community groups within their communities, that is important and it is noble. These volunteer firefighters, however, stand apart. They do a lot of the same things the Kinsmen, the Kiwanis Clubs, and Lions Clubs do, which is provide opportunities for people within their communities. Where it is different is when that alarm goes off, when that pager goes off.

People from larger centres, such as downtown Toronto or Vancouver or any of the cities across this country, are protected around the clock by full-time firefighters. However, in rural communities, a volunteer may be a mechanic, a guy who just did a motor job in the local garage. It may be a lady who teaches school during the day but has the pager on, because she has made that decision to volunteer. Volunteers come from all walks of life, but when the pager goes off, that is when they stand apart and leave their jobs to attend to the emergency within that community. That warrants some kind of special recognition.

These are people like the carpenter who responds to the head-on collision out on the highway. He takes off his tools, he responds to the call and goes out, and when he gets there, he has to know just as much as the full-time, professional firefighters. He has to be trained. He has to be prepared. He comes with the jaws of life. He cuts open the car and scrapes an 18-year-old kid off the dash of the car.

Mentally, physically, and emotionally, these are volunteers who stand apart from others. These are the guys who are running into the building when everybody else is running out. It is incumbent on us as lawmakers to recognize that and to show that we appreciate the exceptional commitment these men and women make.

If we want to retain them and bring new firefighters in, rewarding those firefighters we have is the least we can do as a nation. The least

we can do as a country is recognize the special contribution they make to their communities.

That is why I asked the Minister of Public Safety whether he would be willing to support a tax initiative or a tax credit for volunteer firefighters in this country. I was not pleased with the answer.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss how collectively we support the brave men and women who work as volunteer firefighters in rural communities across Canada.

First responders, such as firefighters and auxiliary police officers, play a valuable role in ensuring the safety and resiliency of our communities. As the term suggests, in emergencies first responders employed by municipal, provincial or territorial governments across Canada are often the first on the scene. These brave men and women place themselves in harm's way to serve Canadians in times of need.

We also understand that the provinces and territories have a legal framework in place for occupational health, safety and workers compensation and provide benefits to the families of workers who are injured or killed in the line of duty.

Benefits received under these workers' compensation programs may also be supplemented through union agreements or group insurance plans that provide compensation for losses incurred due to workplace accidents or death.

Faced with an emergency, Canadians expect all governments to act. Under the Emergency Management Act, Public Safety Canada, on behalf of the Government of Canada, coordinates activities of government institutions related to emergency management with those of the provinces and, through the provinces, those of local authorities.

Public Safety Canada also conducts emergency preparation exercises and provides education and training related to emergency management. The Canadian Emergency Management College in coordination with provinces and territories provides training to emergency management workers from across the country.

Under budget 2007, Public Safety Canada is contributing \$2.5 million over five years to the Canadian arm of the International Association of Fire Fighters to implement a new hazardous materials training program. This initiative will make hazardous materials training available to all first responders throughout Canada. This contribution agreement is also a tremendous opportunity in that it provides a mechanism for Public Safety Canada to build a stronger working relationship with the first responders community.

Adjournment Proceedings

● (1945)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the response by my colleague but what frustrates me most is that I once presented a private member's bill on this particular issue, on the tax credit for volunteer firefighters, back when we were in power, when the Liberals held government, and I remember the Conservatives at the time were very much in support of this. I remember the member for Lethbridge sitting shoulder to shoulder with me to defend this at the finance committee. There was a great deal of excitement about it on the Conservative benches then but it seems to have totally disappeared now.

What I am pleased about is the fact that our leader has pledged that he would proceed with such a tax credit for volunteer firefighters. I think it is the least we can do. As I said before, I think it is the least we can do for this very special group of citizens.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, it is almost a repeat of the last group here. If the Liberals had only had one more term they would have got it done.

When my friend speaks about having all of the support back in the day when the Liberals were the majority, I am rather surprised that

they did not get it done. There is obviously a reason and I am sure my friend, if he had more time, could explain to everyone why they did not get it done in those 13 years.

As I have stated, first responders are primarily employed by municipal, provincial or territorial governments and all the provinces and territories have some legal framework in place for first responders.

We have made it obvious that this government has taken measures to work collectively with our provincial and municipal partners to ensure that these brave men and women are well prepared to help Canadians when needed.

I just wish that if my friend had felt so strongly during those 13 years he would have got it done then and we would not be debating it today.

The Deputy Speaker: 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 7:48 p.m.)

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