



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, May 28, 2012**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 28, 2012

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*English*]

### CRIMINAL CODE

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-217, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mischief relating to war memorials), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

**The Speaker:** There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed without debate to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)** moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**Mr. David Tilson** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this morning on behalf of the residents of Dufferin—Caledon to speak to Bill C-217, which is my bill to protect and defend our nation's war memorials and cenotaphs.

As members will know, Bill C-217 seeks to add significant penalties to the mischief section of the Criminal Code for those convicted of mischief against our war memorials, cenotaphs and similar structures that honour those who have died as a result of war. The first offence would carry a fine of not less than \$1,000. The second offence would carry a jail term of 14 days. The third and subsequent offences would carry a 30-day jail term.

All members of this House are familiar with veterans in their communities and likely with serving Canadian Forces members as well. We hold them in the highest regard for the sacrifice their service represents. Our war memorials and cenotaphs are places we set aside in our communities to honour them and especially to honour those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. We owe them a debt that can never be repaid.

Since we last debated this bill on February 2, 2012, I was pleased to appear before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights as it began its examination of Bill C-217 on March 27. I had the honour of being accompanied by Mr. John Eggenberger of Nepean, Ontario, a retired air force colonel and vice-president of the Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association. I was also accompanied by Mr. Earl Page, a Korean War navy veteran from Woodstock, Ontario. These two gentlemen underscored the need for more stringent sanctions against those who would desecrate or vandalize our cherished cenotaphs and war memorials.

Mr. Page, in particular, made an impassioned presentation during which he recounted the events of a shocking act of vandalism that took place in Woodstock on November 10, 2009, the night before the Remembrance Day ceremonies. Residents of Woodstock arose to discover that vandals had spray-painted swastikas and offensive messages on the town cenotaph. With no time to remove the offensive graffiti, the ceremony proceeded with this heinous damage in full view.

Mr. Page commented on the disgust felt by everyone, especially the veterans attending the ceremony in Woodstock on that Remembrance Day. I will quote from Mr. Page's presentation at committee on March 27. He said:

...I wanted to express my deep disgust on behalf of all the people in Woodstock, all the veterans in Woodstock, as well as the many children there. Children were mentioned. We always have a great many children out to that cenotaph on Remembrance Day, and they all come and shake our hands. They're happy to see us. Since the desecration of our monument, the city has gone to the trouble of re-facing all the names on that monument, and it cost the city a great deal of money. I know the feelings of the veterans: if we had got hold of that guy, I don't think he would be walking around today. But he was not a child, or even a teenager—he was an adult, and he got away with it. We spent six or seven days going to court to see what was going to happen to him, and he got off with a slap on the wrist, a couple of days of community service. Terrible. I won't say much more, because I'm liable to say things I shouldn't. Thank you.

During the previous hours of debate on this bill, I have recounted many similar examples of such profound disrespect to our fallen soldiers, our veterans and our men and women serving in the Canadian Forces today. As the mischief section of the Criminal Code is currently written, war memorials and cenotaphs fall into the same category as a mailbox or parking meter when it comes to penalties. They certainly deserve better protection than that.

*Private Members' Business*

During the examination of Bill C-217 at committee, colleagues from the opposite side of the House made numerous references to mandatory minimum sentences, restorative justice, judicial leeway, discretion and so forth. The member for St. John's East and the member for Mount Royal, who are both very experienced and knowledgeable members, expressed opposition to the mandatory minimum sentencing provisions of Bill C-217. Both of those members and other members of the opposition were pushing for restorative justice and judicial flexibility to be written into the bill. Indeed, several hours of the committee's time was taken up with debate on their amendments in this regard. It is my contention that they missed the point.

● (1105)

Nothing in Bill C-217 precludes a judge from ordering some form of restorative justice, restitution or apology, or other alternate sentencing. A judge could order a guilty individual to spend time at the local Legion to perform community service or even scrub the monument with a toothbrush, for example. The judge would be as free to do as he or she sees fit on a case by case basis after the guilty individual is ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine for the first offence.

Staying with the committee for a moment, I should note that an amendment put forward by the government was adopted. It would move the maximum imprisonment under indictment from five to ten years. This is a technical amendment that was brought to my attention by officials with the Department of Justice, and I thank the department for its guidance in this regard. I might point out that the opposition parties voted against the government's amendment, and they also voted against the bill itself in a recorded division at the conclusion of clause by clause. This action speaks for itself as to how seriously they view this issue.

I return to my observation that, under the current regime of the mischief section of the Criminal Code, a war memorial or cenotaph is not accorded the pride of place that we accord them in our communities.

These honoured places we know so well represent shared military heritage and its key role in defining who we are as a country. We can all recall the major milestones and some of the lesser ones in our military history: Ypres, Vimy, the Somme, Dieppe, Ortona, the liberation of the Netherlands, the Korean War, the Suez crisis, Cyprus, the Golan Heights, peacekeeping throughout the Cold War, the first Gulf War, Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Afghanistan and, more recently, Libya, to name but a few.

Those names evoke strong emotions among Canadians, and rightly so. They and so many others are part of what defines us as a country. We are a country that defines freedom and liberty to the point that we have sent and continue to send our sons and daughters to dangerous places in the world in defence of that freedom and liberty. We understand collectively as a country what this has cost us in lives sacrificed. To properly honour that sacrifice, we have erected war memorials and cenotaphs across the land, where communities gather to pay tribute to those who have fallen and those who have served.

We would repay that sacrifice and service poorly indeed if we did not do all we can to deter the senseless desecration of these honoured structures and places. My goal with Bill C-217 was to lift cenotaphs,

war memorials and other similar structures above the mundane and properly recognize them in the Criminal Code as having special value, value deserving of significant sanction in the criminal law of this country if someone chooses to violate them.

I have related this story before in the House but it bears repeating as to what prompted me to introduce this legislation. In early 2008, in my community of Orangeville, Ontario, the town arranged for our local cenotaph to be sent for restoration. In late October, it was reinstalled with an appropriately solemn rededication ceremonies. Then a few days later, just days before Remembrance Day, vandals hit it with eggs. It cost the town of Orangeville more than \$2,000 to repair the damage.

This was the original impetus behind the bill. As I did research on this, I found that this incident was, sadly, not isolated. Without having to dig very deeply, I found dozens of incidents over only the past few years from coast to coast of vandalism and desecration of these important monuments. In many cases, perpetrators received either a slap on the wrist or even went scot-free.

It was said during testimony at the justice committee that we should take into account youthful indiscretion or the lack of education as to the significance of our military history when considering cases of vandalism of this kind. I could not more vehemently disagree. I think of the tens of thousands of Canadian youth who lay in war graves in Europe, North Africa, the Pacific and elsewhere. There is no youthful indiscretion there.

Part of educating those who remain ignorant of the value of our war memorials and cenotaphs includes making it clear in our criminal law what the consequences are for dishonouring them.

● (1110)

The severity of the penalty gives Canadians an indication as to how seriously we as a society and we as parliamentarians view this associated crime. To suggest that vandalism against a war memorial or cenotaph is done on a lark or a whim and should be treated less harshly is frankly offensive to the memories of those we honour with our monuments.

*Private Members' Business*

Members will know we just celebrated the 95th anniversary of the battle of Vimy Ridge. Many consider this to be Canada's coming of age, as all four components of the Canadian expeditionary forces fought together as a single unit for the first time. Great odds were overcome at a great cost of life, far out of proportion to our size as a nation. It is a key defining moment in our history as a nation. The Governor General recently led a delegation of thousands of Canadian students to the monument in Vimy to commemorate this important milestone. As well, during 2012 we are celebrating the bicentennial of the war of 1812. Canadians can be justifiably proud of our role in that conflict, another pivotal moment in our history. Throughout this year, many will be paying tribute at our local cenotaphs and war memorials. In two years' time we will commemorate 100 years since the outbreak of World War I, which cost our country immeasurably.

All this is to say that Canada has a proud military history. We have never sought a war, but we have always come to the defence of democracy and freedom when called upon to do so. We have always recognized the bravery and sacrifice of the best among us through our memorials and cenotaphs in the ceremonies we hold there.

Most members know someone who has fought or served at some point in our great country: a father, a brother, a grandfather, an uncle, an aunt, a sister, a mother or a friend. We appreciate these men and women for their dedication and courage and the sacrifice they have shown for Canada. Their willingness to fight abroad for our freedom here at home is an inspiration. The memorials in our communities are dedicated to these people, and none of us wants to see them damaged or defiled. The increased penalties called for in Bill C-217 will make potential vandals think twice before acting against a memorial that holds such significant meaning for this community.

Canadian Forces members continue to serve in Afghanistan, engaged in training the Afghan security forces. Just last summer combat operations ceased and the bulk of our combat troops returned home to a grateful nation. Over the course of 10 years of combat operation, Canada's longest-ever combat mission, we lost 157 brave men and women. As a result, our cenotaphs and war memorials have taken on new significance and value, especially in those communities that lost one of their own. Protecting them from vandalism is more important now than ever.

As members of Parliament, we serve our democracy in a very direct way. It was to protect that democracy and the freedoms that go with it that so many brave Canadians signed up and continue to enlist in the Canadian Forces. Too many of those Canadians did not make it home, and so we have places of honour and great respect in our communities to recognize their sacrifice. We would repay them poorly if we did not do absolutely all we can to discourage people from dishonouring those hallowed places.

Those of us who enjoy the hard-won freedoms that are part of modern Canada owe it to those who have paid in blood and life to keep these honoured spaces free from harm or dishonour. As citizens and residents of this great country, we have a duty to protect and preserve our memorials and cenotaphs in memory of those who have fallen.

To conclude, I would like to thank all the members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for their work on Bill

C-217. They gave it thoughtful consideration. While I did not agree with everything that was said, I nevertheless want to acknowledge their work. In particular, I want to thank both the chairman, the member for Oxford, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, the member for Delta—Richmond East for their stewardship of Bill C-217 through the committee process.

Canada's long and proud tradition of standing up for freedom and democracy and defending our values is one of the things that make us the greatest in the world. I believe the passage of Bill C-217 is necessary to ensure that those who would damage our honoured places think twice before they act. I would therefore urge all hon. members to support Bill C-217.

● (1115)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Dufferin—Caledon because I truly understand why he has introduced this bill. This is not his first attempt.

I know that all members of the House are always appalled to hear about incidents such as those that occurred recently in Ottawa and in the hon. member's riding. However, one of the issues raised by the Standing Committee on Justice is that there is no mandatory minimum sentence for mischief in relation to objects of religious worship or cultural property. The fact that Bill C-217 establishes mandatory minimum sentences for committing mischief in relation to a war memorial seems to make this a much more serious offence. I would like the member to talk about this.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Tilson:** Mr. Speaker, whatever we are doing now, which is under the mischief section in the Criminal Code, is not working. The vandalism continues.

I understand the position of the official opposition and the Liberal opposition. Their position has been quite clear. They do not like maximum or minimum sentences, and that is it in a nutshell. They want restorative justice and other things. As I said in my comments, Bill C-217 does not preclude a judge making that decision. After people have been fined \$1,000, they can have other things applied to their sentences. There can be restorative justice. I say that, surely to goodness, this offence is greater than minor mischief charges. These are very serious things.

● (1120)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we recognize, as all Canadians do, the importance of war memorials and monuments. A great majority of Canadians every year take the time to show their love and appreciation of our forces of today and of yesterday, and assign a great deal of value to the monuments.

*Private Members' Business*

The concern, at least in part, that Liberals have is in regard to the issue of restorative justice. I have had the opportunity to work with young people on the issue of restorative justice. Quite often victims themselves would prefer to have some sort of restorative justice rather than just a simple fine. Restorative justice can ultimately lead to a more positive outcome for the community. Could the member reflect on the benefits and acknowledge that there is benefit in some cases in working toward restorative justice? It brings communities together in working with individuals who have caused the damage and there tends to be a great deal more remorse and respect from the individuals who caused the vandalism in the first place. Why would we want to rule out restorative justice, which is what is implied in the current legislation that is being proposed?

Could the member reflect positively on the potential of restorative justice?

**Mr. David Tilson:** Mr. Speaker, I am pretty well going to repeat what I said to my hon. friend from the official opposition.

This sort of vandalism, I am told by veterans today, does not occur very often in Europe. I do not know why that is. There could be any number of reasons, such as the lack of education. The purpose of this bill is to draw to the attention of people of all ages that these sacred places should not be desecrated. That is what they are. They are sacred places to honour our veterans.

My friend and I are on the same committee with regard to other matters. I respect his position on things, but I have never suggested, nor has the bill ever suggested, that no one believes in restorative justice, apologies or working with Legions. A court can rule on that, but it is going to do so after the people who have been charged and convicted pay \$1,000. In other words, I am raising the level. I am taking this out of the usual offences for mischief.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague who, by introducing this bill, has made it possible for me to address such an important matter in this chamber.

However, I would first like to say that this bill is a little like many other government bills, even though it is being introduced through the back door as a private member's bill. Bill C-217 seems to be inspired by media headlines. The danger with this type of bill is that it meddles with the Criminal Code. We are supposed to be good managers of this country, good legal experts and supposedly good lawmakers. Lawmakers do not talk for the sake of talking. The danger is that by making piecemeal changes to sections of the Criminal Code, which is something that the Conservative government does on a regular basis, we are creating a monster and those who manage criminal matters every day will have a great deal of trouble working with it.

When we studied the bill in the Standing Committee on Justice, the critic at the time, my colleague from Newfoundland and Labrador, specified that we had no problem with the substance of the bill. We all recognize the importance of war memorials. We have no problem with that. Our problem was, and still is—because the amendments have not been passed yet—with the fact that the government introduces in Bill C-217 changes immediately following section 430 of the Criminal Code on mischief involving religious worship.

The section stipulates:

Every one who commits mischief in relation to property that is a building, structure or part thereof that is primarily used for religious worship, including a church, mosque, synagogue or temple, or an object associated with religious worship located in or on the grounds of such a building or structure, or a cemetery, if the commission of the mischief is motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on religion, race, colour or national or ethnic origin,

- a. is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years; or
- b. is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding eighteen months.

It is because we raised these points that the government presented its amendment, because the maximum sentence did not make sense. The government recognized that. If we considered that the purpose of the bill was essentially to introduce minimum sentences, then the official opposition could not support this type of amendment given that, in the same section, this did not exist for the other things. Never, during the entire hearing in committee of the various witnesses, was anyone able to tell us in an intelligent or consistent manner why war memorials are more important than places of religious worship or cultural property.

It is important to be consistent. Indeed, there will be a problem when and if this goes before the courts. We do not write just for the sake of it, to return to our ridings and go to the Royal Canadian Legion—that I joined a few months ago—and say that they will be proud of us because we voted in favour of Bill C-217 and we have agreed to make things much more serious. It is important to be consistent. As legislators, we have a responsibility. If this government does not understand its role as legislator, at some point, Canadian society as a whole will pay the price. We agree that there is a problem, but it is important to be realistic. It is not something that happens every day, but there is a problem. That it would happen once, is once too often.

I would have been a little uncomfortable had I not received a letter from the president of the Royal Canadian Legion, who wrote to us, during our committee hearings, on behalf of the Royal Canadian Legion. If anyone is proud of their history—of our land, air and sea forces—and of what has been done in Canada's name throughout the world, it is the Legion.

● (1125)

I participate in enough activities with these people to know that they are proud and that they want to educate young people about our history. They want young people to be more familiar with what is happening now and what has happened in our history. The youth of today are quite often unfamiliar with Canada's history. My colleague who introduced Bill C-217 stressed this when he compared our situation to that of Europe, where young people are so proud of their history. I have travelled throughout Europe and I have been to Normandy. It was one of the most wonderful trips of my life, and the most emotional. I saw all the tombstones of our Canadian soldiers, which are maintained by people who go there every day. Of course, it is a proud moment to stand before these tombstones, and one that makes you want to return.

Will slapping people with a \$1,000 fine solve the problem of ignorance of history? As the president of the Royal Canadian Legion put it so well:

*Private Members' Business*

The punishment should fit the crime and although no incident of this nature can be condoned, there should be provision for restorative justice measures with a mandated dialogue between veterans groups and the offenders. There should be provision where offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions, to repair the harm they have done, by apologizing to a group of Veterans, or with community services. It provides help for the offender to avoid future offences and provides a greater understanding of the consequences of their actions.

That is the Royal Canadian Legion's vision, which I share. There is a reason why the Criminal Code section on mischief does not provide for a minimum fine for mischief in relation to cultural property or places used for religious worship.

We feel that war memorials belong in the section on mischief. While we do not necessarily object to mentioning war memorials specifically in that section, it is important to be consistent with the rest of the section, because there is a danger. The member for Dufferin—Caledon was asked about this when he testified in committee. Anyone who has done some criminal law and gone to court knows what will happen to avoid the minimum fine. Take the example of a stupid young person who gets a good slap on the wrist from the authorities so that he understands the seriousness of what he did and is properly punished. You would have to be pretty stupid to do this sort of thing, but who did not do something stupid when they were young? Do we have to slap people with a \$1,000 minimum fine to make them understand that what they did was wrong?

The best proof that this is not necessary is that these individuals rarely reoffend, which goes to show that the punishments handed down under the current legislation are successful. Something is missing, though. Students in this country need to be made aware of our history.

I will repeat what I said the first time I took part in this debate, for anyone who did not hear. In my former life, I was a radio broadcaster. One of my best radio programs was one that I had to fight for to some degree, since my program director thought my idea was completely crazy. After travelling to Europe, I said I wanted to do a special program on November 11, which I wanted to begin by observing a minute of silence. For anyone who does not know, a minute of silence on the radio is very expensive. My director asked me if I had gone mad. I told her that I thought it was worth commemorating what happened in our past and giving our listeners a little history lesson. That was my best program. It was an open-line broadcast. People called in to talk about what had happened. That is what needs to be done, rather than adding a subsection that will only complicate section 430 and confuse people, because they will no longer know which section to invoke when laying charges, in order to prevent the minimum fine from being given.

This bill is thoughtful in the sense that it comes from good intentions, but once again, this Conservative government has failed to reach the right conclusion.

• (1130)

[*English*]

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-217 on the issue of mischief in relation to war memorials and cenotaphs. As I have stated previously in this regard, there is a responsibility to take action against those who would dishonour our heritage, our history and our memorials, the *devoir de mémoire*, the duty of memory. As I have said before,

vandalism and desecration of monuments and memorials is intolerable. Such desecration dishonours us all.

Like every member of this place, I am as shocked as I am pained to read accounts of vandalism and desecration of war memorials. In my own riding of Mount Royal, we are home to such memorials including the cenotaph in the municipality of Côte Saint-Luc, erected in memory of those who gave their lives in the First World War, the Second World War and the Korean War, as well as the Mount Royal cenotaph in Peace Park, which honours the brave soldiers from the town of Mount Royal who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Second World War. One shudders to think of these community treasures and memorials being vandalized.

However, we have been witness to troubling accounts of vandalism and desecration of war memorials and monuments across the country, as has been set forth before this House in discussion and debate. Indeed, in response to an incident on Canada Day in 2006, when an individual urinated on a national war memorial here in Ottawa, Liberals and in particular my colleague from Ottawa South called upon the government to take action in this regard. As it happens, we have before us today legislation that seeks to address the specific issue of mischief related to war memorials.

However, this is flawed legislation. Accordingly, I will enumerate for my colleagues why, though I am supportive of the bill in principle, I nonetheless feel it would not achieve that which must be accomplished.

First, the measure is duplicative of what is already in the Criminal Code and in our criminal law. It is not as if, without this legislation, mischief to war memorials is not criminalized. Indeed, such behaviour can be prosecuted now under the Criminal Code, as it has been in the past under the general principle of mischief. Moreover, it can also be punished under the subsection of mischief specific to the damage to cultural property provision.

Thus, while we need to denounce and prevent damage to war memorials, cenotaphs and the like, it is unclear that this legislation is adequate in terms of scope. For example, in the town of Hampstead in my own riding, in front of the Irving L. Adessky Community Centre, there is both a cenotaph and a Holocaust memorial. Under the present legislation, only vandalism of the cenotaph would be punished whereas vandalism of the Holocaust memorial would be addressed under the existing mischief provisions. While both could be punished under the provision for “damage to cultural property”, it is unclear why a war memorial and cenotaph, to the exclusion of another memorial such as a Holocaust memorial, should receive the unique protection that is offered by Bill C-217.

Rather than dwell on this particular point any longer, I suggest that the government may wish to revisit this area of the law to ensure consistency in the preservation and protection of these important reminders of our heritage and our history.

*Private Members' Business*

Second, Bill C-217 makes use of a mandatory minimum penalty. While I have enumerated various critiques of mandatory minimum penalties in this House on the grounds of law and principle, criminal law policy, economics, prejudicial fallout and the like, I do not wish to repeat myself at length on this point. Rather, I will focus my concern in this regard on the use of a specific punitive mandatory minimum in this legislation, where such punishment may not be the appropriate and precise remedy necessitated by the vandalism that it seeks to counteract.

As was discussed extensively in committee, much of the vandalism of war memorials is committed by youths sometimes not even aware of the significance of the site. In that regard, and as we have seen judges determine this in the past in relation to such mischief, it would be more appropriate to regard such youth vandalism to require of them to complete community service projects with veterans groups, or to mandate that they volunteer with veterans. Simply put, rather than collecting a fine and leaving it at that, we should require individuals to learn about the sacrifices veterans have made for this country, to engage with the veterans, to hear their stories and to appreciate the sacrifice that was made.

• (1135)

Regrettably, we discourage the use of such sentencing techniques by requiring a punitive mandatory minimum, where judges may be less inclined to propose such action in addition to a fine or prison term. It may even be that a prosecutor would charge a lesser offence to avoid the mandatory minimum, as we have seen in the past as well, such that this, in the end, would undermine this law's attempt at even specific denunciation of this behaviour, let alone its prevention to begin with.

I find myself, again, in the position where I need to draw to the attention of my colleagues opposite that crime and justice cannot, and do not, only operate in the realms of punishment and incarceration.

Indeed, in relation to alternative sentencing, we have the concept of restorative justice, of which we hear very little from the government, if anything. It would provide for remedies like the one suggested regarding community service and promote the idea that a person convicted of such an offence should make it right, not simply with the state but with those who are harmed and hurt by his or her conduct. As witnesses from veterans groups noted at committee, a heartfelt and sincere apology can go a long way.

Another thing we ignore with the focus on punishment is, indeed, prevention, which brings me to my third and final point; that is, the bill would do nothing with regard to prevention, and it would not serve as an effective deterrent.

The government could have introduced a fund for security at such sites. It could have announced a new initiative to fund events and ceremonies at such sites to encourage broader community awareness and understanding of their importance and place. Indeed, just as the government is now involved in promoting and publicizing the War of 1812, it could focus at this point on encouraging interaction and engagement with veterans, particularly as the surviving veteran population from World War II diminishes with each passing year.

I do not fault the member for Dufferin—Caledon in any way. Indeed, I appreciate his bringing forth this legislation. However, I must take issue with the government's myopic focus simply on punishment and incarceration, ignoring that prevention and restorative justice must equally be considered and, in some cases, would dictate the adoption of measures other than mandatory minimum penalties of a fine, imprisonment or both.

In closing, while I do believe the bill has flaws, I am supportive in principle, given its foundational importance that we remember those who sacrificed so much for us and our cherished way of life and that we honour their memory appropriately.

However, we can have more effective legislation. We could make it better. We can better honour their sacrifice. We can best honour their memory by so doing.

• (1140)

**Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to stand today and speak in support of Bill C-217, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mischief relating to war memorials).

This bill is important because, frankly, many people do not recognize what is taking place across this country. They do not recognize the sacrifices our men and women in uniform have made in the past, and how they should be respected.

When the sponsor of the bill, the member for Dufferin—Caledon, appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice, which was tasked to study the bill, he observed that the Criminal Code currently treats the desecration of war memorials in the same fashion as when someone damages or desecrates mailboxes, for instance.

The member said that the national importance of war memorials warrants that they be governed by a separate offence in the code. He called them sacred spaces. I would agree with that analogy. I think they are sacred spaces. They are our way of recognizing and remembering those men and women who have paid the ultimate sacrifice to keep us safe and secure, and to give us the freedoms we enjoy today.

We have the greatest country in the world not only economically, as has been identified by many people around the world, but also the best banking sector, the best enforcement of the rule of law, the best individual freedoms for people than any other country on the planet.

It is in no small part what the men and women in uniform did in World War I and World War II. Battles like Vimy Ridge established us as a country and gave us pride in our armed forces.

The member also said that under the Criminal Code a person commits mischief by doing certain things. I am not going to go through them specifically, but it is in relation to destroying or damaging property, somebody rendering a property dangerous, useless, inoperative or ineffective.

I did have an opportunity to listen to the previous speakers. I have also had an opportunity to litigate for some years. Clearly, one thing that is not recognized by some parties is the number of people who commit crimes of property damage and mischief, and frankly, the people who commit those crimes are very seldom caught.

*Private Members' Business*

There are studies which indicate that only 8% of crimes are ever solved. I would suggest that with this type of crime, the percentage solved would be much lower because the crime is committed anonymously, usually late at night and in a place where there is no witness, nobody who can identify the people. Often people consider it to be a victimless crime and one that does not need to be studied.

To be clear, Bill C-217 proposes that Parliament recognize the special significance of war memorials by amending the Criminal Code to create a new offence to deal specifically with mischief directed at such property, as the code has already identified for cultural property and property primarily used for religious worship, such as churches, mosques, synagogues and temples.

It also proposes that this new offence be subject to mandatory minimum penalties. I know some members of the Liberal Party and the NDP do not agree with that, but I do think it is very important because many judges across the country do not impose consistent sentences. First of all, we need to send a clear message to criminals that this will not be tolerated. Second, judges across the country, whether it be in Prince Edward Island, Fort McMurray or Vancouver, should impose the same sentence for each individual who commits these types of offences and other offences, such as drug dealing and violent crimes.

People who understand the law, such as the lawyers who spoke earlier, will see that in Vancouver, for instance, the courts are more lenient on drug dealers than the courts are in Alberta. We can see that. It is no surprise. Lawyers know this. That is why lawyers shop around in different jurisdictions.

Mandatory minimum sentences are very important. It is important for the judges to understand that legislators such as us are sending a clear message, and they need to send that clear message on to those people who would commit crimes of this nature.

I can understand why Canadians would readily support the creation of such a specific offence, because who does not know somebody who served in Afghanistan, World War I, World War II, or the Korean War? I think all of us have a relative or know someone who lost his or her life or something of themselves in one of those conflicts. Canadians clearly would support a mandatory minimum sentence in this particular case.

●(1145)

We heard from the previous speaker that he is supporting it. He said it is not a perfect law, and I would agree. I do not think there is such a thing as a perfect law, but certainly we need to move forward as legislators to find that balance between what could be perfect and what is necessary to hold these people to account.

If we were to leave the current law as it is, nothing would change. Clearly it is not working. That is why we need to do something. It has failed to discourage people from committing these offences. It has failed to convince people to pay attention to this in their own communities. These monuments lose their importance to Canadians if they see that people can get away with the occurrences that have taken place.

I want to bring forward to the House some examples of what has happened in the past. These examples were brought to light in committee by Mr. John Eggenberger, the vice-president of research

at the Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association. These examples clearly indicate what is not acceptable and why we should be taking these steps and sending this message.

In September 2006, the monument in Vimy Ridge Memorial Park in Winnipeg was tagged with silver spray paint. I had a chance to go to France to represent our country. I saw the Vimy Ridge Memorial. I read the names of the young men and women who had served on behalf of Canada. The average age of those young people who died I do not think was even 21. We should honour the people who died to establish and protect our country, as well as the many countries and people of Europe. It is unacceptable to spray-paint a memorial that represents people who died while protecting our freedoms.

In 2008, the Korean War veterans memorial in Ottawa was smeared with human feces. How disgusting is that? The National Capital Commission, to its credit, cleaned it up within an hour. The person or persons who did that should be totally ashamed of themselves. It is disgusting and totally unacceptable.

Also in 2008, a 14-year-old boy was caught spray-painting a war memorial on Vancouver Island. I do not see any constructive purpose in that. Maybe that 14-year-old boy should receive some sort of punishment and some recognition for being a youth, but certainly he should be making a dramatic change in his lifestyle. To do something like that shows an absolute lack of respect.

In June 2008, local Montreal Legion members were outraged to discover FLQ slogans painted on a nearby cenotaph in a southwest suburb of the city. Why would people do that to a monument which recognizes people for their great sacrifices? Likely, many of those people who served during those conflicts were related to the individual who did that, or the individual at least knew them.

In April 2009, a large X was painted over the names of the World War II veterans inscribed on the war memorial next to the town hall in Lennoxville, Quebec. A beer bottle was also smashed on the monument. What is the purpose of that? What do people solve by doing that? Clearly, there is a lack of respect and that needs to change.

In 2009, four teens were charged after the war memorial in Welland, Ontario, was vandalized with spray paint.

In 2010, in Trail, British Columbia, a group of youths were caught on video defacing the town's recently restored cenotaph. What happened to those individuals? Some of those offenders were identified but faced no monetary sanctions for their acts.

There is a cost to this. It is not just a cost to Canadians but a cost to the people who actually sacrificed their time to protect our rights and the rule of law that we have in Canada. Many people take that for granted. Clearly, this is one way to establish that they need to take it seriously.

*Private Members' Business*

That is why the mandatory minimum sentence of a \$1,000 fine for a first offence is absolutely necessary. It is a small price to pay for what our men and women in uniform did for us. It is a small price to pay for recognizing their great sacrifice. For second or third offences, I suggest that the book be thrown at the perpetrators and that they be sentenced to more than 14 days and 30 days as proposed in the bill, because they are not recognizing the great respect that should be shown to the men and women in uniform today and the men and women in uniform who fought for us and gave us our freedoms.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very eager to participate in the debate on Bill C-217. Before getting into the details of the bill, I would like to remind everyone that, sadly, our nation's history has its darker moments, such as our participation in armed conflicts.

Thousands of Canadian soldiers have fought for our freedoms and democratic values. We recognize that these men and women fought for a cause that they cared deeply about. We have to ensure that future generations learn about the sacrifices that all soldiers have made in the name of a noble cause. The vast majority of them have come home, but others never left the battlefield. Of those lucky enough to return, many carry permanent scars left by the atrocities they experienced on the battlefield. Pain and sadness have affected and continue to affect many families. Unfortunately, nothing can bring back those killed in action. Still, one of the things we must do to show our respect is pay tribute and commemorate their lives. No praise or medal can ever compensate for their service and sacrifice.

Despite our valiant efforts to honour these people, human beings unfortunately have memories that are sometimes a little too short. Therefore, we must ensure that negligence does not lead to a generation of skeptics who are unfamiliar with the history of our country and the lives sacrificed on the battlefields.

Consequently, it is our duty to remember these soldiers and the values that they fought for: the preservation of peace, justice and freedom. We must remember the dedication of these soldiers and their families.

War memorials are a lasting and visible sign that we are grateful for the sacrifices made and that we will never forget the Canadians killed in action. This is not about military propaganda, but recognition for the efforts of thousands of soldiers who died in action. War memorials also remind us that we sometimes find it difficult to learn from our mistakes.

The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon introduced Bill C-217, which amends the Criminal Code to provide for the offence of committing mischief in relation to a war memorial. This bill seems to stem from the fact that a number of acts of vandalism have been committed against war memorials over the past few years. The hon. member, it seems, wanted to respond to those indecent acts committed against the memory of these soldiers who died in combat.

Nonetheless, we do not believe that sending young people to prison would benefit our society or help young people show respect for our veterans. I think the bill should have focused on education and raising awareness, which, in my opinion, better help prevent

vandalism against our war memorials. What is more, the principle of restorative justice has been completely ignored and I think that is a mistake.

The focus should be to make young people realize the importance of respecting the memory of our veterans. A Veterans Affairs Canada report indicates that only 35% of Canadians have attended remembrance ceremonies.

We need to focus on giving Canadians a new appreciation for remembrance. The NDP believes we must ensure that those who made the ultimate sacrifice are not forgotten and that everyone knows that these memorials demand our respect.

We also recognize and commend our community volunteers who work hard to ensure that all Canadians' service and sacrifice are honoured and preserved in memory for the benefit of future generations.

Bill C-217 would amend section 430 of the Criminal Code on mischief and provide for a mandatory minimum fine of \$1,000 for a first offence, a minimum 14-day prison term for a second offence and a minimum 30-day term for each subsequent offence for mischief in relation to a war memorial or part of a similar structure.

• (1155)

These minimum sentences, added to all the minimum sentences the Conservatives have introduced in numerous bills recently, will clearly have a huge impact on Correctional Service Canada's budget. Putting more people in prison will only add to the cost of incarceration. Mandatory minimums have no deterrent effect, contrary to what the government would like us to believe.

We feel that the bill is excellent in principle, and we certainly have no objection to adding a subsection on mischief in relation to war memorials. However, there are two problems with the bill.

First, section 430 of the Criminal Code already pertains to mischief, which includes destroying or damaging property in general, and the punishment for this crime gives the judge ample latitude in sentencing.

Second, and along the same lines, we are against minimum sentences, because, as other members have already said, they give the judge no latitude in determining an appropriate sentence and they are not the right approach. Contrary to what the government thinks, minimum sentences are not a magic bullet. They are not a one-size-fits-all solution to society's problems. As I said, they have no deterrent effect on an offender who is about to commit a crime.

*Government Orders*

I am completely convinced that what we need to emphasize is prevention, through awareness and education. Consider the following example from a few years ago: a young man was charged for having urinated on a monument. As part of the offender's sentence, he had to apologize, meet with members of the Royal Canadian Legion and perform community service for that organization. After his sentence was complete, that individual continued working with the Royal Canadian Legion, which tells me that the principle of restorative justice was completely beneficial in this case and that it works.

It is also important to point out that it was the Royal Canadian Legion that asked for and suggested this sentence. Thus, in my opinion, the government should follow the Royal Canadian Legion's example. That organization even told the Standing Committee on Justice that this bill should include provisions on restorative justice, such as dialogue between veterans and offenders convicted of mischief.

The Legion also said that the punishment should fit the crime and that imposing sentences should be left to the judge's discretion. Police officers, speaking on their own behalf, have also openly stated that restorative justice should be encouraged in cases involving vandalism of monuments.

The members of the Standing Committee on Justice requested and proposed amendments to the bill. They wanted to remove the clauses about minimum sentences. They also suggested an escape clause to give the judge the discretion to impose a more appropriate, less harsh sentence. The NDP members of the committee also proposed an amendment to introduce a restorative justice clause, but the Conservatives flatly dismissed those amendments.

Recently, the Conservatives cut many jobs at the centre for research into the prevention of mental illness, and in the epidemiology section, which analyzes mental health issues such as suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide. Veterans Affairs Canada's budget will be reduced by \$36 million by 2014-15.

How can the Minister of National Defence say that the health of the troops is a priority when budgets for mental health services are being cut? Is this how the Conservatives plan to honour the memory of our veterans?

We have to honour living veterans by providing them with the support and help they need to ensure their well-being. We must honour those who have fallen on the battlefield by taking care of monuments across Canada. The Conservative government still has to go a long way to prove that it really cares about the health of our veterans and about honouring their memory.

● (1200)

I would like to close with a few lines from John McCrae's *In Flanders Fields*:

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow.  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.  
Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.

If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

It is up to us to keep those poppies blooming, to preserve the memory of our veterans and their commitment to freedom, the freedom they have won for future generations.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### CONTINUATION AND RESUMPTION OF RAIL SERVICE OPERATIONS LEGISLATION

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons)** moved:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, a bill in the name of the Minister of Labour, entitled An Act to provide for the continuation and resumption of rail service operations, shall be disposed of as follows:

- (a) the said bill may be read twice or thrice in one sitting;
- (b) not more than two hours shall be allotted for the consideration of the second reading stage of the said bill, following the adoption of this Order;
- (c) when the bill has been read a second time, it shall be referred to a Committee of the Whole;
- (d) any division requested in the Committee shall be deferred until the end of the Committee's consideration of the Bill;
- (e) not more than one hour shall be allotted for the consideration of the Committee of the Whole stage of the said bill;
- (f) not more than one half hour shall be allotted for the consideration of the third reading stage of the said bill, provided that no Member shall speak for more than ten minutes at a time during the said stage and that no period for questions and comments be permitted following each Member's speech;
- (g) at the expiry of the times provided for in this Order, any proceedings before the House or the Committee of the Whole shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the stage, then under consideration, of the said bill shall be put and disposed of forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, and no division shall be deferred;
- (h) when the Speaker has, for the purposes of this Order, interrupted any proceeding for the purpose of putting forthwith the question on any business then before the House, the bells to call in the Members shall ring for not more than thirty minutes;
- (i) commencing when the said bill is read a first time and concluding when the said bill is read a third time, the House shall not adjourn except pursuant to a motion proposed by a Minister of the Crown;
- (j) no motion to adjourn the debate at any stage of the said bill may be proposed except by a Minister of the Crown; and
- (k) during the consideration of the said bill in the Committee of the Whole, no motion that the Committee rise or that the Committee report progress may be proposed except by a Minister of the Crown.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity today to explain to the House why we should expedite the passage of an act to provide for the continuation and resumption of rail service operations.

*Government Orders*

As each of us is well aware now, work stoppages in any key industry, including rail transportation, can have serious consequences for the economy. For some time now, we have been navigating through challenging times. Our government has taken swift action to protect Canadians from the worst effects of the economic downturn. It is clear as well that the House has an important role to play when we are faced with a situation that could negatively impact our recovering economy and, indeed, the well-being of our citizens.

Canadians have given our government a strong mandate to protect our national interests in a period of global economic uncertainty. We are fortunate in our country to have some of the best working conditions in the world. To a very high degree, our federal workplaces are safe, our employment practices are fair and employees' rights are protected by the Canada Labour Code. Among other rights, the code ensures that workers have a right to collectively bargain. It gives the parties many opportunities to reach a settlement, with or without the support of the federal government. The Canada Labour Code also recognizes the right of employees to strike or employers to lock out if their negotiations fail.

We now find ourselves in a situation where traffic controllers and running trades employees at CP Rail are on strike. Even while we sit here today discussing legislation, it is our sincere hope that the parties will find a way to settle their differences and come to a collective agreement. This is the best solution to any labour dispute. It is particularly important given CP's role in our economic security.

We are proposing this legislation today to protect our recovering economy and resume rail services. I am not sure that all hon. members realize just what CP Rail means to Canada's economy. According to Transport Canada, CP Rail moves almost \$50 billion worth of freight each and every year.

However, before I talk about the economic impact, I would like to sum up the dispute that is before us today. This will be a broad overview because the parties have been hard at work negotiating for many months. However, I want to reassure the House that the labour program and I, as minister, have been involved throughout this process.

The parties to this dispute are the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, or TCRC.

The Teamsters independently represent 4,200 running trades employees and about 220 rail traffic controllers. Running trades employees includes employees such as locomotive engineers, conductors, baggagemen, brakemen, car retarder operators, yardmen, switch tenders, yard masters, assistant yard masters and locomotive firemen. The men and women who fill these roles keep one of our country's most important rail systems working, and they do a good job.

The railway is a 22,000 kilometre network that links our country together. Not only does it extend across the country; it also links us with other major industrial centres like Chicago, Philadelphia and New York City in the United States and further into Mexico. The railway is truly the backbone of our economy as a trading nation and of our country. CP Rail transports the grain, coal, potash and

consumer and automotive products that keep our country functioning.

The negotiations between CP Rail and the TCRC, or the Teamsters, began in October and November of 2011. On February 17, 2012, I received notices of dispute from the employer regarding both units. Two weeks later, in accordance with the Canada Labour Code, on March 2, the labour program appointed two conciliation officers to help the parties work through the collective bargaining process. As per the Labour Code as well, the parties were released from conciliation on May 1 and, as such, received the right to strike or lock out on May 23. As of 12:01 a.m. on Wednesday, May 23, the work stoppage began.

● (1205)

Our hope is that the groups will still be able to resolve their differences, as they did in their 2006 round of collective bargaining, with the help and assistance of a mediation officer.

As you know, CP Rail is a privately owned company, and the responsibility to bargain and reach new agreements ultimately rests with the parties. Unfortunately, so far the parties have been unable to resolve their differences, even with help from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

I continue to encourage the parties to end this work stoppage. I encourage them to negotiate deals on their own, to restore the public's confidence and to restore the confidence of Canadian workers and businesses that rely on commercial rail services.

As for my part, on May 16 I met with representatives from CP Rail and the Teamsters to offer them an extended mediation process to help them reach agreement, or at least move forward, on some of the remaining issues from the bargaining table, issues that included pensions, wages, benefits and working conditions. Regrettably, this additional assistance was not accepted by the union.

Again on May 22 I met with the parties late into the evening before the work stoppage, to encourage them and to assist them to move forward in the negotiations. It was during these meetings on May 22 that the two parties finally agreed to maintain commuter rail services in the greater Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal regions.

This concession is extremely important, and it is something I pushed for from May 16 in order to lessen the effects of the work stoppage on commuters who use the CP Rail line to get to and from work on a daily basis, and that is approximately 65,000 commuters each day. I was pleased that the parties agreed to maintain this commuter service during the period of the strike, but despite this one agreement, the parties were unable to reach an overall collective agreement.

Let me say a few words about how the work stoppage at Canadian Pacific is affecting, and will continue to affect, the economy.

An October 2009 report by the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management estimated that four Canadian key bulk shipping industries—oilseed and grain farming, coal, wood products manufacturing and pulp and paper—contributed over \$81 billion per year to the Canadian GDP and accounted for nearly one million jobs.

*Government Orders*

Let us think for a minute about how many jobs that is. The highly skilled people who are employed by Canadian bulk shipping industries, these one million people, depend upon CP to help move their products. Without trained and certified conductors, without engineers and without rail traffic controllers, CP Rail services has completely shut down, and that has resulted in temporary work losses within both the Canadian bulk shipping industry and within CP Rail.

It has been pointed out that there are other rail carriers that have the ability to pick up the slack. Canadian National, which is the only other Canadian class one freight railway, has been attempting to help, but it is too much. VIA Rail, on the other hand, is a passenger railway that does not have the ability to transport commercial freight. Some VIA rail trains do run over tracks that are owned by CP Rail; without rail traffic controllers, no trains are able to run on these tracks, so we are seeing delays with respect to VIA service right now.

In terms of the freight, what does this cost the Canadian economy? According to Transport Canada, in 2010 CP Rail handled the shipping of 74% of this country's potash, 57% of this country's wheat, 53% of coal and 39% of containers within Canada. To put that in monetary terms, that is \$5 billion worth of potash, \$11.1 billion worth of grain and \$5.25 billion worth of coal annually. In these four bulk sectors alone, a complete shutdown of this railway over a prolonged period of time could have an impact on the economy of \$545 million per week. That is half a billion dollars.

If this work stoppage is prolonged, the loss of productivity and the loss of revenue could translate into permanent job losses. With no trains running, the implications of this work stoppage are widespread.

• (1210)

However, we have to consider more than the bulk carrier aspect of rail. In addition to halting the movement of potash, wheat and coal, the work stoppage is also impacting the auto industry.

Auto parts make up the third-largest container import good that enters Canada through Port Metro Vancouver. This work stoppage is preventing these parts being shipped to manufacturers in Ontario. Without the parts they need, assembly lines will slow down or stop. That will result in lost production and, depending upon the duration of the stoppage, possible layoffs.

In terms of exports, CP Rail is a vital link in moving freight to and from Canada's west coast ports, and we know that Canada's west coast ports are integral to the Asia-Pacific gateway.

The work stoppage is preventing us from keeping products moving in and out of Canada. That undermines Canada's reputation as a reliable place to do business. It, quite frankly, is a setback from which it could take years to recover lost business and lost investments.

It is very clear that the Government of Canada must act now to resume rail services at CP Rail, as the prospect of ratified agreements in the short term seems highly unlikely.

Although our economy is recovering, it is still fragile, so we have to ask ourselves whether or not, for the nation's good, we can afford

this work stoppage at CP Rail to continue. Hundreds of businesses are affected, and these are businesses that already took a hit during the recession.

We also need to think about all the people who depend on the railway for their livelihoods. Let us just start with CP Rail's tens of thousands of employees across this country.

How about the impact of this work stoppage on our international reputation as an efficient and reliable business partner? We are only one link in a long supply chain. What happens here affects inbound and outbound traffic, as well as our ability to grow other North American businesses. We all know what they say about chains: they are only as strong as their weakest link. We cannot afford to be that weak link.

It is clear that without this network, the economy suffers. We need it to keep businesses operating, businesses both large and small. Our customers around the world will not make allowances for our difficulties. Indeed, our competitors in the international marketplace will not graciously refrain from competing while we solve a labour problem.

The issues cause a ripple far beyond the bargaining table. They need to be addressed in a larger forum. They need to be addressed by Parliament.

The time for us to act is now. Every step set out in the Canada Labour Code was taken and every resource and support was offered to the parties to help them reach an acceptable compromise. Simply put, the strike cannot go on. We need to get the trains running again.

Canadians want responsible leadership from their parliamentary representatives, so the sooner the bill is passed, the sooner Canadians, businesses and investors will be reassured.

I call upon my fellow members today to support the expedited passage of this bill in order to allow our economy to recover and to keep Canadians working.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House in order to ask a very important question of the Minister of Labour.

This issue is extremely important because not only does it affect 5,000 workers, including 5,000 Canadian families, it also sends a signal to every worker in the Canadian federation. It is not the first time that the Conservative government has been heavy-handed and applied pressure in such an issue, and yet it always comes down on the same side. It is utterly deplorable.

I would like the minister to explain to us today why her government, the Conservative government, is once again attacking the fundamental rights of Canadian workers. Why is the government preventing them from using the means of persuasion at their disposal? Why is it getting involved in a private dispute, in labour relations that function well, when everybody has told the government to let the parties continue bargaining, because they are capable of finding a solution to this dispute by themselves? Why does this government systematically attack Canadian workers?

*Government Orders*

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt:** Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, the government does indeed support free collective bargaining. A negotiated settlement is always better for the parties because they can be masters of their own domain. They can determine what their destiny is going to be. Indeed, in the federal service, in the federal legislation area, 94% of collective bargaining does conclude with a collective agreement as negotiated by the parties.

Even when the parties become entrenched and extraordinary means of help given at the table still does not allow the parties to find a negotiated settlement, it does not mean that the government will necessarily intervene. The government intervenes in a very clear case: it intervenes when the work stoppage affects the national economy or has a greater Canadian public interest. As I have outlined today in my opening remarks, clearly there is no question that a prolonged work stoppage at CP Rail has a great and significant effect on our economy and therefore on the Canadian public interest. That is why we as a government must intervene to protect the interests of all Canadians.

• (1220)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, actions speak far louder than words. The government, and in particular this minister and the Prime Minister, might say they believe in the free collective bargaining system, but their actions show quite the opposite, whether it was the shafting of Canada Post workers or the shafting of Air Canada workers. Today we are seeing the shafting of the CP workers.

I say shame on the government for not believing in the importance of free collective bargaining. The union and the management group are very much aware of the government's and the minister's mentality when it comes to the whole issue of the free bargaining process. They will just hold off because they know that the government will bring in back-to-work legislation as early as possible.

My question is for the Minister of Labour, even though she does not represent labour. I walked with union workers over the last weekend at CP Rail and I can say that the minister is not representative. She is perceived as being biased toward corporations, not workers, take away the fact that she is a minister representing labour. Why does the minister and her government not believe in the important role that free collective bargaining really is supposed to be all about?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt:** Mr. Speaker, the member would be well advised to perhaps study history. He should take the time to actually understand what he is talking about today, instead of making accusations about who I may or may not work for. I work for all Canadians. That is the important part. That is why we are acting on behalf of all Canadians.

Shame on the member for not remembering that it was the party that he represents that brought in back-to-work legislation three times when it was in government in 1995. It was two times in the case of the west coast ports and one time in the case of Canadian Pacific Railway. I am just wondering if he had that chat with the workers on the line as well. I wonder whether or not he understood specifically that in doing so, his government at the time was

extremely clear and extremely on the same page as we are in realizing that it is very important to protect the national economy and act in the Canadian public interest instead of using its pro-union ideals and standing up only for a very limited portion of the country.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the energy and resources minister of Saskatchewan, now minister of the economy, had some grave concerns about the fact that three potash companies in Saskatchewan need to move their potash during a peak season and are concerned about that. Also, the grain and oilseed business requires the movement of those products to provide cash flow for prairie farmers. He is quite concerned about the impact that this might have on the economy.

Could the minister comment on the impact any prolonged work stoppage may mean to those particular industries, and others as well?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt:** Mr. Speaker, it is very easy to see the industries affected by CP Rail. Our government, through myself and other ministers, reached out to suppliers and shippers early on in the process when we realized that negotiations at the table were not going well. We asked what the economic effect would be, what we should watch for and whether or not there would be difficulties associated with a prolonged strike. We asked them to keep us posted.

Therefore, we have very current and accurate information with respect to potash. What I can tell the hon. member is that it is absolutely devastating to the industry to not be able to ship its product to the coast, where it is shipped out to export customers around the world. It is a highly competitive industry, and people in this industry want to keep their customers. Their customers are not going to wait for a rail strike to go on for many days when there is no prospect at the table for a negotiated settlement.

• (1225)

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we can agree that Canadian industry is important. Therefore, where was the minister when the jobs were leaving Mabe? Where was the minister when the jobs were leaving Electro-Motive Diesel? She said that the government will intervene whenever there is an effect on the economy, on Canadian industry. However, we see that she acts when it comes to stopping a strike and stopping workers from protecting their rights, but she and the government did not stop a company from moving all of its jobs offshore or elsewhere. Why is she protecting CP, in this instance, by imposing back-to-work legislation, but she did not protect the jobs of the people at Electro-Motive Diesel, Mabe, and other places such as Aveos, the overhaul workers, who all of a sudden were out of a job? Why the flip-flopping of positions?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my opening comments, the purpose of bringing forward this kind of legislation is to get the railway working again. In large part it is not just because it is happening at one isolated company like CP Rail but rather the spinoff, the ripple effect caused to companies which, as the member points out, could be affected by such a rail shortage.

*Government Orders*

My response is that what he is indicating is exactly what we are doing. We are acting now to prevent other innocent third party companies from experiencing layoffs and business interruptions to such a devastating point that they would be forced to make decisions with respect to productivity, shifts and layoffs. Indeed, what we are doing is acting proactively. We are making sure that we are dealing with the matter now and that we will be protecting all of those other companies outside this very narrow negotiating table.

**Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are currently debating the procedural motion which would allow the quickest possible passage of the restoring rail services act. Clearly, there are some members in the House today who would argue that we should allow the strike to drag on longer and allow for further bargaining between the two parties. Could the Minister of Labour please explain the necessity to expedite the passage of this bill for the benefit of all Canadians?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt:** Mr. Speaker, in 1995, CP Rail, CN and VIA were in the midst of a strike and a work stoppage that lasted seven to nine days. At the time, most economists agreed that during that strike of seven to nine days, serious damage to the economy could be had. Indeed it was in the billion-dollar range. We know from precedents that this is the effect of a rail strike on the Canadian economy. That is why we are acting now.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising once again in this House to defend the rights of Canadian and Quebec families and the fundamental rights of workers. This government is a repeat offender in attacking the rights of workers to associate and bargain freely. In this case, 5,000 workers and their families are being affected. These people are being attacked by a government that cannot stop interfering and sticking its nose into matters that are none of its concern. The government does not do the things it should do, but when it should be doing nothing, there it is, in the wrong place at the wrong time. This has an effect on people's lives and on the living and working conditions of Canadian workers. This is unacceptable to us in the NDP, the official opposition.

I would like to point out a paradox that would be amusing were it not for its serious impact on workers and on the future of labour relations in this country. The paradox has to do with the Conservative government's ideology, which includes allowing the market to decide everything, the state not intervening, small government and no redistribution of wealth through social programs. In other words, laissez-faire economics. It is the notion that society will manage best if there is no intervention. Yet, bizarrely, the Conservatives' ideology no longer applies when it comes to the rights of workers; the government intervenes, and intervenes quickly—too quickly.

It is strange, because the Conservative government is looking a lot like the leaning tower of Pisa: it always leans on the same side. It always leans on the side of the shareholders, never on the side of working people and their families and their interests. I am going to try to demonstrate this, but the Minister of Labour has made a good start on that today by showing her true colours: the colours of a Conservative government that could not care less about people's working conditions or their right of association, their right to use

pressure tactics, their right to speak or their right to negotiate a collective agreement without having big brother, in the form of the federal government, coming along and saying no. They have to get back in line and get back to work, and they no longer have the right to speak or to bargain freely, because the government has changed the rules of the game. This is not the first time it has done this, and we will come back to that.

This bill, which we have not seen yet and whose content is unknown to us, is a matter of great concern on more than one front. It is a matter of concern because this government reoffends repeatedly, attacking free bargaining and working people's right of association; this is not the first time it has done it. This violates the bargaining framework that has been in place in Canada for about a century. It upsets the balance of power between the parties, because in negotiations between an employer and an association of employees, each side has the ability to put pressure on the other. The employer has the right to lock out and has its management rights; the employees have their association and a collective agreement, and the right to use pressure tactics, including the right to strike, but we get the impression that under this government, the right to strike is being eroded away. Every time someone is inconvenienced, a stop is put to all of that. The people are told to get back in line and shut up, and told they no longer have a choice.

The right to bargain means the right to use pressure tactics. Last week, the Minister of Labour came out publicly and went to the media to announce, not even 24 hours after the workers went on strike, that if there was no negotiated agreement there would be special back-to-work legislation. What did the minister accomplish when she did that? She told the private company and the employer that there was no longer any motivation to bargain in good faith, because the legal and constitutional threat that the workers were using had disappeared. There is no longer a balance of power. The employer has no incentive to find a negotiated solution that would be reasonable for both parties.

In so doing, this government attacked not just those 5,000 families, but also the right to strike and to use pressure tactics. That upsets the historic balance between employer and union in labour relations in Canada, and this is not the first time it has done this. It is strange to note that the Conservatives do not do this when it is to preserve jobs. We will recall what the Minister of Transport had to say, not so long ago, when it came to the 2,400 jobs at Aveos.

● (1230)

The Conservative government responded that it would not interfere because Aveos was a private company.

As far as I know, CP is also a private company. How is it that the Conservative government cannot save 1,800 jobs in the Montreal area, but can rush to the aid of a very profitable company that wants to attack its employees' working conditions and pensions? In this case, the Conservative government is acting as quick as a flash, jumping in with both feet and imposing its will on the parties.

*Government Orders*

Last Wednesday, the minister told the head of CP that he did not have to negotiate any more because she was going to take action and force 5,000 people to return to work. That was the Conservative government's message—the same message it gave to Canada Post and twice to Air Canada. Today it is attacking the rights of CP workers.

In just over one year, on four occasions, this Conservative government has interfered in collective bargaining, favoured the employer and attacked the rights of workers by shoving down their throats concessions regarding their working and living conditions.

That is not acceptable to us in the NDP. We are concerned about this and so are the workers and their families across this country. Who will be next? The postal workers have paid the price. For the first time, the official opposition put up a fight in this House to defend their rights and allow them to negotiate longer. The Canada Post employees remember. They still congratulate us on the work we did as the official opposition, even though the Prime Minister's Office killed the agreements that had been reached at the bargaining table.

The Conservatives attacked the rights of the Air Canada pilots. They also attacked other Air Canada employees, like the mechanics. This time, it is the 5,000 workers at Canadian Pacific who will pay the price. For the NDP MPs, this is unacceptable. We are wondering who will be next. Which groups of workers will have to suffer once again the unnecessary, irresponsible, and unjustified interventions of this government, which jumps at every opportunity to impose cutbacks on the workers and hurt the economy in the same breath? I will come back to that.

There are not a lot of figures on this file, but there are some that are very important: 570 is the millions of dollars in profits that Canadian Pacific made in 2011. This is not a company that is struggling.

I had the honour of representing Quebec membership for years and with my union background, I can tell you that when a company is in real difficulty, the union and the workers' associations are able to sit down and come up with solutions. Concessions are negotiated. I have seen it happen. When the company is doing well, the employees can do well. When it is in difficulty, the employees are careful, they tighten their belts, they can accept freezes, they can spread things out. The workers know the score. They are not stupid.

CP Rail made \$570 million in profit in a year. What is the government doing? It is dipping into workers' pockets in order to pay the company's U.S. shareholders. That is what is happening today. It is shameful and unacceptable. We are fed up with seeing this government interfere in free bargaining and attack fundamental rights, as they are doing once again today and tomorrow.

With \$570 million in profit, this company is hardly in trouble. If the government had let the parties bargain freely, they could have found a solution. There is optimism in the early stages of bargaining, but when the government stuck its nose into the process, the employer started to get the message that it did not need to do anything. It could just sit back and wait for special legislation, which is very sad.

In the past quarter alone, CP made \$142 million in profit. This is a company that is in very good shape financially. In the past four quarters, shareholders have received the largest dividends in CP's history. We are talking about historic amounts. In 30 years, CP shareholders had never received dividends as large as they received in the past four quarters.

● (1235)

The message that sends is that even if your company is doing well, you have the right to attack workers' working conditions. The government will not only let you, it will encourage you. That is what the government is doing today.

This gives us an idea of the real situation at CP Rail. We are told that there are problems with the pension plan. All pension plans have problems, and I will come back to this later, but the pension plan negotiated by the Teamsters and CP was 96% funded last year, and that is a very high rate. The plan is healthy. Yes, workers get good pension benefits, but that is because they put a lot of money into the plan. CP workers put twice as much money into their pension plan as other rail workers, including those at CN. Obviously, at the end of the day, they benefit from that, which is a good thing.

What is retirement? It means deferred wages, money that people set aside for their senior years, and this is a good thing. Canadian Pacific was asking for huge concessions, and the union, which was also at the negotiating table, was prepared to compromise. There was some openness in that regard. When the company talked to the union and met with it, that is what it told us. It knew it was facing a challenge, but I would also point out that this company is extremely profitable and financially sound. We must not forget that.

The Minister of Labour and the Conservative government have only a single argument: the impact this will have on the economy. I have not heard anything else from the minister. The first thing I would say to that is this: if you use pressure tactics and it has no impact, you do not hold much balance of power. When the minister announced the special legislation, the strike was not even 24 hours old. This really pulls the legs out from under workers. It pulls the rug right out from under them and violates their rights, once again.

If this has any impact on the economy, it is because of the balance of power. That is how the labour relations system functions in this country. Of course it should have an impact. When the employer imposes a lockout, that also has an impact on workers. When workers resort to pressure tactics, of course it has an impact. If that were not the case, they would not be called pressure tactics, because there would be no balance of power. Our system is built on that principle.

*Government Orders*

I would like to respond to the minister's argument about the economic impact of the job action. Reducing Canadian Pacific workers' pensions by up to 40% will have an economic impact because it will reduce salaries and pensions overall. That is dangerous because we need people, seniors with good pensions who can keep spending money in their communities. If these people have no income other than OAS, which they will not receive until they turn 67, what impact will that have on our cities, towns and communities? These people will be poor and will no longer be able to spend money the way they used to in restaurants, corner stores and clothing shops or on travel and tourism.

A company that racks up a \$570 million profit in a year, then asks its workers to agree to cuts of up to 40% of their retirement benefits is indecent. The NDP understands why workers are not okay with this. These people have contributed to their retirement plans and do not want the benefits to decrease.

The icing on the cake is that 2,000 non-unionized workers—mainly Canadian Pacific managers—contribute to the same pension plan. Yet, they receive the same benefits despite the fact that they contribute half as much as the unionized workers. That means one thing: this is an attack on people's ability to spend and have a satisfactory retirement. It is a very important issue, not only for the workers of Canadian Pacific, but also for the entire population.

In passing, I wish to salute the campaigns of the Canadian Labour Congress and the FTQ that, for several months, have been urging the government to invest and inject money into the public pension plans.

• (1240)

Indeed, that would be the most effective and healthy way of ensuring that retirees and seniors live decent lives. These are simple and affordable solutions that could save all seniors from the grips of poverty. Therefore, it is important to invest in the guaranteed income supplement, and also to invest in the public plans, the Canada and Quebec pension plans.

These tools exist, but the Conservative government is ignoring them and prefers to give free reign to a company that intends to slash the benefits of its workers. For us, that is unacceptable because it will have repercussions on the economy and on the lives of families and future retirees. When people invest a lot of money in a retirement plan, they expect to receive benefits; that is natural. It is a pity that the government is encouraging management to move in this direction. That is what this legislation does today. It is not good for the economy, nor is it good for communities and families.

Here are a few examples of the draconian effects that Canadian Pacific's demands will have on Canadian middle-class families. Indeed, the attacks on unionized workers are very much attacks on the middle class. The middle class is primarily a creature of the union and labour movement because, before people became organized and fought for their working conditions and their rights, they faced exploitation that was even worse than we see today. Yet, there is a sense that the middle class is crumbling because labour unions are being attacked. Once again, the Conservative government is pushing this ideology.

Here is an example: an employee who is 50 years old with 30 years' service for Canadian Pacific would lose \$9,900 every year to

the end of their life. The changes proposed by the employer and encouraged by the Conservative government would cause that person a loss of nearly \$10,000 a year. A locomotive engineer aged 50 with 30 years' service, who lives and works in British Columbia and has five years left to work before being able to retire would see their pension cut by \$9,900 a year, if Canadian Pacific gets the concession it is demanding. That employee will have invested their entire adult life in that career; they are preparing to retire and have no alternative to replace that income to entitle them to a pension that Canadian Pacific is trying to take away from them. That employee made higher contributions than the contributions paid by employees of any other railway company, and now the government would give the employer preference by acquiescing in the significant concession that Canadian Pacific is demanding from its Canadian and Quebec employees. This is shameful. This is not the way to treat people. This is picking the pockets of working people and their families so the company, which is already making a profit, will make even more profits. A profit of \$570 million in one year is not enough; it has to have \$600 million or \$700 million. How are they going to achieve that? They are going to hit the workers over the head, they are going to lower their working conditions and cut their pensions. What that will do is impoverish our society; it will impoverish the whole of our real economy. That is what the Conservatives seem to forget. They are blind to this phenomenon.

Here is another example: an employee who is 40 years old with 20 years' service for CP would lose more than \$27,000 a year. That is appalling. A conductor aged 40 with 20 years' service who lives and works in Saskatchewan and has about 15 years left to work before being able to retire would see their pension cut by more than \$27,000 a year, if Canadian Pacific gets the concession it is demanding. That employee will have invested their entire life and be preparing to retire. They will have no other choice, no other option. They counted on this; it was their nest egg. I would point out that this employee has paid higher contributions than the contributions paid by employees of any other railway company in the country, but the government is giving the employer and its concession demands preference, once again. It is shoving substantial losses of income down these people's throats, when these women and men, who work hard, who provide a service to our economy, will be losing their pensions. In the NDP, we think they deserve more respect than that.

*Government Orders*

Here is another example: a 30-year-old employee with 10 years of service with CP would lose more than \$30,000 a year upon retirement. An Alberta train conductor who is 30 years old with 6 years of service will still need to work another 25 years before retiring. His pension will be cut by \$30,000 a year. He will have invested in this fund throughout his life, because there was no other alternative available, no other option. The Conservative government is going to make this young worker pay the price, and his living conditions will be affected by the special bill that the Minister of Labour is about to introduce in the House.

• (1245)

And it is unfortunate, because I would have liked to have had the opportunity beforehand to ask her whether she was going to have the courage to introduce the bill today so that we could see exactly what the details were. Or did she feel that it would be better instead to wait another day, given that the motion on the subject was clear in any event: she is planning to spend only 3.5 hours of debate in this House on the matter. We will have 3.5 hours to discuss very important special legislation that will have a major impact on the lives of 5,000 people in this country.

Pension plans are an essential factor for the redistribution of wealth and equity in our societies. Unfortunately, we have a government that is not doing anything to improve or protect pension plans.

I am going to relate a family anecdote. My grandfather Urgel—I think I am allowed to use his name—worked for the Singer company for 44 years in a big factory; it was a big company in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. He worked at the forge with his friends. When he retired, the company left with the pension fund. He was left with nothing. There were legal proceedings for years, even decades. By the time the workers finally won their case, my grandfather had died. He never got his money.

Why is this government going down the same road and attacking Canadians' retirement plans? Why is it unable to do anything to help them? Why, when a company declares bankruptcy, are the workers not at the top of the list of creditors? Why are the banks and shareholders the ones who collect the money and why are there only ever crumbs left over for the workers? We have a government that is heading in the wrong direction, that makes bad economic choices, that always favours the same people, when people are in need and people in the middle class are having a hard time making ends meet. The middle class is shrinking and the Conservative government is not helping.

From 1980 to 2009, the purchasing power of the middle class has remained unchanged. The richest 20% became 38% richer. Over a period of roughly 30 years, their incomes increased by nearly 40%. The poorest 20% have seen their incomes drop 11.5%. The poor are poorer today than they were in 1980 because they had greater purchasing power then than they do now. The middle class has stagnated; there was no increase. Middle class incomes did not go up. If their income does not increase, how are they supposed to cope when the price of fuel, milk and meat increases, when the cost of groceries and rent goes up? What does this mean? This means that there are people who are poorer today. The middle class is poorer today than it was 30 years ago.

Shoving special legislation down our throats is not going to improve the situation or change anything. The government giving tax credits to the oil companies at every turn is not going to help Canadian and Quebec families. The government tells us it gives families tax credits, but, again, those families have to have enough income to pay income tax in order for such credits to be of any benefit.

Allow me to come back to the issue of the Canadian Pacific negotiations, because they are at the centre of today's discussion and of this infamous bill that the Minister of Labour will be introducing.

I want to speak about fatigue management. Canadian Pacific workers are constantly on call. They must be reachable by telephone 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There is a real problem at Canadian Pacific, that of fatigue management. There was a pilot project that lasted five years. This phenomenon, which affects hundreds of workers across eastern Canada, was studied. The issue was studied because there is a real problem with fatigue at work. Solutions were found, but nothing was done.

Today, we have a government that is helping an employer perpetuate a dreadful situation where employees working conditions subject them to extreme fatigue. Canadian Pacific workers have put forward legitimate demands at the bargaining table.

• (1250)

Just imagine: what was the demand for a person who has worked several weeks full-time? Two 48-hour break periods per month, real breaks, just to sleep. From time to time, it feels good to be able to sleep at night, and not during the daytime, because it is not the same quality of sleep. The workers documented this, had a study done, and came up with concrete solutions.

It is 2012 and we still have to fight to get days off, to be able to say that enough is enough, that we have worked long enough, and that we would like to spend a couple of days at home. The fact is that Canadian Pacific workers are unable to plan anything at all because they are always on call. Why not come up with a freely negotiated solution that says these workers will have two 48-hour periods per month when they can guarantee that they will be at home with their family and their loved ones? That is not asking too much. These demands are entirely reasonable.

What is this Conservative government doing? It is making it possible for the employer to perpetuate this situation. Canadian Pacific workers will continue to be tired. This not only has an impact on workers, their families, their family and community life, it also has consequences in terms of public safety. It is not in anybody's best interests to have people who are overtired managing trains. It may end up causing accidents and derailments. It is impossible to know what might happen.

*Government Orders*

We know that CP transports goods and sometimes dangerous goods. The trains sometimes go through residential areas, towns. Do we really want to have exhausted people working on or around those trains? Personally, I want CP workers who are healthy, proud of what they do and able to work under normal conditions, but they cannot at present. The Conservative government is totally insensitive to this.

This special back-to-work bill, the fourth in a year, will have an impact on public safety. That is shameful. It is shameful because not only does it send the wrong message and violate workers' fundamental rights, but it delays solving the real problems at CP.

Just imagine what will happen if this bill is passed and CP workers are forced back to work, even though they were exercising a legitimate and legal right. Imagine the poisoned work environment. This is not in anyone's interest, not even the company's. Problems that are not resolved today will still be problems tomorrow.

What the government is doing is putting things off, seeking a short-term solution and violating workers' rights. This will mean downgrading working conditions and reducing pensions, wages and leave; that is the message the Conservative government is sending today. This will leave scars on CP workers, and the problems that are not resolved will resurface with even more resentment, even more acrimony, because people will be frustrated. Forcing people back to work is never a good solution for the medium or long term. The government should have let the parties negotiate freely. The bargaining had not been going on for years. This strike is not very old.

The minister did not even wait 24 hours to issue her threat and hoist her sword of Damocles over the heads of Canadian Pacific workers. That is not a responsible way to behave. For once, we would have agreed with the Conservatives government's tendency to do nothing, to let the two parties continue negotiating. The government could have let the two parties—on the one hand, a strong union representing hundreds, thousands of workers, and on the other, a company just as strong, important to the country and profitable, which is a good thing—reach an agreement. Still, given that the company is profitable, it should treat its workers well because they are entitled to their fair share.

Another issue that this bill raises—and this has come up over and over again in the House over the past year or more—is the fact that just as this government seems driven to attack workers' rights and working conditions, so it seems driven to silence MPs.

● (1255)

The motion we are debating here today is basically another gag order, because it sets out very specific guidelines for the discussions and because the government does not appear very willing to listen. I will read the motion:

- (a) the said bill may be read twice or thrice in one sitting;
- (b) not more than two hours shall be allotted for the consideration of the second reading stage of the said bill, following the adoption of this order;
- (c) when the bill has been read a second time, it shall be referred to a Committee of the Whole;
- (d) any division requested in the committee shall be deferred until the end of the committee's consideration of the bill;
- (e) not more than one hour shall be allotted for the consideration of the Committee of the Whole stage of the said bill;

Wow, one hour.

There are 308 members in this House, all parties combined. I do not have a calculator, but if we divide one hour by 308 members, that does not allow much time for everyone to speak, although when we are in Committee of the Whole, we should be able to propose amendments to the minister's bill.

Thus, at second reading, two hours of debate will be allowed, but during the Committee of the Whole, only one hour is granted. The motion continues:

- (f) not more than one half hour shall be allotted for the consideration of the third reading stage...

It is a good thing we do not have a fourth reading, for it would get only 15 minutes, since the Conservatives are cutting the time in half each time.

Canadians and Quebeckers are starting to get a little tired of the government's arrogant and condescending attitude, because we are seeing the gag being used repeatedly in this House. We have seen it several times. If my calculations are correct, today is the 21st gag in a year. That is a record I would not be proud of if I were a Conservative member, because it is an infringement of members' freedom to speak to bills as fundamental as those.

We have seen this with other bills. Debate on Bill C-38, a bill that amends 69 acts and is 450 pages long, was gagged. That bill will therefore be considered by only one committee, the Standing Committee on Finance. In Bill C-38, the government is amending a lot of things and attacking a lot of rights. One third of the Act to implement certain provisions of the budget relates to environmental assessments. As they say, the connection escapes me. The bill also amends the Fisheries Act and fish habitat provisions. That is going to be considered by the Standing Committee on Finance. I imagine that the Standing Committee on Finance has invited a lot of fish habitat experts—or at least I hope it has—because that is a consequence of this bill.

Why is the government refusing to listen to parliamentarians, to members? Because it does not want to hear the amendments; it does not want to have suggestions; it does not want to agree to amendments; it does not like opposition; it does not like democracy; it does not like debate; it does not like discussion. One thing is clear: to the Conservative government, democracy means 35 days every four years.

We know that once the election is over, if we happen to have the misfortune of getting a Conservative majority government, it has no further need to listen to anyone and it does what it likes.

Excuse me, but that is not a healthy, living democracy. There has to be dialogue with the public, with the people. There has to be discussion with colleagues in Parliament. Unfortunately, we have a government that has a closed mind and even gags its own members, who might like to speak occasionally, but have to close ranks.

*Government Orders*

Recently, we had a few examples of people who dared to think for themselves, dared to use their critical thinking skills and say that it was perhaps a little extreme to impose a gag for a 450-page-long bill with consequences for a multitude of issues and subjects, but they were immediately brought to heel. Bam.

On the opposition side, perhaps we would also like to hear what the Conservative members have to say, what they are talking about, what they think. Do they think it is healthy in a democracy to have a bill of this kind shoved down the throats of parliamentarians—on which they are unable to express their views?

Unfortunately, the special back-to-work legislation is another demonstration of this. We have a government that will not take responsibility when workers lose their jobs. It says that nothing can be done; these are market forces at work; and it is really sad.

I really liked it when the Minister of Transport expressed his sympathy and his sadness about the 2,400 Aveos workers, even though the Air Canada Public Participation Act had provisions forcing it to maintain jobs, primarily in Montreal as well as other cities across the country. Now the minister is refusing to enforce it because Air Canada created a subcontractor, Aveos. Because of that, the legislation does not apply anymore and the government can wash its hands of the whole thing.

●(1300)

When that is the issue, the Conservatives sit on their hands and do absolutely nothing. However, when it is a question of people exercising their right to freedom of association, freedom of expression, to use pressure tactics and a possible strike, then, what does the government do? It does what it did before. It brings out the big guns and boom. It tells people to get back into line and go back to work, because it does not want any repercussions. The company is doing well, but it does not have to make any concessions. It is always the same ones who have to make concessions; it is always the workers who have to compromise their working conditions and their living conditions. For us in the NDP, the official opposition, this is not a fair and equitable standpoint. This is not the kind of society we want to live in. Why can they not simply let the parties express themselves and give free reign to the balance in union-management relations that we have found in this country? The collective agreement with CP had not expired very long ago and, before the government got involved, the negotiations were going well. The company is profitable and is able to talk with its employees. However, with the threat of special legislation hanging over them, I say again, the Minister of Labour has destroyed that balance and unfortunately given the advantage to just one side, the management side.

The official opposition—the NDP—is incensed and opposes this bill that attacks workers' rights. We are starting to get fed up with the attitude of this government, which gives tax breaks to big corporations that do not need them and does nothing to help people who have trouble paying their bills and providing for their day-to-day needs. That will be the fate of the CP workers if this bill passes and their pensions are affected and reduced in this way, as is expected. We are anxious to see what exactly is in the bill because we do not yet know what it contains. Will the government impose arbitration? Will it side with the employer? We are anxious to find

out. We would have liked the Minister of Labour to introduce her bill today, but she does not seem to have the courage to do so.

I will close by simply saying that the official opposition vehemently opposes a special bill that forces workers to return to work, attacks their fundamental rights and worsens the working and living conditions of thousands of Canadians. It is unacceptable and we condemn it.

●(1305)

[*English*]

**Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it appears that every time this kind of impasse is reached between a company in Canada that keeps the economy going and is so important to our economy and the union, the opposition takes a pie in the sky attitude of hoping everything works out and of hoping for the best. It does not seem to matter how much it costs in terms of money and production.

My riding is obviously a strong riding in the agricultural sector. The railway service is so important, not just to immediate growth but to future growth in terms of markets and customers knowing they can depend on the producers in my riding.

I wonder what the opposition would say concerning a real solution to this problem, not just this pie in the sky, let us hope it all works out and everybody gets along. Government needs to take real action and real leadership on issues like this, but it seems the NDP is not prepared to take any kind of real action. What it really wants to do is just hope for the best.

Could the member opposite tell me what he would tell the farmers in my riding, as well as the forestry industry and the automotive industry across the country, about real solutions and not just hoping it all works out?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her frank question.

To use an expression that we hear around here from time to time, I do not agree with the premise of the question, quite simply because it is irresponsible and completely bizarre to have a minister interfere directly in the bargaining process of a profitable private company, when she should let the parties continue to negotiate. The strike is less than 24 hours old and right away the Conservatives have to pull out the threat of back-to-work legislation and completely disrupt the bargaining process. An agreement might have been reached, a solution might have been found that might have provided an answer for the people in her riding and for those who need goods to be transported. Nonetheless, if it is action they are looking for, where is the government's action to save the jobs at Aveos?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has expressed a great deal of concern about the way in which the government is trying to bring things through, in what we would argue is an inappropriate fashion, to draw this matter to a close.

Through this resolution, the government is suggesting that the bill, whenever we see it, would ultimately pass second reading and then the House would go into committee of the whole. Going into committee of the whole would not allow representation from management or union reps, for them to be able to come to Ottawa to share and express their concerns with the government first-hand, given the government's determination to get directly involved by bringing this legislation forward.

Does the member support our not going into committee of the whole but rather taking this matter outside committee of the whole, so individuals other than members of Parliament could make presentations and answer questions pertaining to this important issue?

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for that very relevant question.

Indeed, we in the official opposition, in the NDP, share this concern. We have a bulldozer government. It is bulldozing again with this special legislation. As a result, it will be up to us here in this House to sort this out. We will be unable to invite people and hear what people from the general public, civil society, businesses, unions, and universities might have to say on the impact of such legislation. Everything is staying in the House. The government is rushing it all through in three and a half hours and does not want to hear a thing from anyone.

My colleague's question is quite simple: could we, once in awhile, take the time to do things properly?

• (1310)

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie on his speech. I very much liked the image he used, at the start of his speech, of the government as a repeat offender. It seems to me that that is quite apt. As a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, I have noticed that the government members talk quite a bit about repeat offenders. They always wonder how best to deal with recidivism.

My colleague was very eloquent and stated the facts very clearly. In short, this government is completely abandoning the people of this country. I know what I am talking about, because my riding went through the brutal closure of a plant that is due to reopen soon. However, the workers still do not know under what conditions the plant will reopen. I am talking about the Stadacona plant of White Birch Papers, which is owned by foreign investors.

Something else that has not been considered is the fact that many companies have unfortunately come under foreign control. Workers then lose many benefits, and much of the company's profits goes out of the country.

Could my colleague elaborate on this? This is another truly distressing aspect of what the government is doing, and it may raise the review threshold under the Investment Canada Act to \$1 billion.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, under the pretext of wanting to stimulate investment, the government is handing our raw materials, our natural resources and much of our industrial sector over to foreign investors.

### *Government Orders*

I share my colleague's concern. We are losing control of our own economy. We have a government that is deaf and blind when it comes to maintaining an important manufacturing structure in Canada. It is letting jobs go to other countries. When plants close, the government is sympathetic, but sympathy is not enough. We want jobs and a real job creation plan for Canada.

[English]

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is not supporting the government's back-to-work legislation, and he is doing that on some blind ideology. I have a couple of things about which I would like him to think and comment.

A few thousand rail workers are holding captive thousands of farmers who need fertilizer right now to finish putting their crops in the ground. This is an urgent thing. Much of this fertilizer is shipped by rail. These same farmers have to sell their crops, which are shipped by rail, and they truly are captive shippers. They have no choice. In most cases they do not even have the choice of CN Rail because the rail tracks run across western Canada in particular, a CN track, a CP track, CN-CP tracks, so there really is no competition when it comes to rail movement. These are bulk goods that require rail movement to be moved in an economically viable fashion.

I would normally agree with the member that workers and management should work out a deal, but in this case, where many captive shippers whose income and livelihoods are damaged so much by this stoppage, why is he only focused on those few workers? Why is he not focused on the several thousand farmers and others who are hurt badly by this work stoppage?

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** So few workers, Mr. Speaker? Five thousand workers? Five thousand families in this country are hit by this company, and the government is taking sides with the company. Come on.

I imagine that the farmers he is talking about are those who were in favour of maintaining the Canadian Wheat Board. The government should not listen to them, only when it suits.

It is really practical from our side, from the NDP side, to let the parties freely negotiate. Of course there is some pressure. That is the name of the game. However, the government is going to scrap all the bargaining balance we have built in this country. It is so sad.

• (1315)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to put a few words on the record about what we believe are very important issues that all Canadians no doubt are concerned about.

*Government Orders*

I appreciate the question that the member opposite posed, but only in the sense that we within the Liberal Party have always advocated how important it is for us to look at the larger picture. In fact, members will recall that the leader of the Liberal Party, last fall, talked about the importance of jobs and how we need to put more focus on creating jobs. We talked about the importance of our railway lines just last week. I had the opportunity to talk about railway safety and the important role railways play across our country from coast to coast in providing good quality jobs and the leadership that is required from management and so forth to ensure not only that those jobs are going to be there but that the company as a whole is going to be able to survive, to build and to ultimately provide opportunities for all Canadians.

When we talk about our railway system, we look at the benefits, whether it is the potash, the wheat, the coal, the imports or the exports of manufacturing products all over our country from international to national. We all recognize and appreciate the critical and vital role our railway workers play, and have played, in building us to the nation we are today. There is no doubt that a vast number of Canadians are watching with interest, in terms of what is happening with this potential strike situation and how the government is dealing with the issue at hand. Having said that, the workers themselves have a great number of concerns, as does the management group.

What I would like to talk about is this particular government's and this Minister of Labour's approach in dealing with labour issues. This is not the first time the government has brought in labour legislation, in essence forcing people to go back to work, and it has been at a great cost.

A number of years ago, I used to be a critic for labour in the province of Manitoba. One of the things I recognized is that there has to be a balance between labour and management and the dialogue that occurs there. I would argue that a minister of labour not only has a responsibility to talk about at least a free, balanced collective bargaining process but also an obligation to ensure, as much as possible, that it is in fact being adhered to.

In one of her statements, she made reference to the fact that she believes she is providing balance. I take great exception to that. Many members of this chamber take great exception to the minister saying she believes in a balanced, fair collective bargaining process because, as I pointed out in my question, the government, especially since it has achieved its majority, has made it very clear that it does not support balance when it comes to a collective bargaining process. That has been more to the detriment of the worker than the corporations.

What I would like to do is to highlight a couple of those issues that clearly demonstrate that the government does have a very strong bias that is anti-worker.

Members will recall that not too long ago, we actually had back-to-work legislation for Canada Post workers. Members will recall that they actually had negotiated some salary increases—and that would have been in January 2011, I believe—where some consensus and concessions were given in which there were going to be some increases to salaries.

● (1320)

Well, the Conservatives brought in back-to-work legislation a few months later that actually rolled back those salaries to which union and management had agreed. The government was more than eager to support and show its bias toward Canada Post in bringing in that back-to-work legislation.

The government has brought in back-to-work legislation twice in relation to Air Canada. I have stood up on numerous occasions in this House to tell the government that it needed to hold Air Canada to account for being in violation of the Air Canada Public Participation Act. Thousands of jobs were lost and the government allowed Air Canada to just walk away from it. There was no accountability for those jobs being cut and lost. The Conservatives said it was third party because it was Aveos.

Let us look at what the legislation that was passed inside this House said. Those jobs were supposed to be there in Winnipeg, and I represent a good portion of that city, Mississauga and Montreal. What did the government do? It sided with Air Canada Corporation and chose not to apply any pressure on that company when it came to making it fulfill a legal requirement that was passed in the House of Commons years ago.

What did the government do when there was a threat of a strike, not once but twice? Even before the moves toward getting into a strike situation, the government threatened back-to-work legislation. True to form, it brought in back-to-work legislation. This is why I believe that the government has no real credibility.

The minister can stand inside this chamber and say she believes in a fair bargaining process, but I would suggest that actions speak louder than words. In this case, we will find the government does not support fair and balanced labour negotiations between unions and management.

People need to be concerned about that because we are talking about going forward with future negotiations that might be taking place in other sectors as well. We have a minister who is very biased, who works against unions and has not demonstrated an interest in hearing what unions have to say.

On Friday and Saturday this past week, I was walking with some CP Rail workers along some lines on McPhillips, Jarvis and two different spots on Keewatin. I had the opportunity to meet with workers who have made a career out of being engineers and conductors and others. These are individuals who are very proud to be working for CP Rail. Yes, they have some general concerns regarding the ownership issue in terms of Canadian content on boards and how that might be shifting over to other jurisdictions, particularly to individuals coming in from the U.S. to take control, or management issues. There are some very serious concerns regarding that.

*Government Orders*

While we were walking the line, the types of issues they were talking about were best said in a document they provided to me. I indicated that I would likely get the opportunity to address the House. I figure it is good for me to raise these issues because I feel very comfortable in knowing that the government and this particular Minister of Labour are definitely listening to what CP Rail is saying. However, I am not convinced that she is listening to what the workers have to say. Again, I believe there needs to be balance.

As much as I am very interested in hearing, and my door is always open to what CP management would have to say, I would like to share with the minister some very specific comments that I believe individuals who have been walking the line want this minister and the Prime Minister to be aware of. These are the types of concerns they are talking about at the table. I am going to go through about six points.

• (1325)

The first point is that CP wants to reduce future pension income for active employees. The amounts vary by income, but they are up to 40%. Without a doubt, at all three locations where I walked, that was the biggest concern raised. The workers are very much concerned about their future when it comes to retirement. They want to know that they will have a good, viable pension after they have had the opportunity to put in their 30-plus years, or whatever number of years it might be. That is not so different from what many other Canadians want to have, pensions. The union has been asking for that.

The next point is that CP wants to devalue past pensionable service of unionized employees.

The next point is that CP wants to reduce retirement health care benefits and eliminate benefits at age 65, a reduction of over \$20,000 per member.

The next point is that CP refuses to address the fatigue management proposals, or adequate time off to recover from the effects of fatigue or problems related to earned days off.

Another point is that CP refuses to address pooled regulation language affecting earning ability and stability.

Another point is that CP refuses to address its own sharp practice regarding seniority freeze to temporary managers and insists its own DB pension benefits must continue to escalate and they must receive more.

Those were some of the points that had been provided to me as I walked along the line.

There is one point that I will quickly make reference to, but I understand there has been some significant leeway on this. The CP demands represent excessive concessions to work rules, such as 12 hours without rest, working double subdivisions, raising the 3,800 monthly mileage maximum, extending road switcher limits to 50 miles and no wage increases for 2012.

I believe much of the last point has been in good healthy discussions, and we hope that will in fact continue.

Those are the types of concerns of which we believe the Minister of Labour needs to be made aware. She has not really demonstrated

that she has listened to what the workers have had to say. We know, and feel comfortable in saying, that the minister is prepared to advocate on behalf of CP Rail.

We are concerned with regard to the whole issue of balance. That is the reason why I thought it might be appropriate to read into the record some of the concerns individuals who walk the line have and suggest that the government be more sensitive to those needs.

I want to highlight a couple of other things before I go onto the whole process issue. One is in regard to how very important the role that CP Rail, along with CN, plays in our economy. We recognize that and acknowledge it.

Being a prairie member of Parliament, I know full well, whether it is Saskatchewan and potash, or the three Prairie provinces and wheat, or coal or other mineral distribution, how critically important the role of CP Rail is in getting that distribution out throughout the world. We recognize that.

• (1330)

I made reference to the fact earlier that we had many imports that came into our country, through Vancouver and other ports. They are very dependent on having CP Rail there for them to transport those goods. We acknowledge that. We recognize the important role that CP plays in our economy. However, that does not give the government the right to walk all over union workers.

The minister made reference to the previous Liberal government. If the members look into it, they will find that there was much greater leniency in what the Jean Chrétien government did back then. Let us not try to kid anyone. I believe political parties of all stripes, whether at the provincial or federal level, have seen the merit of having to bring in some form of legislation to ensure people go back to work or companies are re-established so the broader interests of the community are served. I do not believe the government has provided that opportunity to CP Rail and the CP union. Both knew full well that the government would bring in this type of legislation, even though we have not seen the legislation.

The government is so predictable on that point. The government has not provided that balance of fairness, which takes away from the free bargaining process. I encourage the government to revisit its commitment to that process because it is definitely lacking, and that is putting it as politely as I can.

As I pointed out, we do not actually have the legislation before us, but we have a resolution about how that legislation will be dealt with. I mentioned this in the form of a question earlier. One of the biggest concerns the Liberal Party has is that the minister has suggested that after it has completed second reading, it go into a committee of the whole and that there be a one-hour time limit put on that committee. We do not know how many clauses will be in the bill. We do not know what the actual content of the bill will be. All we know is that it will have something to do with back to work for the CP workers. We do not know anything more than that. The point is that the Conservatives are saying that the legislation, once brought in sometime this week and then forced through second reading, will go into a committee of the whole.

*Government Orders*

The problem with committee of the whole is we will have a very limited ability to garner experts outside of other members of Parliament to contribute to a very important debate. If this bill were to go to any other committee outside of committee of the whole, where we could call upon witnesses to come before the committee, we believe that would be far healthier for the system. Even though the legislation is somewhat premature at best, at least having it go into a committee, we could have CP management and union representation present to express the concerns they have with regard to the legislation and to maybe talk about the importance of having fair, balanced labour relations in our country. This would be of great benefit to all Canadians.

The government says that this is about every Canadian. I suggest that going into a committee outside of committee of the whole would ensure that those Canadians, whom the government says it wants to protect, would have more direct input as to what would take place with the legislation.

• (1335)

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member opposite and there are two points I want to quickly bring out.

First, he and the NDP colleague who spoke before him both talked about the importance of having witnesses from labour and management appear at a committee. I have heard from union members and I have heard from farmers who have been affected by the rail stoppage already. Many farmers are concerned about the damage that will be done, damage that will never be recovered from and losses that will never be regained. I have heard from people on both sides of the issue. I do not know what the MPs opposite are doing and why they are not meeting with people from labour and management and getting that information. Why are they not prepared to bring this to the House? That is part of our job as MPs.

Second, the member opposite acknowledged the impact on farmers and all the other industries that depended on CP Rail to move bulk shipments, but then said that this was between labour and management. It is not. There are individuals who are affected directly by this, but they have no place at all at the table. That is why our government is giving them a voice in this process.

Would he comment on those issues?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the member's government, his Minister of Agriculture, brought in legislation just last year which in essence would kill the Canadian Wheat Board. That was in opposition to over 20,000 plus farmers who wanted to retain the Canadian Wheat Board. Any potential strike CP could have had would have had nowhere near as much impact on the grain farmers in the Prairies as killing the Canadian Wheat Board.

Looking at it from the point of view of whether it is potash or the Wheat Board, we recognize the important role that CP plays in the distribution of those commodities. We do not question that. What we do question is the Minister of Labour's ability to ensure that there is some sense of fairness when it comes to the whole issue of negotiations at the labour table. She has demonstrated a bias that is anti-union. That is very hurtful for the industry as a whole, whether it is the railway industry, the airline industry or our postal system.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech and ask him a very simple question.

This government keeps interfering in the free bargaining process that exists in this country, and attacking workers' right to organize and to bargain. Canada has established labour relations, 99% of which are peaceful in this country, and yet we have a government that systematically hammers workers' rights and always sides with employers.

Is my colleague concerned about the context in which Canada's workers will be allowed to exercise their rights? Are we currently witnessing the breakdown of free bargaining in this country?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, let us look at the government's track record since it achieved a majority government. We can talk about Air Canada that has had back-to-work legislation imposed on it twice. We can talk about Canada Post and its back-to-work legislation. Now we anticipate back-to-work legislation for CP Rail. Canadians should be concerned. I know we are concerned with regard to the manner in which the government has chosen to directly get involved in a way that gives the clear impression, and I would ultimately argue the reality, of taking a bias in favour of the business over the unions. I do not believe that is healthy for our country in the long term.

The Department of Labour and the Minister of Labour should be attempting to foster and improve labour relations at all the different levels, while at the same time looking at what is in Canada's best interest.

• (1340)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, we are debating time allocation on a bill we have not yet seen. We have a sense of déjà vu. We also debated time allocation on a bill we had not seen with regard to the Air Canada pilots strike. In this light, I noted the hon. member called the current approach of the Minister of Labour predictable. My concern is that it is predictable to management as well as to those of us on the opposition benches. As it is predictable to management, it decreases the likelihood of collective bargaining rights being respected and collective bargaining working.

Does the hon. member for Winnipeg North share my concern?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt it is an attitude issue. In good part, the government has brought in legislation that would have a very serious and severe impact on thousands of workers. This talks volumes about the government's ability or desire to have a fair process. The government's track record has demonstrated that it is not prepared to ensure that the system is fair. The legislation being brought in and the manner in which it is being brought in does not surprise me. This is a government that has moved some form of time allocation some 20-plus times since it achieved its majority government in just over a year, which is unprecedented. People of all political stripes in the House should be concerned.

*Government Orders*

It is time Conservative backbenchers start reining in the Prime Minister and their cabinet. Collectively, they could have a voice if they chose to use it.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take issue with what my colleague stated about the minister listening. Unlike opposition members, who listen only to their union bosses, the minister has met with all the parties. The minister has spoken with Canadians. She and our government are taking action now to protect Canadian businesses, to make sure Canadian farmers have an opportunity to move forward with their farms, to make sure the auto workers in my riding at Honda have an opportunity to ship parts into the plant and ship their products out.

Unlike opposition members, who refuse to move away from the cozy relationship with their union bosses, which, do not get me wrong, my constituents have an issue with, I wonder why they will not stand up for Canadians and protect the \$500 million a week that this strike may cause to be lost, taking away jobs from Canadians and causing damage to the Canadian economy. Why will they not protect Canadian jobs?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** First off, Mr. Speaker, I would say that my door is always open if members of CP want to chat with me about their concerns. I suspect the minister has talked with CP officials. I am not convinced that she has listened at all to what the workers have been saying.

I take exception when the member talks about this caring attitude. I would like to make it very clear that the CP workers she is referring to also take a great deal of pride in where they work. They take a great deal of pride in the work they do for our Canadian farmers and the transportation of products. Yes, it would be nice to see the parties resolve this on their own in a very quick fashion. Unfortunately, the government has sent a very clear message that they do not have to negotiate an agreement because it is going to bring in legislative measures that would prevent any strike from continuing. There are no good faith negotiations when a government says it does not matter whether there is an agreement, because it is going to be legislating workers back to work. It is an issue of fairness, something that escapes the government.

• (1345)

**Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am here today to ask the House to support the quick passage of an act to provide for the continuation and resumption of rail service operations.

As the House will recall, last June there was a three day strike by Air Canada's customer sales and service agents. I am glad to say that it was resolved by the parties, and the harm to Canadians was limited.

In June of 2011, our government introduced and passed the Restoring Mail Delivery for Canadians Act because of the economic importance of reliable mail delivery.

Because the government took action, Canadian workers and businesses, as well as citizens, were spared the hardship that a prolonged interruption in mail would have caused. In March, the

government passed an Act to Provide for the Continuation and Resumption of Air Service Operations to prevent a work stoppage at Air Canada involving the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers and the Air Canada Pilots Association. This legislation protected the Canadian economy and the public.

Today, we are again faced with a work stoppage that could do enormous damage to our economy. Once again, we have to take measures to protect our national interests in this period of economic uncertainty.

Talks have failed to result in a new collective agreement between Canadian Pacific, CP Rail, and the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, TCRC, which independently represents the running trades employees and the rail traffic controllers.

The work stoppage at CP Rail is causing confusion and doubt where stability and certainty are needed in our recovering economy. Stability and certainty are essential to keeping Canada in business. If my hon. colleagues were to ask their constituents, as I have asked mine, or if they were to ask almost anyone in Canada right now, they would hear what I have been hearing as well, that we cannot afford this work stoppage because the risks are too great. As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to act. Therefore, we have to take a stand for Canada's economy.

Like other industrialized economies around the world, Canada has faced challenging economic times. Our economy has weathered the global storm well. Our government is proud of its record for sheltering Canadians from the worst effects of the downturn and laying the foundation for a strong recovery. We all read the papers and know that our country is not immune to the changes in the world economy. There could be more turbulence. As of April 2012, our unemployment rate was 7.3%, a definite improvement from last year.

We need to be careful if we are to maintain our progress and promote economic growth. We cannot afford to have major labour disruptions. We have so much potential. A labour stoppage in any key sector of our economy would be a serious impediment to our growth and recovery. A work stoppage that detrimentally affects a major freight transportation sector is no exception. Rail is a vital cog in keeping Canada among the top performing world economies. Trade represents 35% of our GDP. In Canada, the rail transport service contributes significantly to the Canadian economy.

Let me provide some facts to make the point of how vital rail services and shipping are to the Canadian economy.

A 2009 report prepared by the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management estimates that four key Canadian bulk shipping industries, oilseed and grain farming, coal mining, wood products manufacturing, and pulp and paper and paper products manufacturing, contribute over \$81 billion to Canada's GDP. These industries also account for nearly a million jobs.

*Government Orders*

The rail-based transportation system in Canada is complex and interconnects a range of stakeholders, such as shippers, terminal operators, transloaders, ports, shipping lines and trucks, which are all part of a very competitive supply chain. Problems occurring in one part of the supply chain can affect the stakeholders across it. An effective supply chain is critical to meeting the government's objectives related to strategic gateways and trade corridors, such as the Asia-Pacific gateway, and is key to continuing our country's high economic success.

The Minister of Labour has heard from numerous stakeholders who are urging the government to ensure that this strike does not continue for any prolonged period of time. I would like to read just a few quotes from some of the correspondence that she has received from stakeholders.

The president and CEO of the Mining Association of Canada wrote that, in the minerals and metals sector, experience has shown that a rail stoppage impacts the ability of companies to bring essential inputs to their mines and smelters, and to move finished products and byproducts to their destinations. The association requested that the government take action to head off this potential work stoppage before it damages the economy.

• (1350)

The Association of International Automobile Manufacturers of Canada and the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association jointly wrote, "CP Rail plays a vital role in the shipment of both parts and components into Ontario vehicle manufacturing facilities, as well as a significant role in the shipment and distribution of finished vehicles from ports of entry to local dealerships across the country...The integrated North American auto industry is presently experiencing a positive but fragile economic recovery." Any disruption to CP Rail service will have an immediate and dramatic impact on its collective membership and their operations in Canada.

I can tell members that the Honda plant in my riding definitely reiterates this. We have a challenge ahead of us if we do not get the rail moving.

The Western Grain Elevator Association wrote that "this work stoppage will have a significant impact on the grain industry. Many of our elevator locations are serviced only by CPR. In the event of a work stoppage, these elevators will have no options available to them in the transportation of grain products. This will lead to the inability to supply our international customers and prohibit producers from delivering to those facilities. If we cannot at the very least move this product in a timely way to our customers, the associated lost opportunities and added costs will be significant."

Finally, the Forest Products Association of Canada wrote to the minister and outlined the following:

As most of the industry's mills are located in remote areas where rail service is the only viable transportation mode, other forms of ground transportation are either too costly or unavailable to provide our companies with relief, making our sector particularly vulnerable to even the shortest disruptions in service.

The association wrote, "In addition, the industry does not have the capacity to stockpile finished product nor can it continue production without certain input materials. As a result, any service disruption will undoubtedly lead to the industry incurring significant cost and will quickly result in mills shutting down temporarily."

Some companies have already had to shut down production lines or lay off workers. Already the effects of the strike are hurting businesses, and it is not even a week in.

I have quoted from just a small handful of stakeholders and businesses that have called on the government to act quickly to prevent a prolonged strike that would do damage and have significant effects on the Canadian economy. We need to act now to protect Canadian jobs and the Canadian economy. Let us consider what this work stoppage means to businesses. We have heard quotes from a few of them that by stopping the trains, the strike is negatively impacting our trade opportunities. Businesses are losing sales at home and abroad.

Will businesses be able to recoup these sales? There is no way to know. Are businesses able to adapt and find alternative solutions? Again, we cannot say.

Work stoppages create ripple effects, or to put it another way, a chain reaction of damage that has far-reaching effects, possibly creating layoffs all the way down the line. Even a short work stoppage is very costly. Lost income, lost opportunities, lost jobs are all the unintended consequences of a work stoppage. They are devastating for both workers and businesses in a time of economic challenge. The losses caused by this shutdown of rail services are not only borne by the railway and its employees. They are borne by hard-working Canadians and their families all across the country. Jobs are at stake. The viability of businesses is on the line. We cannot afford to let this continue.

Let me say a few words on the recent history of collective bargaining at CP Rail. The Teamsters Canada Rail Conference independently represents 4,200 running trades employees and about 220 rail traffic controllers. Their collective agreements expired on December 31, 2011. The TCRC started negotiating with CP Rail in October 2011.

On February 17, 2012 the Minister of Labour received notices of dispute from the employer regarding both the running trades employees and the rail traffic controllers. The main issues in this round of bargaining deal with pensions, health care benefits and working conditions. The parties were released from the conciliation process on May 1, 2012 and acquired the right to strike or lockout on May 23, 2012.

On May 16, the Minister of Labour offered the representatives from CP Rail and the TCRC an extended mediation process to help them resolve issues and reach agreements. Again on May 22 the Minister met with both parties in an attempt to encourage and facilitate an agreement. Regrettably, this additional assistance was not accepted. On May 23 the work stoppage began.

*Statements by Members*

I want to inform this House that our government would like nothing more than for the parties to reach an agreement on their own. However, the Minister of Labour has offered the parties the tools provided through the Canada Labour Code, but to no avail. These disputes have gone on too long. The government has not stepped in prematurely. As I said earlier, the parties have been asking for assistance from the labour program since February and they have received assistance. However, it has not resulted in a collective agreement. This work stoppage will have a significant effect on Canada's trade. Millions of Canadians are affected directly or indirectly.

• (1355)

There is more at stake here than the issues on the bargaining table. CP Rail and the TCRC, independently representing the running trades employees and rail traffic controllers, have had ample time to reach a negotiated agreement on their own. They will also be afforded all the tools available to rebuild and improve labour relations, such as preventive mediation services offered by the labour program. This work stoppage has gone on long enough, and for every day that it continues, our economy and trade relationships are jeopardized.

I ask my fellow parliamentarians to stand up for Canadians and support the motion and the legislation. We need to move forward and take action so that we can ensure that Canadian jobs and the Canadian economy are protected.

**Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was interested to hear my colleague talk about the ripple effect impacts of this strike on the Canadian economy. When I was in my riding last week, I heard about a business that had a turbine that was stuck and how that was affecting its workers.

I wonder if my colleague could go into a bit more detail on why this legislation is important in the context of the ripple effect on the rest of the Canadian economy.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Mr. Speaker, CP Rail is a complex logistics system and the work stoppage is disruptive to the flow of goods across the country and to international destinations. A work stoppage at CP has the potential to cause this ripple effect throughout the entire Canadian economy.

According to Transport Canada, in 2010 CP Rail held \$5 billion worth of potash, \$11.1 billion worth of grain and \$5.25 billion worth of coal. Stopping the inputs and the potential outputs from manufacturers and the individuals who work at these plants is substantive. This puts Canadian jobs at risk and the Canadian economy at risk.

We need to take action now. We need to put this legislation in place and bring people back to work so that we can get the rail service moving. We need to ensure that all of the other vital businesses in Canada are supported, that their workers are supported and that people can continue with their Canadian jobs.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned. Today we often heard a distinction made between a company and its workers. The word “corporation” comes

from the Latin *corpus*, which means that it is the body of the people. As we can see here today, the body is sick.

Just 11 days ago, Pershing Square Capital Management took control of Canadian Pacific's board of directors. One person is happy about this and it is not a Canadian—it is a New Yorker. Bill Ackman is very pleased that the government is doing what he wants and passing special legislation to increase the company's profits for shareholders. At present, the only thing about Canadian Pacific that remains Canadian is its name.

Why does the government continue to protect a company that is currently being run by Americans? Why will it not promote the rights of workers here in Canada? Does it not see the valuable contribution that our workers make to the Canadian economy?

[*English*]

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier how the Minister of Labour was listening. The Minister of Labour has not just been listening to unions and union bosses but has been listening to all the parties as well as to Canadians. She and this government are acting to ensure that we are protecting Canadians, protecting Canadian jobs and protecting the Canadian economy. We are moving forward to ensure there is no work stoppage and that this strike does not continue, so that Canadian jobs are protected.

I encourage my colleagues opposite to finally step up for Canadian workers and Canadian businesses and ensure we get the rail service working again quickly.

• (1400)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The time for government orders has expired. The hon. parliamentary secretary will have six minutes remaining for questions and comments when this matter returns before the House.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

### SHAWINIGAN CATARACTES

**Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, people all over Mauricie and central Quebec are celebrating the Shawinigan Cataractes' historic Memorial Cup win in a dazzling overtime victory over the London Knights in the packed-to-the-rafters Centre Bionest.

This is the first Memorial Cup win in the 43-year history of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League's oldest team. The last time the Cataractes were in the Memorial Cup final was in 1985. Éric Veilleux's team fought their way to the top of Canadian junior hockey, winning four games in five nights. They defeated the other three league leaders and became the second team in history to capture the famed cup following a tiebreaker situation.

I would like to congratulate the players, especially MVP Michael Chaput, and the entire Cataractes organization, as well as the many volunteers and the people of Shawinigan who made the 94th Memorial Cup a huge success by creating such a welcoming and exciting atmosphere and by proving that Shawinigan truly is a top-tier city.

*Statements by Members**[English]***SHRINERS INTERNATIONAL**

**Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I recently received an important reminder that I believe all members of this House can help me to pass on.

Shriners International is much more than a group of fun-loving volunteers who often skilfully entertain us in parades all across this great country. We must not overlook the commendable efforts of roughly 375,000 dedicated Shriners worldwide who serve to help crippled children get the medical attention they need.

In British Columbia, our local Shriners now operate a fleet of five Shriners Care Cruisers that travel the province bringing sick kids to children's hospitals. They do this free of charge to the children and the families that they serve. In fact, since 1922, the Shriners have helped over 865,000 children.

Locally, the Penticton Shriners Club will be hosting a Shriner awareness week from June 2 to June 10. I hope the House will join with me in recognizing the great work of the Shriners organization.

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*[Translation]***WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY**

**Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Thursday, May 31, 2012, is World No Tobacco Day.

This year, the World Health Organization has chosen “tobacco industry interference” as the theme of World No Tobacco Day.

The advertising campaign, which focuses on intimidation, will highlight the need to expose and counter—and I quote the WHO —“the tobacco industry's brazen and increasingly aggressive attempts”. This global epidemic kills nearly six million people every year, more than 600,000 of whom die from exposure to second-hand smoke.

I would therefore like to encourage Canadians to kick the habit and stop smoking. I would also like to express my great admiration for all young people who decide not to start smoking and to live a smoke-free life.

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*[English]***MANITOBA RIDE FOR DAD**

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank and honour the organizers and volunteers of the fourth annual Manitoba Ride for Dad in my home city of Winnipeg.

In particular, a special thanks goes out to Kirk Van Alstyne and Mo Sabourin of the Winnipeg Police Service who have led the way to make this event successful every year.

As Mo said at the opening ceremony this Saturday, May 26, “Raising awareness means never having to hear the words, ‘If only I had had my prostate checked a year ago, I would be planning my future instead of my funeral.’”

That is why this ride is so important. Awareness helps to save lives. There were 834 motorcycle riders who participated and raised over \$109,000 to support research and awareness. Tony Kusiak was the top donation earner at \$7,700.

I was thrilled to be chosen as a ride captain again this year, and it was extra special to be joined by the Winnipeg Jets assistant coach and co-ride captain, Charlie Huddy.

I would ask my colleagues here in the House of Commons to please join me in congratulating the Ride's Manitoba Advisory Board, the Winnipeg Police Service and the organizers and supporters of the 2012 Manitoba Ride for Dad.

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● (1405)

**CYCLING**

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadian cyclist and Victoria, British Columbia native, Ryder Hesjedal made history this Sunday with a spectacular triumph at the Giro d'Italia.

Like many Canadians, I was infused with pride as Mr. Hesjedal rose to the podium and Canada's national anthem was played for the first time ever at the end of one of cycling's three Grand Tour events. In a feat of unimaginable mental toughness, he won this gruelling 21-day race by a mere 16 seconds.

This remarkable win in one of bicycle racing's most punishing competitions makes Ryder, who is also an outspoken anti-doping advocate, the most successful cyclist in Canada's history. It also announces his arrival on the world stage as a superstar athlete in international sport.

His victory this weekend offers testimony to Mr. Hesjedal's perseverance, training, heart and unyielding competitive spirit.

On behalf of this House and all Canadians, I am immensely proud to congratulate the inspiring Ryder Hesjedal on his historic victory.

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**MISS WORLD CANADA 2012**

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I want to congratulate Ms. Tara Teng of Langley, British Columbia on her recent victory of being crowned Miss World Canada 2012. Winning this prestigious contest will give Tara the opportunity to represent Canada internationally at the Miss World 2012 contest in China in July. Previously, Tara was the winner of Miss Canada in 2011.

Tara has worked hard fighting modern-day slavery and human trafficking. Last year Ms. Teng worked in my office as I mentored her on the issues of modern-day slavery and encouraged her to be a strong voice to the many people affected by this heinous crime. Tara has proven herself through her efforts focused on abolishing modern-day slavery and has fought faithfully against human trafficking.

I want to wish Tara all the best as she heads to China to represent Canada in the Miss World 2012 competition and her continued efforts to end modern-day slavery. She is a young woman to be proud of. She is a role model.

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[Translation]

#### SHAWINIGAN CATARACTES

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, again this year, the Memorial Cup did not disappoint hockey fans, and the people of the host city have many reasons to celebrate.

As the suspense reached a peak, Anton Zlobin scored a remarkable goal at the end of the overtime period, clinching the Shawinigan Cataractes' two-one Memorial Cup victory over the London Knights.

In front of more than 5,000 ecstatic fans, the Cataractes celebrated the first Memorial Cup win in their 43 year history. I am extremely pleased to congratulate this team, the first in Quebec to win the Memorial Cup since 2006.

Congratulations to Michael Chaput, who was named most valuable player and leading scorer of the tournament, and to Gabriel Girard, who was named top goalie of the tournament.

I hope every member of the Shawinigan Cataractes enjoys the victory parade, which is being held today in this beautiful Mauricie town.

Three cheers for the Cup in Shawinigan.

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[English]

#### FARMTOWN CANADA

**Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to congratulate the Ontario Hockey League champions, the London Knights, for a great showing at this year's Memorial Cup. I will see them next year in Saskatoon. I am proud of the Knights.

Also happening this week near Aylmer, Ontario, Farmtown Canada is gearing up for another exciting summer. This unique camp features a wide variety of farm animals, from horses to pigs to peacocks, for children to see and explore.

Animals are at the centre of what goes on at Farmtown in both the day camps and counselling programs it provides. Through interaction with animals, children learn valuable life lessons about leadership and responsibility.

What makes Farmtown even more remarkable is its mantra that all kids are welcome on the farm. Families are only asked to pay what they can.

I had the pleasure of visiting Farmtown last week and saw first-hand how truly special this place is. Owner Kelly Franklin has an incredible vision and is committed to teaching children from all walks of life about life on the farm. I thank the people at Farmtown for all they do.

#### Statements by Members

##### AZERBAIJAN

**Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was 20 years ago that a most brutal incident took place in a tragic war.

Canada remembers the Khojaly massacre whose death toll exceeded as many as 2,000 civilians. Today we remember.

This massacre was one of many atrocities both sides were alleged to have committed during the Nagorno-Karabakh war between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The war killed over 30,000 civilians and soldiers and displaced more than one million people. The border region remains to this day a place of scattered but deadly clashes.

We encourage all parties to continue their efforts to seek a peaceful resolution to this dispute.

Today we think of those who died, and today we remember.

This is a time of remembrance, as well as a very important day for the Azerbaijani community. I send best wishes to the people of Azerbaijan, in particular the people of the Azerbaijani community in my city of London, as they celebrate their 94th Republic Day today, May 28. On this special day, let us all pray for peace.

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● (1410)

[Translation]

##### FRANÇOIS CHEVRETTE

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise here today to pay tribute to François Chevette, one of the most eminent constitutional law experts of his time, who passed away suddenly on May 19.

He became a professor at the University of Montreal faculty of law in 1968. He served as dean of the faculty from 1984 to 1988. He was long associated with the Centre de recherche en droit public and also penned many important publications.

Mr. Chevette was an excellent communicator and a born teacher. He shared his passion for law with thousands of future judges, lawyers, notaries, professors and so on, all of whom were fortunate enough to learn from his intelligence and knowledge. He devoted himself entirely to his students, providing them with continuous support and the best possible advice.

On behalf of the NDP, I would like to acknowledge his outstanding contribution to public law. The legal community has lost a great constitutional expert. I would like to extend my sincere condolences to his family, his colleagues and his friends.

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[English]

##### CALGARY STAMPEDE

**Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, over the past century, the Calgary Stampede has welcomed millions of visitors to the greatest outdoor show on earth. The Calgary Stampede is a pillar of Alberta's culture, reflecting our core values of western hospitality, integrity, pride of place and community.

*Statements by Members*

We are less than 40 days away from the start of the centennial Calgary Stampede. This year marks an important chapter in our history, representing over 100 years of Alberta overcoming the many challenges that faced a young province to become the economic powerhouse that feeds Canada's economy today. New attractions and events will take place to mark the special occasion. Visitors will see the very best of rodeo and chuckwagon races in the world, and enjoy spectacular grandstand shows, this year featuring Alberta's own Paul Brandt.

I encourage all Canadians to take part in this great cultural event in a year that also marks Calgary's designation as the 2012 cultural capital of Canada.

I send congratulations to this Canadian icon of tourism and culture, and thanks and appreciation to the staff and over 3,000 volunteers who make the Calgary Stampede the greatest outdoor show on earth.

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[*Translation*]

**OUTAOUAIS PARAMEDIC CO-OPERATIVE**

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week, I had the honour of taking part in a recognition ceremony held by the Coopérative des paramédics de l'Outaouais. This co-operative, which is a fixture in Gatineau, paid tribute to the service, the sense of duty and the heroism of nearly 80 of its employees who have helped women give birth, resuscitated people and responded to countless other emergencies. The co-operative, which answered 30,000 calls last year, also honoured a number of employees who had completed 12 and even 22 years of service in the Outaouais.

Today I wish to acknowledge Bruno Pétrin and Mathieu Danis in particular, two paramedics who were involved in a serious traffic accident in March. Mathieu is still fighting for his life. Bruno and Mathieu, their families and their co-workers are in my thoughts.

Paramedics provide a reassuring presence for everyone in our region. They are everyday heroes, and their work deserves greater recognition.

On behalf of the people of Gatineau, I invite all hon. members to pay tribute to the outstanding work done by the Coopérative des paramédics de l'Outaouais and to keep Mathieu in their thoughts.

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**SHAWINIGAN CATARACTES**

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, perseverance and determination are two assets that lead to success and victory. Together with Cataractes fans, we celebrated Shawinigan's two-one overtime victory over the London Knights at the Centre Bionest.

We are proud to see the Cataractes go down in history as Memorial Cup winners, the first win for a Quebec team since the Quebec Remparts's victory in 2006 and the second consecutive victory for a Quebec Major Junior League team.

The teams treated fans to an edge-of-the-seat nail-biter. With Michaël Bournival and Michael Chaput leading the charge, Russian Anton Zlobin delivered the goal that clinched the exciting match.

After 43 years, the league's oldest franchise celebrated its first victory.

On behalf of my government colleagues and myself, I would like to congratulate the 2012 Memorial Cup champions, the Shawinigan Cataractes.

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● (1415)

**SHAWINIGAN CATARACTES**

**Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain and Shawinigan.

I am very pleased with the interest that the members of this House have taken in this tournament. This is a victory for all communities in the Mauricie region. Once again, our common passion for hockey has connected Canada's regions.

I salute the Cataractes' victory in a thrilling game of our national sport. I would like to congratulate the Edmonton Oil Kings, the Saint John Sea Dogs and the London Knights, which all contributed to the success of the Memorial Cup tournament.

Our leader and I were at this historic game. We would like to acknowledge the hospitality of the people of Shawinigan. Congratulations Shawinigan Cataractes, 2012 Memorial Cup champions.

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[*English*]

**CYCLING**

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to join the Prime Minister in congratulating Ryder Hesjedal on his victory in this month's Giro d'Italia.

As the first Canadian winner of one of cycling's three grand tours, and only the second non-European to ever win the Giro, his victory is a testament to the world-class athletes Canada produces. The Giro is one of bicycling road races' most gruelling multi-stage competitions. His victory, riding for team Garmin-Barracuda, is a testament to his training, endurance, skill and competitive spirit.

Most Canadians came to know Ryder during his strong performance in the Tour de France. We knew that a major victory was well within his reach.

I congratulate Ryder on this defining moment in Canadian sport and wish him well in his upcoming races, including this year's Tour de France.

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**GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have the nerve to tell seniors and the unemployed that the cupboard is bare, while giving out all the pork to their failed candidates.

*Oral Questions*

Let us look at who is feeding over at the trough at the employment insurance board. We have Yvan Patry, failed candidate from Papineau; Jean-Philippe Payment, from Blainville; Leanne Villella, rejected in Welland; Jean-Philippe Bachand, from Richmond—Arthabaska; Nathalie Ferland Drolet; Sébastien Forté; Pierre Lafontaine; Pierre Harvey.

Have members heard enough? I have tons more Tories to still go through. We have Jennifer Clarke, from Vancouver; Bernard Généreux; Richard Bélisle; the Laval candidate, Robert Malo.

And who could overlook the cash-for-life lottery in the Senate? We have Jean-Guy Dagenais; Fabian Manning; Josée Verner; Larry Smith.

The Prime Minister promised to clean up the cesspool in Ottawa. He broke that promise.

Why are his buddies who were rejected by the Canadian people living off the taxpayers' dime?

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**NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, speaking of nerve, the NDP is trying to divide the country against itself. It calls our strong resource sector a disease, despite the fact it creates thousands of spinoff manufacturing jobs in my riding of Etobicoke Centre and throughout southern Ontario.

The NDP's politics of division, pitting one region of the country against others, and its ill-informed remarks show that its foolish economic policy will raise prices and cost Canadian jobs.

The NDP had its Canada-U.S. border critic call for a new manufacturing sector. That member opposite recently endorsed a proposal calling for a taxpayer-funded, government-owned car manufacturing company that would compete with private sector tax-paying companies that employ thousands upon thousands of Canadians.

These positions on manufacturing are typical of what Canadians can expect to hear from the NDP: dangerous economic experiments. These are policies that would hurt everyday Canadian families and waste large amounts of taxpayer dollars.

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**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[*English*]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, let us talk about unemployment insurance, something that will become important for the member very soon.

[*Translation*]

Canadians are starting to see through what the Prime Minister is doing with his catch-all budget bill.

The Conservatives are going to force Canadians to accept a 30% pay cut or else lose their employment insurance.

Cuts to EI, cuts to old age security, cuts to social rights: that is the perfect way to create cheap labour for McDonald's. The minister said so herself.

In six years, 500,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost, and they are being replaced with McJobs.

Is that the Conservatives' economic strategy?

● (1420)

[*English*]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is most interesting is that when this gentleman became leader of the official opposition, he said he would bring a new civility and raise the tone of debate. I guess not two months after his election, they have thrown that to the side.

We are facing unprecedented labour and skills shortages in the country. It is tremendously important that the employment insurance program be working most effectively for Canada and for Canadians. That is why we are working to better connect Canadians with available jobs in their local area appropriate for their qualifications and working to ensure that they understand the responsibilities they have while collecting EI.

This is an important part of our jobs and economic growth agenda. Every Canadian wants a job, and we are working hard to create an economy that will provide just that.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, no one should be surprised at the Conservatives' attitude. It was their Prime Minister who said that people in Atlantic Canada had a culture of defeatism and were dependent on EI.

To the Minister of Human Resources, employment insurance is attractive, even lucrative, a nice gift for the lazy people who make a living from fishing, farming and forestry.

How can the Conservatives justify policies that target the unemployed, attack workers and unfairly force people to give up either a third of their salary or their EI cheque?

[*English*]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what we want for Canadians is what Canadians want for themselves. We want a Canada with a growing economy, with more jobs, with more hope and with more opportunity. That is exactly what we are doing with these changes to unemployment insurance.

We are working tremendously hard to ensure that available jobs are connected to those people in their home regions with the appropriate skill set. Every single person in Canada who is on unemployment insurance wants to get a job, and this government is committed to moving them into employment so that they can provide for themselves and their families.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the unemployed are expected to abandon the careers they have trained for, commute up to two hours a day, take a permanent 30% pay cut and get a McJob or work in the mines, as their ministers have said, even when it is not related to their skills.

However, failed Conservative candidates do not end up at McDonalds or in the mines, do they? No, they get nice cushy jobs in Paris. They end up on government boards, racking up expense accounts. Meanwhile, hard-working Canadians are told that they are lazy and defeatist.

Why are the Conservatives going after the unemployed? Why are they targeting people in need?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I believe the individual he speaks of who was appointed ambassador in Paris served in the Liberal cabinet, a cabinet that he served in at one point, although I think it was a bit before his time.

Someone's individual circumstances and the local labour market will always be taken into consideration. For example, if someone is from an area of higher unemployment and the opportunities are limited, their benefits will be maintained. The reality is that we want to work with Canadians to ensure that they can move into new employment so that they can provide for themselves and their families and have the dignity of a job and the pride of independence. That is exactly what we are doing.

[Translation]

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, failed Conservative candidates do not have to worry. They are rewarded with a job in the Senate. That is their employment insurance.

But the Conservatives are going after people and communities that rely on seasonal industries.

The minister wants absolute power to make the rules and tell people which jobs are suitable for them.

These changes are going to drive wages down. Why did the Conservatives conceal them during the election campaign?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our priorities are economic growth and job creation to benefit the country, but there are Canadians who want to work and who do not have information about available jobs. We want to help these people identify these jobs, find jobs and keep those jobs.

That is what we are doing to help people work for themselves, their families and the country.

[English]

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that Conservatives are targeting the businesses, communities and people who rely on seasonal industries. Fishing, tourism, arts, forestry, agriculture are all under attack by the Conservatives. Work is easy to come by if one is a failed Conservative candidate, but for businesses, workers and communities in Atlantic Canada and across Canada, times are tougher.

The Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador has asked to meet with the Prime Minister over the proposed changes, which leads me

to wonder why the minister did not consult with premiers before making these sweeping changes.

• (1425)

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is misrepresenting the facts. In fact, we are helping people who are in seasonal jobs to work longer and work more for their families so that they and their families will be better off. We are going to help them identify jobs within their skill range—sometimes scarce jobs within their region—and help them get those jobs. We are doing that so that they and their families will be better off and so that employers will be better off, and so will the country.

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### RAIL TRANSPORTATION

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, speaking of consultation and the government's back-to-work legislation, I would like to ask the minister very directly whether, instead of rushing the bill through the House, he would not finally see the wisdom of allowing the members of the unions involved as well as the company to have an opportunity to appear before a House committee.

Surely they have a right to explain to the House exactly what the impact of that legislation is going to be, what it is going to do to their bargaining power, what it is going to do to collective bargaining, what it is going to do to their pensions and what it is going to do to their wages.

How can one take away pensions and wages without giving workers the opportunity to—

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

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we set out the best way to make sure that the trains get rolling as quickly as possible. We are in day six of a work stoppage, and the economic effects are going to accumulate from here.

In 1995, the Liberal government at that point in time sent it to committee, and it got stuck there because of the opposition. The Liberals could not get it out and had to cut a deal with NDP in order for it to happen.

**An hon. member:** That was you at the time.

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### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not going to go there.

Speaking of not consulting, I would like to ask this question very directly to the minister or to whoever is answering these questions today.

The changes in employment insurance will inevitably have a major impact on social assistance in all the provinces in the country, particularly those provinces with higher numbers of people who are currently covered by employment insurance. That is inevitable. That has been the impact since the 1990s. That has had the effect and had the impact.

*Oral Questions*

I would like to ask the government this question: why did it not consult directly with the provinces and directly with the premiers whose costs are going to be directly affected?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, surely the member knows something about rising social assistance rates. When he was Premier of Ontario, it became the welfare capital of Canada.

Let me say this. What our initiatives are designed to do is assist unemployed Canadians in obtaining what they want: a job, a paycheque, the dignity of a job, the pride of being economically independent. That is exactly what these measures do. Rather than increasing the social assistance rate, what we hope will happen is that we will be able to move more people into the workforce, where they can contribute, pay taxes and help grow Canada's economy.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I feel as though I am being attacked by a wild sheep. This is serious.

He did not answer my question. He has to admit that there is a problem. It is not just the workers and the employers who will be affected by these changes. This is an issue that will also affect the provinces. This issue goes to the heart of what the federation is, to the essence of Canada.

Why increase costs for the provinces without even consulting them?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is our government that has helped the provinces and territories with the largest economic and fiscal transfers in order to help with social programs. We are very proud of that.

The purpose of our policy is to help the unemployed find jobs. That is why the bill is before the House and that is why we are taking action to help people find real jobs so that they can support their families.

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, considering how this government is ravaging employment insurance, it appears to have declared war on the tourism industry in Quebec.

Just when restaurants, hotels and museums are completing preparations for the new summer tourism season, the government is slashing employment insurance, openly attacking the seasonal workers who keep the tourism industry running.

Can the minister explain why she insists on waging war against the tourism industry?

•(1430)

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, across Canada, in the winter, in the summer, all year round, there is a labour shortage. That is a fact. At the same time, we have unemployed workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Yet employers need their talent and this labour source.

We are trying to get employers and unemployed workers to connect for the well-being of employers, unemployed workers and their families.

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the reforms the minister is introducing will result in lower wages for workers.

The Conservatives' obvious disdain for seasonal workers is unbelievable. They are making senseless, useless economic decisions. They have no compunction about picking and choosing winning industries and losing ones, penalizing millions of Canadians for their career choices, and attacking whole regions.

Will the government call off this irresponsible plan before it destroys whole sectors of the economy, yes or no?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is not at all the case.

What we are trying to do is connect people who have lost their jobs with available jobs in their local region that suit their qualifications. That is what we will try to do. We will ensure that if they work, they will earn more money than they do now, because they stand to lose money under the current employment insurance program.

We are introducing changes that will take effect on August 1.

[*English*]

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives lack of empathy is astounding.

If individuals are lucky enough to never need EI or use it only once, then they may be okay, but if a community relies on seasonal industries such as tourism, fishing, forestry or agriculture, or if individuals have been laid off more than once, the government has its sights on them.

EI does not belong to the Conservatives to change on a minister's whim; it belongs to the workers who paid into it.

Why is the government forcing a job on out-of-work Canadians?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is this: why does the NDP not want to help Canadians get back to work faster? That is exactly what we are trying to do.

We know there are work shortages and skills shortages right across this country. We want to connect those who are out of work with skills in their local area to the jobs that are available. It only makes sense to try to help Canadians into those jobs before we try to bring in people from offshore.

That is why we are making changes: to help make these individuals aware of jobs in their local area, to provide them with the supports they need to get them and to make sure that they are better off accepting that work than not.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while running for the Conservatives may mean an individual never needs EI, other Canadians actually do have to look for jobs.

*Oral Questions*

These short-sighted changes are an attack on the workers who own EI. Canadians who have paid into EI should have access to it. Even before these latest restrictions, fewer than 40% of unemployed Canadians qualified, an all-time low.

Is that the Conservatives' job plan—handing cushy jobs to their failed candidates while forcing skilled Canadian workers to take minimum-wage jobs?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the record on that. Almost 85% of people who pay into the EI system, an insurance program, do have the hours eligible to collect should they lose their job due to no fault of their own. We are proud of that figure.

EI is there as a temporary income support for people who have lost their job through no fault of their own, to support them and their families while they are looking for a new job.

We are asking people, making sure and clarifying that people know what their responsibilities are in terms of looking for a new job, and we are providing support to help them find those new jobs. It will be good for them and their families.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, EI belongs to workers and employers who pay into it, not the government.

When a mill closes in New Brunswick, the Conservatives want to punish employees. When lobster quotas are full, they penalize the fishing communities. These industries deserve respect.

Why is the government refusing to consult the individuals, the communities and the provinces affected? Why is the government making changes that blame workers for losing their jobs? What a shame.

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, quite the opposite is true. In fact, we are trying to help those people who lost their jobs when the mill closed. We are there with Service Canada to help them adjust and make sure they get the EI that is there to support them while they are looking for a new job.

We are also going to be sending notifications to people to let them be aware of jobs that are available in their area, something they did not receive much of in the past, something against which the NDP has already voted. We want to help Canadians get back to work as quickly as possible.

• (1435)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will send the information by F-35.

The Conservatives are not just going to limit access to employment insurance and lower wages. They are going to take things even further by replacing the employment insurance boards of referees with a new organization, but we do not know who will hear the appeals, how the process will work, or how long it will take. What we do know, however, is that there will be 10 times fewer people to hear appeals by the unemployed. Naturally, this is all concealed in the Conservatives' Trojan horse bill.

Why are the Conservatives trying to quietly pass this major reform of the appeal process?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we should ask the following question: why does the NDP not want to help the unemployed find new jobs? Why?

We want to help them because it is better for them, their families, employers and the country if they are working.

Right now, we have a shortage of workers all across Canada. We want to help Canadians by connecting them to available jobs.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, 60% of unemployed people do not qualify for employment insurance. That is the real problem.

The Conservatives apparently decided that their biases and their irresponsible ideology would win out over reason.

They are now waging open war on seasonal workers, the Atlantic provinces, the Gaspé and millions of Canadians who need the employment insurance fund, their fund.

Meanwhile, the government is making changes to boards of referees to ensure that there will be no possibility of appeal.

Why is this government going after workers and targeting the economy of Atlantic Canada and the Gaspé? I might add that it cut \$18 billion from ACOA—

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. Minister of Human Resources.

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I must correct what the hon. member said.

The fact is that nearly 85% of workers who have paid into the employment insurance fund have access to benefits when they lose their job through no fault of their own. We are proud of that fact.

Our government is making changes to help these people find another job.

There is a shortage of workers in Canada, and we would rather help our unemployed workers find jobs.

\* \* \*

**WORK**

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, again, the Conservatives have pushed the panic button.

Here we go again with another back-to-work bill. This time, it is the railway workers whose rights are being trampled on. Five ministers held press conferences today. Were they trying to protect pensions? No. Were they defending good salaries? No. They came out to justify eliminating the rights of workers.

*Oral Questions*

Do the Conservatives realize that the workers drive our economy, that they buy bicycles and clothing and spend money at the small businesses in their communities? Do the Conservatives realize that people need good salaries and good pensions in order to keep driving the economy?

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, indeed, I was joined by my colleagues today so we could update the Canadian public on the effect that the six-day work stoppage has had on businesses that are not necessarily Canadian Pacific. They are in the automotive industry, the natural resources industry, the agriculture industry and the transport industry.

We are seeing layoffs. We are seeing people cut back. We are seeing those things happen. That is why we are acting today by tabling legislation. I say to the member that the real reason for the press conference was to ask the NDP to support us in passing this quickly, so that we may be able to get people back to work sooner.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. It will not happen.

It is always a race to the bottom with those Conservatives. This is the sixth time in six years they have legislated workers back to work. They have beaten the Liberal record for back-to-work laws.

Well, 5,000 workers and counting are asking themselves what they have done to deserve the wrath of the minister. Why are Conservatives always picking winners and losers, and why are they crushing the principle of collective bargaining? Why are they crushing the principle of free collective bargaining?

• (1440)

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are firmly on the side of the Canadian public and the national economy. We are not taking one side over the other. The economy is being affected. It is a six-day strike. We have provided ample opportunity to the parties. They are facing very serious issues at the table. They were unable to do it and finish their own collective agreement. As such, we will be making our legislation known this afternoon.

\* \* \*

**THE BUDGET**

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when his constituents asked the member for Kootenay—Columbia to help split the non-budget measures out of the budget bill, he agreed, saying, "...you'll find a barrage of Conservatives that do hold your concerns, and I am one of them.... I do believe some could be separated out".

Will the government listen to Canadians and listen to its own members of Parliament and split up the budget bill, or does it agree with the member for Kootenay—Columbia that Conservative MPs are "not going to make a difference"?

**Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to stand and talk about Canada's economic action plan 2012, which is focused on jobs, the economy and long-term prosperity for this country.

I would remind hon. members that this government has put in place policies that have helped create more than 750,000 jobs since July 2009. That is important, that is what Canadians are focused on and that is what Canada's economic action plan is all about.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has pushed almost every aspect of the old Reform ideology, from EI to immigration to first nations to crime, but the freedom of members of Parliament to represent their constituents instead of party ideology, has masterfully disappeared in spite of the opposition calls, concerned Canadians and now members of the Conservative caucus.

Will the Prime Minister divide the undemocratic budget bill?

**The Speaker:** Order, please. There was far too much noise on both sides during that question.

The hon. Minister of State for Finance.

**Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would also agree there was far too much noise.

Speaking of divides, we are actually starting to see a divide on the other side, battling amongst themselves about who can oppose what Canadians support, and that is economic action plan 2012. It is a plan to get Canadians back to work.

The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development is doing her best to make sure that people who are unemployed can actually find a job, but we need help in this House of Commons to get this bill passed, and passed quickly, to create jobs for more Canadians who do want to work.

\* \* \*

**SEARCH AND RESCUE**

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, closing the Kitsilano search and rescue station will result in people dying. That is according to retired Coast Guard commanders, rescue volunteers and boaters.

This Vancouver Coast Guard base is the busiest in Canada. This year it has handled more than 70 life-and-death emergencies well before summer even started. Closing the Kitsilano base will increase Coast Guard response time by up to an hour.

To the minister, if he were capsized in the cold waters of English Bay, injured and needing rescue, would he still say that the Richmond base is close enough?

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as always, the top priority of the Canadian Coast Guard is the safety of mariners.

The level of search and rescue service in Vancouver will not be affected and will remain the same. In fact, the Coast Guard will establish a new inshore rescue boat station for the summer season in Vancouver port and strengthen our partnerships with other on-water search and rescue partners such as the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary.

*Oral Questions***FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' decision to close the Freshwater Institute is a step backward for freshwater research and will have a huge impact on the management of our fisheries. Scientists from Harvard, the Smithsonian and other top research centres have slammed the cut. This research helps us understand and manage the impact of pollution on our freshwater systems and our fishery.

Why are the Conservatives so afraid of knowledge? Why are they cutting the Freshwater Institute?

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Fisheries and Oceans Canada will continue to support freshwater research across Canada. The Experimental Lakes facility has a lot to offer to non-governmental research labs involved in ecosystem manipulation research. We look forward to facilitating a transfer to a private organization.

• (1445)

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first the Trojan Horse budget paves the way for treating our lakes and streams as dumping ponds. Then the government cuts the very programs that tell us why we need to be so careful.

The Freshwater Institute has already led to breakthroughs on acid rain, hydro dams and the use of phosphorous, but now when we need it the most the government will ensure it disappears. Why are the Conservatives throwing caution to the wind and ending this important scientific tool?

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, Fisheries and Oceans will continue to support freshwater research across Canada. The department will no longer conduct research that requires whole-lake or whole-ecosystem manipulation. Departmental research on fresh water will continue in various locations across Canada.

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**SEARCH AND RESCUE**

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the cuts do not end with protecting fresh water. There are major cuts to the Coast Guard too. The Kitsilano station in the heart of Vancouver is one of the busiest in Canada, but the government is planning to close it. This would double response times, putting lives at this international port at risk.

Will the minister stop the dismantling of this station and reverse these reckless Conservative cuts?

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, levels of search and rescue service in Vancouver will remain the same. Search and rescue capability in the area was also improved through budget 2010, which provided funding for a new hovercraft available early next year, to replace the aging hovercraft at the Sea Island base.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last weekend 55 lives were saved because of the Kitsilano station alone. With growing traffic, the impacts could be severe, but

the government did not consult anyone but DND. It did not consult the province; it did not consult the city; and it did not consult the community. It did not consult the facts.

How can the minister close the station without talking to the very people whose lives he will put at risk?

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are very aware and we are convinced that search and rescue services in Vancouver will remain the same. We will strengthen our partnerships with other on-water search and rescue partners such as the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary. We think we have an opportunity to provide better service in this area.

\* \* \*

**LABOUR RELATIONS**

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Labour met with CP Rail and with the Teamsters Union to try to encourage and facilitate an agreement that would have avoided a work stoppage. While the parties continued to negotiate until yesterday, the union began strike action on Wednesday, May 23.

Notwithstanding the rhetoric of the parties opposite, labour stability in the rail sector is critical to the functioning of the Canadian economy, the continued economic recovery and the confidence of Canadian businesses and the Canadian public.

Could the Minister of Labour please, once again, give the House an update on the status of the labour negotiations at CP Rail?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is very concerned about the prolonged work stoppage and the effect it is having on the national economy. Indeed, figures indicate that it could be half a billion dollars a week for a prolonged work stoppage.

That is why today our government will take further action. I will be introducing legislation to resume all rail services to protect the Canadian economy and, of course, national interests.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**CANADIAN HERITAGE**

**Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we all know that when it comes time to listen to the advice of the departments, the Conservatives like to add their own personal touch. Clearly, the Minister of Canadian Heritage spends a little too much time with his colleague, the Minister of International Cooperation, because now he likes to interfere in these kinds of affairs.

*Oral Questions*

I have here the unbelievable decision to ignore the recommendation to designate Tadoussac and Rouyn-Noranda as cultural capitals of Canada. Why? Because the minister decided to favour the City of Calgary, which was not even on the selection committee's shortlist.

Why did the minister go against his department recommendation to list these two Quebec cities as cultural capitals of Canada? Why?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we were proud to name Niagara Falls and Calgary the cultural capitals for 2012. It is sad that the opposition constantly tries to pit Canadians against each other. We received several nominations for cities that wanted to be listed as cultural capitals, but only a few can actually be named. There were two quality nominations.

Having said this, Rouyn-Noranda and Tadoussac will receive funding for cultural events that will take place this year. Tadoussac will receive funding for the Festival de la chanson in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Rouyn-Noranda will receive funding for the 36th and 37th editions of Salon du livre. They will be getting money.

It is also true that the NDP voted against this.

•(1450)

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is the minister who is pitting one city against another. When you play with the rules to help your friends, it smacks of bad faith and favouritism.

After spending several years putting together their applications, Tadoussac and Rouyn-Noranda are going to have to look elsewhere in order to fund their projects. The mayors of these two Quebec cities were told that their bids were not good and that they did not meet the criteria. Yet, officials said that the two towns qualified, and even recommended them.

Can the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages tell us why he decided that these two cities' bids were not good enough?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I just said, there were certainly quality nominations, but there are limits to the amount of money available for these types of events. This year, Calgary and Niagara Falls were named cultural capitals. Last year, Lévis, Quebec, got this designation. Another year, Trois-Rivières, Quebec, was listed. And one year, it was Saint-Jean.

We will continue to conduct this type of analysis, but in the future, we will support events that are responsible, and that have good local projects. It is true that this year, those two cities were not designated cultural capitals, but, once again, we will fund good quality community events that benefit the people in these regions.

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**CANADA REVENUE AGENCY**

**Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if there is one region that will be suffering from the recent Conservative budget, it is Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. After they did nothing for the forestry industry and let jobs in the region vanish, now it is the survival of the Jonquière tax centre that is in jeopardy as a result of the ill-considered cuts in the Conservative budget.

Is the government going to reassure working people and families in the region and assure us that the Jonquière tax centre will not be affected by cuts at Revenue Canada?

[English]

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canada Revenue Agency must ensure that our programs are efficient, effective and achieving the best results for Canadians. Our top priority is the economy and ensuring that we spend tax dollars wisely.

We will be revealing more details on CRA's budget very soon. However, we are committed to supporting the CRA in providing a high level of service and ensuring the integrity of the tax system.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first there was concern in Shawinigan and then in Jonquière, not to mention the underhanded manoeuvres surrounding the relocation of the Rimouski service centre. Things are definitely not working under the Conservatives.

The future of the jobs at the Shawinigan tax centre is still up in the air and the news from Jonquière is not comforting. Although this is not the first time the problem has been raised, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development is still unable to clarify the situation.

Are the Conservatives finally going to shed some light on the cuts foreseen at the Shawinigan and Jonquière centres?

[English]

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot comment on rumour and speculation.

However, what I can say is that more details from CRA's budget will be coming soon. At the same time, we are committed to ensuring a high level of service to Canadians and the integrity of our tax system.

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**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government talks about an unprecedented skilled labour shortage and that being the reason for EI changes last week.

If there is a skilled labour shortage, it has been developed under the current government's watch.

What we have seen is that six years of doing nothing has put us in the situation we are in today. With a million and a half Canadians out of work, the government's answer is, "Let's get seniors to work two more years. Let's let disabled people live in poverty for two more years. Let's attack seasonal workers in seasonal industries. Let's help depopulate rural Canada".

Is that the best the government can do? Is that its A game over there?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if that is the best the Liberals can do to come up with facts, then they are in sorry shape.

It is our government against the votes of the Liberals that has created over 750,000 net new jobs in this country since the recession.

Again, our priority is job creation and economic growth. We are so successful at that that right now we do have skills and labour shortages in a wide range of occupations right across the country. We want to help people get back to work because it will be better for them, for their families and for the good of the country.

• (1455)

[Translation]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** In any event, Mr. Chair, as pots and pans are being banged in Montreal, we can see from the questions and answers we are getting today that we are stuck with a load of empty Conservative vessels who do not use their heads. What we are seeing today is disgusting. There is no consultation with the provinces and no sensitivity to the regions; seasonal workers are left by the wayside kicking their heels.

I simply want to know something. Since they are killing the regions and killing off industry, is the minister going to do her job and start over again from zero, in order to protect seasonal workers? That is what we want to know.

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, our government is the one that has created and helped to create over 750,000 jobs in Canada. Our priorities are economic growth and job creation. That is why we now have a shortage of workers and skills. We want to help Canadians who have lost their jobs, whether they are full-time or seasonal jobs, to find new positions in their areas that are suited to their qualifications.

\* \* \*

[English]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after only a few hours of testimony, the Conservatives are set to shut down the inquiry into the AG's scathing report on the F-35, with only seven hours of investigation and nearly seven years of Conservative mismanagement.

The Conservatives have misled Canadians by hiding somewhere between \$15 billion and \$30 billion of life cycle costs. They pledged accountability and transparency, so why are they now stopping Parliament from getting to the bottom of the F-35 fiasco?

**Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the Auditor General three times, once for the report as a whole, once for the beginning of the chapter and once at the end of the chapter. We have heard from senior government officials at two different sets of meetings that detailed the government's response. We have heard from the Parliamentary Budget Officer to compare his numbers versus others.

The purpose of the committee is to study the Auditor General's report. We have done that. We need to get on with writing the report.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, none of that dispels the odour of cover-up that permeates the House today. Either the Minister of National Defence stands today to disclose the truth about the F-35 procurement or his government has to let the committee do its important work.

We learned early not to hold our breath waiting for answers from the minister. Therefore, will his government reverse its decision and allow the F-35 investigation to continue?

**Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned, we have heard from the Auditor General not once, not twice, but three times. We have heard from departmental officials not once but twice. It is time to get on with writing the report.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, I was overjoyed to learn that Abby and Dominic Maryk were reunited with their mother and returned to Winnipeg after being abducted by their father and taken to Mexico four years ago.

It has been a complex and sad case, but one with a happy ending.

Could the Minister of State responsible for Consular Affairs please update the House on this case?

**Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the excellent support she has provided to these constituents. The Maryk children did indeed return to Winnipeg yesterday with their mother.

It was a coordinated effort. I sincerely thank consular officials, our partners in Mexico, the Province of Manitoba, the RCMP and the CBSA for their hard work in locating and returning these children.

I hope the mother and her children can now rebuild their family life and that those responsible for this abduction will be held responsible.

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**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would hope that by now we could assume that the minister has finally completed his homework and is up to speed on the 31-page Federal Court decision on veterans pensions.

*Oral Questions*

With only a few days before the Conservatives must decide whether to appeal this very clear ruling, is the government now in a position to tell the House and thousands of affected veterans what action it intends to take?

• (1500)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of National Defence. The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a working group in the Department of Natural Resources of Canada has concluded that the federal government should regulate the shale gas industry better.

I repeat: this is a federal government working group, so I do not want to hear the excuse that this is under provincial jurisdiction.

The group says, among other things, that the public is not well informed and the regulations are based on old practices that do not take into account the consequences for the water table.

Are the Conservatives finally going to listen to that recommendation, or will they continue to ignore the concerns expressed by Canadians?

[*English*]

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the shale gas exploration development has been going on in the west for many decades. This is a provincial matter, under provincial jurisdiction. It is being investigated from a regulatory perspective in a number of provinces, and we await the results.

In the meantime, there is no indication of any leakage or any harm to water in the areas in which it is being developed.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians were horrified to hear of this weekend's massacre in the Syrian town of Hula in which more than 100 people, including 34 children, were killed. Even with UN observers on the ground, the Assad regime continues to ignore its commitment to the Annan peace plan and flaunt its utter disregard for human life.

Would the Minister of Foreign Affairs please update the House on Canada's reaction to this weekend's violence in Syria?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his interest in this humanitarian disaster. This weekend's shocking attack has yet again demonstrated the Assad regime's utter contempt for humanity and decency. We call upon the Security Council to take stronger action, including having United Nation's Security Council sanctions.

Canada continues to view the Annan peace plan as the best option. However, the international community must redouble its efforts to get adherence or move on to explore other diplomatic solutions to the crisis.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as people around the world watch the negotiations with Iran over the issue of nuclear proliferation, Canadians want to know if the government is willing to take international leadership on nuclear disarmament.

A year and a half ago, the House unanimously endorsed a New Democrat motion to prevent nuclear proliferation and increase the rate of nuclear disarmament. When will the government implement the intent of that motion and take leadership on nuclear disarmament?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I share the concern of the member opposite about nuclear disarmament. I think the strongest measures we can take are on stopping nuclear proliferation. That is why what is going on in Iran causes us all such deep concern.

Before the P5+1 talks in Baghdad this past weekend, I had a long chat with Catherine Ashton, the high-level representative from the European Union. I spoke with her for more than half an hour after these meetings and offered Canada's full support for these efforts.

If Iran obtains nuclear weapons, not only will it be a disaster for the Middle East and a disaster for the world, it will see the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, something I do not think any of us in the House want to see.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in addition to making the unemployed accept lower-paying jobs that are further from home, the employment insurance reform announced last Thursday risks doing much worse.

By forcing employees trained by seasonal businesses to go elsewhere, it will deprive employers of the skilled labour they need to maintain their activities. This is a direct attack on the fishery, tourism, agriculture and forestry industries that provide a living for the regions of Quebec. One might think that the Conservatives have forgotten that winter comes back every year in Quebec.

Is the government going to respond to the outcry over these harmful measures for the workers and the regions and will it retreat and drop this reform?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, clearly the hon. member does not understand the changes we are proposing. These changes will help people who have lost their jobs to find new jobs. Such jobs will be in their local area and will correspond to their qualifications. We want to help these people because it is in the best interest of their families and our country to do so.

*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I raised a question in question period and I am not sure there was an answer. If there was, it certainly was unintelligible here.

My question was whether the government had decided if it would appeal the ruling on veterans pensions. I did not hear—

**An hon. member:** The microphone wasn't on.

• (1505)

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I understand there may have been a problem with a microphone. I understand it was a very short response. Maybe the Minister of National Defence would do the members who did not hear it a favour and repeat his answer.

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, he will have an answer soon.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

**GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 38 petitions.

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**RESTORING RAIL SERVICE ACT**

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-39, An Act to provide for the continuation and resumption of rail service operations.

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

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**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food in relation to the study of Growing Forward 2, which includes a summary of the study of the biotechnology industry.

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

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS**

## IMPORTATION OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS ACT

**Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present 90 names from a certified petition from members of my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla in clear support of

my private member's Bill C-311 to end the current wine prohibition in Canada.

Free trade in wine should not be a crime. I am very happy to represent my riding today.

## OLD AGE SECURITY

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present.

The first petition calls on the government to maintain funding for the old age security and to make the requisite investments in the guaranteed income supplement to lift every senior out of poverty.

The petitioners point out that the Conservative government has threatened to make changes to the old age security program and this is a direct attack on the poor seniors who rely on that money for daily living expenses. They point out that the NDP moved an opposition day motion calling on the House to reject the proposal by the Prime Minister to increase the age of eligibility for old age security, while also calling on the government to take the necessary measures to eliminate poverty among seniors.

## FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is related to the bill to amend the Food and Drugs Act, Bill C-257. The petitioners call on the House of Commons to support Bill C-257, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act, mandatory labelling for genetically modified foods.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my third petition calls on the Government of Canada to remove its support for the development of the northern gateway pipeline, assume a neutral position on the outcome, await the evidence and ensure a full, fair and impartial process under the National Energy Board and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

The petitioners point out that the government and cabinet have made it clear in advance of the hearings that they believe the project should proceed and that oil tanker traffic should be allowed in some of the most treacherous waters on earth.

They therefore call on the government to support this petition.

## POVERTY

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by constituents who want to eliminate poverty in Canada.

The petitioners point out that individuals living in poverty suffer more health problems and have lower life expectancy as a result, that these rights are guaranteed under international covenants as well as the Canadian Human Rights Act and that it threatens the cohesion and progress of society in general.

Therefore, the petitioners call on the federal government, along with its provincial and territorial counterparts, to come up with a good strategy that reduces poverty. Bill C-233 would require the federal government to develop and implement a strategy. They implore the House to support that.

I thank the constituents in towns such as Grand Falls—Windsor, Bishop's Falls, Gander and Harbour Breton.

• (1510)

#### RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed my pleasure to present to the House two petitions today from my constituents of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. The first petition is from the Emmanuel Christian Church of Newbury and the second is from the Strathroy & District Right to Life members.

Both petitions ask for the House of Commons to confirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law as human by amending section 223 of the Criminal Code in such a way as to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions.

The first petition is from a group similar to my friend's across the way, a number of people from Smithers and the Taku region of northwestern B.C., asking the House of Commons and Parliament to amend section 223 of the Criminal Code on the definition of life.

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from a number of residents from Vancouver Island, Powell River and Lund, asking the government to honour and respect the wishes of British Columbians to protect the coastal waters from the threat of supertankers on the coast.

#### OLD AGE SECURITY

**Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of the residents of Random—Burin—St. George's.

The petitioners call on the government to reconsider the decision to raise the age of OAS from 65 to 67. They say that this will be cumbersome and difficult and that it is unimaginable the government could impose this burden on seniors, some of whom will lose up to \$30,000 over a two-year period in benefits. They say that this is totally uncalled for, that there is no need to do this and that the impact it will have on seniors, low-income Canadians and particularly on women is such that this should never be allowed to happen.

They call on the government to reconsider this terrible decision.

[Translation]

#### KATIMAVIK

**Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to present a petition signed by people from across Canada—from Montreal, Terrebonne and even Vancouver—who oppose the government's decision to end funding for the Katimavik program.

#### Routine Proceedings

The petitioners are calling on the government to restore the annual \$14 million in funding, which would allow young people to continue to have the Katimavik experience, which is a very valuable experience indeed.

[English]

#### CANADA POST

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the people of my riding of Davenport to present two petitions.

The first petition has to do with my constituents being very concerned about the loss of public services in the riding, the post office being a very important one. There is an excellent post office in the heart of my riding that is used by seniors and people who run small businesses. Canada Post has been up and down as to whether it plans to close it.

The petitioners call on the government to keep this vital public service open to the people in my riding.

#### CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is a Toronto-wide petition with regard to Bill C-31. As we know, over half of those who live in Toronto were born outside of Canada.

This bill strikes at the heart of the very foundations of who we are as a country. The fact that this bill would tear families apart is of deep concern to members of my riding and people right across the country. Jailing refugees for six months without the possibility for appeal, forcibly separating refugees from their families for at least five years, dividing refugees into tiers based on their country of origin, unnecessarily punishing them as a result and expanding ministerial powers to shape legislation by removing parliamentary oversight and access to an appeal process are just some of the things in Bill C-31 that people right across the city of Toronto have deep concerns about.

It is an honour for me to present this petition on their behalf.

#### OLD AGE SECURITY

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to present a petition which is from virtually every community within Winnipeg North expressing concerns with regard to raising the age of OAS.

The government has made the decision to increase the age of eligibility to collect OAS from 65 to 67. These constituents believe that people should continue to have the option to retire at the age of 65 and the government should not in any way diminish the importance and value of Canada's three major senior programs: the OAS, GIS and CPP.

• (1515)

[Translation]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by residents in the riding of Alfred-Pellan in response to the measures announced regarding old age security.

*Routine Proceedings*

The petitioners believe that these measures are an attack on the poorest seniors and wish to point out that experts agree that the old age security system is sustainable.

First, the petitioners are calling on the government to leave the old age security program alone. They are also calling on the government to increase the amount of the guaranteed income supplement, since the current amount is not enough to lift seniors out of poverty and is a disgrace to Canada today.

[English]

PENSIONS

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present pages and pages of petitions from people in east Vancouver and metro Vancouver who are very concerned about changes to the old age security system.

The petitioners point out that approximately 5 million Canadians receive OAS and when that is combined with the 1.7 million seniors receiving GIS, this will have a huge impact on people's incomes.

The petitioners call on Parliament to reject the changes to the age of eligibility for OAS, to increase the OAS and GIS to end seniors' poverty and to ensure that retirement benefits are indexed to the real cost of living.

**Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I, too, have a petition from Canadians across the age spectrum.

As members will have noted, there is great and profound concern from the public of Canada in regard to proposed changes to old age security. Seniors and others who have signed this petition regard this as a direct attack on the poorest seniors in the country, which includes women and those living with disabilities.

The petitioners call upon the government to change its plans to increase the age of retirement from 65 to 67 and to make the necessary funding changes to OAS and investments in the guaranteed income supplement to lift every senior, all 250,000 of them, out of poverty.

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions.

The first petition comes from petitioners in Kingston, Ontario and Roberts Creek, British Columbia.

The petitioners, like so many thousands before them, call upon the House to ensure stable, predictable funding for our national public broadcaster, the CBC.

[Translation]

This petition is also intended to protect the work of the CBC, one of the major networks that brings everyone together.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, my second petition is from residents of Peterborough, Ontario, Kings County, Nova Scotia, including Wolfville, Montreal, Vancouver and Burnaby.

These petitioners, like tens of thousands before them, urge the House to demand of the Privy Council that it stop promoting a particular project, the Enbridge pipeline, allow the evidence to come in and not to insist that we put supertankers in this country's, and indeed the planet's, most treacherous waters.

\* \* \*

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the following question will be answered today: No. 583.

[Text]

Question No. 583—**Mr. Justin Trudeau:**

With regard to government Web sites: (a) is there a government-wide standard for the retention or maintenance of (i) press releases, (ii) other documents on departmental or agency Web sites; and (b) if the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, (i) what is the standard, (ii) in what document is that standard established, (iii) when was the standard established or most recently re-established?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada provides significant direction to departments and agencies on the management of information, regardless of its publishing medium or format.

Specifically, the Policy on Information Management and the Directive on Recordkeeping outline requirements that apply to all information that is created and used by the Government of Canada, including web content published on Government of Canada websites. In addition, the Standard on Web Accessibility and the Standard on Web Usability specifically outline requirements that apply to Government of Canada websites.

The links to the above-noted documents are found below. The dates on which they became effective are found on the websites.

The Policy on Information Management document may be found at <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=12742&section=text>.

The Directive on Recordkeeping document may be found at <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=16552&section=text>.

The Standard on Web Accessibility document may be found at <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=23601&section=text>.

The Standard on Web Usability may be found at <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=24227&section=text>.

*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

**QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 578, 580, 581, 582 and 584 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

**Question No. 578—Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:**

With regard to the planned reductions in departmental spending for the International Assistance Envelope announced in Budget 2012, for the each of the fiscal years between 2012-2013 and 2014-2015: (a) what is the total dollar amount of reductions in official development assistance; (b) what is the total dollar amount of reductions in non-official development assistance; (c) what is the total dollar amount of reductions to administrative costs at the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); (d) when will the restructuring plans for CIDA be announced; (e) what is total dollar amount of reductions to each of the 2011-2012 countries of focus; (f) what is the total dollar amount of reductions to CIDA's program activities, specifically, (i) fragile countries and crisis-affected communities, (ii) low income countries, (iii) middle income countries, (iv) global engagement and strategic policy, (v) Canadian engagement; (g) what is the total dollar amount of reductions for each of CIDA's thematic priorities, specifically, (i) increasing food security, (ii) securing the future of children and youth, (iii) stimulating sustainable economic growth, (iv) ensuring stability and security, (v) advancing democracy; (h) what is the total dollar amount of reductions for each of the branches of CIDA, specifically, (i) the geographic programs branch, broken down by country programs, regional programs, and Canada funds for local initiatives, (ii) the partnerships with Canadians branch, (iii) the multilateral and global programs branch, broken down by international humanitarian assistance, other initiative-specific programs with multilateral organizations, and core funding to multilateral development institutions; (i) what is the total dollar amount of the reductions to each of the programs at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, specifically, (i) Security and Stability, (ii) Democracy, broken down by the Glyn Berry Program Democracy Envelope and the Rights and Democracy core funding, (iii) Children and Youth, (iv) Sustainable Economic Growth, broken down by the Investment Cooperation Program and Environment and climate change, (v) Contributions to International Organizations, broken down by the World Health Organization, the Francophonie, the Commonwealth, the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and all others, (vi) Global Partnership Program, (vii) Anti-Crime Capacity Building Program, (viii) Counter-Terrorism Capacity Building Program, (ix) Afghanistan Counter-Narcotics Program, (x) Services rendered abroad; (j) what is the total amount of the reduction to each of the following programs at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), (i) the Development Innovation Fund, (ii) climate change adaptation in Africa, (iii) ecosystem approaches to human health, (iv) environmental economics, (v) rural poverty and environment, (vi) urban poverty and environment, (vii) Acacia, (viii) connectivity and equity in the Americas, (ix) Pan Asia networking, (x) telecentre.org, (xi) the IDRC Research Partnerships Challenge Fund, (xii) innovation, technology and society, (xiii) the global health research initiative, (xiv) governance, equity and health, (xv) research on international tobacco control, (xvi) globalization, growth and poverty, (xvii) peace, conflict and development, (xviii) think tank initiative, (xix) women's rights and citizenship; (k) what is the total amount of the reduction to each of the following themes at the IDRC, (i) agriculture and environment, broken down by health and the environment, agriculture and food security, climate change, and energy supply and use, (ii) science technology and innovation, broken down by science, technology, and innovation granting councils in developing countries, the role of the university within the national innovation system, and creative industries, (iii) information and communications technologies, broken down by knowledge economies, information societies, collaborative technologies and social change, and policies for networked societies, (iv) social and economic policy, broken down by inclusive, sustainable growth, accountable governance, and inclusion of marginalized groups, (v) health and health systems, broken down by health systems, governance, and access to health, health information systems, health human resources, understanding the emerging chronic disease epidemic, demographic changes, and biomedical research, (vi) complementing thematic programs, broken down by Canadian partnerships— universities, research institutions, and non-governmental

organizations, fellowships and awards, and special initiatives; and (l) what is the total amount of the reduction to the operational cost of the IDRC?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 580—Mr. Justin Trudeau:**

With regard to Canadian Forces operations since January 1, 2006, how many times have Canadian Forces aircraft been dispatched, at the request of provincial authorities, to conduct an emergency medical transportation and, for each such dispatch: (a) which provincial authority made the request; (b) which aircraft asset was involved; (c) from which Canadian Forces establishment was the aircraft dispatched; (d) from what location was the patient or patients picked up; (e) to what location was the patient or patients transported; (f) what was the date of the medical transportation; and (g) was a news release or other statement issued to the media concerning the incident, and, if so, on what date was the release or statement made?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 581—Mr. Justin Trudeau:**

With regard to search and rescue operations: (a) prior to January 31, 2012, what was the "call back procedure [which] is standard protocol followed by the [Joint Rescue Coordination Centre] and all provincial and territorial emergency management organizations", as referenced in paragraph 5 of the memorandum from Major-General J.H. Vance to the Chief of Defence Staff, dated February 7, 2012, under file number 3120-1 (WH Ops 1-1); (b) in what document or documents was this standard protocol issued, laid down or promulgated; (c) what are or were the dates and file numbers of the documents in (b); and (d) have there been changes to this protocol since January 31, 2012, and, if so, (i) what is the nature of those changes, (ii) when were the changes made, (iii) when did the changes come into effect, (iv) in what document or documents were the changes issued, laid down or promulgated, (v) what are or were the dates and file numbers of those documents?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 582—Mr. Justin Trudeau:**

With regard to the 2012 budget: (a) who provided the translation of the budget press release into the following non-official languages: (i) Arabic, (ii) Chinese (simplified), (iii) Chinese (traditional), (iv) Portuguese, (v) Spanish, (vi) Ukrainian, (vii) Persian, (viii) Polish, (xiv) any other non-official language, specifying which language; (b) how much did each translation cost; (c) for each translation, was the work carried out pursuant to a competitive contract, or was it sole-sourced; (d) what are the reference or file numbers associated with each translation; and (e) to which media outlets or organizations was each release distributed, and by whom?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 584—Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:**

With regard to government employment levels: (a) what is the current total number of federal employees in each Census Metropolitan Area; and (b) what is the total number of anticipated job reductions in each Census Metropolitan Area for fiscal year (i) 2012-2013, (ii) 2013-2014, (iii) 2014-2015?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Speaker:** The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

*Privilege***PRIVILEGE**

## ALLEGED MISUSE OF TEN PERCENTERS

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has come to my attention that what appear to be ten percenters have been mailed into various ridings in New Brunswick, including my own.

On many of these ten percenters, the return mailing address is to the Liberal member for Toronto Centre. One such mailing to my own riding of New Brunswick Southwest came in a franked envelope from the Liberal member for Cardigan.

I have submitted this evidence to you, Mr. Speaker, along with notice of this question of privilege. I ask you to consider the following points.

On November 3, 2009, the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore raised a question of privilege, claiming his position on the long gun registry was misrepresented in a mailing from another member.

In the subsequent decision by Speaker Milliken on November 19, 2009, it was found that the privileges of the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore were breached for these very reasons, and that it had the effect of “...unjustly damaging his reputation and his credibility with the voters of his riding...”.

Also, on November 19, 2009, a question of privilege was raised by the member for Mount Royal on grounds that his privilege was infringed by the actions of another member who sent a ten percenter into his riding. This resulted in Speaker Milliken stating that “...the mailing constitutes interference with his ability to perform his parliamentary functions in that its content is damaging to his reputation and his credibility”. This can be found in *Hansard*, November 26, 2009.

On March 15, 2010, the Liberal member for Malpeque moved a motion calling for the Board of Internal Economy to “take all necessary steps to end immediately the wasteful practice of members sending mass mailings, known as 'ten-percenters', into ridings other than their own...”. Again, this is from *Hansard*, March 15, 2010.

This motion passed, and the Liberal member for Malpeque issued a press release on March 29, 2010, stating that “The Conservatives abused this privilege—both in quantity and content—by sending excessive partisan attacks into unheld ridings and wasting millions of taxpayers' dollars. The Liberal motion ended these partisan out-of-riding mailings and won a victory for Canadian taxpayers”.

So much for that.

I remind the House that according to the April 19, 2010, decision by the Board of Internal Economy, ten percenters are only to be distributed as bulk mail from the House postal services, effective May 1, 2010. The April 1, 2012 version of the manual on members' allowance and services states, “Ten percenters may only be distributed within the member's own constituency and may not be distributed as addressed mail”, yet the material sent into my riding and others by Liberal members is generic in nature. Inside the franked and addressed envelope there is nothing that addresses the individual whose name is on the outside of the envelope.

In the mailing from the member for Toronto Centre into the riding of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, the letter begins with a generic “Dear Friend”. In the mailing into my own riding by the member for Cardigan, there is not even a salutation line.

Regardless of whether these materials were produced by the House of Commons printing services, in the offices of the member in question or in the research offices, these mailings are bulk in nature. They are not specifically addressed to the individuals whose names appear on the outside envelope and they are printed using taxpayer-supplied resources.

As you will see, Mr. Speaker, from the paper I supplied to you, they are partisan in nature, generic in content and should not be sent using franked envelopes into other members' ridings.

If the Liberal Party of Canada wishes to launch bulk partisan mail into Conservative—or, for that matter, New Democratic-held ridings—it should do so with its own funds, not House of Commons resources.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is a breach of privilege in this matter and I am prepared to move an appropriate motion should you agree. That motion would involve sending this question to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The actions of the members for Toronto Centre, Cardigan and possibly others are in direct contradiction of the spirit of the rules governing House of Commons mailings and, I believe, in contradiction of the letter of the law, which of course was to not only not direct such mailings into a riding held by another member but to do so with taxpayers' dollars.

• (1520)

It is clear that Parliament previously sought to end the practice of bulk partisan mailings being sent by one member into another member's riding. The Liberals seem to believe that they have found a way around this rule by stuffing bulk partisan materials into addressed and franked envelopes.

It is important that the House have the opportunity to examine this matter in the appropriate committee. It is necessary to determine whether the actions of some members are in breach of House of Commons rules. In addition to this, I think it would be prudent for the members of the Liberal Party who are participating in this practice, which they have previously publicly denounced, to apologize to this House and to Canadian taxpayers for their misuse of the resources entrusted to them.

If these mailings were paid for by the Liberal Party of Canada—meaning both the cost of printing and of postage—I would be the first to claim this matter was outside the purview of Parliament. That, however, is not the case.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for reviewing this important matter that I am sure you, like me, had believed was resolved.

• (1525)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, once we take a look at the blues from my hon. colleague's notes, we reserve the right to address his point of privilege, unless you are ready to rule on it right now.

## ALLEGED MISUSE OF TEN PERCENTERS—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I am ready to rule now.

I thank the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest for bringing this matter to my attention. I have had a chance to read his letter and look at the items in question.

I do feel that it is not a situation exactly analogous to the two previous rulings that he cited, given that it seems here to be more a complaint about whether the House rules were followed than about the content of the items he questioned.

Therefore, I find it is not a question of privilege, but it certainly could be something that the Board of Internal Economy should look at. I can assure the hon. member that I will ensure its appearance on the agenda for the next board meeting in order for the board to determine whether these particular mailings followed the House of Commons' own internal rules for these types of publications.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### CANADA–PANAMA ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT

The House resumed from March 29 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, 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, and of the motion that the question be now put.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak today on Bill C-24, 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.

This trade agreement is one of a series of agreements that the government has gotten into very hastily. This is another one that was negotiated in record time, without proper consultation, and our party has opposed it.

I do not want anyone to think that our party is opposed to trade. I know it is a common mantra for those opposite that New Democrats are opposed to trade; we are not opposed to trade. However, we are opposed to this trade deal.

I only have 10 minutes, so I will try my very best to be succinct in stating why we are opposed to this particular trade deal.

As I mentioned, it was done hastily and without consultation with relevant stakeholders, as well as without consultation with trade unions and environmental groups in Panama. It was done without consultation with civil society or citizens in Canada and Panama who have an interest in these agreements. It was done without respect for labour standards and collective bargaining, despite the addition of a labour agreement.

### Government Orders

There is no protection against money laundering and tax cheating in a country that has been decried a tax haven.

There is no commitment in the agreement to sustainable development and sustainable investment, which should be an important part of any free trade deal.

When we talk about trade in this country, we should not just be talking about the movement of goods. We need to be talking about a partnership, but what we have seen is the government making hasty trade deals that do not respect what Canada wants and needs.

If trade was all about free trade deals, Canada's trade would be increasing and improving, not getting worse. The government members talk about how they are very interested in trade and carrying on with these trade deals, but where are the results? When we look at the difference between signing free trade deals and actually increasing trade, Canada's trade has actually deteriorated. The quantity of goods and services shipped abroad from Canada is actually 7% lower than when the government took office. It is lower than it was back in the year 2000. What we do see in trade is an ever-increasing proportion of raw materials and raw resources, especially oil, making up that trade.

At one time, we had a very impressive trade surplus with other countries. That has now gone into a deficit. Even though we have increasing petroleum sales, 3% of GDP per year is in fact a decrease in sales.

This is from a report by Jim Stanford, an economist with the Canadian Auto Workers, that was published in *The Globe and Mail* on May 21. He is obviously very concerned about issues, particularly in the manufacturing trade. He has done a study of our longest-standing free trade pacts, which are with the United States, Mexico, Israel, Chile and Costa Rica. What is interesting is that our exports to those countries have in fact grown more slowly than our exports to non-free trade partners, while our imports from these countries have surged much faster than with the rest of the world.

Therefore, if our goal—which is a sensible one, according to Mr. Stanford—is to boost exports and to strengthen the trade balance, then signing free trade deals, as we have done, is exactly the wrong thing to do.

● (1530)

What is very interesting is that the five biggest trade deals we have had have resulted in more imports to us from these country, which is good for them, but fewer exports to them. We have not increased our trade nor boosted our proper partnerships.

*Government Orders*

The problem is pretty difficult, particularly for some aspects of our economy. We are seeing an endorsement by the government of an over-valued currency. We have heard our leader talk about that. I know many people in this country do not want to talk about that. The members opposite do not like to talk about the fact that our currency is over-valued and is trading at some 25% above its purchasing power parity with other countries. However, it does hurt Canada's exports and skews our trade with other countries, particularly the kind of trade that takes place when we are exporting unprocessed materials, including crude oil, bitumen in particular, without refining it. If we are not refining the stuff here and we are not making mining machinery here, our capacity to produce higher-end products will further diminish.

We do have a significant problem with trade and we have a problem that is not being fixed by these free trade deals.

What does the NDP support? We support trade, but we support fair trade. We want to ensure that the trade agreements we sign with other countries are fair and reasonable for both parties, partnerships that build positive relationships and not just open doors.

For example, in Panama we have situation where the government of Panama has refused various Canadian requests to sign an agreement to share tax information. It is extremely important in terms of transparency to have a tax information exchange agreement. The Government of Panama has refused, but Canada goes along with it anyway.

What is it we want as New Democrats? What do we want to have in trade agreements? First, in order to have a totally fair trade strategy, we want to have a comprehensive, common sense impact assessment for each agreement that we enter into that demonstrates that trade deals with Canada are beneficial for Canadian families, workers and industries, and that we do not have a trade agreement that will lead to a net job loss.

Second, we want to ensure that any agreement we negotiate supports our own sovereignty, our freedom to chart our own policy in the future and our ability to be competitive on the world stage, and that it supports the principle of a multilateral fair trade system.

Third, it is fundamentally important that all trade agreements promote and protect human rights by prohibiting the import, export or sale in Canada of products that are deemed to have been created under sweat shop conditions, forced labour or conditions that are not in accordance with fundamental labour standards and human rights.

Fourth, we also want to ensure that all trade agreements respect sustainable development and the integrity of all ecosystems.

Fifth, we want to be clear that before we go ahead with any enabling legislation, it be subject to a binding vote on whether we accept the terms of the agreement. The current system of tabling agreements in the House for a period of 21 days prior to ratification is neither mandatory nor binding.

In the case of the Panama trade deal, we see a repetition of the failures of previous trade deals to be fair, to be reasonable, to respect human rights, to provide the kind of protections that Canadians need and actually lead to increased trade from Canada to these countries.

• (1535)

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have three quick questions for the member.

The member says that the NDP is not opposed to free trade agreements. I wonder if he could share with the House a free trade agreement that the NDP has supported.

I also wonder if he can tell us how the NDP feels about the regional free trade agreement and NAFTA.

Finally, could the member share with the House, if the NDP were ever to form government, whether it would take Canada out of these free trade agreements with which it disagrees?

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the minister thinks that those are quick questions. I do not know if I can answer them as quickly as he asked them. They are three very important questions.

Since the government has come into office, it has not produced an agreement that meets the criteria that I just laid out. It has not produced an agreement that has led to increased trade from Canada except by importing more goods. We have mentioned the five most important ones that were studied by an economist. When an agreement is put forward that meets the criteria that I just laid out, and I set out five conditions, then we would be very happy to support it. We are in favour of fair trade. We are not in favour of signing trade deals that do not improve Canada's situation.

When we form government, and I know the minister says "if" with some trepidation, but I will answer "when" with some confidence, we would seek to improve any agreements that exist in order to ensure that Canada is engaged as a fair trade partner for the improvement of Canada and the countries that we deal with.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will pick up on the last point the member made in terms of the possibility of enhancing agreements.

In terms of the free trade issue, it is great to give attention to countries like Panama and so forth, but to what degree has the government over the last number of years looked at our exports and agreements with our greatest trading partner, the U.S.? Would he attribute that to being the reason we are maybe not doing as well in the manufacturing sector as we could be here in Canada?

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Mr. Speaker, we seek to improve whatever agreements we have. In terms of an analysis of the NAFTA in particular and the government's action, we have not seen the kind of sectoral support that we would like to see in Canada.

I do have to challenge the member's party as well in terms of this agreement. When our trade critic sought, through a motion in the international trade committee, to delay the implementation of the agreement until Panama agreed to tie into the tax information exchange agreement, which would stop the money laundering and tax cheating, the motion was defeated by both the Conservatives and the Liberals in committee.

*Government Orders*

I hear the member, but he wants me to point the finger opposite. If we are into pointing fingers about the problem with trade deals, I think we would need to look as well to the Liberal Party that did the add-ons with the NAFTA after claiming that it would do something entirely different.

• (1540)

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the member for St. John's East pointed out that New Democrats support fair trade.

In the process of examining the bill at committee, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster made a number of proposals that would have made this trade agreement acceptable to New Democrats. One in particular that I want to touch on is the definition of sustainable development. It reads:

“sustainable development” means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, as set out in the Brundtland Report published by the World Commission on Environment and Development.

I wonder if the member could comment on the fact that New Democrats actually have proposals to make trade agreements fair.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Mr. Speaker, obviously sustainable development is important. The report by the Brundtland Commission in the late 1980s was championed by Prime Minister Mulroney. I remember that because I was here. He championed that report, but we do not see the results of sustainable development being adopted by the current government either within trade agreements or even within our own country, which is a shame.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from St. John's East, I am pleased to rise today to speak on Bill C-24 at second reading. This bill deals with the implementation of 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.

It is certainly clear that we feel proud every time we see agreements. We feel that other countries want to trade and do business with us. All this seems really nice on paper. On the other hand, sometimes there are little surprises in the fine print. While I cannot claim that I am a specialist in international trade, there are some basic things that we, as a free and democratic country, should insist on when we do business with other countries. This is one of the reasons why our party is opposed to this bill. It is not because we are against international agreements, free trade agreements or attempts to try to remove trade barriers between countries. In fact, if we believe in certain values, I think we must make sure that the countries with whom we do business are not rogue countries or countries that mistreat their people in order to acquire, create, build, produce or manufacture articles that will be freely traded with our country.

I think that when we have principles, we must express them all the way. If not, we should stop going around the world saying that we defend rights and freedoms, and we should just go ahead and do whatever we want.

For those who do not know much about Bill C-24, it is a bill that was previously introduced, if memory serves, on August 11, 2009. The Conservative government had entered into negotiations on a comprehensive agreement with the Republic of Panama. The same day it signed that agreement, the Conservative government presented the agreements in the House of Commons as part of Bill C-46. This was back in 2010. The bill was passed at second reading and referred to the Standing Committee on International Trade for clause-by-clause consideration.

If you followed the speech by my colleague from St. John's East, you know that international trade is one of his passions. I would like to take this opportunity to commend him. The member for Burnaby—New Westminster also worked extremely hard on this issue and his advice was always very wise. He showed us the importance of conducting what is called reasonable and fair trade when these kinds of agreements are negotiated with other countries. Responsibility for this file was passed on to the member for Windsor West, who has also done excellent work.

I think it is important to listen, instead of simply playing cheap politics, as is frequently the case in this House. On the government side, they reduce the speeches made on this side of the House to one-liners, as if the NDP were anti-international trade or anti-free trade just because we ask questions and we ask that the countries with whom we do business do not, for instance, use child labour or exploit children as cheap labour, because we ask questions about specific environmental rules or because we ask that these countries not be obvious tax havens.

I was absolutely shocked when I read about the circumstances surrounding Bill C-24 in a little more depth and when I noted that Panama—which is, by the way, a very beautiful country—is what some people call a tax haven. On both sides of the House, there are people who rise frequently to say that we must try to put an end to anything that is called a tax haven. The problems with tax havens do not just occur away down there; their impact reaches into our country. Considerable amounts of money are taken and sent somewhere else to be hidden because certain countries have rules that are a little too lax. They allow any kinds of company throughout the world to go to their country and hide money from the government in the company's own home country.

• (1545)

Even the OECD has called Panama a tax haven. The United States considers Panama to be a tax haven. The OECD even specified that Panama was on the grey list. I learned there is a white list, a gray list and a black list. I have learned about a great number of things in this House. I also like it when we have the time to express our views on all these bills that often have, unbeknownst to us, an impact on all our constituents, in every one of our ridings.

We have a tendency to believe that when we talk about international trade, we are talking primarily about major trading centres within a country. However, when we do business with certain countries and give them certain privileges with regard to our goods and our services, it has an impact on all our population. Sometimes we have to look at the ramifications of this type of bill.

*Government Orders*

It is really worrying that a country like Panama still refuses to send information about its tax measures and about various issues and fields, and I am surprised. Although sometimes I am not surprised when we know that we are dealing with a government that is so lacking in transparency. The government may be happy to deal with a country that also has little fiscal transparency, but on this side of the House, we are not.

We definitely do not want to see that country become a place where some of our companies doing business there shelter money from taxation. All MPs should be concerned about that. We are debating a back-to-work bill because the government wants to force people to accept a collective agreement or poorer working conditions, but at the same time, it wants to carry on international trade with a country that allows big companies that make millions or billions in profits to diversify some of their income in order to avoid paying taxes, taxes that enable the government to provide services to Canadians.

I think it is inappropriate and simplistic for MPs on the other side of the House to ask whether the NDP has ever supported a free trade agreement. Bilateral agreements have taken the place of broad territorial agreements. Still, talks are under way between my province, Quebec, and the European Union. Every nation is trying to open its borders to ensure that its goods and services can circulate and be purchased. Once again though, we have to remember how that money is made, and I am proud to be a member of a party that is concerned about making money without having a negative effect on trade. There are ways to do that.

If these people are truly interested in doing business with us, then it is up to them to follow the rules of human decency. For example, I am extremely concerned about the whole section of the agreement concerning labour. When certain people see the number of times this government has resorted to back-to-work legislation, they could simply say that we are in no position to preach. What bothers me is that we are doing business with countries who do not pay much attention to the rights of workers and of those who, by the sweat of their brow, make things that we all take a great deal of pleasure in using.

To conclude, I am happy to have had the opportunity to comment on this bill. I am in favour of international trade, but not at any price.

• (1550)

[*English*]

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this member the same question that I asked the previous speaker. Is there any free trade deal that Canada is currently involved in that the member and her party are happy with? If so, I would like to know about it. If not, what would the NDP do if it had the opportunity?

Finally, are there countries that the NDP would not have a free trade deal with that are democracies?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Françoise Boivin:** Mr. Speaker, if possible, I would prefer to begin by answering the third question.

In theory, I have no problem doing business with any democratic country. But then that is not what we are talking about.

Had the member listened carefully to what I said, he would have understood that the problem does not lie with the signing of agreements; rather, it lies in the content of these agreements.

That being said, he is asking whether I can name one agreement that we are happy with. An agreement that I will definitely be happy with will be the first agreement that will be proposed by the NDP when it forms the government in 2015. I am convinced that we will not stop conducting free trade with other countries under an NDP government. People should get that idea out of their heads.

The difference is that the NDP will make sure that these agreements are respectful. Even President Obama, during his last the election campaign, mentioned re-opening some parts of the free trade agreement with Canada and Mexico. Sometimes we realize along the way—and there is nothing the matter with this—that some aspects of the agreement are not working or not working very well.

I believe that the priority of every government is the people who live within its boundaries. I personally do not represent the people of Panama, but rather the people of Gatineau. I want to ensure that, when we make agreements, we do so in accordance with the values of the people who elected me to represent them.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the short answer to the previous question was no, there is no free trade agreement or freer trade agreement which the NDP has a record of supporting, nor is it going to be supporting any free trade agreements under any other government, unless it happens to be the party in government. That is in essence what the member said. Can she just confirm that is the case?

• (1555)

**Ms. Françoise Boivin:** Mr. Speaker, if I read my own blues, I am pretty sure that conforms to what I said.

[*Translation*]

I strongly support the agreement with the United States and Mexico. I do not see a major problem there. This could lead to a lengthy discussion. I would like to have the time to say what I think about certain aspects of many of these agreements, because sometimes they need to be revisited. The reason the three countries hold so many summit meetings is to try to improve or alter the agreement. Just because a treaty is signed, does not mean that it immediately becomes immutable and untouchable.

I would like to repeat that the government has never obtained the guarantees that Canadians are entitled to receive before signing this type of agreement. I am convinced that I would have no trouble rising to vote in favour of any agreement proposed by the New Democratic Party government that I hope will be in power within three years.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a sad state when members of the official opposition make statements in which they clearly indicate that they do not support freer trade or free trade agreements in principle because it is not their political party that has brought them into place.

*Government Orders*

It reminds me of the leader of the official opposition's position, very much an anti-western divide and conquer mentality. He says, in essence, that he has no problem taking shots at the industries out in western Canada. I must say that westerners, including myself as a member of Parliament from the Prairies, took great exception to his divide and conquer mentality. Other members on the front bench feed into this anti-trade sentiment. I do not say this lightly.

Let us talk about a specific issue. Let us talk about the Panama agreement.

Manitoba has a huge potato industry. I like to think it is only a question of time before we could be first place in Canada. Now, some of my colleagues in Atlantic Canada might have something to say on that point, but I do believe that there is an opportunity for Manitoba to be number one in Canada. Ultimately, if we approach the industry in an aggressive way, we could surprise a lot of people throughout the world. We have three processing plants in Manitoba that take that raw material and generate roughly 1,000 jobs for the province of Manitoba. That is a lot of good-quality jobs.

Those potatoes and processed potatoes are being sent to countries like the United States, the Philippines and Panama. Many Manitobans, when they see the agreement that we are looking at today, ask if it could be better. Sure, it could be better. There is no doubt it could be better. If only the government would see the wisdom in some potential amendments, maybe we could make some significant headway.

There are many stakeholders in Manitoba and, because I do not want to be selfish, many individuals across Canada who would see the benefits and would question why not, if the argument is strictly a human rights issue or an environmental law issue. I remember having a debate with one of our NDP colleagues earlier about China and how much we import from China. The New Democratic Party is not talking about stopping those exports in order to protect human rights issues.

I think all political parties are concerned, and I can guarantee the Liberal Party is concerned, about human rights. We are concerned about labour laws. We are concerned about environmental laws. We are going to do what we can to try to influence so that we have a better world. Canada has a leadership role to play.

However, we in the Liberal Party believe in freer trade. In fact, one of the best, most significant free trade agreements ever achieved in our country was through Lester Pearson. It was the Auto Pact. That created tens of thousands of jobs yesterday, and is still creating jobs today—

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** You don't know your history, Kevin.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** No, we do know the history. That was back in 1965, roughly. Lester Pearson signed off on that agreement. Now, that is a formal agreement. There are other ways in which we can get around and encourage and improve.

I was a provincial legislator when Team Canada was being talked about. Team Canada was going to go to Asia and beyond.

● (1600)

It was actually former prime minister Jean Chrétien who said we should get stakeholders, some of the business and union groups, elected provincial officials and a wide spectrum of different stakeholders, who believe Canada would be a better country if we could reach out around the world and try to get contracts that would not only improve the quality of life for Canadians living here, which is our first priority, but also contribute to the economic and social development of other countries.

That was through an informal agreement in which the prime minister at the time said that, as a group, collectively we could have a huge impact if we brought the stakeholders together to visit some of these countries.

Some provinces have piggybacked on that idea. This is not to say that Prime Minister Chrétien's government was the first to do it. There might have been provincial governments that had taken such initiatives on a smaller scale, but that particular prime minister actually set the stage for taking stakeholders outside of Canada to try to secure the types of agreements that could make a difference.

Sure, as I have pointed out, we have legitimate concerns with regard to issues related to Panama. Yes, we could have legislation that would make it better, but we are not going to close our eyes, as a political entity, and say the legislation is so bad it is not worth pursuing.

I like to think we take a more open-minded approach to trade than my colleagues to the left, the New Democratic Party.

We believe, ideally, it would be wonderful if it were a Liberal government, and we have demonstrated in the past how aggressive we can be in generating and creating jobs here in Canada by looking abroad and enhancing our trading relations. We have had very successful missions in the past. We have made very successful amendments to trade agreements. We have had very successful agreements signed by prime ministers and ministers, and it is because we have seen the value and how Canada has benefited.

Having said that, we also recognize that we happen not to be in government at this point in time, but if the government does enter into agreements in principle that we can support, there is nothing wrong with doing that. If the government does have an idea or is progressing in certain areas, we are prepared to look at the possibility of supporting that.

On the last Friday on which we were sitting I posed a question about the idea of freer trade with Ukraine and how freer trade with Ukraine could potentially be used as a way to ensure there is a healthier democracy in that wonderful, beautiful country that we all know as Ukraine. If the government continues to move forward, hopefully it will listen to some of the ideas that are coming from the Liberal Party, as a political entity of the House, with which we believe we could improve upon those relations.

For example, the member for Wascana was in Ukraine just the other week and no doubt was concerned about that issue. One of the reasons I asked the question was that he had raised the issue with me a week ago last Friday.

*Government Orders*

What I like about this type of legislation is it allows us to enter into discussion on the importance of world trade because if it is managed properly, and I do believe the government has dropped the ball with regard to the U.S., we in Canada can have a very healthy manufacturing industry and other types of industries that make up our economy.

We are concerned about our manufacturing industry, but I do not believe closing the borders and building walls, as the NDP would seem to support, is the best way of doing that, nor is dividing the country when irresponsible statements are being made about western Canada.

• (1605)

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg. We are both Winnipeggers. I was struck by his initial comments about his surprise that the NDP rejects all the free trade agreements Canada has ever signed purely because the NDP did not design the free trade agreement. That seems very counter-productive.

Could the member expand on why he thinks the NDP position on free trade is so backward?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, it is hard to understand why the New Democratic Party would be convinced to such a degree that the only type of trade deal that would be viable would be one that originated from a national New Democratic government.

I cited my example in regard to Panama and the potato industry. Members can research that by looking at the Manitoba website on industry and trade; I believe that is where they will likely find it. They will find that, at the lower level, the provincial NDP appears to be somewhat supportive; at least I hope it would be a bit more supportive. I believe we have a national New Democratic Party that does not quite get it when it comes to the importance of trade and the impact it has on real people and real jobs. The best example I could give of that is the attitude of the Leader of the Opposition toward western Canada and the valuable commodities we have there.

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is always an interesting expedition to listen to my hon. colleague twist himself into a pretzel explaining how at one point in the Liberal Party's history it was for free trade and then at another point it was against free trade, although the member forgot to mention that in his typically long-winded speech.

However, I wanted to ask my friend in the corner if he agrees with and supports a free trade agreement that does not protect the rights of workers to open collective bargaining, that does not protect human rights and does not provide measures for the proper stewardship of the environment. These are all amendments that we put forward and that both the Conservatives and the Liberals voted against. Can the member explain how it is that he and his party do not agree with those basic elements of labour rights, human rights and environmental protection?

• (1610)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the principles of trade. If we were to apply the New Democratic Party's principles on the issue of trade, those being of human rights and the environment and labour legislation, and apply that equally, one could

actually say the NDP would be erecting walls around our entire country in terms of whom we would be able to trade with.

There are many nations around the world, the single greatest one likely being China, from which we import a phenomenal amount of consumer products every day, billions of dollars' worth annually from China. I know that logic can defy a lot of people, but at the end of the day if we follow through on NDP logic on the issue, we would think that the NDP would shut down the borders or raise a wall to trade between China and Canada.

Otherwise, I would challenge the member to explain to me why he believes there are absolutely no human rights issues in China or environmental concerns or labour laws that this member would be concerned about because he has no—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when I stand in the House on another so-called free trade treaty with a small developing country, the sense of déjà vu is interesting, the sense of repeating our history and repeating the gross errors we have made so many times in the past with these types of trade agreements. Those errors are not just errors that compound the economic problems this country has; they compound the problems in the country with which we are making these so-called free trade deals.

I think of when I spoke against the NAFTA agreement, in particular when I pointed out that in the first year after NAFTA came into effect in Mexico, the average wage went down by 20%. The cost of corn to the producers was reduced by almost 50%, the value of their corn product. Farmers were forced off the land and into the ghettos and barrios of a number of the major cities in Mexico. That is the kind of impact these deals have.

There are some good parts to these deals, if one is wealthy in the existing country, if one is a multinational corporation in the existing country, or if one is an authoritarian government that wants to maintain control of its population. Each one of those sectors of those countries benefits from these deals.

However, the average citizens do not. In a lot of cases, their conditions actually deteriorate. We can see that, consistently. I think there is a seminar being put on one day this week by a number of countries that are neighbours to Panama on the conditions that are going on there with regard to child labour, violence against women, violence against the aboriginal populations and the list goes on. There are great human rights abuses that a trade deal will do absolutely nothing to better. In fact, as I said earlier, in many cases it will actually make them worse.

I want to address one particular problem with this agreement, as I have very little time in 10 minutes to get all the points out. Panama is a major tax haven. In spite of attempts by the international community, in spite of demands from Canada, it has done very little at a legal level to correct the money laundering that occurs in huge numbers of dollars in that country.

There are 400,000 corporations registered in Panama, a country many times smaller than us. We do not have anywhere near that many corporations registered in Canada. We have about a quarter of that many, if that. They are there for one purpose only, and that is to launder money in the vast majority of cases. Very few of them are legitimate operations.

There is a huge number of dollars coming in from the Colombian drug trade. There is a huge number of dollars coming in from the Mexican drug trade. It is being laundered and being passed back so that it can be used legally in other countries.

We are signing on to that operation. Our banks and our financial institutions are going to be able to take part in that. They are going to be used by the operations down there to move that illicit money back into Canada and into the international markets through our banking system.

When we demanded of Panama that it begin to clean up, it paid lip service to it, but at the practical level it is growing. Money laundering is in fact growing in Panama and has been for at least the last decade.

We sit here and we hear the Conservative government and its Liberal affiliates supporting this deal.

• (1615)

For this reason alone, the Minister of Foreign Affairs wants to support it. He knows better than most members sitting on that side of the room just how bad the situation is in Panama, but he will pay lip service to its ideology and support this deal. It will continue on down there, and in fact the money laundering process will grow. We will be aiding and abetting it by signing this deal.

Not one member in the House should stand and vote for it when the vote comes, as eventually it will at third reading. Members should vote against it. We should do it right now when it finally gets to a vote at second reading.

The billions of dollars that flow through that country is not just drug money. It is organized crime members using the money that they take from human trafficking and all of their other abuses, such as the gun trade, and it just goes on and on. That is what we are signing onto with that country.

Panama could clean it up. We as a country should tell it that we will not deal with it, that we not will we enter into a trade agreement with it until it does that. However, that is not what we are saying. We are looking the other way.

There are three lists of countries that the international community creates: the white, grey and black lists. Nobody is that bad to be on the black list, which makes us wonder how valid it is. The white list is made up of countries like Canada that have meaningful controls over their financial institutions and that combat money laundering and tax havens on a systematic and reasonably effective basis.

Panama is on the grey list and has been for a long time. I do not know why it is not on the black list. However, there is nobody on the black list, so I guess that explains that. A country gets onto the grey list when it makes noises about doing something like cleaning up its

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financial institutions, banking systems and its economic structure that allows for the tax havens and the money laundering.

Like the other countries that are on that list, once they get on it they stay on it indefinitely. Hardly anybody ever comes off of it and goes onto the white list. Nobody goes onto the white list. They just do not do anything except talk about it. We have done this at the international financial level, but it is meaningless. I would suggest there is no reason to believe that Panama will ever come off the grey list when we have countries like Canada with its current government, along with its Liberal affiliates, that will support that process by entering into these deals.

The other reason we should not enter into this trade deal is that in spite of the provisions in the agreement dealing with labour standards, practically that will not occur. Panama does not have the governmental infrastructure to enforce human rights and environmental and labour standards.

When asked what kind of a deal we would support, it is one wherein we would say to those countries that we want trade, but we will not do it if it is to the exclusive advantage of multinational corporations and the very wealthy in those countries. If it benefits Canada as well as their people, then we are interested and we will negotiate. However, until such time as we enter into those kinds of agreements, this party will continue to oppose them.

• (1620)

#### **Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's comments, and he has raised many serious issues. There is a school of thought that engaging countries with human rights standards that may not be as we would want them to be as Canadians and helping them grow their economies through free trade and increasing ties will allow these countries to rise above many of the terrible things that the member has outlined.

I was born in Brazil. I have seen that country do a lot of probably not very good things, but it is now blossoming, as is Latin America, though it had a troubled history.

Would member not agree that a growing economy helps everyone?

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Mr. Speaker, it is too simplistic to say that a growing economy helps everyone. It does not. Growing economies sometimes only benefit the very wealthy in the country.

Let us go to Brazil and look at the leadership role it has provided in South America. It does not want to sign an agreement of a free trade nature with Canada. It has been building its own trading arrangements, with the Mercosur arrangement, with other countries from Central America.

Brazil looked at the NAFTA agreement with Mexico and saw the way it damaged that economy so badly. It is not interested in talking to us if we are talking about that kind of agreement. What it has done there is in fact much as the European Union did. It entered into agreements with other smaller countries that actually provided a transfer of wealth, outright dollars to it that would assist the country in building some of that infrastructure so human rights, environmental standards and labour standards were protected.

*Standing Order 57*

Brazil has been the leading country in South America doing that. It is the kind of country we should be following as a model, not countries like Panama or Colombia.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that members of the other parties are attacking us more and more. That proves that our opinions are gaining currency.

I would like to thank my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh for his presentation on the situation. He raised some very important points.

Unfortunately, when we enter into free trade agreements with other countries, we tend to overlook the fact that the entire world is watching the important step being taken. That is part of the reality of international relations. Any important step taken is observed and interpreted. Unfortunately, Canada has taken steps, especially regarding the Kyoto protocol, that have tarnished its reputation in certain parts of the world.

Some countries believe that by signing a free trade agreement with Panama, we will be condoning certain practices that really should be condemned, such as money laundering.

I would like my colleague to talk a bit more about the message that Canada is sending to the rest of the world.

• (1625)

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

He is right. If we enter into these types of agreements with Panama, we are indicating to that country and to the rest of the world that Panama's practices are acceptable. We are saying that Panama can keep on doing what it is doing, that it can put its children to work because we know that it cannot change without help. We are giving permission, not just to Panama, but to other countries, to continue with such practices and to violate human rights. We are allowing it to believe that this is acceptable and permitted by Canada.

For us, the NDP, it is not acceptable.

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#### CONTINUATION AND RESUMPTION OF RAIL SERVICE OPERATIONS LEGISLATION

##### NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that, with respect to the consideration of Government Business No. 12, at the next sitting, a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that the debate not be further adjourned.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

#### PROTECTING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

##### BILL C-31—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** While I am on my feet, I will advise that Bill C-31, protecting Canada's immigration system act, has been debated

on six days in the House and there have been over 80 speeches. That is in addition to over a dozen committee meetings where members studied the bill. Yet even with all of that debate and study, I must advise that an agreement has not been reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) concerning the proceedings at report stage and third reading of Bill C-31, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act, the Marine Transportation Security Act and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Act.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at those stages.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Malpeque, Public Safety; the hon. member for St. Paul's, the 41st General Election; the hon. member for Sudbury, Telecommunications.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

#### CANADA-PANAMA ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, 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, and of the motion that this question be now put.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Davenport.

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise this afternoon to speak to the bill, which our party is opposing, Bill C-24, a free trade agreement with Panama.

Many people on the other side of the aisle have been asking us today what kind of deals we support. We stand very clearly in support of fair trade.

This agreement is a marginally improved copy of the George Bush era style. It puts big business before people. There is no effective enforcement of human rights. There is lip service to environmental protections without any real tough measures or dispute mechanisms. It is a NAFTA copycat. These agreements have been in the past designed for trade between two industrialized countries. We have ourselves and Panama which is currently a developing nation.

This is a deal that was negotiated, like others, in record time, without consultation with trade unions, environmental groups, civil society or citizens.

*Standing Order 57*

A fair, sustainable trade deal would not only address the needs of business, but it would also address the needs of workers and the concerns over the environment. We have global environmental issues. We have global issues around workers' wages and workers' rights. These need to be reflected in any deal that Canada signs internationally because what we sign internationally speaks to who we are as a country.

According to, not just us, but the U.S. department of justice and other entities, Panama is a major conduit for Mexican and Colombian drug traffickers and their money laundering activities.

The OECD has noted that having a trade agreement without first tackling Panama's financial secrecy practices could incentivize even more offshore tax dodging. There is a reason to believe that the trade deal would not only increase tax haven abuses but would also make fighting them that much harder.

It is one of the many ironies that we experience in this House daily. We have a government that pretends to trumpet this belief in law and order domestically but will play footsie internationally with regimes that do not have proper transparency or accountability when we are talking about organized crime, drug cartels, when it is clear that Panama has not tightened up its measures around tax.

My colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster put forth several moderate amendments that dealt with some of the fundamental issues that Canada stands for: fairness, treating workers fairly, allowing for collective bargaining and protecting workers and the environment. We on our side do not believe that economic development, economic activity and stewardship of our environment are mutually exclusive terms. We believe they can work together. In fact, we believe that is the key to future prosperity, not just for Canada but for countries like Panama.

The NDP has consistently opposed NAFTA-style trade templates that focus on the interests of multinational corporations and ignore these other basic important elements of any free, democratic civil society, and that is workers' rights and the environment.

This trade model ultimately rejects fair and sustainable trade which, in turn, generates discontent and protectionism. The NAFTA model has shown unparalleled efficiency in driving and entrenching the political and economic domination of large transnational corporations and is currently at the heart of the ongoing drive for bilateral FTAs.

• (1630)

In our country and in my riding, there are many immigrants and new Canadians who are desperate for work. They are sometimes working three jobs at minimum wage just to make ends meet. We do not need one more instrument in the race to the bottom for wages, not just in Canada but internationally. We need to create good jobs, protect workers' wages and allow workers to bargain collectively not just here but in countries that we deal with. In fact, trade agreements are economic agreements and partnerships between us and other countries but, as I have already said, they also speak to who we are as a country. Are we a country that is willing to toss aside, throw overboard, throw under the bus, whatever metaphor one wants to use, those things which our forefathers and foremothers fought for?

I go back to workers' rights. This deal echoes the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement. I know the party in the corner seemingly had no problem with the ways in which workers' rights were not protected in that agreement. It is willing to throw workers under the bus in this instance, too. We expect that from the government and we are getting used to it from the Liberals, but we on our side will not do that.

What do we stand for? What does fair trade look like to us? We believe in an alternative and better form of trading. As an aside, which is not a minor aside, there are other countries that aggressively promote their businesses internationally and locally. There are countries that spend hundreds of times more than we do promoting, for example, their wine industries abroad and we are not doing that here. In other words, we have many ways in which to promote trade with other countries, celebrate and promote the innovation, technology and things we produce here in Canada and we are missing out on those opportunities. We are missing out on them in the ever-expanding arts and culture sector. I can say that from first-hand experience.

The New Democrats believe in an alternative, in a better form of trading, in providing a comprehensive and commonsense impact assessment on all international agreements that demonstrate that the trade deals Canada negotiates are beneficial to Canadian families, workers and industries, and that the government does not sign any trade agreement that would lead to a net job loss. What could be controversial in an amendment like that? That seems like due diligence to us. It seems like a no-brainer. We want to ensure that the deal we sign will not create net job losses. There should be a means test of assessing whether this agreement is good for the Canadian economy, not just a few large multinational corporations that get backdoor access to government ministers.

Those are some of the ways in which we believe that international trade agreements should be negotiated. We also know that many Canadian workers, families and businesses support this direction.

• (1635)

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was listening to my colleague's speech, and there was so much misinformation that I just do not know where to start.

One of the things we should all agree on is that what the Leader of the Opposition calls jobs is a disease. He said that quite clearly. The NDP policies actually makes sense in a kind of twisted way. It needs to inoculate Canadians and people around the world against jobs and shut down any trade agreement that might actually improve trade and create jobs between the countries.

*Standing Order 57*

Is my colleague aware that Canada and Panama have committed to ensuring that their laws respect the International Labour Organization, one that he supports, of course, the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which covered the elimination of child labour, forced labour and discrimination, the respect of freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively? Is he aware of that, or is this something that the NDP researchers do not let their members know? The NDP has the idea that anything that creates jobs is a disease, like open and free trade, and that is a bad thing to do.

He still has not answered the question as to whether there has ever been a free trade agreement that the NDP has supported. We would like to know that on this side of the House.

**Mr. Andrew Cash:** Mr. Speaker, there is so much misinformation in that multi-pronged question that I do not know where to begin answering it.

However, I can tell my hon. colleague with some certainty, which perhaps the researchers on his side have not fed him the bad news, that Ontario has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. These were not the \$10 an hour jobs, the kind the Conservatives are creating that they are in such a celebratory mood over. We have lost good, high-quality jobs that people can raise a family with. What we want for Canadian workers is the same thing we would like for the workers in Panama, which are jobs they can raise a family on, where they do not need to take three low-paying jobs and never see their kids, never be able to work in the community and never be able to get involved because they are desperately trying to stay above water. That is the kind of job creation we look for on this side of the House. That is the kind of job creation that would be reflected in international trade agreements that we would support.

• (1640)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will make reference to the potato industry that I talked about earlier. It provides approximately 1,000 real jobs in the province of Manitoba. Those workers are making a relatively decent living with valuable jobs. They contribute immensely to Manitoba's economy, and we hope to see the industry grow. Does the member have any kind words to say in regard to the potential of being able to increase demand for our potato product on the Prairies by looking outside of Canada?

Panama currently is one of our consumers. It purchases many Manitoba french-fry and potato products. Does the member not see any benefit whatsoever if there were some sort of freer trade agreement that would help solidify that particular market? I just cite that as a specific example. Does he see any benefit whatsoever for those 1,000 workers in Manitoba?

**Mr. Andrew Cash:** Mr. Speaker, I love french fries as much as the next guy, and if there is an opportunity to expand the markets for potatoes I will not be the guy to stand in the way of that. However, the member is mixing things up. We are talking about a very large-scale issue here. We are talking about money laundering and hidden taxes, and my friend in the corner is talking about french fries.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening very carefully to today's debate about

the bill to create a free trade agreement between Canada and Panama.

Canada does not have an extensive trade relationship with Panama. Trade between our two countries amounts to less than \$150 million per year, which is not much. However, the government now wants to formalize a less than satisfactory situation marked by an imbalance between the rights of workers and the rights of big companies. That is exactly why the NDP does not agree with the bill before us today.

The government did not consult with unions here or in Panama. Panamanian workers' rights have not been formalized, even though the government claims that this bill will formalize a mechanism to give workers the right to some oversight over free trade between our two countries. The sad thing about all this is that, realistically, that right is nothing but an illusion. It does not really mean anything. In Panama, workers do not really have the right to disagree. I will come back to that point shortly.

I also want to make another point. Today, we are debating the passage of a bill on free trade with a country that does not give us any hope, like the rest of Latin America. We do not want other countries to follow into Panama's footsteps to make their laws, to develop future free trade initiatives. That is not the country I want to rely on and use as a model for future bills. That country has serious problems related to tax havens and money laundering.

I do not understand why the Conservatives are so interested in moving forward with a country that has not shown that it is prepared to rehabilitate itself and to engage in open and transparent free trade. On the contrary, it is a country whose economic activities are not conducted in the open. That may be why the Conservatives are so interested in moving forward with that country, since they also prefer to avoid doing things in the open and want to make sure Canadians are not aware of the impact that the bills debated in this House will have on the rest of the country.

What concerns me in all this is the lack of openness. The Conservatives want to turn into reality, to codify a situation that is not balanced. This will benefit large corporations, but Panama's workers and average families do not have any reason to believe that they will be better off.

I find it hard to see why we are passing a bill involving a country that has so little trade with Canada. And even if that trade were to expand, there is no guarantee that this growth will not take place on the negative side, namely money laundering and drug trafficking.

I thought the Conservative government wanted to avoid increased drug use. I wonder if this agreement will not have the opposite effect.

As for the rights of workers, I want to mention a few amendments that were proposed by the NDP when this bill was brought to the attention of the House, during the 40th Parliament.

*Standing Order 57*

At the time, we proposed eleven amendments. Among other things, we wanted to define the notion of responsible investment as maximizing social good as well as financial return in the areas of social justice and corporate governance, in accordance with the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment. I do not believe that the bill before us today is an improvement over the legislation introduced during the 40th Parliament. Among other things, that amendment did not get the support of the House today.

This is a free trade initiative that is really based on the major free trade agreements of the past. For example, in the case of NAFTA, the two partners were rather major industrial and economic powers.

● (1645)

Canada and the United States have had an important relationship for a long time. That is also the case for Mexico. These countries all have a very important trade and industrial history. We signed agreements based on the fact that each of the two or three partners has a certain amount of power. I am thinking in particular of the auto pact signed a number of years ago. This type of free trade benefits both parties. However, the agreement we are debating does not strike a balance.

Panama and Canada are not on the same economic and industrial level. The Canadian economy is based on exports, especially of natural resources, whereas Panama has a black market economy, an economy based for the most part on money laundering and drug trafficking.

Do we really want to formalize a relationship with a country that is incapable of being transparent and of showing that it can promote another economy and that its own is based on activities that will benefit and not harm Canada?

We believe in a model based on a trading relationship that will not cause job losses. We recommend free trade agreements that will contribute to the growth of the Canadian economy. I think the Canadian economy depends above all on the well-being of its workers, who must have the means to spend money and support their communities.

In the bill before us here today, I do not see how this agreement will benefit the workers of our regions, who will be very much affected by these changes, especially those concerning employment insurance. What benefit is there for them? This free trade agreement would benefit Panama, but what does it do for our workers? I would really like to know. Will seasonal workers in eastern Canada benefit from this bill? I highly doubt it. This bill is worthy of George Bush and his trickle down economics. This created a negative situation in the United States, where the economy has collapsed. That country still has not recovered.

I do not understand why anyone would want a bill based on bilateral trade worth less than \$150 million.

I want to come back to the issue of workers and of the rights they will have under this bill. In Panama, according to chapter 11, when there is a dispute, investors will have the right to request compulsory arbitration that they can conduct independently, however Panama's unions can only file a complaint and it will be up to governments to seek and obtain remedies. The government of Panama has not ever shown that it wanted to go further and really apply workers' rights.

Consequently, if the unions are not entitled to give concrete expression to the recourse being proposed in today's bill, this right becomes a mirage and not a concrete right. It is a very theoretical right. Unfortunately, Panama's unions will have neither the means nor the legal capacity to give concrete expression to the right that this bill claims to be giving them.

Clearly, workers will not be able to take advantage of these illusory rights. If members are looking for a reason why the bill before us should not be adopted, then that is their reason. Workers do not have any rights in this bill, and Panama's workers deserve better than that. This bill should be amended to improve the lot of Panamanian workers.

Several laws in Canada should be amended to improve the lot of our own workers.

● (1650)

[*English*]

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, throughout this debate we have heard a lot of untruths from the opposition. I would like to make a correction for the record.

Panama is no longer on the OECD grey list as a tax haven. This is a repeated claim by the NDP. Panama is improving, so it can participate in free trade agreements. Panama was removed from the grey list by the OECD in 2011 after having substantially implemented global tax standards for exchange of information. This is a big development. It is important. It demonstrates that countries that want to have free trade can improve for the goodness of their citizens and for the betterment of Canada.

Why will this member not support free trade?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Philip Toone:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments.

We certainly do support trade that respects human rights and improves the lot of workers. However, I do not see why we should support a bill that will primarily benefit big business and others who are already well placed to profit hugely.

I remind members that, very recently, even Nicolas Sarkozy also made the point that Panama is still a country that supports the black market. It is a country with a huge capacity for drug trafficking. This is nothing new. One organization has said otherwise, but a lot of organizations do not agree with the member across the way. There are a lot of improvements that need to be made in Panama, and progress will not be made by adopting a bill like this.

● (1655)

[*English*]

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, sitting on the international trade committee, I actually thought the NDP was starting to come around on some of these trade issues. However, listening to the remarks made here this afternoon, obviously not.

*Standing Order 57*

There is no question that there are some problems in Panama in terms of money laundering and tax havens. Does the NDP really believe that by slamming the door shut the situation will be improved? It is our biggest trading partner in Central America. There are opportunities for the continued export of seafood, potatoes, et cetera that we are exporting there now. I think there is a huge opportunity, if we can get in the door, in terms of the new canal being built, in terms of the infrastructure. I know there are some restrictions on that infrastructure because of agreements with the United States.

Does the member not think that we should at least be trying to get in the door, signing an agreement? I believe if it is a partner with another country, it will have a better chance of overcoming some of the labour abuses and other things happening in its system, because the economies do become more linked.

How can the NDP say we should just slam the door shut, as if that is going to do anything for Canada or the workers in Panama?

**Mr. Philip Toone:** Mr. Speaker, the only people I see slamming the door shut are the Liberals and the Conservatives.

We proposed amendments. We continue to suggest changes to this law. We want to improve workers' rights. We want to make sure that all parties, especially in Panama, are going to benefit, and that workers in Canada are going to benefit from this bill in front of us. There is no proof whatsoever, no study, that shows that passing a bill such as this would actually improve the plight of workers of the world.

We need to make sure that if we are going to pass a bill here in this House, it is actually going to be beneficial to all the parties concerned. We should be standing up for those who need our protection. That is the point of this House.

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate. Even before we started, it was pretty clear what we were going to face from the government across the way, with the help of its supporting choir in the Liberal caucus.

There is not one member of this caucus who does not fully understand and support the notion that we are a trading nation. Our survival depends on our ability to trade. The issue is not whether one believes in or supports trade. If we did not support trade, we would not have much of an economy.

When we are defining the rules of engagement for Canada in trade agreements, the question really is whether they are only going to be about the bottom line. Is that the only thing that matters? If that is the case, then the Conservative approach, supported by the Liberals, is exactly the right approach. In fairness to the Liberals, I acknowledge that once the government gets into this deal, it is going to start working magic somehow and doing things that are not in the agreement.

The Conservatives have been clear: as long as an agreement makes money, it is a good deal. We in the NDP do not agree with that attitude. We think there is more to a trade agreement than just the bottom line. We have said on many occasions that our trade policies should be based on the principles of fair, sustainable and equitable trade.

Where I come from in Hamilton, that sounds very much like Canada. That is who we are, or at least we used to be like that. When there were issues of labour rights or environmental protection, not to mention a host of other issues, it used to be that Canada was always seen as the cavalry. If we were not leading in making improvements and changes, then Canada was one of the first countries to be called upon to add support.

I have said many times that we do not have influence in the world because of the size of our economy or the size of our military or the size of our population. Our geography, both in size and in its proximity to the United States of America, makes it pretty clear that any trade agreement would have to improve our bottom line, or why bother? However, to leave it at that is not Canadian. It is not the Canadian way.

It is no longer the case. Those of us who travel to international forums and so on and run into other parliamentarians around the world are always being asked what happened to Canada. Where did the Canada that was respected go to, the Canada that was prepared to say it is not just about dollars, that there is more to it?

We do give a damn about what happens to workers in other countries that we have trade agreements with. We care equally about the environment, because there is only one, and it is not decided by national boundaries.

In my opinion, we in the NDP have taken the approach that the majority of Canadians want. We did not tell the government not to do any trade agreements. Hon. members across the way ask us to show them one trade agreement that we have ever supported; I ask them to give us one that would actually meet Canadian standards, and then we would gladly support it. We in the New Democratic Party will not just roll over and forget about human rights, labour rights and the environment. That we will not do.

I was not at committee. I am not a member of that committee. However, I do know about some of the presentations that were made, and I would like to read a couple briefly into the record.

• (1700)

The first was from Dr. Teresa Healy, who is a senior researcher in the social and economic policy department at the Canadian Labour Congress. Dr. Healy said:

However, the Canada-Panama agreement does not include specific protection for the right to organize and the right to strike.

If I can speak as an aside, given what is going on in this place right now with the pending legislation, it should not really surprise anyone that given the government's view of its own workers, its view of Panamanian workers would be even lower.

I will continue with the quote:

It provides instead for the "effective" recognition of the right to collective bargaining. On trade union rights then, the agreement is weaker than previous agreements.

On labour issues, fines are small; there are no countervailing duties; there is no provision for abrogation or any other such remedy; and yet again, labour provisions remain in a side agreement rather than in the body of the text.

That is for a purpose, Mr. Speaker.

*Standing Order 57*

The problem is, and the point that I am making about the way Canadians view free trade agreements and whether they are free or fair, suggests the government cannot just leave the issue alone. It had to come up with these side agreements.

Although I am not a lawyer, we can be assured that those side agreements do not carry more power than the main agreement. If the government were serious about protecting the rights of Panamanian workers and the right to have a sustainable environment, it would be in the main body.

Dr. Healy goes on to say:

Let me speak a bit about the context of labour rights in Panama. Panama is a country with a population of about 3.4 million people. It is currently recording relatively high growth rates, but it is the second most unequal society in the region: 40% of the population is poor and 27% is extremely poor, and the rate of extreme poverty is particularly acute in indigenous populations.

Unfortunately, that sounds familiar.

Dr. Healy goes on:

Although the country has endured extensive structural adjustment, liberalization, and privatization in recent years, this has not translated into economic benefits for the population.

In response to the international perception that Panamanian labour laws were rigid and a disincentive to foreign investment, President Ricardo Martinelli announced unilateral changes to the labour law in the summer of 2010. The law ended environmental impact studies on projects deemed to be of social interest, it banned mandatory dues collection from workers, it allowed employers to fire striking workers and replace them with strike-breakers, it criminalized street blockades, and it protected police from prosecution.

The severity of this attack on labour rights was met with strikes and demonstrations. The police were exceedingly harsh in their response—and this was just the past summer. At least six people were killed, protesters were seriously injured, and many were blinded by tear gas and police violence. Three hundred trade union leaders were detained before the President withdrew the labour provisions and called for a national dialogue of moderate trade union leaders and business leaders.

That is one quote.

I would like to read a second one if I could. This is from Mr. Todd Tucker, who is research director at Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch. He said:

I have two central points. First, Panama is one of the world's worst tax havens. It is home to an estimated 400,000 corporations, including offshore corporations and multinational subsidiaries. This is almost four times the number of corporations registered in Canada. So Panama is not just any developing country.

Let me elaborate on the first point. What makes Panama a particularly attractive location for tax dodgers and offshore corporations? Well, for decades the Panamanian government has pursued an international tax haven strategy. It offers foreign banks and firms a special offshore licence to conduct business there. Not only are these businesses not taxed, but they're subject to little to no reporting requirements or regulations.

You have to be kidding, Mr. Speaker—one minute? My, time flies when having fun. Let me then get at least—

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** If there's unanimous consent, we can give him a few more, can't we?

**Hon. John Baird:** I give unanimous consent for another hour. They'd never agree.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Okay, let me put this on the record before I end my remarks.

Two of the amendments put forth in committee by the member for Burnaby—New Westminster would have protected trade union

workers in Panama by offering the right to collective bargaining as well as requiring the Minister of International Trade, as the principal representative of Canada on the joint Canada—Panama commission, to consult on a regular basis with representatives of Canadian labour and trade unions.

• (1705)

There is that consultation again.

The government needs to start asking people what Canadians think before it starts ramming things through as it is doing here.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe the pompous, arrogant view of the socialists on this issue. They actually think that they understand the people of Panama and what is better for Panama more than the Panamanians themselves.

They are talking about consultation with Canadians. Their attitude is, I think, very much in line with their leader's attitude, which is that the NDP believes that jobs are diseases. We have seen this consistently.

The member was saying that the NDP is not against trade. He should listen to the speeches that have come out of his colleagues' mouths on this issue.

We have been asking consistently if the NDP has ever supported any free trade agreement. At least this member was honest and said that he did not.

However, his colleague before him did talk about a very important agreement, called the Auto Pact, which many of us on this side who represent the automotive sector understand. The Auto Pact meant that for every job Canadians bought, they would be guaranteed to have one in relation to the Americans, so it was one for one. Ever since free trade, in the automotive sector in Canada, we have built over a million more units of automobiles than we consume here and buy in this country.

Would he please explain how a one-for-one deal would—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please.

The hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

• (1710)

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of things I could say to that. I would be glad to answer those questions if either the member wants to ask again or somebody else wants to, but with that kind of preamble to the question, I am not responding any further than I just have.

[Translation]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very glad that my colleague has had a chance to speak on the subject of this bill, which once again shows just how unbelievably see-no-evil the Conservatives and Liberals are when it comes to trade and international relations.

*Standing Order 57*

One hon. member spoke on the subject of China and tried to ensnare us with some pretty fallacious reasoning. Briefly, in reference to China, it owes its economic success to what is essentially dumping, with massive state intervention, and to making loans that end up being gifts to companies, using the banking system.

Since it is that see-no-evil approach that has devastated our industrial fabric and ultimately trapped people in undesirable, low-wage jobs, all so that we can have very low-priced goods—really, cheap goods, I would like to ask my colleague what he thinks about the approach taken by the government and the third party in the House.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Mr. Speaker, the member is asking specifically about China. Of course, our neighbours to the south are now paying the price for that whole China approach. They decided they would do as much of their manufacturing as they possibly could over in China at a fraction of the cost of doing it in the United States. That worked really well for the first few years, until finally so many jobs were gone—and we are not immune from this at all—that they have no more manufacturing sector. Now, when the Americans are trying to rebuild their economy, where is the basis for it?

In terms of the government and what it is willing to do, let us remember that this is a government that is still prepared to send asbestos from Canada to India and other countries. I guarantee members that not one of my constituents would stand by that policy and say it is okay. They would say that it is not okay to poison people around the world in the interest of the almighty dollar. That is not the Canadian way.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-24, 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.

I would like to make something clear at the outset. We oppose this bill. In the NDP, we do not want a free trade zone where workers' rights are sold at discount prices; that is already a serious problem in Panama. Nor do we want a bill without a clear definition of sustainable development and responsible investment.

I would like to remind the House that when the committee considered the predecessor to Bill C-24, Bill C-46, it heard persuasive testimony that the Republic of Panama is a tax haven and that its record on human rights is debatable, to say the least. The situation has not changed since then.

Bill C-24 has a new title but does nothing to address the fundamental shortcomings of its predecessor. It does not incorporate the amendments moved by the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, which would have addressed the most contentious aspects of the agreement. During the clause-by-clause study of Bill C-46, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster proposed 11 amendments that would have made progressive changes to the bill.

The changes proposed by our member concerned the addition of the crucial concepts of sustainable development and responsible investment, the obligation of fiscal transparency and some provisions that would have integrated into the bill the protection of workers' rights, especially the right to collective bargaining. Other amendments proposed by my colleague would have required the Minister of International Trade to consult workers and unions, and to work with experts and human rights organizations in order to conduct analyses of the impact of the trade agreement. All these amendments were rejected by the Conservatives with the support of the Liberals.

There are many reasons why we cannot vote in favour of Bill C-24. First of all, the Canada-Panama agreement, which follows the NAFTA model, puts large corporations before people. That is unacceptable. Agreements like NAFTA were initially designed for trade between highly industrialized, developed countries, but Panama is a developing country. This trade agreement will not help Panama to grow sustainably or improve the living conditions of its people. Instead, the agreement will increase the influence of multinational firms and increase inequalities, and this will happen much faster and more definitively than it did in the case of NAFTA.

Furthermore, this trade agreement does not create a level playing field for investors and workers. Under chapter 11, investors have the right to request compulsory arbitration that they can conduct independently, however a union in Panama would not be allowed to take a case to arbitration. It can file a complaint, which would lead to an investigation followed by a report, but it would be up to the government to seek and obtain remedies.

In addition, the Canada-Panama agreement does not ensure respect for human rights. Also, while Bill C-24 appears to protect the environment on the surface, it does not implement any real measures or mechanisms to resolve disputes. We also have to wonder about the degree of Panama's fiscal transparency. It is important to bear in mind that, despite the Canadian government's requests, Panama refused to sign a tax information exchange agreement.

•(1715)

We believe that Canada's trade policy should be based on the principles of fair, sustainable and equitable trade that builds partnerships with other countries that support the principles of social justice and human rights, without ignoring the need to broaden trade opportunities.

The federal government needs to stop focusing exclusively on NAFTA-type free trade agreements at the expense of other options, and it should explore other ways of increasing trade, in particular by adopting a vigorous trade promotion strategy, one that would spread Canada's brand abroad the way Australia has succeeded in doing.

The NDP firmly believes that there is another, better model of trade relations that could be established with Panama or any other country, a model that would include the following in a global fair trade strategy.

*Standing Order 57*

First, it should include a comprehensive and rational impact analysis for all international agreements, to determine whether the trade agreements being negotiated by Canada are advantageous to Canadian families, Canadian workers and Canadian industries. The government should not sign any trade agreement that is likely to lead to a net loss of jobs. Once again, that is unacceptable.

Second, there should be a guarantee that the trade agreements Canada negotiates will strengthen Canada's sovereignty and its freedom to establish its own policies, that they will help make us a force to be reckoned with on the world stage and that they support the principles of a fair multilateral trade system.

Third, there is the fundamental principle according to which all trade agreements must protect and promote human rights by prohibiting the import, export or sale in Canada of any products considered to have been manufactured in sweatshops, by forced labour, or under any other conditions that do not meet basic international standards for labour or human rights.

Fourth, the model includes the fundamental principle according to which all trade agreements should be consistent with sustainable development, as well as the integrity of all ecosystems.

Fifth, every time the government of Canada signs a free trade agreement, the decision to adopt the enabling legislation must be submitted to a mandatory vote on whether or not the terms of the agreement are acceptable.

The current system, which consists of tabling a free trade agreement in the House for a period of 21 sitting days prior to ratification, is not mandatory and does not bind the government to accept a decision of the House.

I am now ready to answer questions.

• (1720)

[*English*]

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate that Panama is no longer on the grey list of tax havens as determined by the OECD. It is unfortunate that the NDP keeps repeating the suggestion that Panama has not improved itself in this regard. Panama was removed from the grey list by the OECD in July 2011 after having substantially implemented global tax standards for exchange of information. I wonder if the member would reflect on that.

We on this side of the House still have not heard if the NDP supports any free trade agreement in the history of humankind.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nycole Turmel:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's question, but I remind him that all countries and all organizations are saying that Panama is still a tax haven and also a country where human rights are not respected and where working conditions are extreme.

When Canada signs a free trade agreement with another country, it should establish requirements to ensure that our rights are not violated and that people working in that country, in this case Panama, do so in decent conditions. That is what we want, and that is something that can be done. It is possible to make demands and to have free trade agreements in which all the parties will be respected.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier this afternoon the member's colleague made it very clear that the only free trade agreement the NDP would ever support would be a free trade agreement put in by an NDP administration. Otherwise, it does not support free trade agreements.

Having said that, the member made reference to other options. One of the successful demonstrations of how free trade or expanding borders can really help was when former prime minister Jean Chrétien had a team Canada approach, in which he took stakeholders from industries outside the country in an attempt to sign up a wide variety of different types of contracts and so forth, thereby increasing trade. I am wondering if the member would support that sort of initiative that former prime minister Jean Chrétien took.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nycole Turmel:** Mr. Speaker, I remind the hon. member that, in my presentation, I mentioned the amendments that we proposed. However, they were rejected by the Conservatives and the Liberals. Those amendments would have helped us secure free trade agreements with other countries.

The NDP is not opposed to free trade, but it supports basic human rights. It is perfectly natural to make that request.

• (1725)

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer for clearly defining the conditions under which the New Democratic Party might consider supporting a free trade agreement with one or several countries.

I wonder if my colleague could elaborate on the wrong message that Canada might send about labour rights, among other things, if we were to accept a free trade agreement with Panama under the current conditions.

**Ms. Nycole Turmel:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The message we would be sending is simply that we agree with the fact that another country allows its workers to have much less favourable conditions than workers in Canada.

We would also be agreeing that these people, these workers, will not get a decent salary. We would be agreeing with the fact that products are made and sold clandestinely, while hoping they were not made by children.

That is what we agree to when we sign a free trade agreement that goes against human rights and against the Canadian principles relating to free collective bargaining, even though we know that, right now, there is talk of legislating workers back to work here. We do not agree with that, but the message being sent abroad is that we are prepared to accept any conditions.

**Mr. José Nunez-Melo (Laval, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to say a little bit about Bill C-24 on the implementation of the free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Panama.

*Standing Order 57*

As you are aware, the NDP is strongly opposed to this agreement because of all its deficiencies and inconsistencies. It is based on the former Bill C-46, which was not passed in the previous Parliament. Let us remember the proposals and amendments suggested by our colleague for Burnaby—New Westminster. He submitted 11 amendments without success and the bill was never passed.

In this Parliament, the Conservative caucus decided to introduce this bill again as Bill C-24. Among other things, the Conservatives proposed that, for tax purposes, Panama should still be considered a tax haven. This is unacceptable in the eyes of the global financial community. The Conservatives are sending the message that we are not asking any questions and that we are not imposing any constraints on countries regarding the disclosure of useful or important tax information. It seems that the negotiators of this type of agreement have not shown the importance of this and have not sent the message to the officials negotiating for the other countries involved—such as Panama in this case—that this was perhaps not a binding requirement for signing this agreement. As we know, these countries have refused to disclose this financial information. It would appear that the Canadian negotiators said that there was no problem and that negotiations could continue.

Our country places a great deal of importance on workers' rights, as demonstrated by all the collective agreements signed throughout Canada, by the existence of unions and by legislation that permits free collective bargaining. However, the hon. members can see for themselves what is happening right now, in our country.

The Conservatives want to sign a free trade agreement with a country where there are few guarantees that there will be at least minimal respect for the working conditions of employees. In reality, that is not a binding condition, either. It sends the wrong message. In fact, Panama can say in return that it understands very clearly that, in reality, the aim of this free trade agreement is just to grant certain advantages to mining companies, oil companies or Canadian casinos. These companies will be able to operate more profitably, considering the competitive advantage they will obtain from the lower wages and all goods that they can purchase more cheaply.

The countries that should be our partners have flatly refused to sign this agreement. However, this tax information exchange agreement was one of the critical points in the negotiations that Panama entered into with European countries. The OECD has made a number of statements and has even drawn up grey lists and black lists and lists of every colour imaginable in order to categorize certain countries whose economies are dysfunctional.

● (1730)

However, as everyone knows, the result of this is that there was never really a positive agreement between Panama and Europe, and particularly between Panama and France. Now, Canada comes along and wants to be the sheriff. It wants to sign a free trade agreement and it tells Panama what it must commit to do. It also tells Panama that what it is asking for in return is negotiable in a very unfair fashion.

Recently, I was stunned to hear a member of this House call one of our colleagues on this side a pompous socialist, because that member thought the New Democratic Party was fiercely opposed to international trade. It does not make any sense. We were misunder-

stood. That is really misquoting and mischaracterizing what we want to propose, or what was already proposed on numerous occasions by our colleagues in this House.

When it comes to trade, I feel that all the proposals made by the New Democratic Party are good. These include: protecting the environment and workers' rights—and I will say it again—and total honesty regarding the financial information that must be shared to avoid shenanigans. International trade is plagued by money transfers, money laundering and similar activities.

Our dear colleague, the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster, proposed amendments, but the Conservatives and the Liberals always refused to accept them. At the time, there was a deadlock because we were proposing to secure “win-win” free trade agreements, instead of “win-lose” agreements like this one.

As for the member who called our colleague a pompous socialist, it is all a matter of interpretation, because if I said the opposite, they would then be deemed to be imperialists and even colonialists. That is all part of history and those days are over.

As we will see, international trade will evolve in a way where good faith will prevail, followed by everything related to financial interests and to profits from that trade.

Instead of collecting interests or buying bank drafts, we are going to go back to the ancient basic form of trade, namely the trading of natural resources for another form of financial resources.

● (1735)

[English]

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have three quick points.

First, on the socialist issue, that is how the NDP members describe themselves. I am glad they do that, because the first step in any problem is identifying the problem. Now that they know they are socialists, they can work on becoming capitalists and join the world of prosperity, democracy and happiness.

Second, Panama, as a tax haven, has been removed from the OECD grey list. It has substantially implemented global pact standards for the exchange of information. Therefore, it is probably better that the NDP not keep repeating that false fact.

Finally, I am still waiting to hear of any free trade agreement the NDP has supported in the last 2,000 years.

**Mr. José Nunez-Melo:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member reminds me of an old story about the socialist and the capitalist. At the end, the socialist is the good guy and the capitalist is all the time the bad guy who wants to screw others.

Relative to the OECD list, we do not know what the objective of that organization is. It has prepared these lists and says that this is black, that this is grey and that this is white. We will see that all of the ones on the white list are the ones who commit more fraud than the other ones.

*Standing Order 57*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague surely knows the old adage, “give a dog a bad name and hang him”. It is obviously always a pleasure to talk of all manner of ills and illnesses—and why not talk about illnesses while we are at it.

However, I would like to bring my colleague back to the more serious matter of the interests at play in the free trade agreement with Panama. Considering that the Liberals and the Conservatives clearly seem very swayed by particular interests—or what could be described as corporate interests with ties to the world of finance—could my colleague talk more about the fact that this trade agreement will not defend the interests of 99% of the population?

● (1740)

**Mr. José Nunez-Melo:** Mr. Speaker, that was indeed very well put. The member put the question rather clearly and accurately so that we could understand what is beneficial and what is not.

Canada has traditionally been a rich, developed country whose international trade has primarily been subject to the dictates of the United States of America. I can clearly remember, when I was still a student at university and at the HEC, we learned everything about economic relations. It was the NAFTA era and everyone knew that 85% of exports went to the United States of America.

Not everyone agreed with this and some argued that we would have to diversify and increase international trade with Europe, Latin America and Asia. This was suggested by some people in our discussion groups in our masters level international trade courses. These were the kinds of issues we discussed. It was only recently—less than 15 years ago I think—that we began to sign free trade agreements with other countries, those described as non-traditional customers, rather than the United States.

I can only agree with my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou. What he said was very apt.

[*English*]

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as usual, my colleague made some important points with respect to this trade deal and Canada's role in the world, making fair and just deals with other countries. As has been said, there is no doubt about the fact that Canada is a trading nation. It always has been a trading nation. I am from Nova Scotia. It is a trading province, always has been and always will be.

I have looked at some of the work the government has been doing, whether it be the CETA deal or what it has done on NAFTA, or other free trade agreements. The crux of the problem is that the government does not have a clear policy on what its position is on trade, just that it wants some.

Its negotiators do not have an industrial policy to work from. The European Union has an industrial policy. All other major trading nations in this world have a domestic, industrial policy to work from. They know where the strengths and weaknesses are in their economies. They know what it is that they want from a trade deal, not just the fact that they want a trade deal.

That is extremely important to begin with, to understand where we want to make gains and what the downsides might be in order to get those gains. If we understand them up front, then we understand that during the negotiations we need to make accommodations for the downsides. If we are going to engage in some deal that is going to affect a particular industry, in their wisdom, the negotiators and the government departments responsible may decide that the gains are greater than the losses. Nonetheless there are going to be losses, and they have to prepare for those.

There has to be, built into the deal, accommodation or adjustment strategies for the possible closing of an industry, the laying off of employees, the retraining, the relocation, perhaps, of the people and communities affected.

This is what a fair and responsible trade policy has to look like. It has to be progressive. It has to be fair. It has to be socially just. There has to be a commitment to human rights, to the environment, to labour protections and to making sure that the deal, in the final analysis, is right for this country.

I agree, and I bet there are not too many members on this side who would disagree, with the idea that Canada needs to be out there promoting what Canadians do best, creating new markets, creating new opportunities for our entrepreneurs, our businesses, our ideas, our technology and our resources. I do not think this country, certainly under the government, is doing a good enough job with that.

What are we dealing with here on Panama? We are dealing with a country that is important because it is a country and because there are working people, an environment, a government that is perhaps making some mistakes and doing some things that we are not happy about. Nonetheless, there are hard-working women and men in that country who are trying to provide for themselves, their families and their communities. There is an important ecosystem in Panama that we need to ensure is maintained.

● (1745)

However, in 2008, for example, two-way merchandise between the two countries reached only \$149 million, less than 1% of Canada's total trade. Now I am not suggesting because we only do a bit of trade with this country it is not important. I would say just the opposite. It is even more important that we tailor the kind of deal that we do with a developing country like this, so we are all gaining from the experience, so the people of Panama gain as much as the people of Canada and the businesses in Panama gain as much as our businesses.

*Standing Order 57*

The problem is the government has put together a deal that is very much like the NAFTA deal. It is like a deal it would do with a major industrialized country. It does not have the kind of sensitivities that are necessary in dealing with a developing country, and those are some of my concerns. It does not deal to my liking with human rights issues. It does not deal appropriately with the environment, with labour rights and, has been stated by successive members of this caucus, it does not deal with the fact that Panama is a tax haven. Panama has been delisted by the OECD. As the member before me stated, it has been black- and grey-listed because it will not provide information and there is no transparency with respect to financial transactions. Even with this deal, the Government of Canada tried to get the Government of Panama to sign a taxation information agreement that would make its information more transparent and it did not happen. However, it is a free trade deal and the current government is a free trade government and it is going to sign it come what may.

It was interesting listening to my colleagues. We talk about pushing for environmental protections, human rights and labour rights. I began to think about what we have been talking about in this House in the past number of weeks and months. How many times has the government brought in back-to-work legislation? Twenty-one times, completely and utterly taking away the right to free collective bargaining for working people in this country. The Conservatives are getting rid of science. They have shut down the Freshwater Institute; the Centre for Offshore Oil, Gas and Energy Research, gone; the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, gone; the National Council of Welfare, gone; the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council, disbanded last fall. These were organizations that provided valuable scientific and fact-based research to help governments and to help the private sector, to help communities make sound decisions and conduct themselves in ways that make our communities and our countries stronger.

The government has brought in a piece of legislation we are dealing with right now, the Trojan Horse bill, Bill C-38. It has stuffed an unprecedented amount of legislation into that bill. Seventy pieces of legislation would be changed. The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act would be completely repealed. The Fisheries Act would be changed substantially to the point where it would hardly be recognizable. EI would be irreparably changed. Is it being changed in the face of discussion and debate? Not one iota. The government unfortunately is engaged in relations with countries like Panama and it has absolutely nothing to hold to that country because the way it is conducting itself is anti-democratic and opposed to human rights. That is why it should be subjected to all kinds of criticism from this side and from others in this country.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for having very clearly described the framework for the debate and the discussion we are engaged in with respect to this free trade treaty. He brought out the finer points, while focusing on the things that are important to us as progressives, which is to say environmental protection and respect for human rights.

What we have here is a very bad cut-and-paste version of George Bush style free trade agreements that place major corporations ahead of people.

I would like him to give us some further details about why Canadians should be worried and concerned about the fact that there is nothing about environmental protection or protection for the rights of workers, or about the fact that it may make our own working conditions worse.

[*English*]

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague's question gets to who we are as Canadians, it gets to our values. Whatever the government of this country does, whether it is here in Ottawa, Halifax, Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, or whether it is in Panama, it reflects the values of the people of this country.

In a case like this where the government is negotiating a trade deal with a developing country, people are looking at our country and saying that we are taking advantage of that country, that we are a much bigger country, that we have a much bigger trade balance than Panama. They are saying that Panama is struggling and this country is taking advantage of it. People are saying that we do not care about the environment, about human rights or about labour protections. They and Canadians are increasingly asking what happened to the principles of justice, good governance and walking this earth with integrity.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for having given such an eloquent presentation that really went to the heart of the matter.

I wish to speak to my colleagues about another matter. I am very worried because a factory in my riding has been closed for a long time. One might reasonably hope that it could reopen within a few days, but unfortunately, the workers in my riding have no idea whatsoever about what the conditions will be like. Currently, it is owned by a private investor, or at least assumed to be.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives now want to raise the threshold for mandatory review of foreign investment to \$1 billion. They want to raise it from \$330 million to \$1 billion. I am rather disturbed about this inconsistency in the government's approach to the management of our domestic economy while at the same time exporting problems that were created here in Canada by signing free trade agreements with countries whose treatment of their people raises serious doubts. There are all kinds of concerns about Panama.

Is my colleague as concerned as I am and can he tell us more about this matter?

• (1755)

[*English*]

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** Mr. Speaker, the member is working hard for his constituents, who find themselves in the difficult situation of not having a job and are waiting with bated breath to know who is going to take over ownership of the country.

*Standing Order 57*

My colleague talked about foreign ownership. The government recently reduced that threshold of \$1 billion. It reduced it considerably because everything in this country is for sale as far as the Conservative government is concerned.

The Conservative government is looking at countries around the world. China is taking a bigger stake in the oil sands in Alberta. An American company came up here and took over Caterpillar. Within five years it shut the company down. It took all the money, the tax breaks and everything else. That American company enjoyed all of the benefits of being in Canada. Caterpillar was shut down and the workers were put out of work. The company went back to the United States.

That is what happens when we do not have a government that is prepared to stand up for working people. They can be taken advantage of by foreign companies. Every Canadian has reason to be concerned about that.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Standing Committee on International Trade, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-24, the Canada–Panama Economic Growth and Prosperity Act.

To be acceptable and really effective, free trade agreements have to do more than just open new markets like Panama. They have to be based on fair, sustainable principles that benefit both countries. The free trade agreement we are debating today does not really meet these criteria. In fact, this agreement has problems that are common to many of our free trade agreements. I would like to talk about these problems, as some of my colleagues have done.

One of the most disturbing parts of the agreement is in chapter 9, which has to do with investment. This chapter covers the same principle as chapter 11 of NAFTA, which allows a company to sue a government if it creates regulatory barriers to trade.

According to Todd Tucker of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, who testified before the Standing Committee on International Trade on November 17:

Panama is one of the world's worst tax havens. It is home to an estimated 400,000 corporations, including offshore corporations and multinational subsidiaries. This is almost four times the number of corporations registered in Canada. So Panama is not just any developing country.

Indeed, for decades, the Panamanian government has been deliberately pursuing a tax haven strategy. It offers foreign banks and firms a special offshore licence to conduct business there. Not only are these businesses not taxed, but they are subject to little to no reporting requirements or regulations.

According to the OECD, the Panamanian government does not have the legal capacity to verify key information on these businesses, such as, for example, their capital structure. Panama's shadowy financial practices also make it a very attractive place to launder money that comes from all over the world.

According to the U.S. state department, major Colombian and Mexican drug cartels, as well as Colombian illegal armed groups, are using Panama for drug trafficking and money laundering purposes.

The Canada-Panama trade agreement could even exacerbate the problem posed by Panama's status as a tax haven. As the OECD pointed out, signing a trade agreement without first tackling Panama's shadowy financial practices may lead to greater tax evasion. So, an agreement with Panama would facilitate tax evasion, which would result in large sums of money not being collected by the taxman. Need I remind the House that this is a period of budget austerity, when that money is badly needed for our public services.

There are no restrictions on capital entering or exiting Panama. Transactions are protected by banking secrecy, and financial activity is not monitored. There is also a somewhat more specific problem in this case, and that is the absence of a tax information exchange agreement. The negotiation of a free trade agreement should be an opportunity to encourage Panama to be more transparent about tax evasion.

Although the importance of dealing with problems caused by tax havens was highlighted at the 2009 meeting of the G20 in London, Canada is moving in the opposite direction and is creating a new means of facilitating the flight of capital. This type of strategy is just irresponsible.

We should also note the serious environmental problems in Panama. While this deal includes an agreement on the environment, as we saw with the free trade agreement with Colombia—which has a separate agreement on the environment—it actually provides no enhanced protection for the environment or the resources in affected communities. Given Panama's very lax environmental regulations, especially when it comes to mining, this oversight is extremely worrying.

We know full well the devastating impact of deforestation, especially in that area of the world. Instead of taking real action to address the current and impending threats to Panama's precious natural resources, the Canada-Panama trade agreement risks encouraging a race to the bottom on environmental protection. Probably a new version of Easter Island.

Why is the government so willing to ignore the huge threats to Panama's environment? All trade agreements, including this one, should respect sustainable development and the integrity of all ecosystems.

• (1800)

However, seeing that this government cut eight ecotoxicology positions at the Institut Maurice-Lamontagne, I imagine that it does not understand the importance of preserving these ecosystems.

There are also problems when it comes to protecting workers. Panama is currently enjoying relatively high rates of growth, but it is ranked second among countries in the region in terms of inequality: 40% of Panama's inhabitants are poor, 27% are extremely poor, and the rate of extreme poverty is particularly high among indigenous populations. In recent years, the country has undergone considerable liberalization and privatization, but they have not trickled down to financially benefit the population.

*Standing Order 57*

The Canada–Panama agreement does not include specific protection for the right to associate and the right to strike. Instead, it provides effective recognition for the right to bargain collectively. As far as union rights are concerned, the agreement is, therefore, weaker than previous agreements.

The trade agreement does not level the playing field for investors and workers. Furthermore, this trade agreement does not create a level playing field for investors and workers. Under chapter 11, investors have the right to request compulsory arbitration that they can conduct independently, however a union in Panama would not be allowed to take a case to arbitration. It can file a complaint, which would lead to an investigation followed by a report, but it would be up to the government to seek and obtain remedies. Based on our experience with agreements modelled on NAFTA, governments are not inclined to go down that road.

Unfortunately, the trade agreement with Panama does not address any of these issues. In fact, the agreement does not refer to drug trafficking, tax havens or money laundering. It does have a side agreement to deal with labour, but we already know from previous efforts with such side agreements that they have no real effect on improving labour conditions in a country.

Quebeckers and Canadians will not benefit from the agreement any more than Panamanians. Moreover, in the agreement, there are several measures modelled on World Trade Organization agreements, which have been contested for some time by southern countries.

The Canadian government justifies this accord by the fact that Panama is an established market for Canada, and that bilateral trade and investment relations show strong, long-term growth potential. Some big Canadian businesses have sniffed out good deals and believe that the accord will facilitate trade relations with Panama, despite its dubious reputation, but what price will be paid by Canadians, Panamanians and all future generations?

We, the members of the opposition, proposed changes to improve this agreement. During the clause-by-clause study, we proposed 11 amendments that would have made this bill more progressive. For example, we suggested adding certain essential concepts, such as sustainable development and investment and, more importantly, transparency requirements for taxation. The Conservatives, together with the third party, rejected our amendments. That shows how backwards those two parties are when it comes to responsible, appropriate fiscal policy.

The NDP, for its part, prefers a multilateral approach based on a sustainable trade model. That might be the main difference. Bilateral trade agreements are usually protectionist trade agreements that grant preferred treatment to some trading partners to the exclusion of others. Weaker countries typically find themselves in an inferior position relative to bigger partners. A sustainable multilateral trade model avoids those problems and protects human rights and the environment. That is why these elements should be more prominent not only in this agreement, but also in other free trade agreements. That could be one way to solve the problem. That is our proposal.

I would like to end by talking about values, because I think values are also involved. This free trade agreement could allow us to assert

our own Canadian values almost everywhere in the world. Our values could be reflected in our free trade agreements; they could be understood; they could be seen; and they would be clear. This would be interesting. In fact, I do not want to speak against the people of Panama. I just think that this agreement is not good for us, nor is it good for them.

• (1805)

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Québec for her speech. It shows great intelligence and her great capacity for work. It is very promising. It makes me trust her work on the Standing Committee for International Trade. It is a committee that I am familiar with and I enjoyed my time on it very much. It is a fascinating field to learn about.

My colleague really put her finger on the problem of our Canadian values. These values are shared by people throughout the country, by 34 million Canadians. These values, of which we are extremely proud, are related to issues of world peace and human rights.

Sometimes I have the impression that the party in power, as well as the third party in the House, have confused these values with monetary values and other values relating to the development of natural resources or to human exploitation.

I will not hide the fact that I hesitated a long time in deciding that it was an approach that suffered from naïveté, which would be touching in other circumstances, were it not for the interests linked to it and to the fact that it might colour and in fact even damage and destroy our worldwide reputation. Or else, was it tied to much less commendable interests for a small portion of the population who profit handsomely from it, and have both hands in the cookie jar?

I would like to hear my colleague's opinion on this issue.

**Ms. Annick Papillon:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his very astute comment.

It is indeed a question of values. We should also find out whether this agreement will benefit the entire population or only part of it. This is where the NDP differs with the government, which, all too often favours just some of the people.

This is something we have noticed in a number of policies, not just the policies involving free trade. We think it is important to promote these values for the benefit of all, not just for a portion of the population, and to do it in our own country, certainly, and also beyond our borders. These are also values that we would like to inculcate in the people of Panama. In fact, we would like to inculcate these values in everyone.

I would like to thank my honourable colleague for his very valid ideas, with which I completely agree.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I ask the member her thoughts on the issues of human rights, labour legislation and environmental concerns. She comes across as being fairly passionate in terms of freer trade maybe not being able to deal with those types of issue in these bilateral agreements.

*Standing Order 57*

My question to the member is related to countries like China, which exports billions of consumer products and dollars to Canada. I am sure she would have concerns related to those three issues. What would she suggest Canada do with those countries we currently trade with, where there are those types of concerns, or does it just apply to those countries where there are agreements in place?

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Annick Papillon:** Mr. Speaker, human rights and the environment are issues of concern in any agreement with any country. However, what I wanted to emphasize in what I said was the idea of a multilateral approach. I meant a multilateral approach for other countries too, including Asian countries, where several countries can be involved. It is a better approach than bilateral agreements, which are often problematic.

This approach has often been suggested. I am thinking of Asia in particular because of the current situation. One frequently meets people—at the Standing Committee on International Trade, for instance—who suggest the idea of developing this multilateral approach and encourage us to think more seriously about it. That is why, in this case, I said to myself that it may be an answer.

It will never be possible to solve all the world's human rights and environmental problems, but at least we can have the desire and show the leadership to work in that direction and to promote it. Nothing has even been said here about what is happening in this country. It is as if it did not exist. That is the problem.

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, like many of my colleagues, I am rising in the House today to speak about Bill C-24, 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.

As many of my colleagues have already pointed out, Bill C-24 is a new version of a bill that was introduced in the House during the previous Parliament, but that died on the order paper at the time.

In August 2009, the Conservative government entered into negotiations surrounding the future free trade agreement with the Republic of Panama. The agreement also included side agreements on labour co-operation and the environment.

This free trade agreement was signed on May 14, 2010, and tabled in the House of Commons as Bill C-46, but the legislative process ended at the clause-by-clause review by the Standing Committee on International Trade.

This same bill is now being reintroduced without any significant improvements over the previous version.

The NDP was opposed to Bill C-46 in the 40th Parliament for the many reasons that have already been enumerated here in this House.

Again, we are going to have to oppose Bill C-24, because there are no provisions in it to remedy the fundamental flaws that have already been cited in this House.

The Canada-Panama agreement negotiated by the Conservative government is in fact only a slightly improved version of the approach to trade taken by former American President George Bush. Once again, in this free trade agreement, big corporations come ahead of the Canadian and Panamanian people, and absolutely nothing is being done to ensure respect for human rights, and very little to protect the environment.

More specifically, it is obvious to my colleagues in the NDP and to me, at least, that there are no provisions in the Canada-Panama agreement to ensure respect for workers' rights in Panama. If the agreement is ratified by Parliament as it stands, there is absolutely no guarantee that the rights of Panamanian workers will not be flouted as they have so often been in the past.

But honestly, is anyone here surprised by this? If we look at the Conservatives' record since the May 2, 2011, election, it is clear that workers' rights are the very last thing on this government's list of priorities.

In barely a year, they have introduced a record number of bills to force workers back to work and violate their fundamental right to negotiate their conditions of employment in good faith. Given this kind of contempt for the rights of Canadian workers, it is really not surprising that there would be no provisions in the Canada-Panama agreement to protect the rights of Panamanian workers.

My colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster had already proposed two amendments at the Standing Committee on International Trade to remedy this major flaw in the bill.

Those amendments would, first, have protected unionized workers in Panama by guaranteeing them the right to bargain collectively, as is the case here in Canada, or at least as it was before this government came to power.

The amendments presented by my colleague would also have forced the Minister of International trade to consult regularly with representatives of Canadian workers and with Canadian unions.

We know that this kind of consultation seems somewhat repugnant to this government, but New Democrat members think this measure is essential before we can ratify a free trade agreement with Panama.

Of course, in spite of Panama's bad record when it comes to defending workers' rights, those amendments were naturally defeated by the Conservatives, with the support of the Liberals.

With the Conservatives confirming on a daily basis their bias in favour of businesses and management—with their brutal attacks on workers' basic rights—it was hard to expect a different outcome.

Another major problem with Bill C-24 is the fact that it does not include any measure to prevent tax evasion. It is important to note that the Republic of Panama is still regarded as a tax haven. In fact, Nicolas Sarkozy, the former president of France, recently said so.

Even though these issues were raised by my colleagues during the 40th Parliament, Bill C-24 is still seriously flawed when it comes to tax disclosure.

*Standing Order 57*

●(1815)

Despite repeated requests from Canada, the Republic of Panama has refused to sign a tax information exchange agreement.

This is very troubling, considering the large amount of money that is laundered in the Republic of Panama, including money from drug trafficking.

The Conservatives are constantly boasting about the importance they attach to law and order in Canada and about the fact that they are prepared to put Canadians in jail for years just because of a few marijuana plants. However, they refuse to do anything to create obstacles for big drug traffickers. It is really impossible to understand this government.

In its present form, Bill C-24 is not acceptable to the NDP. This trade agreement, which is quite similar to NAFTA, unjustly favours multinational corporations at the expense of workers and of the quality of our environment. This type of agreement with various countries that are often at an economic disadvantage compared to Canada, increases social and economic inequalities, while also significantly reducing the quality of life of workers and their families.

The rights of workers all over the world are important to my NDP colleagues and to myself. We cannot, in good conscience, support an agreement that does not do anything to protect the basic rights of the country with which that agreement is reached. We already have enough problems protecting our own Canadian workers against this government, which is barely able to conceal its contempt for their rights. We should not, in addition, start interfering with the rights of workers in Panama. It just makes no sense. We must ensure there are guarantees, so that they can negotiate their collective agreements freely and in good faith, as should be the case in any democratic society.

Since the beginning of the debate on Bill C-24, Conservative members keep repeating the same old arguments dictated by their government, without trying to understand our position on this issue.

My colleagues and I have made speeches in this House that are very clear. Our position on international trade is clear: we believe in the importance of international trade, but it has to be fair, sustainable and equitable trade. It is totally false to say that the NDP does not support international trade. I think I will say that again for the benefit of my colleagues opposite: it is totally false to say that the NDP does not support international trade. We simply believe that the trade agreements being negotiated have to respect and support the principles of social justice, sustainable development and human rights, which is not to say that we have to neglect the need to expand our trading opportunities.

We are aware that Canada has to trade with other countries; to import and to export. That is the system we are in. That is how things work and we are very aware of these realities. However, my colleagues and I in the NDP do not think that Canada's economic prosperity needs to come at the expense of workers' rights in other countries, people who are less fortunate than we are and who do not enjoy all the freedoms we had before this Conservative government came on the scene. We can indeed see that the rights to free

association and to collective bargaining are fading away as the weeks go by.

It is completely absurd and false to say that the NDP wants to close our borders to commercial products from other countries. We do believe, however, that the government should stop focusing exclusively on the NAFTA model and should remain open to exploring other possible solutions to establish trade ties with other countries.

We must ensure that Canada puts the pursuit of social justice, strong public-sector social programs and the fight against poverty at the heart of its trade strategy. As soon as this government presents us with a free trade agreement that respects the principles of social justice and sustainable development, we would be pleased to support and vote in favour of such a bill. So far, however, we have yet to see such a thing in the history of Canada. The Liberals did not present any such agreements, nor have the Conservatives.

So, until that time, we will continue to oppose them. However, there is still time to amend this bill and ensure that the principles of social justice, sustainable development and the fight against poverty are respected.

I invite my Conservative colleagues to reflect on this and remain open to the kind of amendments that my colleagues are proposing.

●(1820)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am wondering to what degree the NDP will have credibility on the issue of free trade agreements. On the one hand, when we look at 2015, it will be saying that it supports fair trade but that it does not support free trade agreements, and yet hundreds of thousands of Canadians have benefited immensely. I cited the potato industry in Manitoba.

Canada is an exporting nation and we are very dependent on our ability to trade worldwide. That is what generates jobs and wealth.

After listening to members of the NDP, there is a difference between the NDP and the Liberals. We see the value of freer trade agreements.

Contrary to what the member's colleagues would have said on the front benches, if, for example, the amendments the NDP proposed in committee had passed, would the NDP members then have supported the bill in the House?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that some of the nuances of my speech and those of my colleagues were not grasped by the member in the corner. I liked what the member for Davenport said earlier.

*Standing Order 57*

From the beginning the NDP has said that it encourages free trade if it is fair and just. This has yet to be seen in Canadian history. In the future, we will have a great deal of credibility among workers whose rights we will have defended, among Quebecers whose culture we will have defended—an aspect sometimes neglected by these free trade agreements—and among future generations, for protecting the environment.

By defending the principles of social justice, the fight against poverty and strong public programs to help people, we will have the credibility needed to vote for the next free trade agreements that will respect the principles we defend.

• (1825)

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her eloquent speech and clear explanations. There are no doubts.

I would like my colleague to comment on the current scenario. From the beginning, the Conservative government has used the muzzle and the bayonet. Now, it will find itself with a trade agreement with a country that is a poor student and a tax haven.

I would like to know what impact this will have on workers' rights, on the right to association and the right to strike. Unfortunately, these rights are not in the Canada-Panama free trade agreement.

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the very important and greatly appreciated work that she does for her constituents.

The problems with the right to negotiate, freedom of association and the right to strike are likely to be very serious for the countries of South America, primarily for Panama, because this type of agreement contains no guarantee those rights will be protected.

We are already flouting the rights of our Canadian workers by stopping them from negotiating their collective agreements and by preventing negotiations in good faith. Basically, the government is telling employers that they do not have to try and negotiate because it will be there to save them and to give them exactly what they want at the expense of the workers, who will have to make do with whatever salaries and working conditions employers want to give them. This kind of risk is very real, and it already exists in Panama, where the workers do not have the same rights as we do at all.

In signing such agreements without protecting their rights, we will merely be worsening their working conditions, and we will not be able to pass on the democratic social values particular to Canadian society that should be spread throughout the world.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Before recognizing the hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, I must inform him that I will have to interrupt him at 6:30 p.m., at the end of the time provided for government business.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is pretty funny to realize I only have only three minutes to talk about all this, but what is even funnier—and I am not a specialist in international agreements—is when I hear my Liberal colleague talk about the credibility of the people in the NDP.

I think it is hilarious and laughable that, when his former leader had his ships registered in Panama, the lakers in the Great Lakes got themselves beautiful Panamanian flags. People can see right away the kind of country it is. As this is one of the rare opportunities I have to speak about this issue, I have to say that today it is certainly the cherry on the top to talk about this agreement with a country that is none too encouraging in terms of the Canadian economy.

Once again, we see the government on the other side preparing to slip a bill through that will put CP workers up against the wall with a gun to their heads, and simultaneously presenting us with a potential free trade agreement with a country where workers at many levels are denied the right to strike. And when I suggest that the whole thing is laughable, it is because their proposal does not at first glance strike me as obviously popular; what they are putting forward is a plan for a free trade agreement with Panama, a country which, to say the very least, does not have a sterling reputation and is recognized as one of the most notorious of tax havens.

I was reading *Le Devoir*, which reported that Panama was one of the countries where tax shelter transactions, like those currently practised in Barbados, were most widespread. I find the whole idea pathetic.

I am not casting aspersions on the people in Panama who have products to export, but I wonder whether tomatoes will cross the border more readily than people. We are going to trade agricultural products with these people, but we do not want to see their faces, and that is very sad.

Once again, it' is a back door agreement that serves the interests of a number of specific people who have lobbied the government, which always tends to lend a friendly ear to business interests rather than ordinary people. Enough said.

• (1830)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The Hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher will have seven minutes to speak when the House resumes debate on the motion and five minutes for questions and comments.

\* \* \*

#### POOLED REGISTERED PENSION PLANS ACT

The House resumed from May 17 consideration of Bill C-25, An Act relating to pooled registered pension plans and making related amendments to other Acts, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** It being 6:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division at the report stage of Bill C-25.

Call in the members.

• (1855)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negatived on the following division:)

*Standing Order 57**(Division No. 225)*

## YEAS

## Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Caron
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Freeman	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Godin	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hughes	Jacob
Kellway	Lapointe
Latendresse	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Quach
Rafferty	Ravignat
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Savoie
Scott	Sellah
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Turnel — 90

## NAYS

## Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Bélangier
Bennett	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Casey	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Coderre	Cotler
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dion	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)

Dykstra	Easter
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Foote	Fortin
Galipeau	Garneau
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hayes
Hiebert	Hilleyer
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Hsu
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lamoureux	Lauzon
Lebel	Leaf
Leitch	Leung
Lizon	Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murray	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Oliver
Opitz	Pacetti
Paradis	Penashue
Plamondon	Poillievre
Preston	Raïtt
Rajotte	Regan
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Seeback
Sgro	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sopuck	
Sorenson	St-Denis
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trotter
Trudeau	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 177	

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I declare Motion No. 1 defeated.

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (for the Minister of Finance)** moved that the bill be concurred in.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If you seek it, I believe you will find agreement to apply the vote for the previous motion to the current motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.

• (1900)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Does the chief government whip have the consent of the House to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nycole Turmel:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP is willing to proceed, but will vote against.

We would also like to add two “no” votes by the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster and the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

[English]

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals agree, and we are voting yes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Louis Plamondon:** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc votes yes.

[English]

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, the Green Party votes no.

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** Mr. Speaker, I will be voting yes.

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have just been made aware that the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells is not in the vote. Discount her name for this vote.

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

(Division No. 226)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Bélanger
Bennett	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Casey	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Coderre	Cotler
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dion	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra	Easter
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)

Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Foote	Fortin
Galipeau	Garneau
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Hoeyppner	Holder
Hsu	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lamoureux
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Leung	Lizon
Lukiwski	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murray
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliver	Opitz
Pacetti	Paradis
Penashue	Plamondon
Poilievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Regan	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Seeback	Sgro
Shea	Shipley
Shory (sor)	Simmis (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
Sopuck	Sorenson
St-Denis	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trottier	Trudeau
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	Williamson
Weston (Saint John)	Young (Oakville)
Wilks	Zimmer— 176
Yelich	
Young (Vancouver South)	

Standing Order 57

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Caron
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Freeman	Garrison

*Business of Supply*

Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Godin	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hughes	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lapointe	Latendresse
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
Michaud	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Papillon
Patry	Pécelet
Perreault	Pilon
Quach	Rafferty
Ravignat	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Savoie	Scott
Sellah	Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Turmel— 92

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

## BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

## OPPOSITION MOTION—KOMAGATA MARU INCIDENT

The House resumed from May 18 consideration of the motion.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion relating to the business of supply.

● (1910)

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

*(Division No. 227)*

## YEAS

## Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau
Easter	Foote
Fortin	Freeman

Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Latendresse	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
Michaud	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Pécelet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rafferty	Ravignat
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Savoie	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau	Turmel— 118

## NAYS

## Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galpeau	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
James	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
Leaf	Leitch
Leung	Lizon
Lukiwski	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliver	Opitz
Paradis	Penashue
Poillievre	Preston
Raith	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Sopuck	Sorenson
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trotier
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 147	

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I declare the motion defeated.

**ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

## PUBLIC SAFETY

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on February 17, I asked the government the following question.

Madam Speaker, my question is for the government's chief spymaster who is so intent on snooping into Canadians' private emails and the laptops of the nation. However, Conservatives are not stopping at emails. The minister's bill would allow government agents to enter on an Internet service provider when they wanted, without a warrant and demand to see absolutely everything and even to copy it all.

My question was:

Why does the government see every Canadian as an enemy of the state and why has the minister given Conservative agents absolute power to pry?

As one might imagine, I received a non-answer from the government, in fact from a senior minister. Instead of getting an answer, I received a rant and an attack against the NDP.

The question really was in relation to the provisions of Bill C-30, which was introduced with much fanfare in February of this year and now seems to have disappeared from the order paper.

The concerns expressed by Canadians across the country were consistent. This legislation was designed to enable the government to

gain a level of surveillance that has not been seen in this country ever.

However, the government's clear view is that anyone who criticizes its actions, questions them in any way, is described as an enemy, as a radical, as being un-Canadian. Members may remember the Minister of Public Safety's ludicrous remark that one is either with the government or with the child pornographers. These are the kinds of intemperate, belligerent and disgraceful characterizations the government uses against Canadians who raise even legitimate and appropriate questions against the government.

Although this legislation is off the order paper, the Minister of Public Safety seems to have made it clear recently that it will be coming up again in the fall.

This legislation and the elements of intrusion, which have nothing to do with the real issues, should have been the end result of serious consultations, a process the Conservative government seems to know nothing about. The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development the other day in her comments on employment insurance said she consulted. Premiers have come out and said they have not been consulted. As far as we know the unemployed have not been consulted.

Do ministers think consultation means sitting down with a business partner or a friend and having a glass of wine? That is not consultation. If the government is going to do consultations, they have to be wide open, transparent and public. That is not what the government has done.

The government is not just using surveillance and basically spying on people as an attack on democracy. The government monitors and cuts funding to organizations that disagree with it. We just need to look at the KAIROS funding. That organization has done tremendous work internationally. There have been cuts to peace and development. The public service has expressed fear, with public servants scared to even use their own personal email and Facebook as a result of the government's tactics.

Instead of acting like a legitimate democracy, the Conservative government is instilling fear in people with the kind of attitude it is portraying toward Canadian citizens.

• (1915)

**Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying what complete misrepresentation that member of Parliament has just displayed, which shows why that party is over there in the corner with a reduced amount of seats. Canadians recognize that the Liberal Party unfortunately has lost complete touch with the Canadian people.

The government will send Bill C-30 to committee for major review before proceeding further. The fact of the matter is that this legislation was introduced by the previous Liberal government with fewer privacy safeguards.

We have answered this question. We have indicated what our government is prepared to do.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

What is very disturbing is what appears to be complete hypocrisy on the side of the Liberal third party in regard to this issue. It is disturbing to hear that member talk about the bill and this issue with complete disregard for what his party did previously on this issue.

As I said, the bill will be sent to committee before we proceed any further. We are listening to Canadians on this issue and we will continue to listen.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, the member goes on a great attack against the Liberal Party, but she fails to answer our question.

The Conservatives have not done serious consultations with Canadians to see what they need on this particular issue, whether it be Internet surveillance or whatever. It is the same with every other bill.

What I said in my remarks is absolutely true. This is a government that operates on the politics of division. It is a government that operates on the politics of fear. We are seeing that everywhere.

Canadians should be worried about the Internet surveillance bill because, as it said in the bill, which I quoted earlier, not only can the government go in and look at what has been on the Internet; it can actually copy it. That is the serious risk.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary if the Conservatives are going to withdraw those sections of the bill and do proper consultations.

**Ms. Candice Hoepfner:** Mr. Speaker, shame on that member for completely misrepresenting the facts. Yes, Canadians were afraid, but now they are resting at peace because that party is in the third party position, thankfully.

That being said, we are always interested in listening to Canadians on issues that concern them, such as the economy and increasing and making sure that our technology and public safety infrastructure is in line with current technology. We want to find the best ways to keep Canadians safe from online crime, as well as protect privacy rights.

The Liberal Party introduced this bill. It had less privacy protection. We are making sure we balance the rights of Canadians with their rights to privacy. This bill will be sent to committee for major review before we proceed any further.

It is very disturbing and yet very telling to see the Liberals in their third party state continue with this complete flip-flop on so many issues, including the long gun registry.

●(1920)

## 41ST GENERAL ELECTION

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is on the very serious issue of election fraud in the election of 2011. The science of voter suppression, well documented at stealingdemocracy.com, has been systematically executed by the Conservative Party of Canada.

In my riding of St. Paul's in the last election, fraudulent calls impersonating my campaign went to the homes of Jewish voters during the sacred Seder of Passover. We reported these calls to Elections Canada at that time.

A recent EKOS poll in seven ridings across the country found that Liberal, NDP and Green Party supporters were much more likely than Conservative supporters to report receiving a telephone call in the last election directing them to the wrong polling station. As EKOS president Frank Graves stated, the pattern is "highly statistically significant and we can say with confidence that this is not an artifact of chance". Claims are coming from all corners of the country, and it seems increasingly likely that this was a coordinated effort to keep Canadians from the polls last year.

Unfortunately, this does not end at phone calls. We have heard reports of aggressive people acting on behalf of the Conservative Party outside polling locations misleading voters, often seniors or new Canadians, in an attempt to prevent them from casting a ballot.

There are also extremely disturbing reports of scores of instant voters who cast ballots in certain ridings in which they were not actually residents. Elections Canada is investigating these allegations, but now faces a \$7.5 million a year cut by the Conservative government.

Liberals are committed to co-operating with the investigation. We are setting the standard for openness and transparency, and we expect that all other political parties will follow suit. The Liberal Party of Canada has proactively disclosed its calling data related to the 2011 federal campaign in an effort to assist Elections Canada with its ongoing investigation into possible election fraud.

As I asked before, when will the Conservative government stop the "I am not a crook" rhetoric and comply fully with Elections Canada and the RCMP to get to the bottom of the largest electoral fraud known in Canadian history?

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that was remarkable rhetoric from the member for St. Paul's.

Here is one of the really troubling things about what the Liberal Party has been saying. The member indicated that the Liberals had been open, honest and transparent from the get-go. Nothing could be further from the truth. Ultimately, it had to be found out. It had to be investigated and researched. Information had to come forward, evidence that could not be refuted.

The Liberal member for Guelph, for example, the riding where so much of this has been talked about, actually conducted an illegal robocall using a false number, using a false person, targeting Conservative supporters, targeting supporters of every party with a message specifically working toward suppressing votes. That is what the Liberals did. That is what the Liberals always do. They accuse others of what they do.

The member for St. Paul's has stood many times and complained about things that went on in her riding during the election. However, the member also has to acknowledge a couple of things. Several thousand more people voted in St. Paul's in the last election than the election immediately previous. That sounds like a vote increase, not a vote suppression. I am sure she has an equation that actually works that into somehow having an impact.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Here is the other thing the Liberal Party has to get good with in its heart. It has to accept this and acknowledge it. She had her “I am not a” quote. They are not popular. That is what this is really about.

Thousands more Canadians voted, almost a million more. Over 900,000 more Canadians voted in the last election, but we know who they did not vote for. They did not vote for the Liberal Party because of what the Liberal Party stood for, and of what it continues to stand for.

Canadians voted for our Prime Minister and this party for an economic vision and an ongoing commitment for jobs, opportunities and success right across the country.

What the Liberal Party knows and knows in its heart is that these allegations it is bringing are false and phony. We have fully supported and assisted Elections Canada from the get-go. We have nothing to hide on this side. I am proud of this party and proud of how we have fought this battle.

• (1925)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, as we have said, the reason we have not called this scandal “robocall” is it really is about election fraud that included voter augmentation.

Today, we know that former Liberal MP Borys Wrzesnewskyj had the means to go to the courts to remedy the electoral irregularities in his riding. The court has now overturned the Etobicoke Centre election results. However, the Conservatives, rather than calling a byelection, have decided to appeal to the Supreme Court and further drag out this process.

Unfortunately, most candidates do not have the significant financial means required to remedy electoral irregularities through the courts. Reports and allegations of electoral fraud are widespread, and many cases are still under investigation.

Will the Conservative government explain why it is cutting the budget to Elections Canada, just as Canadians need reassurance that it has the needed resources to conduct fair elections and properly investigate allegations of wrongdoing?

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Liberal Party may hear but does not listen.

What the court actually came forward with on Etobicoke Centre and said was that no party played any role or did anything wrong in that byelection whatsoever. Parliament has set up an automatic right to appeal, because this specific subsection in the elections code has never been used to overturn an election. It is an automatic right to appeal at the Supreme Court.

The member talks about voter suppression. Perhaps she would like to stand on the floor of the House of Commons and apologize for the appalling ten percenter she sent out to first nations communities in our country featuring body bags. If that is not suppressing votes, I want to know what is. It is that member who did it. That member should be ashamed of her actions, not this party.

I am proud of how we have acted and the integrity with which we have approached Canadian voters.

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week, *The Globe and Mail* published an article titled, “Life in the slow lane: Dial-up Internet still a reality for hundreds of thousands in Canada”. The article explained both the alarmingly high number of Canadians who have no option but to use dial-up Internet connections and the problems that face these Canadians as Internet sites continue to add more data-reliant content.

I know the problems faced by constituents in my riding: travel just a few kilometres outside of the downtown core of Sudbury and high-speed Internet is non-existent. I can tell residents almost to the metre where my cell phone loses both 3G Internet access and cell service, the so-called digital divide that separates the high-speed haves from the have nots.

This has real repercussions. Yes, people lose out on social media, but, more importantly, businesses are unable to participate in the economy and, as more government services move online, people have less access to programs that their taxes fund.

Unfortunately, the government seems determined to do nothing to rectify the situation.

The announcement of the upcoming spectrum auction made by the minister in March offered a real opportunity for the government to overcome the digital divide. A strong rural rollout requirement would have forced telecom companies to expand the areas covered by wireless high-speed networks and set asides for the so-called new entrants would have ensured real competition to drive down prices. Instead, we got an announcement that, in trying to unsuccessfully please everyone, failed to deliver on any of its promises.

The rural rollout component of the auction is so convoluted that it is actually unlikely to be met by any one company unless it acts in concert with another telecom provider, and even then, those firms will only be required to roll out new services to a percentage of areas that are already covered by their current high-speed networks. This rollout requirement should have been designed to ensure rural and suburban Canadians have access to these vital Internet services. Instead, it can be met by building out service to Canada's urban cores.

Instead of a strong set-aside for smaller cell phone companies to ensure real competition in Canadian firms, we got a cap for Rogers, Bell and Telus, coupled with a relaxing of the foreign ownership rules for all other telecom companies. In effect, the government delivered a gold-embossed invitation to big foreign telecoms to buy spectrum and compete in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal while ignoring the concerns for Canadians living in rural areas and even in small urban centres like my riding of Sudbury.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

In summary, the government seems so unprepared on this file that when the minister appeared before the industry committee, he said that his department had not even come up with an estimate of the revenue that would be generated from this auction, and the government is unwilling or unable to say where the proceeds will go.

The government still has time to rectify this situation, to strengthen the rural rollout component, to ensure real competition across the country and to reinvest revenue to make Canada a digital leader, but time is running out.

• (1930)

**Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will talk briefly about recent steps that our government has taken to help provide Canadians with more choices at low prices for the wireless services that have become so important in their everyday lives.

In 2008, our government took action to encourage the entry of new competitors into the wireless market. Since then, new players have launched services and are providing more choice to Canadians. In addition to these new competitors, large telecom companies have made substantial investments to better serve their subscribers. Because of these actions, consumers are seeing the benefits of access to more advanced services, greater choice and lower prices.

We recently announced decisions that will continue to promote our goals of increased competition and investment in the sector and to see that all Canadians, including those in rural areas, benefit.

First, we would amend the foreign ownership rules under the Telecommunications Act, meeting a commitment we made in the 2010 Speech from the Throne. These amendments are included in Bill C-38. We are lifting these restrictions for companies with a small share of the telecommunications market so they can better compete and grow.

Access to capital is an important issue, especially for the new wireless competitors, and our targeted actions would remove a barrier to investment for the telecommunications companies that need it most, so that Canadian families and businesses can continue to benefit from more choices and competitive prices.

In addition, we will support competition and investment in the upcoming auctions by applying rules that will enable new wireless competitors access to the spectrum up for auction.

We will also extend and improve the existing wireless roaming and tower-sharing policy to further facilitate competition. These policies provide access to existing networks and infrastructure and support better coverage and services for consumers.

We believe all Canadians should share in the benefits of advanced wireless services and that rural Canadian families should have access to the same services as those in cities. We are applying specific measures in the upcoming auction to see that Canadians in rural areas have access to the most advanced services in a timely manner.

All Canadians should be able to benefit from the fastest mobile speeds and latest devices, such as the newest iPad, PlayBook or smartphone. These are the first such specific measures of their kind in Canada.

Finally, to improve the safety of Canadians and first responders, we will be reserving some spectrum for exclusive use by public safety users across Canada. Our government believes that Canadians, in both rural and urban areas, deserve value for their hard-earned money, and our government is taking action to see that they get it.

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his answer but I would like a bit more clarification on what the government plans to do in relation to ensuring that the larger companies that are out there right now bidding ensure we get spectrum in the rural areas.

What I talked about in my speech was how in our opinion we did not see how the government was rolling out to ensure that there is a strong roll out for rural areas. I know we did some great work in the industry committee talking about the e-commerce and the e-economy. However, when we have individuals and businesses in communities that do not have high-speed and are still stuck on dial-up, they cannot be part of that. What we did not hear from the government was whether it will use the revenue it can gain from this auction and put it back into another broadband fund to create high-speed Internet in other communities that do not have it, and even with the spectrum piece to ensure there is roll out so everyone can have high-speed Internet.

• (1935)

**Mr. Mike Lake:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend talked about stakeholder reaction and talked about his own party's position on this. Let us listen to what they had to say.

A new player, Mobilicity, called the decision “a real victory for Canadian consumers”. Meanwhile, an incumbent, Telus, noted that the new rules “will allow all competitors to have fair and reasonable access to the critical 700-megahertz spectrum in the upcoming auction”. The NDP's former industry critic said:

...we heard the intention of the government to cover 90 percent of the Canadian territory within five years. We like the idea. I come from a rural riding. There are major problems of coverage in my riding so this is something that is very dear to me....

Incumbents like the decision, new entrants like the decision and even the NDP can agree with parts of the decision. I would say that we got this one right.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:36 p.m.)





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