



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, November 2, 2005

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 2, 2005

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, and we will be led by the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1405)

[*English*]

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Mr. Gary Carr (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to inform my fellow colleagues of an innovative process that I use to communicate and work directly with my constituents. They are called citizen advisory committees.

We currently have committees on the topics of health care, citizenship and immigration, seniors, rural and agriculture. These groups meet a minimum of four times a year in small groups of 10 in order to exchange real dialogue and debate on issues.

They provide me with advice and feedback on issues and legislation which I in turn take back to the caucus and ministers. In between meetings we share ideas through e-mails, letters and phone calls. This allows an ongoing dialogue and is much more effective in dealing with complex issues.

On October 15, I held an advisory group meeting on Bill C-407, an issue that has become very emotional to many of my constituents. I had the opportunity to listen and take notes on the opinions, concerns and comments of my constituents which I will then discuss with my caucus.

I would like to thank everyone who came out to this meeting and thank all those who have taken the time to volunteer on the advisory committees. Their time, work and comments are very much appreciated.

AGRICULTURE

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the plight of Canadian farmers is becoming increasingly desperate as they face grim financial realities constantly.

Walter Klinger, a farmer from Jansen, Saskatchewan, recently wrote me a letter describing the situation in his own words:

Western Canadian farmers are experiencing the lowest commodities prices, related to the highest input costs in history. This is not only a disgrace for Canadian farmers, it is an outright demoralizing issue.

The government's response to this current crisis is only adding to the grief. To quote Mr. Klinger again:

In other grain producing countries, their respective governments ensure that there are sufficient support programs in place for their producers. Our farmers feed the public out of their own pockets.

The Liberal CAIS program is so complicated and ineffective that you need to pay your accountant upwards of \$400 to \$500 to file your application, only to learn that you don't qualify.

Clearly, this government's response to the agriculture crisis has failed. It is now time for a government that will implement agriculture policies that actually and really work.

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GUELPH HUMAN RESOURCE CENTRE

Hon. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to recognize the Guelph Human Resource Centre of Canada for students and the very successful summer they had. This year, the Guelph Human Resource Centre posted 706 positions, a 21% increase from 2004. This means that in 2005 the centre helped more employers meet their staffing needs and helped more students find summer jobs.

Some 350 students also received help one on one from summer employment officers. These are individuals who help students with developing or improving a resumé, practising an interview, or help with drafting a cover letter in one on one employment advising sessions.

I wish to commend all those dedicated individuals who worked so hard this summer to help so many students in my community. I hope that they can build upon their success in 2006.

S. O. 31

[Translation]

SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on November 4 and 5, the fourth Summit of the Americas will be held in Mar del Plata, Argentina.

The 34 heads of state of the Americas will meet under the theme "Creating Jobs to Fight Poverty and Strengthen Democratic Governance".

Quebec, unfortunately, was not invited to this meeting to negotiate the creation of a free trade area of the Americas. The nation of Quebec has to depend on Ottawa's goodwill to defend its rights and priorities.

As the federal Liberal government daily denies the existence of the Quebec nation, I have a hard time imagining how it will defend the interests of Quebecers and how it will look after Quebec's needs in a context of continental integration.

The situation once again illustrates the need for a sovereign Quebec so we can defend our culture, values and interests ourselves.

* * *

• (1410)

[English]

ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN OF INDIA IN CANADA

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this House today to recognize a very special organization that has made a tremendous impact on the local community in my riding of Don Valley East.

For almost 30 years, AWIC Community and Social Services has provided support to families who have just arrived in Canada. AWIC provides settlement services, employment counselling, volunteer opportunities, ESL and computer classes, as well as a number of other programs for seniors, women, children and youth.

Since its inception in 1976, AWIC has become a pillar of support for various people who need help adapting to their new surroundings. Above all, AWIC epitomizes Canada as a multicultural society that encourages its citizens to preserve and promote their cultural heritage.

* * *

BEREAVED FAMILIES

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 20th anniversary of Bereaved Families of Ontario in Cornwall, in my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

This organization has helped thousands of families who have lost a loved one to cope with their loss through love, hope and determination. It currently offers a bereavement centre, a resource library, special bereavement services to children and youth, telephone support services, one on one discussions, support groups and public education services.

All these services are made possible by the dedication and generosity of volunteers, each of whom is bereaved and has received

formal training. I know what good work these people do because I myself benefited greatly from their services 17 years ago.

From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank and congratulate everyone who has contributed to Bereaved Families of Ontario over the past 20 years and I welcome the Cornwall representatives who are visiting us on Parliament Hill today.

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CYPRUS

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I, along with the Canada-Cyprus parliamentary friendship group, today had the opportunity and the pleasure of welcoming to the Hill His Excellency the Ambassador of Cyprus to the United States and High Commissioner of Cyprus to Canada, Mr. Evriviades, along with His Excellency the Consul General Mr. Vryonides, along with Mr. Sophocleous, the President of the Canadian Justice Committee for Cyprus.

Today these gentlemen talked to us about the Cyprus of yesterday, today and tomorrow. This nation has come a long way since the illegal invasion of July 1974. Most impressive was when they were asked, "What does Cyprus want today?" Their response was, "Cyprus doesn't want nothing, nothing more than what any civil society is asking today, that the rule of law be applied and justice and security for all civilized people".

The time has come for a solution to the Cyprus issue.

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[Translation]

INVERNESS BRONZE SCULPTURE GALLERY

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Inverness bronze sculpture gallery is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year.

Located in the Mégantic—L'Érable region, this economuseum protects and promotes a rich heritage and pays tribute to Quebec's great sculptors.

The fame of the gallery, its exhibitions and its works helps promote the cultural, tourist and economic development of both the L'Érable region and Quebec as a whole.

On October 2, the gallery celebrated its anniversary with an exhibition of the work of some forty highly talented artists, who were present at the event and included Armand Vaillancourt, Raymond Barbeau, Pascale Archambault, Huguette Joncas, Gérard Bélanger, Hélène Labrie, Roger André Bourgeault, Marcellin Fortin, Marie-Claude Demers and Jacques Lisée.

Their enthusiastic response shows just how much support there is in the artistic community for this gallery devoted to Quebec's top sculptors.

Congratulations to the gallery. May it long flourish.

[English]

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Hon. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House of Commons today to offer my congratulations to Reverend Daniel Rupwate and the congregation of the British Methodist Episcopal Church-Salem Chapel on the occasion of its 150th anniversary and its role in the Underground Railroad.

Two weeks of celebrations will see the congregation and community remember one of the most famous conductors, Harriet Tubman. This extraordinary woman dedicated her life to saving the lives of others. She took tremendous risks which enabled countless people to find freedom.

In the 1850s St. Catharines and the BME Church became her headquarters for the Underground Railroad. It was a centre for religious, cultural and political activity. The Underground Railroad was the network of families and people that offered their assistance, food or shelter to slaves during their escape north.

I commend the congregation and the many volunteers who have worked so hard to help us celebrate the 150th anniversary of the BME Church. It ensures that we continue to remember the spirit and the strength of Harriet Tubman and her lifetime of courageous actions.

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●(1415)

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS OF CANADA

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada and to recognize its ongoing commitment to helping children nationwide achieve their potential.

By encouraging the development of positive relationships with peers and mentors, boys and girls clubs help children build self-esteem and social skills that last a lifetime. They provide invaluable access to enriching recreational and social programs outside of school and help foster the development of positive peer relationships, emotional health and high academic performance.

As an alumni of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, I am proud to stand in the House today to welcome our visitors and commend this great organization for the important work it does. The many hours that the volunteers, program supervisors and staff put into ensuring a fun and safe environment where children can thrive does not go unnoticed.

On behalf of the members of the House, I applaud the dedicated work of all boys and girls clubs nationwide, particularly the Eastview Boys and Girls Club in my riding of Oshawa.

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CHIROPRACTIC

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to welcome many of the chiropractors who are in Ottawa today to meet with their federal representatives. I believe these meetings will provide an ideal opportunity for many members of the House to learn about the important and integral role that chiropractic has to play in the health care arena.

S. O. 31

As a chiropractor, I have seen first-hand the benefit of chiropractic treatment for conditions such as back pain, neck pain and headaches. With musculoskeletal conditions such as back pain, costing Canadians \$16.4 billion in treatment, rehab costs and a decreasing workforce productivity, the chiropractic profession has a key role to play in addressing many of the challenges experienced in health care.

As the dynamics of health care change, it is imperative that all health care professionals work together in multidisciplinary environments to provide the highest quality of health care for all Canadians from coast to coast.

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BELL CANADA

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since 1996, the Communication, Energy and Paperworkers Union has attempted to get Bell Canada to live up to its obligations to equal pay for work of equal value.

This case has been at the Human Rights Tribunal for almost 10 years and the hearing dates scheduled until 2009. Bell Canada has spent more than \$35 million on a small army of lawyers to deny thousands of women working as telephone operators money they are entitled to by law.

Bell's consistent attack on women's human rights proves yet again the need for proactive federal pay equity legislation. The labour, justice and status of women ministers are all on record referring to pay equity as a fundamental human right, yet there is still no legislation to protect workers.

The NDP is calling on the Liberal government to stop forcing women to fight for decades for economic equality and introduce proactive pay equity legislation immediately.

The Standing Committee on the Status of Women has asked for legislation. Where is the legislation?

* * *

JAPANESE-CANADIAN VETERANS

Ms. Bev Oda (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next week we will be in our ridings to observe Remembrance Day. Today I want to recognize the Japanese-Canadian veterans who served in the Canadian forces in World War I and II, as well as in the Korean war.

With the onset of the first world war, not recognized as Canadian citizens, they had to fight to even be able to volunteer for service in 1915. And again in the second world war, even while all west coast Japanese were being evacuated as enemy aliens, when they were still not recognized as citizens, they volunteered to serve in our armed forces once again.

Oral Questions

In these wars and the Korean war, they served with distinction, dignity and valour. These men and women and all Japanese in Canada finally received the right to vote and were recognized as Canadian citizens in 1948.

The Japanese-Canadian veterans fought to be able to say proudly, "I am a part of my country. I have suffered in her struggles and gloried in her victories. I was ready when I was needed. I am Canadian".

* * *

[Translation]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Gomery report has confirmed the magnitude of the sponsorship scandal and the political leadership that presided over this vast exercise in propaganda.

The most influential members of the Liberal Party of Canada spared no expense in trying to try to buy the conscience and affection of Quebecers, while lining the pockets of their friends who returned the favour by doing likewise for the Liberal Party.

The sponsorship scandal is a Liberal scandal skilfully orchestrated by the mandarins of the Liberal Party of Canada. Justice Gomery made note of "the existence of a 'culture of entitlement' among political officials and bureaucrats involved with the Sponsorship Program, including the receipt of monetary and non-monetary benefits".

The Gomery report reveals this conspiracy by the Liberal Party of Canada, which, having nothing to offer Quebec, decided to use public funds to try to buy Quebecers. How pathetic.

* * *

• (1420)

[English]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is a very sad day for Parliament. We now know from Justice Gomery that the Liberal government is guilty of funneling millions of public dollars into the Liberal Party.

Gomery has said that the Liberal Party, as an institution, cannot evade responsibility for the sponsorship scandal and what he calls a "depressing story of greed, venality and misconduct".

Justice Gomery confirmed the existence of a culture of entitlement in the Liberal Party. The Liberal cabinet with the current Prime Minister, as finance minister, conceived and designed the sponsorship program. The Liberals ran the program. The Liberal Party benefited from the program and Liberals used the stolen public funds for partisan activities.

We know that \$45 million is still unaccounted for. We know that at least \$5.4 million has ended up in the hands of Liberals. This allowed the Liberal Party to buy elections, buy people and buy power.

The government and those responsible must be held to account. Why has no one gone to jail? It is indeed sad that the Liberal Party is still in government and it is even sadder that the NDP continues propping up that corrupt government.

* * *

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS OF CANADA

Mr. Paul Zed (Saint John, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada and its vital role that this national organization plays in the lives of our children throughout Canada.

I am proud to say that the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada has its roots in my riding of Saint John, New Brunswick, in 1900. Today, 101 Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada are located across the country.

The clubs are leading providers of programs that support the healthy physical, educational and social development for 154,000 young people and their families each year. Boys and girls clubs have over 100 years of experience in providing affordable places where children and youth can build confidence and skills for life.

Please join me in acknowledging the contributions of thousands of volunteers and staff from Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada across our country.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, now that the Gomery report has confirmed the corruption in the Liberal Party, Canadians wonder why responsibility has not been assigned. Justice Gomery wrote in black and white that the Liberal Party as an institution cannot escape responsibility for the misconduct of its officers and representatives.

The Prime Minister says that he accepts without hesitation all the commission's findings. Why, then, does the government not launch legal proceedings against the Liberal Party of Canada? Why the hesitation?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the opposition is quite mistaken. Those who acted improperly are accountable. For example, criminal charges have been laid, civil proceedings have been launched, and dismissals have taken place. As I said yesterday, the report was given to the RCMP, which will decide what additional measures need to be taken.

[English]

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did not answer the question. As Gomery noted, not only were public funds wasted and misappropriated, but no one has been held responsible or punished.

The Liberal Party of Canada executed this scandal. It was executed by some of its highest officials for the benefit of the party. Why is the government not suing the Liberal Party to recover the millions that are lost and stolen?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, anyone who has read the report would reject the premise of the hon. member's question. If he wants to deal with the issues as they are properly put, then the fact is people have been charged in criminal proceedings on the one hand. People have been sued in civil actions. People have been fired. Yesterday I referred the report to the RCMP for its consideration.

• (1425)

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister rejects the premise of the question, then he rejects the conclusions of Judge Gomery. Gomery has said that the Liberal Party can be held responsible as an institution.

The Prime Minister likes to make a big deal out of suing this individual and that individual, but the lynchpin of this scandal is the Liberal Party of Canada, and \$45 million is still lost or stolen.

Why will the Prime Minister not stand and commit that his government will sue the party that is responsible?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we fully accept the conclusions that were drawn by Mr. Justice Gomery. We fully accept his findings. What he has said is the institution is responsible for certain individuals. Those individuals, a number of them have been banned from party membership, and charges are pending in a number of cases.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works said that no dirty money from the sponsorship scandal went into the bank accounts of the federal Liberal Party, not true, of course. Justice Gomery's report found the opposite. Some calculations show that the Liberal Party stole \$5.4 million from Canadians, and \$45 million is still unaccounted for.

Gomery said that Canadians were rightly outraged. We have known about the sponsorship scandal now for over three years. The Liberal Party set up, operated and benefited from the ad scam, yet not a single Liberal has gone to jail.

When will the Liberal ad scam criminals be held accountable and go to jail?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has paid to the Crown \$1.14 million. This reflects the analysis of the facts in Justice Gomery's report. The figure that the hon. member reflects is the Bloc's vacuous partisanship. We are basing our analysis on the facts of Justice Gomery's report because we support Justice Gomery and we support his report.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Justice Gomery finds the Liberal Party of Canada guilty. Here are some facts: clear evidence of political involvement; kickbacks and illegal contributions to the Liberal Party of Canada; agencies paying Liberal campaign workers; and a culture of entitlement among Liberal party officials. His report is clear. It is an indictment of criminal activity and wrongdoing.

The Liberal Party, which included the Prime Minister who was supposed to be guarding the public purse, was fully engaged in the Liberal ad scam. Why should Canadians believe that the Liberal Party's culture of corruption has ended if the Prime Minister will not even sue his own party for the money?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a gross misrepresentation of the facts in Justice Gomery's report.

What Justice Gomery said about political parties and governance in Canada is:

There is no reason for the public's confidence in the integrity of our democratic institutions to be shaken. (...) Canadians should not forget that the vast majority of our public officials and politicians do their work honestly, diligently and effectively, and emerge from this Inquiry free of any blame.

The Liberal Party of Canada is a great national institution that works hard to defend Canadian interests. The fact is that a small group of individuals did something wrong and they will be punished.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the first articles on the sponsorship scandal appeared in the press as far back as December 1999. In 2000, the Bloc Québécois spoke out in its campaign platform against the somewhat dubious administration of the sponsorship program, even identifying some advertising firms involved in the scandal.

If the Prime Minister did not read the Bloc Québécois platform, he surely read the papers. How can the Prime Minister, who used to be vice-chair of the Treasury Board, explain that it never occurred to him that a thorough audit was required as far back as 2000?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all pertinent questions have been examined, asked, and asked again at the Gomery hearings. I myself testified before that commission. The one who knows most about the whole matter is Justice Gomery. He has made his report and we accept his findings.

• (1430)

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that ought not to prevent the Prime Minister from answering this question in the House.

Jean Chrétien said the following concerning the sponsorship program: "I had given the order to Treasury Board to carry out the necessary audits. They confirmed to me on several occasions that I had nothing to worry about."

Does the Prime Minister confirm receiving such an order from Jean Chrétien and did he, as vice-chair of the Treasury Board, confirm to Mr. Chrétien that there was no problem, that everything was being done properly? Will he answer the question?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, all these questions, all these matters, were raised during the hearings with Justice Gomery. I myself testified, as did the former Prime Minister. Justice Gomery has the best knowledge of the matter, and has made his report. I accept his findings.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister must realize that this question was never asked at the Gomery inquiry.

Oral Questions

We are asking him today, as Prime Minister and former vice-chair of the Treasury Board, if he can confirm what Jean Chrétien said, that the ministers on the Treasury Board had assured Jean Chrétien on a number of occasions that there was no problem in the management of the sponsorships. Will the Prime Minister confirm this?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member is now trying to take the place of the lawyers at the Gomery inquiry. All the pertinent questions were asked and all the pertinent answers were given. Justice Gomery made his report public yesterday. We accept the findings and the Bloc Québécois should do the same. Otherwise, is it not casting doubt on Justice Gomery's integrity?

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, no one is questioning Justice Gomery's integrity. Nonetheless, the Prime Minister has responsibilities to the public.

The public watching us wants to know whether what Jean Chrétien said yesterday is true. Jean Chrétien said that the ministers on the Treasury Board—including the current Prime Minister and the former President of the Treasury Board—had assured him that everything was going well in the administration of the sponsorship program.

My question is for the Prime Minister. People want to know. Did the ministers say that to Jean Chrétien, yes or no?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am having a hard time accepting the Bloc Québécois members' indignation at Justice Gomery's findings because they go against the Bloc's claims. All last year, they did nothing but try to tarnish the reputation of the Prime Minister, the ministers of this government and certain hon. members. They should have the integrity to stand up and apologize for the smear campaign they engaged in last year.

[*English*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the indignation from the government benches is, frankly, quite astounding. There clearly is no shame whatsoever.

Judge Gomery said that there was a culture of Liberal entitlement but the Prime Minister is carrying on with that exact same culture today. We see the appointment of political staffers as ambassadors, of Liberal bagmen as senators and we see lobbyists running for the Liberal Party.

Will the Prime Minister take some responsibility for having continued this culture that the judge—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important in this debate to accurately quote what was said by Mr. Justice Gomery.

He said that those who were involved in the sponsorship program suffered from a culture of entitlement, specifying a certain group of people.

The fact is that actions have been taken in those cases. One of the reasons that we commissioned the commission of inquiry headed by Mr. Justice Gomery was to make this open and transparent so that no culture of entitlement would exist.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister said is true. Judge Gomery did specify a certain group of people. He said that the Liberal Party of Canada was institutionally responsible for what happened.

The fact of the matter is that it is carrying on even today. We have cronyism in appointments. We have every kind of lobbyist on the go, in and out of the Liberal government and in and out of the PMO.

When will the Prime Minister take some responsibility for the fact that this culture continues in the Liberal Party today and stop being so congratulatory about it toward himself and his party?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I simply ask the leader of the NDP, who has called for rational debate in the House, that when he stands up he should accurately quote from the transcript.

Mr. Justice Gomery did not say that it was the Liberal Party. He said that as an institution, it has a responsibility for certain people who were members of the party. We understand and accept that, which is why we have acted in that particular field.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier in question period, the government tried to argue that the Liberal Party would cut a cheque for money that it thinks could be attributed to it. However, in our political system we do not get to decide our own penalty, unless, of course, we believe we are above the law.

Will the Prime Minister admit that the Liberal Party should be sued, unless he thinks the Liberal Party is, indeed, above the law?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been clear all along, as has the leadership of the Liberal Party, which is that if any funds were received inappropriately they would be repaid to the Canadian taxpayer.

That is exactly what has happened. The Liberal Party has paid in full any funds received as the result of the inappropriate behaviour of a small handful of people and those people will be punished.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if that is what the Prime Minister believes, I am sure Canadians would not mind hearing it from the Prime Minister himself.

The Prime Minister tried to say earlier in question period that those Liberals who engaged in this conduct will be held individually responsible. However Justice Gomery was clear when he said that the Liberal Party, as an institution, should be held responsible as well for those actions.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing, hold the Liberal Party responsible and sue it for the \$45 million that still cannot be accounted for?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition said in an interview that he thought the figure might be \$700,000. Yesterday some of his members were saying \$5.4 million. Now he is saying \$45 million.

Oral Questions

Our analysis of Justice Gomery's report lead to a credible figure that has been repaid to the Canadian taxpayers. Our figure is based on the facts. The opposition's figure is based on vacuous partisanship. They are doing more to diminish the reputation of all political parties and all politicians through that irresponsible behaviour.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier, in a response to the Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister said that he rejected the premise that the Liberal Party is responsible. In case he cares to follow along, I would like to accurately quote Justice Gomery on page 78 where he said:

The LPCQ [Liberal Party of Canada's Quebec wing] as an institution cannot escape responsibility for the misconduct of its officers and representatives.

The Prime Minister is the representative and is now the leader of the Liberal Party. As leader of the Liberal Party and former senior minister from Quebec, will the Prime Minister take responsibility—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, who appointed Justice Gomery to do the work, fully supported Justice Gomery during that work and accepts full responsibility for Justice Gomery's report. He has taken responsibility and has done the right thing. As leader of the Liberal Party he has disciplined individuals who were involved.

Once again opposition members are misrepresenting the truth. They continue to misrepresent what Justice Gomery said in his report. That may serve their short term partisan interests but it does not serve the people of Canada who deserve the truth from the House of Commons.

• (1440)

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think they were listening. I am reading word for word from Justice Gomery on page 78 where he states:

The LPCQ [Liberal Party of Canada's Quebec wing] as an institution cannot escape responsibility for the misconduct of its officers and representatives.

That is you. Stand up and take responsibility—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is an experienced member and I know he will want to address his remarks through the Chair.

The hon. Minister of Public Works and Government Services is rising to respond.

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister, the leader of the Liberal Party, has taken responsibility. The small handful of individuals who were involved in this affair have been disciplined, and we will continue to see action taken.

Beyond that, we as a government are suing 28 firms and individuals to recover \$57 million for the Canadian taxpayer. There are criminal proceedings against some individuals. Justice is being served. We will ensure that both the Canadian taxpayer and the Canadian citizen get the justice they deserve because that is the right thing to do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, counsel for Mr. Justice Gomery did not question the Prime Minister on Jean Chrétien's statement simply because the statement was made only yesterday. That is why I ask the Prime Minister the following question. Is it true that Jean Chrétien received positive opinions from his ministers on Treasury Board, including the present Prime Minister, who was its vice-chair?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I invite the member once again to read Justice Gomery's report carefully. He will see that the role of Treasury Board was examined in great detail. It was concluded that the ministers from Quebec and the Prime Minister did their job. They are not responsible and were totally exonerated from all negligence or malfeasance.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport should read page 47, where Justice Gomery wrote, in black and white, that Treasury Board had abdicated its spending oversight function. He should read the entire report.

The Prime Minister is avoiding responding, but I put this to him again. Yesterday, Jean Chrétien said that his ministers in charge of supervising spending, that is, Treasury Board, had assured him on a number of occasions that there had been compliance and that everything was in order.

I would like to know from the Prime Minister whether Mr. Chrétien was or was not stating the facts.

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member is hard of hearing.

At page 430, Justice Gomery has said, "Mr. Martin, whose role as Finance Minister did not involve him in the supervision of spending by the PMO or PWGSC, is entitled, like other Ministers in the Quebec caucus, to be exonerated from any blame for carelessness or misconduct".

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Jean Chrétien said, with regard to the sponsorship program, that he had ordered Treasury Board to make the necessary checks and said they assured him many times that there were no problems.

Does this not prove that the Prime Minister, who was then vice-chair of the Treasury Board, chose to turn a blind eye, even if there was mounting evidence to the contrary with regard to the sponsorships?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I get the feeling that the hon. member and her colleagues are not happy with the work of Judge Gomery, who is however universally recognized as an extremely competent judge with a great deal of integrity. He examined every aspect of the Treasury Board. Ultimately, he has completely absolved the ministers and members from Quebec.

The Bloc does not want to hear these findings, which are not to their liking. These findings are not consistent with their claims and their smear campaign. That is why they are in a bad mood.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will have to repeat my question because the members opposite are unable to answer simple questions.

With regard to the sponsorship program, Jean Chrétien said that he had ordered Treasury Board to make the necessary checks and said they assured him many times that there were no problems.

Does this not prove that the Prime Minister, who was then vice-chair of the Treasury Board, decided to turn a blind eye, stick his head in the sand and refuse to hear the mounting evidence with regard to the sponsorships?

• (1445)

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must nevertheless insist so that people realize what Justice Gomery concluded after an exhaustive study on everything related to the sponsorships. The judge said, “Mr. Martin...is entitled, like other Ministers in the Quebec caucus, to be exonerated from any blame for carelessness or misconduct”.

Clearly, this does not suit the Bloc and does not fit with everything the Bloc members have said this past year. They need to accept the truth from Justice Gomery. He did his job and is not engaging in petty politics or partisanship, unlike those who are trying to do so at his expense.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the U.S., Enron executives got hard jail time for relatively minor crimes compared to this vast Liberal criminal conspiracy. Yet no one here been sent to jail, nearly two years after the Auditor General's report.

Why is there one justice system for average Canadians, and another for Liberal criminals?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, am I to take it that this hon. member is saying that the RCMP is not doing a good job? In reality, criminal conspiracies are handled by the RCMP. We have complete confidence in their work. They have full access to all of Justice Gomery's documents. I hope, therefore, that the hon. member is not questioning the credibility and professionalism of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Judge Gomery confirmed that millions of taxpayer dollars were funnelled by the Liberal government to the Liberal Party. At least two federal elections, likely more, were paid for by the Liberal Party with these stolen sponsorship dollars.

The Liberal Party owes taxpayers millions, but the Prime Minister has promised to pay back a fraction. No shame, no honour.

Will the Prime Minister direct his government to sue for all the money that his Liberal Party stole from Canadians? Will he, yes or no?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the Liberal Party has reimbursed the taxpayer for any funds obtained inappropriately, \$1.14 million, that reflects a thorough analysis of the facts in Justice Gomery's report.

Furthermore, as Justice Gomery reported, according to evidence presented on behalf of the Liberal Party in Quebec, reforms to the party management and systems make it less likely that any irregularities will reoccur.

Not only has the money been paid back, but the Liberal Party has taken responsibility and strengthened governance to make sure this sort of thing does not happen again.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister admitted his party's guilt in an ongoing scheme of kickbacks, money laundering and illegal contributions. He said the Liberal Party would repay a token \$1.14 million, even though the money his party walked away with is many times that amount.

Would the Prime Minister explain why Canadians are being hung out to dry, instead of getting every penny back that his party stole from them?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last winter despite my warnings to the hon. member, she continued to comment on daily testimony before Gomery. As such, she actually said things in the House that are not consistent with the truth in Justice Gomery's report. In fact, she accused our Prime Minister of being involved in inappropriate malfeasance. In Justice Gomery's report, Justice Gomery clearly states that our Prime Minister is exonerated from blame for this.

The member should be apologizing both to Justice Gomery and to the Prime Minister for her completely irresponsible behaviour here in the House of Commons.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member should have some shame being part of a government that is tainted with Gomery's findings that our electoral system was undermined and Canadian standards of honesty were violated by his party.

The Prime Minister holds office won by a party even he admits is guilty of fraud, theft and corruption. Why has the Prime Minister stopped at a mere \$1.14 million? Why is the government not demanding that the Liberal Party pay back all the millions it stole from Canadians?

• (1450)

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has reimbursed the taxpayer any funds received inappropriately and that was the right thing to do. Furthermore, Justice Gomery also said that under the Conservative administration, the previous government, advertising and communications agencies having Liberal Party sympathies or connections had little or no chance of getting government business.

The kinds of activities Mr. Justice Gomery investigated were wrong, but they went on under different political parties and governments over the years. The Prime Minister has ended it, cleaned it up and will prevent it from ever happening again.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as chair of the rural caucus and understanding that there are many other issues that the House has to deal with, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

For the record, will the government vigorously support our supply management systems at every available international forum, especially at the World Trade Organization talks this fall?

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, clearly we will. We firmly believe that Canadian producers should have the right to choose their domestic marketing regimes, including that of supply management. That is a point we have been making internationally all along.

In these negotiations we have been saying there needs to be a robust, sensitive products regime, one which allows us to deal with those issues in a way that provides flexibility and allows us to meet our national interests.

* * *

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the right hon. Prime Minister.

I seem to remember a time when the Prime Minister and his colleagues were in opposition and they were quite willing to hold the Conservative Party of Canada responsible as an institution for the scandals that happened while the Conservatives were in government.

I want to ask the Prime Minister, if he is not willing to apply that same standard to his own party and own up to the responsibility of the Liberal Party as an institution for the whole mess, not just for individuals, how are we not to come to the conclusion that he is faking it when he says he accepts the Gomery report?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right. I sat in opposition with him and watched the previous government and I certainly did not see the previous government call in to account a commission of inquiry. In fact, as Mr. Justice Gomery has said, rarely in the history of any democracy has a government opened itself up to the kind of openness, transparency and accountability that we have. Rarely has a government opened up confidential documents.

The fact is that what has happened here is virtually unique. It is because we believe in accountability; it is because we believe in integrity as the foundations of a democracy.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no point in having an inquiry if one is not going to truly accept the recommendations and the conclusions of that inquiry.

The Prime Minister seems to be asking Canadians for forgiveness without the appropriate confession and repentance.

We want real repentance from the Liberal Party. We want the Liberals to show Canadians that the cronyism is going to end, the unregistered lobbyists are going to end, the patronage is going to end, and end to all the things that are part of the culture of

Oral Questions

entitlement that the judge referred to and which is larger than just the sponsorship scandal.

When are you going to do something about that?

The Speaker: I am sure that the “you” meant the Prime Minister. The right hon. Prime Minister may want to respond.

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, we have said we have fully accepted the conclusions of the report. The President of the Treasury Board has set out a complete set of responses in terms of structural changes to deal with this kind of issue.

While I am on my feet, I would like to clarify something I said earlier. I said, in short form, that further charges were pending, in response to an earlier question. I should have said that criminal charges that are proceeding in the courts and for which decisions are pending.

The fact is, of course, that obviously we have referred the report to the RCMP. They will take the decision in their own discretion.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Justice Gomery made it very clear that money was stolen from taxpayers. The beneficiary of that stolen money was the Liberal Party of Canada.

Canadians with common sense understand that thieves should not be trusted to decide how much money was stolen and then how much money should be given back.

What we are asking is a very common sense proposal, which is to have a civil action independent of the politicians to decide how much money was stolen and to give it back to Canadian taxpayers.

Will the Prime Minister initiate civil action to ensure that every dime of stolen money goes back to the Canadian taxpayers?

● (1455)

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, our analysis is based on the facts in Justice Gomery's report. This is what Justice Gomery said in his report:

—a system of government that would impose upon itself a searching inquiry by an independent commissioner armed with...a far-reaching mandate to investigate and report on matters that could prove to be embarrassing to the Government itself, is proof that our democratic institutions are functioning well and effectively.

We take our responsibility seriously. This Prime Minister has cleaned up the mess and we will change the governance to ensure it does not happen again.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is time for leadership on this issue. We want a response from the Prime Minister, not from the public works minister or the latter day fair-weather Canadian in the transport minister. We want the Prime Minister to get on his feet and to answer this question.

[*Translation*]

Perhaps I will get an answer if I ask it in French.

When will the Prime Minister order the Solicitor General to institute proceedings against the Liberal Party and its riding associations in order to recover the balance owing?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 28 million pages of documents, 172 witnesses, 136 days of hearings; Mr. Justice Gomery has actually detailed the answers to all the member's questions right here in this book. If the member would look at the section on the Liberal Party, Justice Gomery does have some things to say. He says the reforms to the party management systems make it less likely that this will occur. He identifies the individuals that were involved, very clearly, and each one of them has been charged.

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CANADA POST

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is all talk. Post-Gomery word spin from the PMO describes the Prime Minister as Mr. Clean, but let us take a look at his actions.

When it comes to Liberal pork master general André Ouellet, for example, he has done nothing. All cover-up, no cleanup. One year ago, the Prime Minister promised Canadians that he would get to the bottom of the André Ouellet scandal at Canada Post. We are waiting.

In his report, Judge Gomery highlighted Ouellet as “favouring his friends over the interests of the corporation”. How truly Liberal.

When will the Prime Minister stop favouring his friends over the interests of Canada and Canadians?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Deloitte & Touche report was followed by very extensive instructions and recommendations. Canada Post has followed those to the letter and reported regularly to me that all those matters have indeed been implemented.

In addition, I am informed by Canada Post that the results of the audit will be forthcoming relatively soon. Indeed, Canada Post as well as the Canada Revenue Agency are addressing these matters.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, André Ouellet awarded contracts to Liberal friendly firms. He hired dozens of Liberal friends and family. He spent \$2 million in lavish expenses, without providing receipts over a year ago. What Canadian gets that deal?

What is the Prime Minister doing about it? He is doing nothing about it, except appointing more Liberal cronies to the Senate, inventing reasons to pay David Dingwall some severance and protecting Ouellet. This is his mess.

Mr. Clean over there likes to fire up the vacuum when he is cleaning up Jean Chrétien's house, but the fact of the matter is Canadians are expecting him to clean up his own house now. When will he get to it?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's behaviour seems to grow more bizarre by the day. Only yesterday he released a press release in which he described me as having a Freudian desire. Some may question what goes through his mind in coming up with such a proposition, but I would quote from his mentor, Sigmund Freud, who said, “Being entirely honest with oneself is a good exercise”.

● (1500)

[Translation]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is refusing to say whether what Jean Chrétien said yesterday was true about the ministers of the Treasury Board responsible for the administration of the sponsorship money assuring him that the rules were followed. The former President of the Treasury Board is shaking her head no.

Can she tell us outright whether in her opinion Jean Chrétien was lying yesterday or not?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the Bloc Québécois members are having a hard time accepting Justice Gomery's findings. They would like to start the inquiry all over again, but it is too late. It is all over. They had the opportunity to be heard, their lawyers were there, everyone was there. The judge was conscientious in carrying out his work. They had best not try to do the judge's work on the floor of this House. The work has been completed, the report has been submitted and it states that the Prime Minister, all the Quebec ministers, and all the current Quebec MPs are exonerated. The Bloc Québécois does not want to accept that.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is a serious problem. The ministers assured us dozens of times, here, from their seats, that the Treasury Board rules were followed to the letter in the sponsorship program. Yesterday, Jean Chrétien said that his ministers had assured him of this personally on a number of occasions.

Based on that statement, how can the Prime Minister explain that, as vice-chair of the Treasury Board, he gave guarantees of this nature to Jean Chrétien, when he knew they were false?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why the Bloc Québécois members are not satisfied with Justice Gomery's answers. He examined every aspect of the sponsorship issue. Now they are trying to expand and change the debate because they are not satisfied with Justice Gomery's report. If they disagree with Justice Gomery, they should have the courage to say so. Justice Gomery has a great deal more credibility than all these members put together.

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[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Indian Affairs has again failed aboriginal Canadians. In the past week, we have seen the population of a northern reserve airlifted to escape the poisonous water in their homes. In another aboriginal community, every single house is condemned as unfit for human habitation. Seventy-five per cent of aboriginal communities have problems with their drinking water and 95 are currently under boil water advisories.

*Oral Questions***SOFTWOOD LUMBER**

The evidence is clear. When will the minister and the government admit their failure to protect the health of aboriginal Canadians?

Hon. Andy Scott (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned Kashechewan. I am pleased to say that the community is bringing in material for renovations. It is producing 50,000 litres of water a day right now. The future is bright for Kashechewan. That is because we made the right decision at the right time for those people.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only time the government took action was when this was in the media and on TV every night, even though the cabinet committee on aboriginal affairs is chaired by the Prime Minister himself.

The Minister of Indian Affairs was aware of the E.coli risk at Kashechewan eight weeks prior to the emergency evacuation by the Government of Ontario. Neither the minister, the cabinet committee nor the Prime Minister acted at that time to protect the citizens of Kashechewan. Was the minister grossly negligent in not informing the cabinet committee? Or was the Prime Minister grossly negligent in not acting?

Hon. Andy Scott (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): As I said, Mr. Speaker, and I stand by it, the Government of Canada made the right decisions by the people of Kashechewan.

They will now have the kind of future that most Canadians take for granted. This is good news for Kashechewan in the future. We will be building houses outside the diked area. It should have happened a long time ago.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the last several months there have been disasters around the world involving hurricanes and earthquakes. Could the Minister of Public Security and Emergency Preparedness tell us if Canada is prepared and what measures have been taken?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right to remind us that events such as those of July 7 in London and hurricane Katrina require all of us to ensure that we are working together to protect Canadians' safety and be prepared for any emergency.

That is why we have created a new department. That is why we are working closely with the provinces, municipalities and the private sector. We have a new government ops centre. We are putting more resources into training and exercises. I think we all see the importance of both training and exercises in relation to the tremendous response of first responders on July 7 in London. This government takes the collective safety—

• (1505)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Macleod.

Mr. Ted Menzies (Macleod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Paul Tellier, the international trade minister's now former advisor on softwood, said that "the file is idle and nothing is happening". More damning, Mr. Tellier says that "nothing is going to happen until the end of the election campaign".

With Tellier and Ritchie off the file, is it not true that the government has given up on Canada's softwood industry and plans to drive up anti-American trade rhetoric to gain cheap political points in the upcoming election?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have made it very clear that we are not going to negotiate when we have had a win at NAFTA. These were the Prime Minister's words.

NAFTA must be respected, which is why we are taking actions on a number of fronts, including retaliation, advocacy, litigation and finding new markets.

I am very grateful for the advice that I have had on an ongoing basis from Mr. Ritchie and Mr. Tellier. They will be available on a moment's notice when we need them.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the absence of an educational amendment to the new copyright law will have devastating consequences for both educators and students all across Canada. Schools cannot afford this added cost of paying for otherwise free materials from the Internet.

Will the minister put the educational amendment into the copyright legislation before the law is passed and it is too late?

Hon. Liza Frulla (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Minister responsible for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said it once and I will say it again. The copyright bill that is presented does not touch education. It is status quo in education. We have had a consultation paper for education presented at the same time as the copyright bill, but in the copyright bill there is actually no question of education and there will be no question of education.

*Routine Proceedings***PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

The Speaker: Order, please. On the occasion of Veterans' Week, I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of five Canadian war veterans and peacekeepers and a current serving member of the military: Gerry Bowen, World War II veteran and retired major of the Royal Canadian Regiment; Helen Rapp, World War II veteran with the Canadian Women's Army Corps; Bill Black, who served aboard the HMCS *Cayuga* during the Korean War; Barry Helman, retired peacekeeper with the Royal Canadian Artillery; and Corporal Jean-Marc Parent, who served in Bosnia and is a current serving member of the Canadian armed forces.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Jean-Baptiste Edaye, the Minister of Youth, Sport and Recreation for the Republic of Benin.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1510)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to table, in both official languages, the government's response to six petitions.

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FIRST NATIONS COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ACT

Hon. Andy Scott (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-71, An Act respecting the regulation of commercial and industrial undertakings on reserve lands.

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

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-72, An Act to amend certain Acts in relation to DNA Identification.

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

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VETERANS

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the presence of representatives of our veterans here with us today, I would like to rise and speak about them, their lives and our country.

As Canadians, we take pride in being a forward looking nation, a country that strives always to overcome the challenges of today so that we may make a better tomorrow for all.

We are a nation that looks ahead, but in a few short days we will be a nation united in recalling the past to honour those who were there when we needed them most.

We will look back this Veterans' Week, as we do each year at this time, and we will feel sadness. We will feel gratitude. We will feel pride. We will feel humbled.

Most of all, we will feel the very spirit of a nation and the spirit of nation builders, nation builders who shaped the country from the deadly mire of Flanders and the freezing flood waters of the Netherlands, from the flying steel of Dieppe and the blood-soaked sand of Juno Beach, from the treacherous rock of Sicily and the icy slopes of Korea, nation builders whose tireless service in the name of freedom and humanity, in the name of Canada, continues today in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Darfur and elsewhere.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, a week does not seem long enough. I suspect Canadians feel the same way. Indeed, in this Year of the Veteran, Canadians have been enthusiastic in showing their commitment to our veterans.

Tens of thousands of Canadians across the country have taken part in hundred and hundreds of activities, big ones and small ones, solemn ones and festive ones, as our nation pays homage during this special year.

[*English*]

I have had the privilege to attend many such events, as have no doubt other members of this House from all sides of the House. The member for Macleod and I had the privilege of attending one such event in Nanton, Alberta, in his riding, where some 5,000 people gathered to mark the building of a monument to commemorate the efforts and sacrifice of the members of Canada's Bomber Command. During World War II, 10,643 Canadians died in that great enterprise, and that enterprise led to the liberation of Europe from Nazi tyranny.

Thousands of Canadians watched on the streets of Vancouver and on television as we buried Smokey Smith, a beloved member of the armed forces, who was our last surviving Victoria Cross recipient. In celebrating Smokey's life, we also remembered that many Canadians have been recognized for their service and bravery over the years.

Few Canadians may know that one of the first recipients of the Victoria Cross was Alexander Dunn who attended Upper Canada College in Toronto and who was awarded one of the original 13 crosses by Queen Victoria for service in the Crimea at the Battle of Balaclava.

The golden thread of service and heroism linking Alexander Dunn to Smokey remains as an inspiration to the young men and women of the armed forces who today serve the cause of peace, stability and freedom around the world.

Routine Proceedings

As we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the end of the second world war this year, we are reminded once again of the depth of the sacrifice and the breadth of the achievement of those who set aside their own hopes and dreams to serve a higher purpose.

We were touched by the outpouring of gratitude from the people of the Netherlands, young and old who gathered in the hundreds of thousands to thank and honour the Canadian veterans who played such a pivotal role in the history of their nation. They came by the thousands too in Canada as we marked VE Day this year here in Ottawa with the opening of Canada's spectacular new war museum.

We remember those who served until the very last days of the second world war in the Far East, many of whom were prisoners of war for almost four years of their very young and terrible lives they lived at that time.

We remember this week especially the sacrifice of Canada's first people, as aboriginal veterans, youth and spiritual elders complete a pilgrimage to Europe, a spiritual journey to call home the spirits of hundreds of warriors who fell on those far off battlefields.

● (1515)

[*Translation*]

This year we have celebrated the contribution of all of our veterans. We have thanked them for their sacrifice and we have remembered them.

From November 5 to 11, we will be marking Veterans' Week and remembering how important it is to pay tribute to our veterans by teaching young Canadians what they did for us.

We must feed the flame of the spirit of remembrance and gratitude that has burned throughout this Year of the Veteran. We are eternally indebted to our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, dear colleagues, the Year of the Veteran and Veterans' Week provide us with an opportunity to renew our commitment to Canada's war veterans and to be sure that the flame of remembrance burns forever.

[*English*]

Just as we will pass this nation we so cherish to our children, let us also pass to them an understanding that this precious legacy comes not from us, for we are but trustees, trustees of a nation forged in the courage of those who served and shaped by the sacrifice of those who fell.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during this year's Veterans' Week we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, and 2005 has also been designated the Year of the Veteran. However, no week or even full year can ever begin to repay the eternal debt of gratitude we all owe to those who gave their lives to defend freedom. Because their sacrifice is forever part of our history, peace is now a part of our citizenship.

I find it especially appropriate that the theme of this Veterans' Week is "Honouring Veterans by Teaching Youth". In this way, as the glorious contribution of those young men and women who sacrificed everything for their country recedes in the fog of time, their memory can be preserved by a new generation of Canadians.

It is sometimes said that Canada truly became a country at Vimy Ridge in April 1917, our first major military victory in the modern era. Even in defeat against overwhelming odds such as Dieppe in August 1942, we gained greater pride in our country and a deeper appreciation for liberty.

Over 100,000 Canadians from all provinces and territories of this great country made the supreme sacrifice in the defence of our way of life and our values. In the eyes of a grateful country, their valour and heroism will never be forgotten.

● (1520)

[*Translation*]

History recalls the name of the great battles of the first and second world wars and the Korean war. However, in thousands of other anonymous locations, at sea, in the countryside, in the desert and in forests, Canadians fell on the field of honour. All of them lie in the peace of the brave, their courage without equal.

Having faced the worst of human nature, they exhibited the best of it. Almost all of them wore on their arm the glorious insignia that identifies them forever as ours, because it included the word "Canada".

[*English*]

On behalf of my party I salute with respect and pride the immortal contribution of our fallen sons and daughters.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): On behalf of my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois and the Quebeckers we represent here in this House, I have the pleasure today of honouring veterans.

It is in large measure thanks to them that we can debate democratically today in this House. It is thanks to them that our people enjoy substantial rights and freedoms in Canada and Quebec. It is in large measure thanks to them that we enjoy economic prosperity.

It is all very well to pay tribute to them once a year, but in fact it is something we should do daily. The best way to do that, in my opinion, is to protect the values they risked or lost their lives to defend.

I recall the sad tales told by my father, who took part in the liberation of Holland. He told me of having seen his friends return from battle in wicker baskets missing legs or arms. These people lived through terrible experiences in the name of freedom. They fought to protect our freedom. Their ultimate sacrifice must not be forgotten.

The Bloc Québécois and its colleagues here have the duty to protect the foundation of our democratic system. We must take care of it every day and never take it for granted. They made a sacrifice. Today, it is extremely important for them to see us ensure that the sacrifice they made was not for naught.

Routine Proceedings

Veterans also preserved our ability to prosper. We, as their successors, have the duty to ensure that this wealth is shared. We must pay tribute to veterans every day by fulfilling our duties here and by preserving the values they so fiercely defended.

We must also do justice to the women, who are often forgotten. I am not just talking about the nurses who went to the front to support the theatre of operations and the men in combat. We must remember the women who supported the war effort and military production in Canada. These were the same women who, when their physically and often mentally wounded husbands returned, had to take care of them. It is important for us to pay tribute to them as well.

In closing, I want to say that veterans have done their duty. We know that the average age of retirement from the armed forces is 37. We must also be responsible for the well-being of those who suffered physical or psychological injuries for many years to come. Our society has a duty to take care of today's veterans and to thank them for all the sacrifices they made. We owe them a great deal. We could never repay them for everything they have given us. The least we can do is to remember them and to pay tribute to them by doing our duty the best way we can.

The Bloc Québécois officially salutes them with much gratitude. We can never repay them for everything they have given us. We thank them for their invaluable contribution. When we speak of veterans we often repeat these words, "At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them" .

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of New Democrats to join our colleagues from all parties in the House in honouring the service and sacrifice of Canadian veterans and the more than 100,000 Canadians who did not return home from war.

In this Year of the Veteran, we remember our nation's struggle through two world wars, Korea and in the peacekeeping missions around the world that have taken place.

Embedded in our national memory are names like Vimy Ridge, Dieppe, Normandy, but we also pay tribute to the often overlooked service of Canadians in places like Burma and Hong Kong.

[Translation]

The Year of the Veteran pays tribute to those brave men and women who gave so much of themselves to defend our freedom. These extremely courageous Canadians fought for the values on which Canada was founded and preserved.

• (1525)

[English]

Veterans like Gary Gould and so many others who I had the honour to meet in the Netherlands. Without their heroism and commitment to this country, Canada would not be the open and democratic society that it is today.

And we are reminded of the vital contributions of the aboriginal peoples made to Canada's war efforts.

In this Year of the Veteran, we saw the members of the House set aside their political differences and join together to pass the veterans charter.

But there are veterans' issues that continue to be raised, like the 14,000 lost veterans whose incomplete paperwork erased their record of service. New Democrats will work with our colleagues in the House to resolve such issues for veterans and their families.

[Translation]

When we remember those who have served our country, let us also take the time to think of the brave men and women in our armed forces who, right now, throughout Canada and around the world, continue to defend Canadian values. Let us think of their families, of those whose attention and support for our forces is nothing less than a national service.

[English]

Remembrance is essential. It is the tie that binds us to our past and ensures that the lessons of history can guide and prepare us for the challenges of the future.

As members of Parliament, we have an obligation to Canada's veterans to take to heart the words that are so often uttered in remembrance, "never again".

The greatest tribute we can pay to our veterans is to build a better world, a world where the words "never again" are not rhetorical but are our solemn vow to pursue peace and deny those who recklessly take up arms.

[Translation]

This is a proud tradition for a nation that reached the age of majority during the war and that, today, is renowned for its pursuit of peace.

[English]

It is my great honour on behalf of New Democrats to thank all those brave Canadians who have served this country. Their sacrifice is not forgotten.

[Translation]

The Speaker: I invite hon. members to rise and observe a moment of silence for those who gave their lives to ensure our freedom.

[The House stood in silence]

* * *

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

In accordance with its order of reference of Friday, October 7, your committee has considered Bill S-38, an act respecting the implementation of international trade commitments by Canada regarding spirit drinks of foreign countries, and agreed on Thursday, October 27, to report it without amendment.

I am also pleased to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food entitled, "Follow-up Study on Bovine Tuberculosis Monitoring and Eradication Programs in the Vicinity of Riding Mountain National Park".

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 the committee requests that the government provide a comprehensive response to this report. As a result of our findings in this eighth report, we are pleased to put forward two recommendations which, if acted upon, will serve to remediate the concerns raised by the affected parties.

● (1530)

INDUSTRY, NATURAL RESOURCES, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Natural Resources, Science and Technology requesting an extension of 30 sitting days to consider Bill C-281, an act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Employment Insurance Act and the Employment Insurance Regulations.

I would also note that the member for Winnipeg Centre put this bill forward and it is a very good bill.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a) a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, November 16, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

* * *

PETITIONS

FOREIGN ADOPTIONS

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, as I have been doing at virtually every opportunity, it is my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of adoptive families here in Canada.

This petition is from citizens in Port Colborne, Niagara Falls, Mallorytown, Burnstown, Welland and Chesterville in Ontario and also from Truro, Halifax, New Glasgow and Pictou Landing in Nova Scotia.

All of these citizens wish to draw the attention of the House to the fact that on average about 2,000 children are adopted from foreign countries every year and brought to our nation and yet, unlike other countries, specifically the United States of America and Great Britain, these children are not granted automatic citizenship in Canada.

Therefore these citizens are seeking that Parliament immediately enact legislation to grant automatic citizenship to those minors adopted from other countries by Canadian citizens with this

Routine Proceedings

citizenship being immediately granted upon the finalization of the adoption.

CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have petitioners from all over the upper Ottawa valley, including Douglas, Eganville, Chalk River, Deep River and even Nepean, who are concerned that the federal government's Canadian Wildlife Service remains determined to move ahead with a ban on the import, manufacture and sale of lead fishing gear. There is no scientific evidence to prove that fishing tackle causes lead poisoning.

Because of the lack of scientific evidence to support that allegation, the petitioners want an open and honest debate on the proposed plan.

AUTISM

Hon. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to table petitions signed by my constituents calling upon Parliament to support intensive behavioural intervention therapy treatment based upon the principles of applied behaviour analysis.

These petitioners would also like to see the creation of an academic chair at a university in each province to teach such treatment to university students.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present three petitions.

Two petitions deal with the growing concerns of many Canadians about the state of our immigration system and, in particular, the failure of the government to hold up, as a cornerstone of Canada's immigration policy, the reunification of family.

The petitioners call upon the government to finally amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to include the sponsorship of relatives now not considered as family in the present administration of this act. They acknowledge that it would do much to enhance the multicultural aspect of this country and our commitment to humanitarian principles.

● (1535)

LABELLING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition yet again on the issue of fetal alcohol syndrome.

The petition calls upon the government to finally implement the motion that was passed by this House almost unanimously three years ago and more, a motion that required the mandatory placement on all alcohol beverage containers of a warning indicating that drinking during pregnancy is dangerous.

The petitioners call upon the government to finally do what is right and respect the wishes of Parliament and the wishes of all Canadians.

Routine Proceedings

CANADA POST

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to present five petitions today from hundreds upon hundreds of residents of the riding of Blackstrap regarding the future of rural post offices.

These citizens from Hanley, Jansen, Glenside, Viscount and Colonsay want their government to know that they value their post offices and they are vital parts of their communities.

CN RAIL

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to present this petition on behalf of 261 citizens of Biggar and surrounding communities. These Canadians ask the House of Commons to fully investigate the proposed closure of the Biggar terminal by Canadian National Railway. They want to ensure that CN employees, local communities and the environment are not unnecessarily put at increased risk by CN's disregard of their concerns.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition in respect to marriage.

These petitioners from the province of Ontario call upon the Government of Canada to support and protect the definition of marriage as the voluntary union of one man and one woman, that it should do all things within the power of Parliament, legislatively and administratively, to preserve and protect that traditional heterosexual definition of marriage as between one man and one women, and that it should not be the role of the unelected judiciary to decide such fundamental matters of policy.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition from the residents of New Brunswick and places beyond who are upset with the possibility of LNG tankers passing through Head Harbour Passage, New Brunswick en route to an LNG terminal built on the American side of Passamaquoddy Bay. This would endanger Canada's environment, our citizens and our economy.

The citizens of New Brunswick are asking the Government of Canada to say no to the passage of those tankers through internal Canadian waters, the same thing that the Government of Canada did 30 years ago when it said no to the passage of oil tankers through that same very narrow, dangerous stretch of water.

TAXATION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition from residents of my riding of Langley.

The petition brings to attention the opposition that the public has to charging a tax on a tax. By charging GST on the federal excise tax and other taxes, it is double taxation and they are opposed to that.

The petitioners therefore are asking the House of Commons to enact legislation to eliminate the goods and services tax charged on federal excise tax and other provincial and federal taxes charged on fuels.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 197 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 197—**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:**

With regard to the Employment Insurance Compassionate Care Benefits program: (a) for each fiscal year between 2003 and 2005, what was the total amount of funding allocated for the administration of the program; (b) for each fiscal year between 2003 and 2005, what was the total amount of funding for public awareness campaigns, related promotional activities and for other miscellaneous items (i.e. focus groups, polling, etc.) associated with the program; (c) for each fiscal year between 2003 and 2005, what was the total level and composition of the staffing for the program; and (d) how many people have applied for the benefits each month since March 2005?

Hon. Belinda Stronach (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am informed as follows:

Compassionate Care Benefits program:

(a)	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Salary	\$ 19 583 000	\$ 19 997 000	The budget distributions have not been finalized and have not been allocated to date.
EBP	\$ 3 916 000	\$ 3 999 000	
Non-Salary	\$ 14 801 000	\$ 7 504 000	
Total	\$ 38,3 M	\$ 31,5 M	

Note: The above table represents the funding approved as per the Treasury Board submission for the implementation, ongoing delivery and administration of compassionate care benefits (CCB). Funding is based on the initial forecast of CCB claim volumes.

(b)

\$1.9 million allocated (2003-2004), and nil (2004-2005)

(c)

Staffing levels are not isolated for CCB. Resources are allocated based on a model which assigns the number of full time equivalents based on varying levels of complexity of the EI claim load.

Government Orders

(d)

Months / 2005	Benefit Claims
March	403
April	417
May	456
June	445
July	355
August	425
September	410

* * *

*[English]***QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS**

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 193 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Question No. 193—**Mr. David Chatters:**

With regard to the Canadian Cancer Society, how much financial support has all government departments and agencies provided to the Canadian Cancer Society and its provincial divisions on a yearly basis since the year 2000, and what was the purpose of these funds?

(Return tabled)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

*[Translation]***MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[English]

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers I want to bring to the parliamentary secretary's attention June 27, which was a few months ago. At that time I asked for copies of all studies conducted by or in possession of the government concerning chemical defoliants, including agent orange and agent purple, applied between the years 1956 and 1984 at CFB Gagetown. This is really important information and it is critical to the work we are doing on this file.

The government could get this information in the next 24 hours if it so chose to do so but it has not.

This whole investigative and public relations process in which the government was engaged in Gagetown where in fact the government hired Mr. Vaughn Blaney to do some of these public exercises, Mr. Blaney has resigned his position. When the government goes about replacing him and setting up a better system of conducting some of these hearings this information will be critical.

I am asking the government to get on with it. It has been since June 27. It has been too long. We need the information now.

● (1540)

The Speaker: I am sure the hon. parliamentary secretary who has been listening very attentively has heard the hon. member's representation on this matter and will deal with it accordingly.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I have one little point left. We also are working on this liquid natural gas issue on which I just presented a petition.

The member knows this issue inside out and backwards. This information is critical as well because this issue still has not been resolved by the Government of Canada in terms of allowing those very dangerous tankers through Canadian waters.

The parliamentary secretary's father would know this issue inside out. Could the parliamentary secretary please get on with the job of answering and providing us with those documents necessary to making the right decisions?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I know you will appreciate that the government answers all Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers and Questions on the Order Paper with great haste and great accuracy.

You may remember, Mr. Speaker, with respect to these LNG tankers, the same member for New Brunswick Southwest was on his feet, in what was in fact debate, with a similar kind of comment with respect to Questions on the Order Paper and he insisted that these questions with respect to LNG tankers needed to be answered immediately and that they were very important.

I was informed when I left the Chamber that day that in fact the questions had only been received by the government that very same day. While we are speedy and while we are prompt, I think all members will understand that they need to be patient because we want the answers not only to be prompt but also to be accurate as they always are.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his reminder that patience is such a virtue and one I know that is well-known to all hon. members.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[English]***PACIFIC GATEWAY ACT**

The House resumed from October 31 consideration of the motion that Bill C-68, An Act to support development of Canada's Pacific Gateway, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended by 18 minutes.

Mr. Gary Carr (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we last met on this issue, I was talking about the Government of Canada's commitment to fully developing the Pacific gateway. I spoke not only about transportation but also about some of the infrastructure. I also talked not only about the impact of the Pacific gateway on transportation but the effectiveness of the gateway and how the Canadian economy would take advantage of it. Not only will the fine province of B.C. benefit from this, but all Canadians will benefit.

China and India are often referred to as the Asian tigers. They are becoming an emerging market with which we need to deal.

The Pacific gateway transportation advisory committee will consist of individuals from municipalities, which is very good because municipalities have an active stake in infrastructure in our great country. The committee also will include representatives from the transportation sector because it needs to be an integrated strategy.

Aboriginals also have been included on the committee as well as environmentalists. It is extremely important that aboriginal issues be taken into consideration as well. Environmentalists must be involved because we are talking about major infrastructure programs. Emergency preparation experts will be included as well.

The Pacific gateway transportation advisory committee will consist of individuals offering their expertise on the opportunities of the gateway and how Canadians can take full advantage of this potential.

Without the funds to operate the advisory committee, it would be difficult for it to do its job. As a result, up to \$35 million over five years has been identified for the work of the council and for the federal departments. We will be interacting with the council to make the delivery of the Pacific gateway strategy a success.

The stakeholders in the transportation sector have long advocated for a more integrated approach to transportation, and I stressed that point in my earlier statements. This approach should address the inter-connections, and I am sure the stakeholders will ensure that happens. Canada's Pacific gateway council will fulfill this need.

The home of the council will be located in the Vancouver area, which is fitting recognition of the critical role that this region will play in Canada's Pacific gateway.

As a result of this initiative, I believe Canada will be able to take up the opportunities and the challenges of the changing Asian marketplaces. We all know that will be a growing area, and the government fully supports it.

As I said in my earlier discussion, the impact of the Pacific gateway strategy reaches well beyond the Pacific. The result of this initiative will yield benefits across the country. All Canadians will benefit from the initiatives, particularly as they relate to the fact that Canada is a trading nation.

We have been successful as a result of our trading. Up until now it has been essentially with the United States, upwards of 86%. The

government is trying to diversify that. Canada's closeness to the world's largest market, the United States, has been a blessing. However, there is a famous saying, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket" and it can be applied here. If there is any type of downturn, we need to ensure we are diversified.

• (1545)

Canada's Pacific gateway will connect to markets across North America and beyond, thereby strengthening Canada's position in the competitive world of international commerce. That is a priority of the government. Up until now, we have done that very well. Members will know the statistics of how well this country is doing in its economy versus our G-7 partners. We cannot rest on our laurels and it is up to the government to provide the infrastructure needed to ensure our businesses thrive.

Whether small, medium or large businesses, our business is to compete with anyone in the world. We have the finest labour and trained people in all parts of the country, but we also need the infrastructure. All small, medium and large companies need to have the infrastructure in place so they can compete and ship their products to other parts of the world.

Our labour force is the best in the world without a doubt. It is highly skilled, but it also needs to ensure we have the infrastructure. I see that as a vital part of government. It is one of the reasons we put together, before the last election, the infrastructure program dealing with municipalities. As businesses say, it is up to the government to put these infrastructures in place.

I am very confident of our success. We have the best labour force and the best companies. We now have a great infrastructure. We also have been blessed with having a lot of raw materials. We have a lot of oil, minerals, water and wood. Those are blessings that came to our great country. When that is put together with the people and the infrastructure the government will put in place, it will definitely ensure that our high standard of living continues. If we are unable to compete or trade, particularly with emerging markets, our standard of living and quality of life will deteriorate.

Canada's Pacific gateway strategy is an important part of the efforts of the Government of Canada to secure and enhance Canada's prosperity for years to come. We are doing other things in the areas of health care and the economy. We also have been very blessed with having a great success over the last while. We have money coming in and no deficit.

We are the only country in the G-7 that does not have a deficit position. We have had eight straight balanced budgets. When all this is put together, along with the new deal for cities and communities, the government has clearly committed to helping ensure that we maintain the prosperity for which we all are looking.

We will break new ground by confirming and addressing a broad range of interconnected challenges and opportunities.

On behalf of the good people of Halton, I am proud to participate in this debate and I look forward to some questions from my colleagues.

Government Orders

This is a very good initiative. I would encourage all members of the House to support the bill and I want to commend the government and in particular the minister for an excellent bill.

• (1550)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two comments and two questions coming out of the member's presentation. The first is on prosperity. He mentioned something about the current government having brought prosperity to Canada.

The member must be aware that the latest Statistics Canada figures show that since 1989, four of the five quintiles, in other words, when we divide the Canadian population into income sectors, the lowest 20%, the second lowest 20%, the middle 20% and then the two upper 20%, have seen a decline in real income.

In other words, the poorest, the lowest income Canadians, have seen their income drop by about 10%. The second quintile and third quintile, the middle class and working class Canadians, have seen their real income, the percentage of family income, drop by an equivalent of three weeks of salary a year.

Even the upper middle class, the second highest quintile, have seen an erosion of market income of a few days of pay a year.

The only group of individuals in Canada that have been prosperous since 1989 are the highest income level of Canadians. They have seen their incomes skyrocket. Corporate CEOs and corporate lawyers are doing very well.

How can the member talk about prosperity when the government has an 80% failure rate since 1989, where 80% of Canadians have seen their real incomes go down, not go up?

My second question is on his very apt observation, that when 86% of our trade is put into one country, we leave ourselves extremely vulnerable. That is has happened. What we have had over the past few years is that concentration of exports, now 86%, to the United States.

As any small business can tell us, when 86% of its trade is done with one client, there is trouble. We have seen in the last two months absolutely no action from the government on softwood lumber, aside from one phone call, but no concrete action and, indeed, various signs that the government is ready to negotiate when we won under the current dispute settlement mechanism.

First, how can he see the country as being prosperous when 80% of our families are seeing lower income?

Second, does he not feel it was a mistake for the government to put all the eggs in one basket and to concentrate our exports, when we should have over the past decade diversified to protect the interests of Canadians?

• (1555)

Mr. Gary Carr: Mr. Speaker, I will have to disagree with my hon. friend. Canada has had the highest standard of living of all the G-7 countries over the last few years. He will know that the G-7 countries include the United States, which has a far larger disparity in terms of rich and poor than Canada. I believe this is a result of the

social programs that we have talked about. I believe it is because of the health care programs and the \$41 billion we put into health care.

As members know, the United States does not have a health care system. Thirty-five million people do not have any health care system. It has larger disparities. It has the very rich, like Bill Gates, but it also has the very poor. Because of its social network, I believe, Canada has a better standard of living across the total population.

Other G-7 countries include France, Germany, Britain and Japan. We have had the best standard of living and job creation. When this government took over, the unemployment rate was heading toward 12%. We have almost cut that in half. That is a good thing.

As members know, in the last budget we helped some low income people, particularly seniors, by increasing to about \$10,000 the amount that they do not pay any taxes on. This will mean that literally hundreds of thousands of people will pay no taxes. I think that is a good thing.

I say to my hon. friend that we will have to disagree, because I believe the standard of living and the quality of life over the last few years have indeed improved. That is not to say that we cannot do more. That is what this government is all about. That is what this bill is all about: ensuring that we have the money and the income to do it.

On the second point, I think it would be agreed, going back decades, as I said in my speech, that we need to diversify, plus we have the U.S., the largest market in the world, right next door. We need to diversify. That is what Bill C-68 is all about. In order to diversify and to help the great people I talked about in terms of labour and the companies, small, medium and large, it is the government's responsibility to put the infrastructure in place.

As members know, through this period we have done it with the cities and communities. That is what this bill is all about. Even though the member may have been critical in that regard, I think we are both saying the same thing. We are trying to diversify so that when the downturn comes, which will inevitably happen in all countries and in the United States, we are able to compete.

When it comes to some of the trade disputes, this government has been very strong with the United States. In the cases of the softwood lumber and the BSE, when we have felt that the U.S. has not acted in the best interests of our country, this Prime Minister and our ministers have been very strong in terms of dealing with the United States.

I believe, as has been said, that Bill C-68 will enhance and help us go into the emerging markets.

I will note one thing last thing as we wind down. Because of these emerging markets in Asia, and the two I talked about in particular were China and India, we need to focus on the west coast. I know that there have been some discussions about what we are doing on the east coast. I am sure that my hon. friend, coming from that area, will give his full support to this piece of legislation because it is a good piece of legislation which will help companies right across this country in regard to competing in markets.

Government Orders

When we do this, I know that it will increase our standard of living and quality of life. I know that is the goal of all members in the House. All of us hope that at the end of the day we will be able to achieve that for the constituents we are here to represent.

• (1600)

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to tie something in to the Pacific gateway. It is with respect to some of the comments that have been made here, our productivity, what we are as a nation, and our abilities.

Some have suggested that we are simply a nation of hewers of wood and those who fish and give up our raw products to foreign markets, but nothing could be further from the truth. We are a nation that exports, to be sure a nation that has to export because of the small size of our population but our large size in geography.

Having said that, let me note that we are also a nation of extremely talented and well educated people who have been able to use our resources as a nation to export much more than wood, minerals and other raw products. We are a nation of exporters of value added products. Indeed, we are leaders in technology in various parts of the world. In fact, from a public perspective, our government has made our country one of the biggest investors in research in the entire world. Our government invests on a per capita basis in research just about as much as any other country in the world.

My question for the hon. member gets down to productivity. The Pacific gateway strategy is a part of something that has to be dealt with and is being dealt with in regard to our economic capability and competitiveness in the world, and that is the issue of productivity.

I would like to ask my hon. friend whether he will support the initiatives to continue to reduce taxes, to remove rules and regulations, to work with the provinces to invest in education and develop products and initiatives nationally to fill the deficits that we have as a country with respect to our professional capabilities in the trades, for example, and in other areas. I think that is fundamentally important. I know that the Minister of Finance is working on this.

Does the member for Halton support this notion of improving our productivity so that our private sector can continue to compete internationally with its competitors, so our country will move forward to be on the cusp of being a world leader in a broad array of arenas, and so we will be able to provide value added, high paying jobs here in Canada?

Mr. Gary Carr: Mr. Speaker, I agree entirely with the hon. member. Members of this caucus will continue to push for more programs in that area. I have spoken on a number of occasions about the standard of living and the quality of life of the next generation. I have three children. In fact, my youngest met the hon. member last night. I firmly believe that the standard of living and the quality of life of the next generation will be in direct proportion to the skills and training we give them today.

Not just the physical natural resources but the skills will ensure that the next generation will have the prosperity that my generation has had. The generation previous to mine worked to ensure that many of my generation could get the skills and training through universities and colleges. I am certain that we will continue to work

with the government on this. I could not agree more that the standard of living and the quality of life will depend on the skills and training we provide. We cannot rely just on the natural resources. That is part of what this is all about: ensuring that we diversify into these markets.

As I said earlier, and I know the member agrees, we have the best people in the world and we have the best companies in the world. With the government supporting them, I fully believe that the next generation will have the prosperity that our generation has had. That is the goal of every member of the House.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on Bill C-68, an act to support the development of Canada's Pacific gateway. I will begin by saying that we in the NDP support the bill in principle, but we have serious concerns about the government's overall approach.

The bill itself is innocuous. It appoints another advisory board. In a moment, I will come back to concerns about the appointment process by the Liberal government. The reality is that the issue of the Pacific gateway is linked much more clearly to broader issues around the infrastructure deficit that we have had over the past two decades under both the Conservatives and the Liberals. Clearly there is a neglect of our infrastructure across the country.

The reality is that the funding, coupled with the advisory committee set up by the bill, is clearly inadequate to meet the needs and objectives of what we in British Columbia have to do to repair the infrastructure after decades of neglect, but also inadequate for us as the province of British Columbia and also as the country of Canada to respond to the need to diversify our trade markets, because very clearly the trade strategy of the current government has been a failure.

With NAFTA, we have seen the dispute settlement mechanism being basically ripped up by the Bush administration. There has been no reply from the government. There has been some posturing and there have been some speeches. The NDP put forth a three point action plan in September and none of those actions put forward in September have been undertaken by the government. It is very clear to me that this shows the Bush administration the government is not serious about defending Canadian interests.

If the trade policy has been a failure, one of the key things we have to do is diversify our markets. In order to do that we have to repair the neglect of our infrastructure over the past two decades and start to respond with broader infrastructure maintenance and broader infrastructure construction.

As for the bill itself, we will be supporting it in principle, but we have five concerns. I will start with the actual administration of the moneys that are attached to this particular bill.

We are talking about \$190 million that has actually been allocated, both to infrastructure programs in British Columbia and in connection with transportation in and out of British Columbia. At the same time, about \$35 million has been allocated to the advisory committee.

Government Orders

We are talking about \$190 million when we know that for infrastructure needs the federal government's share should be at least \$2.5 billion. While the government has allocated an additional \$400 million for photo ops during the election campaign, this much needed money has not been allocated and very clearly is being kept in reserve so that when an election comes, sooner or later, members of the government can go forth and be present at the funding announcements.

However, \$190 million has been allocated when we need \$2.5 billion. I will come back to that in a moment. Very clearly, that is short-sightedness on the part of this government.

I will also talk a bit about the overall neglect of infrastructure. That is a key issue that the NDP, in this corner of the House, has been concerned about for some time. There is the issue of the neglect of infrastructure. There is the issue of the inadequacy of the funding that is attached. There is the actual role of the advisory committee, which has no clear governance role, as it basically advises the government and the government makes the decision.

Primarily this is an issue of the overall mismanagement of governmental programs. I will touch on that at the end of my presentation, but I would also like to start by quoting the Gomery report on who is responsible, those major findings by Justice Gomery, because it is important for the record to hear the concerns that have been raised about programs run by the government. We have \$190 million that ostensibly has been allocated and \$400 million that has not been allocated.

What did Justice Gomery say? What did the commission of inquiry find in terms of Liberal management of programs?

• (1605)

The commission of inquiry found clear evidence of political involvement in the administration of the program, insufficient oversight, and a veil of secrecy surrounding the administration of the program and an absence of transparency in the contracting process. The inquiry also found a reluctance for fear of reprisal by virtually all public servants to go against the will of a manager who is circumventing policies. It found gross overcharging by communications agencies, inflated commission and production costs, and the use of the program for purposes other than those for which it was intended. It found deliberate actions to avoid compliance with federal legislation, including the Canada Elections Act, the Lobbyists Registration Act, the Access to Information Act and the Financial Administration Act, as well as federal contracting policy and the Treasury Board's transfer payments policy. It found a complex web of financial transactions involving kickbacks and illegal contributions to a political party in the context of the program, five agencies that received large contracts, regularly channeling money via legitimate donations or unrecorded cash gifts to political fundraising activities, and certain agencies carrying on their payrolls individuals who were in effect working on Liberal Party matters. It found the existence of a culture of entitlement among political officials involved with the program, and the refusal of ministers, senior officials in the PMO and public servants to acknowledge their responsibility.

The reason I raise this is that we are experiencing the exact same problems now around the issue of the Toronto Port Authority and

\$35 million that was allocated for a bridge that was never built. It is unbelievable. Some \$35 million has disappeared from the federal coffers through the Ministry of Transport, and despite repeated requests under the Access to Information Act, and despite repeated questions, no answers have been forthcoming as to why it would cost \$35 million not to build a bridge.

Very clearly what we have here is an ongoing pattern of mismanagement, the veil of secrecy that Justice Gomery referred to so clearly, where moneys that are public funds, paid for by the taxpayers of this nation, go forward and the ministry, in this case the Department of Transport, has sent that money away without any receipts, without any sort of production of documents to ensure that we are getting good use for those moneys.

I raise that because here we have another incident where the federal Liberal government wants to spend \$35 million for an advisory committee, but since the practices that Justice Gomery has identified, that are current today and that we have seen not only with the David Dingwall affair but also very clearly with the Toronto Port Authority, have not been cleaned up, how can any of us in this House be fully assured that we are going to get the proper accounting for taxpayers' dollars that is a necessary obligation of the government?

Justice Gomery identified clear issues. The government has not responded to them. Other issues are coming forward, the Toronto Port Authority and other examples of the allocation of funds without the appropriate due diligence, yet the government continues to stonewall legitimate questions that are raised about the allocation of those funds.

That culture of entitlement is the first of the concerns we have about Bill C-68. Clearly if moneys are being allocated and very clearly if we have funds of \$400 million that remain unallocated and obviously will not be allocated until a potential election campaign, it is important to raise those legitimate concerns about what is going to happen to that money. The government has not cleaned up its act, so there are legitimate concerns that the opposition, like the NDP, can express about whether or not those funds would be allocated properly.

The second concern is around the issue of the advisory committee itself. The deck presentation around the gateway bill talks about an innovative new governance structure. The innovative new governance structure is an advisory body, and the advisory body has only the mandate to advise governments. The advisory committee itself does not have the power to actually push forward projects. All it can do is advise the government.

One wonders about this, perhaps cynically with an election coming up. The transportation infrastructure in British Columbia has not been dealt with for decades under the Conservative Party or under the Liberal Party. The infrastructure in British Columbia has been completely ignored, but now we see an advisory committee that will be coming forward that has no power to actually implement anything. All it can do is advise the government. One can say that perhaps this will be an advisory committee that is set up primarily for electoral purposes. I hope that is not the case, but it is a legitimate question and we are asking that question.

Government Orders

●(1610)

There is another question that stems from this. Given that the appointment process has not been cleaned up in any way by the government, similar to the financial transactions identified by Justice Gomery, a couple of weeks ago the hon. member for Ottawa Centre presented a clear seven point plan for cleaning up government, cleaning up Parliament, ending the appointments of political cronies that we have consistently seen from the government. There has been no response.

Creating another advisory committee will put us in the same situation. The government seems to be attracted to cronyism. Will the advisory committee actually be composed of legitimate individuals, or will it simply be another place where the Liberal Party appoints its cronies? This is my second legitimate concern.

I have a third concern. It is over the allocation of funding for this particular group of projects. I mentioned earlier that we are talking about \$190 million that has been allocated. Some \$125 million has actually been allocated to transportation infrastructure, including the Pitt River bridge on Mary Hill in the tri-cities area of British Columbia, the Deltaport road rail grade separations, and North Portal, Saskatchewan which is the same thing, road rail grade separations. Deltaport is allocated \$30 million and \$3 million goes to North Portal.

These are projects that are important, but it is a drop in the bucket to what the actual infrastructure needs are. The infrastructure needs have been identified at over \$5 billion. The federal share of that would be \$2.5 billion. Because of the neglect around infrastructure and transportation infrastructure over the last 20 years by the Conservatives and the Liberals these needs must be fulfilled. At the same time, over the last 20 years the population in greater Vancouver has grown by three-quarters of a million. We clearly have a gap between what the needs are and the government stepping forward to actually meet them.

Some \$190 million has been allocated, and \$125 million has actually been allocated to transportation infrastructure projects, and another \$400 million has been kept in reserve, obviously for the next election campaign. The needs are many times what the actual allocation has been. That is the third concern with this bill and the allocation that goes with it.

It is important to mention the overall neglect of the government when it comes to infrastructure generally. Over the past decade we have seen the clear neglect of our infrastructure.

In the 1960s we actually had double the rate of public infrastructure investment to overall tangible capital. It was twice the rate in the 1960s than we are seeing now. That gap has led to the shortfalls that have been identified by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and by the Canadian Urban Transit Association. Very clearly our transportation infrastructure has not kept up with the needs.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has estimated the infrastructure deficit at about \$60 billion across the country. Those are funds that Canadians need because of the shortfall between what should have been invested by the government and what actually was

invested. That deficit is growing at about \$2 billion a year. We have a substantial infrastructure deficit that continues to grow.

We are talking about \$60 billion across the country, and the government is putting \$190 million toward some transportation infrastructure projects. For the most part that just starts to address the problem. It is so far short of what is needed. There is a clear gap between the rhetoric of the government to want to respond to the urgent needs that are occurring in British Columbia and the reality of actually meeting those needs.

●(1615)

The Canadian Urban Transit Association has talked about a deficit in terms of actual infrastructure funding between 2004 and 2008. We need about \$7 billion to maintain our existing urban transit infrastructure and about twice that, \$14 billion, to actually expand, which is what we need to do. As I mentioned, in British Columbia there are three-quarters of a million additional people over the last 20 years. We need \$7 billion to maintain the infrastructure over that four year period from 2004 to 2008 and we need \$14 billion to expand.

Not just my party but a number of parties in this House have raised the issue of the national highway program. We do not have a national highway program in place. Canada is the only country in the G-8 that does not have one. We have seen the deterioration of our highways across the country. It is another example of the infrastructure deficit that exists.

We are seeing a deficit in infrastructure. There are very clear needs that have to be met. The bill, and the relatively small amount of money that goes with it, does not in any way address the infrastructure deficit that has occurred certainly over the past 12 years of the Liberal government but even before that under the Conservative government.

I would also like to mention a number of examples of the mismanagement that we have seen around the overall issue of infrastructure and maintenance in British Columbia and elsewhere. Concerns have been raised about Ridley Island, the sale at the Prince Rupert port facility. A number of companies in the Mining Association of British Columbia have raised concerns that the transport minister should take a second look at a proposal to purchase Ridley Island because they are concerned about the actual sale that is being pushed through by the government.

Concerns have been raised about the Fraser River dredging. The Fraser River Port Authority has not been left with funds to actually do the required dredging in the Fraser River. This is another clear example of a need that is not being met.

In my riding, something that affects the entire greater Vancouver regional district is the Burnaby Lake issue that has come forward. The Burnaby municipal council, on behalf of the GVRD, made an application to the federal government to get funding for the Burnaby Lake revitalization. Mayor Derek Corrigan of Burnaby put together the financing on the municipality side. Harry Bloy, the MLA for Burnaby, pushed the provincial government to provide provincial government funding for the infrastructure to revitalize Burnaby Lake, an important jewel in our community. We continue to wait for the federal government. We continue to wait.

Government Orders

In fact, the city of Burnaby was told that the infrastructure program did not finance Burnaby Lake renewal, but we know that the same program financed the renewal in Saskatchewan. Very clearly we have an issue around infrastructure. We raised those concerns. We have the provincial government on board. We have the city of Burnaby on board. Both sides who have put that allocation forward are waiting for the federal government to step in and make the commitment.

We have broad concerns with Bill C-68, although we are supporting it in principle. We have concerns over the overall financial mismanagement that we have seen and which was confirmed by Justice Gomery. We have concerns about the actual appointment process of the federal government. Despite the interventions of the member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre, we have not seen a change to that appointment process. Any time we talk about a new advisory committee, that raises the alarm.

• (1620)

We are concerned about the inadequacy of the funding of \$190 million when \$2.5 billion is called for. We are concerned about the infrastructure deficit that we have seen over the past 20 years, particularly over the last 12 years. We are also concerned about the mismanagement of current projects that should have been resolved.

With all those caveats, I close my presentation.

• (1625)

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Discussions have taken place between all parties regarding the extension of government orders today as a result of the ministerial statement, and I believe you would find consent that notwithstanding today's ministerial statement, government orders shall finish at 5:30 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): 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 Kildonan—St. Paul, Copyright Act; the hon. member for Langley, Justice; the hon. member for Prince Albert, Softwood Lumber.

We are now on questions and comments. The hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that we have problems with infrastructure all across this country, especially in places such as British Columbia and Alberta and even in Fort McMurray where 98% of this great country's oil is located. There is a single lane highway going in and out of Fort McMurray which some 30,000 to 70,000 people travel on frequently. We do have an infrastructure deficit.

I would like my friend to comment on some of the issues that were brought up by the previous speaker when he said that this government had been firm with our trading partners.

I started to add up the issues in my head. There is the softwood issue. The government has thrown loop into Bill C-64 by trying to stall it for guarantees for the softwood industry. The government says it has been firm with the United States with respect to our cattle industry. There is also the safety issue around shipping in Atlantic Canada that has been brought up by some of our members. The fishing industry is an absolute failure with the U.S. and other countries.

Other issues the government says it has been firm on with respect to the United States are textiles, wheat and especially the environment, for instance, sumas energy 2, which our caucus, especially the member for Langley, has been so adamant in trying to fix with the U.S.

I fail to see where our government has been firm with the United States with respect to acid rain, the Great Lakes and Devils Lake. Could my friend enlighten me as far as the Liberal government's firmness is concerned during any of the years it has been in office?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I indeed have the same problem that the hon. member has. I have been looking for some indication of firmness, some action that may have taken place since the Bush administration arbitrarily ripped up the dispute settlement mechanism of NAFTA. I have not seen a single example.

As the hon. member well knows, it took two months for the government to make a phone call. We have seen from the government absolutely no action, even though the NDP's three point plan called for an immediate recall of Parliament which did not happen. We have been calling for an end to the continued negotiations on NAFTA plus.

At the same time, as the dispute settlement mechanism of NAFTA has been ripped up, we are seeing the government sit down and continue to negotiate concessions with the Bush administration. It is unbelievable that at the same time as we are purportedly upset with the Bush administration, we have the government negotiating further concessions in some 300 areas, including vital areas like food safety and air safety.

We called for an end to those concessions, those continued negotiations, and nothing has happened there. The government is continuing every day to negotiate further concessions with the Bush administration.

We called for an export levy on our energy exports because energy has been part and parcel of the negotiations around dispute settlement. In fact, as the member well knows, in the very early days of the free trade agreement and with NAFTA, our objective purportedly was to obtain a dispute settlement mechanism that would be binding and at the same time the American objective was to have privileged proportional access to our energy.

The Bush administration has that. In fact, we supply the American market before we can supply our own. In the event of a national emergency where we reduce supply most of our energy supplies will still go to the United States. Yet, the government has done nothing on that front either. There has been absolutely no action.

Government Orders

What has been disturbing, and I know the hon. member shares my concern, is that there has been very little support for the industries most affected. The only option seems to be litigation which is the second worst thing possible, but at least, given that the industries are getting that support from the government, this would be something that would help support them. However, the government is not allowing the bill to go through to actually provide some support for the litigation for those companies.

The second disturbing development is the open statements in the House that have indicated that it is no longer \$5 billion that the government is pushing the Bush administration to repay regarding the punitive levies that we saw through the Byrd amendment, but only \$3.5 billion.

Therefore, we are already sending a very clear signal from the government that we are conceding even before there is any negotiation. It is unbelievable that we are reducing already the bar on moneys that clearly, through the binding dispute settlement mechanism of NAFTA, should be coming back to Canada.

I have real concerns about the lack of firmness of the government and its indication of posturing and speechifying rather than dealing with the fundamental issue. If we were to negotiate away the dispute settlement mechanism for the softwood industry, any other sector could be impacted similarly. If we do not stand up, if the government does not stand up for Canadian rights, then we are going to experience similar problems in other sectors.

• (1630)

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member from Fort McMurray brought to this House's attention the SE2 issue and the fight. I appreciate his hard work in this House and also bringing attention to SE2. It is very important to the Fraser Valley.

The question that I have relates to the presentation by the member for Burnaby—New Westminster. He was speaking in relationship to the sponsorship scandal and the Gomery report. He said that he is concerned about the culture of entitlement and that this government has not cleaned up its act.

This has been a concern in this House since the Auditor General's report of two years ago, November 2003. We have said all along that there has been a huge problem with entitlement, corruption, and improper use of taxpayer money. He is quite right that there is a huge problem.

Why is his party supporting the Liberal government and supporting the loss of moral right to govern this country? It is his party that has bolstered up this government. Then he expressed a concern about the advisory board, the appointment process, the cronyism and the patronage.

Again, why is he permitting this to go on? It is his party that is keeping this ongoing problem, which is a huge problem for Canada.

He talked about the infrastructure needs. He is absolutely right. I think Canadians are very suspect about recent political announcements that there will be \$590 million coming for the gateway project. It is an incredibly important project, the gateway project, for not only B.C. but for Canada because the goods will be moving out of the

west coast for all of Canada. He shared his concern about the infrastructure moneys being just a token, and I agree.

The three concerns that he had are legitimate concerns. I agree with them. Yet, when there is an opportunity to hold this government accountable, he does not hold the government accountable and so it is just words.

Why does he keep propping up this government and preventing—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster. Very briefly, please.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, it is hard to respond briefly to a question like that.

Very clearly, the hon. member is referring back to last spring. There were two votes on the budget. The first vote was on \$4.6 billion in corporate tax breaks and the Conservative Party chose to maintain the government at that time. We were opposed.

Then, after talking and knocking on doors in my communities of Burnaby and New Westminster, I got very broad feedback that people in my communities wanted Justice Gomery to get to the bottom of the sponsorship scandal. They did not want an election at that time. Very responsibly, in this corner of the House, we moved forward to push this government to, instead of dumping \$4.6 billion on the wealthy corporate sector, actually invest in housing, post-secondary education accessibility for people across this country, the environment and foreign aid.

We forced the government to do that and we voted to maintain the government at that time. Ever since then, as the hon. member well knows, there has not been a confidence vote in the House. We are as appalled by this report as any other Canadian is. It is a catalogue of the type of mismanagement and corruption that is not permissible in this country.

• (1635)

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the member for Burnaby—New Westminster talk. On the one hand he is worried about an advisory council. At the same time he is worried about government decisions. He is worried about \$190 million being dedicated to worthy causes of necessary infrastructure, that it is too much, but now he says we need \$5 billion worth of infrastructure in British Columbia. I am a bit confused by his confusion.

Let me respond to his initial observation that the Gomery inquiry suggests that we cannot trust our government, that somehow there is something scandalous going on across government. Mr. Justice Gomery says that in general, the administration of government programs by the federal bureaucracy is competent and praiseworthy, a conclusion that has been emphasized by the Auditor General herself. He goes on to say:

The fact that the Inquiry has been held demonstrates that in this country persons at even the highest levels of government are accountable for their actions, not only to Parliament but also to the citizenry...Canadians should not forget that the vast majority of our public officials and politicians do their work honestly, diligently and effectively, and emerge from this Inquiry free of any blame.

Therefore, I would suggest to my honourable friend that he relax with respect to his concern.

Government Orders

My question is with respect to his observation on infrastructure. Is he aware that over the last eight years the government has expended over \$12 billion in infrastructure through the Canada works program, through the Canada provincial infrastructure programs, through the border infrastructure programs, through the highways infrastructure programs and now through the rebates to cities of the GST and the \$5 billion on top of the \$12.5 billion that goes to cities through rebates on the return of gas taxes?

In what sort of a state does the hon. member think we live? I look across at my Conservative friends and sometimes, when I listen to them, I think we live in a failed state. In fact, we are one of the most successful countries in the world. I look at our friends across from the Bloc and I think we live in a foreign state. Now I hear from our friends in the NDP such things on infrastructure and I think they think we live in a fantasy state.

Does the member for Burnaby—New Westminster think we are living in a fantasy state?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the minister has raised many questions. I will start with the last one first.

He is well aware, the New Democratic Party administrations have the best financial fiscal period return record of any party in the country and that comes from the Department of Finance. It is not New Democrats saying that, it is Liberals saying that. They have analyzed from 1981 to 2001 the actual fiscal period returns, not the budget, not the smoke and mirrors. The Liberal administrations had the worst record over that period. Eighty-five per cent of the time they were in deficit. Conservatives were only a bit better. Two-thirds of the time they are in deficit.

Every time the NDP projects a surplus, most of the time we get it right and that is why we are the party of realism. We believe there have to be appropriate financial mechanisms of control and that the money is there to invest. We would never approve \$4.6 billion for the corporate sector, which has experienced record profits, when our post-secondary institutions are closed, when our health care system is in crisis, when homelessness has tripled in the greater Vancouver area alone and increased across the country. We have 1.1 million poor kids across the country and we have infrastructure needs that have not been addressed in—

● (1640)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Resuming debate, the Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Sport).

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on behalf on Bill C-68, which is something that is quite extraordinary in the modern history of Canada. It recognizes that the west of Canada, British Columbia, is the gateway to the Asia-Pacific, which is an extraordinary area of the globe in terms of growth, population, immigration and part of the very special makeup and diversity of the country itself. British Columbia is being recognized as the gateway for a national project.

The Pacific gateway is something that is good for every Canadian. There are three billion people in the Pacific Asian market who are building a middle class. With 250 million people who now have joined the middle income ranks of the Chinese population, they are

looking to purchase goods and resources to build their extraordinary economy that is growing at 10% a year, and has for almost the last 20 years.

The gateway concept is extremely important. We are trying it out. The concept understands that for economic growth, prosperity, tourism and the quality of life in our country, we have to take advantage of gateways to the world. There is a gateway in southern Ontario to the United States and a gateway in Halifax over to Europe. We will be developing more gateways on this model as it develops.

However, let me just mention a few aspects of this important Pacific gateway. First, it will deal with infrastructure. We have heard some comments about inadequate infrastructure. The federal government has invested over the last 10 years some \$12 billion to \$13 billion in infrastructure along with and in partnership with provincial and municipal governments. That is leveraged to over \$30 billion of infrastructure.

The government leads on the concept of infrastructure. When the Pacific gateway initiative was announced by the Minister of Transport last month, he said that \$590 million would be the down payment, the same words that the Prime Minister used, on future infrastructure needs. However, we are starting out in a cautious way to prove the model and to ensure that these investments are in the very most needed and important ways.

It will deal with border infrastructure, security and efficiency at the border. We must have both. That means high technology. It means expanding our border services, and that will come out of this Pacific gateway initiative.

We know the demographics of the country demand that we increase our immigration, not only in numbers but also to ensure that those people are paired with the necessary skills needed and when they have foreign skills and training, that they receive appropriate certification as soon as possible on integrating into Canada.

There are the cultural, skills, border and transportation links. Harmonization of standards is extraordinarily important and this Pacific gateway initiative addresses that. The money is only a start. We know the British Columbia Greater Vancouver Gateway Council, which has been a sectoral transportation council for the last eight years, has identified many projects that will decrease the congestion, particularly around the movement of goods around the greater Vancouver area. This will start to address, in partnership with the provincial government of British Columbia, some of those very desperate needs.

However, it will go beyond that. It will go to increasing the port facilities at Prince Rupert. Last April the government made the announcement of an investment of \$30 million into a container facility in Prince Rupert. Prince Rupert is an extraordinary place in terms of this Pacific gateway.

Government Orders

Prince Rupert, as I think many people know, is the deepest port on the west coast of North America. It has a sheltered, ice-free harbour, but it has clearance to it through the south of Haida Gwaii. Most important, it is close to Asia. If we look at the configuration of the continents as well as the curvature of the earth, it puts Prince Rupert 40 hours by ship closer than Seattle and Vancouver to major Asian ports.

• (1645)

Vancouver itself a major part of the gateway at the current time, is itself over 50 hours closer to Shanghai by ship than is the port of Los Angeles.

We have tremendous aspects to our gateway concept that merely need to be invested in and developed to provide greater employment, investment and trade and therefore a higher quality of life for people across our country.

The previous speaker spoke about the gateway council. He had some difficulty with it, although I am not sure why. The way it is set up in the bill, and I am glad to see he is supporting it in general, it is widely representative. It would include transportation sectors, the environment sector, the aboriginal community, appointments recommended or made in consultation with the four western provinces and representatives from municipalities in the various advisory committees of this council.

This is an extremely important recognition of the reality of new governance, which goes beyond any one government getting its own act together or even coordinating well with other levels of government. It goes out to civil society, to business, to the professions and to our research and teaching universities. Quoting from the bill, clause 5(b):

promote consensus among interested stakeholders and raise awareness among decision makers regarding solutions to problems identified by the Council;

What could be more conciliatory and collaborative? However, it goes on in clause 5(c):

promote collaboration, engagement and complementarity of activities with existing networks of stakeholders that have an interest in the Asia-Pacific region or Canada's Pacific gateway.

What could be a better example of the reality of modern governance, of bringing the ideas from the people who are most involved to government for consideration through their recommendations.

The history of the Pacific gateway did not start last month when this initiative was first announced. This has been going on for some period of time.

There are 300,000 people of Chinese ancestry who live in British Columbia and a further 300,000 from other Asian countries with Asian descent. This is an extremely important competitive advantage of our country. Our multicultural makeup itself is an advantage in our trading relationships.

A project that has gone on since 2002, through my department, Western Economic Diversification, also is called Gateway to Asia. It was started to link new immigrant entrepreneurs from Asian countries with manufacturers and suppliers in British Columbia in order to take advantage of two things. The first is the need for new

markets, and previous speakers have mentioned the need to diversify our markets. The second is to link back to those networks, those contacts that new Asian entrepreneurs have with existing manufacturing companies in British Columbia. Now that has spread into Alberta and it will spread across the west.

In the first two years of that gateway project with the Immigrant Services Society's success in Vancouver, a very outstanding organization, over 750 companies signed up in British Columbia for that link with Asian entrepreneurs. They did over \$4 million worth of business in those first two years. That has now gone up to \$6 million in the third year with over 900 companies engaged in that process. That is a previous gateway initiative.

We know the Canadian Tourism Commission is being moved from Ottawa to Vancouver to take advantage of the fact that not only will we be hosting the 2010 Olympics, but that Vancouver has been named year after year the most livable city and one of the greatest tourist destinations in the world.

• (1650)

That is very significant, and certainly this expanded gateway initiative will add measurably, and even immeasurably, to the tourism potential of all of Canada, but through this gateway in many cases. We have negotiated and are close to concluding with the Chinese government the assured destination status, which will lead to potentially hundreds of thousands of Chinese tourists a year coming to Canada. That is another aspect of this gateway.

Let me say as well that we have an organization created in 1984 by the Liberal government under Prime Minister Trudeau and called the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada. This is an extraordinary foundation, a research and cultural communication institution that has recently been given a \$50 million endowment by the Government of Canada so that it can enhance, in research into economic, cultural and social issues, our relationship to the Asia Pacific countries. This complements perfectly this new Asia Pacific gateway concept.

Let me say with respect to the gateway, if I may, that there is an extremely talented 92 year old artist from Vancouver, John Koerner, who started a Pacific gateway series in his art in 1979, so that while we all claim credit and pride in this new Pacific gateway concept, it has been in this fantastic artist's mind for some time. He has produced some of the most extraordinary art in Canada. I should declare my interest here. He is my father-in-law. He continues to paint very prolifically on this great theme.

I will conclude these introductory remarks by talking a bit about what is happening in China. The port of Shanghai at the moment is one of the top three ports in the world for container shipments. Per year, it ships 15 million TEUs, twenty-foot equivalent units, out of Shanghai. Over the next four years, that will expand to 32 million TEUs. Where are they going to go?

China is now building ships that are too large to go through the Panama Canal. They will come to the new infrastructure in the ports of Vancouver, as well as the other ports of British Columbia, Canada's west ports, including this extraordinary capacity which can be built up in Prince Rupert.

*Government Orders***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Not only is Prince Rupert a deep port with unobstructed access and much closer to Asia than any other port of the Americas, it is also uncongested by population or geography. It is connected by the CN network of railroads, some of the best-run railroads in the world, right across to Edmonton, to Winnipeg, into the Sault and the Great Lakes system, down the St. Lawrence, over to the east coast, down through Chicago and the Midwest, down to Louisiana and the gulf, and out to the east coast and New Jersey.

Thus, literally, this gateway, coming through B.C. ports, which of course have both CN and CP, will link Asia not only to all of Canada but right through the United States and even on to Europe through this great increase in container traffic. The opportunities are limitless.

In concluding these remarks in terms of diversification, which we hear a lot about—and my department of course is western economic diversification—I would suggest that we have to diversify in a number of areas. Obviously we have to diversify in markets.

To my amazement, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster decried the importance of NAFTA. I am sure that if he were to realize the trade surplus that we have with the United States, which is quite extraordinary, he would think twice before he downgrades or degrades our relationship with the United States and the wealth that it brings to Canadians, to the strength of our economy and therefore our quality of life.

We must diversify. The softwood lumber dispute shows why not to replace trade with the U.S., because that will continue to grow to the benefit of Canadians, but to provide other opportunities, and of course Asia is one of those great opportunities.

•(1655)

There is a new community on the outskirts of Shanghai, a suburb of Shanghai, which is a demonstration project for British Columbia designed and engineered homes, using British Columbia softwood. It is developing houses for the Shanghai market, which I am sure members know is growing at a tremendous rate. It is one of the largest cities in the world, perhaps the largest, with a greater Shanghai population of approximately 29 million people.

The diversification of markets is critical. We also have to diversify up the value chain to add value to our raw materials. Part of the boom and bust modern history of western Canada has been the problem of the fluctuations in international commodity markets. Of course commodities by definition are low value added and large quantity, with a very narrow profit margin.

I will end with this. With those narrow profit margins, they are boom and bust in the swings of commodity prices, so we must add value to add employment to Canada, of course, but also to have broader profit margins that withstand those commodity price fluctuations. That is another aspect of this diversification. Of course, those products that we are adding value to will be shipped back in containers to Asia. It is obvious arithmetic that if we can fill a container for both ways, we cut its price in half.

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place among all parties concerning the tabling and adoption of the 50th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, concerning the membership of committees, and I believe you would find consent for the following motion. I move:

That the 50th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be deemed tabled and concurred in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[English]***PACIFIC GATEWAY ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-68, An Act to support development of Canada's Pacific Gateway, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the speech that was made by my colleague from Vancouver Quadra, the Minister of Western Economic Diversification.

I think Bill C-68 is actually a typical Liberal bill in the sense that it is everything and nothing at the same time. The bill does not actually prescribe solving any of the solutions that the port of Vancouver in British Columbia faces in creating a Pacific gateway. What the Liberals are doing is setting up a body so that if they are ever asked about what they are doing about the Pacific gateway, they can say they are doing everything because this body might consider it someday.

The government is not actually addressing some of the specific issues that are of concern to the Pacific gateway, like allowing the ports of Vancouver on the lower mainland to merge, eliminating the cap on borrowing, and allowing them to issue tax exempt bonds dealing with dredging on the Fraser River.

Government Orders

The minister will get up, I am sure, and say that this body will study it and advise the government. The government has been in power for 13 years. We need specific action on these things. I want to ask him other questions in his capacity as the Minister of Western Economic Diversification. In my riding, there are a lot of transportation issues that need a lot funding. They need a lot of support from the federal government.

I have been an elected member of Parliament for going on five years now and I have been persistently dogging the government, trying to get some commitment from it on issues such as the Mary Hill bypass, the traffic jams we are seeing on Lougheed Highway, and the problems we are seeing at the Cape Horn interchange and the Coast Meridian overpass in Port Coquitlam. They need support from the federal government. We need assistance with East Road in Anmore, which is seeing real problems with degradation due to summer traffic, with people going up to Bunsen Lake and into the interior during summer vacation time.

We also need general support for the northeast sector. The RAV line for the 2010 Olympics has received a lot of publicity and a lot of attention from the federal government. It just so happens that it goes through the minister's riding. I am sure that is a coincidence.

The northeast sector of the lower mainland, where I am from, is the fastest growing area of British Columbia. We have huge housing starts happening in Heritage Mountain, in downtown Port Moody along Murray Street, on the south side. All kinds of housing is going in there. The north side of Port Coquitlam is one of the fastest growing communities in all of Canada and the fastest in British Columbia. We have received no support from this federal Liberal government. Even when Liberal member of Parliament Lou Sekora represented my riding in this House, we got no attention whatsoever from this federal Liberal government.

We have a light rail project that is supposed to connect the Lougheed Mall to Coquitlam Centre. We have asked for federal support for it and have received no feedback whatsoever. We have asked for support for West Coast Express so it can continue its expansion to service my constituents and there has been no response on that.

I am going to specifically ask the Minister of Western Economic Diversification, who has done nothing for the northeast sector of the lower mainland, how is this bill going to help my community? The \$590 million the Liberals announced had no specific projects in mind. There are a lot of projects in my riding that need attention and the Liberal government has not paid them any mind or any just dues at all.

On behalf of my constituents, I want an answer from this minister. I enumerated all the projects: the Mary Hill bypass, the Lougheed Highway, the Cape Horn interchange, the Coast Meridian overpass, assistance for East Road, assistance for Ioco Road, the light rail that is being proposed, and the support for West Coast Express. Ours is the fastest growing area with a lot of traffic congestion. We need support. Can the minister please rise in the House and tell me if any one of these projects will receive any support from this federal government?

● (1700)

Hon. Stephen Owen: Mr. Speaker, of course the member knows that the infrastructure program, which yes, is administered by my department, Western Economic Diversification, in western Canada, is set up so that three levels of government make decisions together. In fact, the ideas come from the local level on most of those infrastructure programs. The strategic ones may be provincial and federal, but they are then done with the Union of British Columbia Municipalities.

I would suggest to the hon. member that if his constituency is not getting proper attention, then perhaps it is not getting proper representation either because these programs are from the bottom up. He can get together with local mayors in the area and he can go to the provincial government. Of course, all of the issues that he mentioned come under provincial, municipal or regional jurisdiction. They do not come under federal jurisdiction. The federal infrastructure programs have been outside of what is federal jurisdiction, but they are leveraged funds so that it is available for municipalities to pick their own projects that they want to promote.

I suggest to the hon. member that he should be speaking to both provincial and municipal representatives to see why they have not brought these projects forward.

I recall that the hon. member and his party were chastised in the last election for being against the gas tax and the new deal for cities. In fact, the major mayors across the country came forward with great concern before the last election in 2004 because the Conservative Party would not be following through with the infrastructure programs and the new deal for cities.

There is a lot of money going from the federal government to these projects, which are not the jurisdiction and responsibility of the federal government but do allow for the increase in infrastructure right across the country to a great degree.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in regard to the comments of my colleague, the member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, and the answers from the minister, what I heard was the minister saying the mayors are not doing their job. That could not be further from the truth. My colleague from Port Moody has been incredibly hard-working and the mayors have been incredibly hard-working. The body that has not been there has been the federal government.

I also sit on a task force. It deals with my riding of Langley. It is a task force to deal with the rail traffic going through Langley. Langley has five crossings. When we have these 15,000 foot trains going through Langley, every one of those crossings is blocked at the same time. Sometimes the trains have even stopped and we cannot have any movement of traffic. Emergency vehicles get trapped. It is very dangerous.

We have been asking for support. With Deltaport, it is very important. We have these containers coming to service Canada and we need to have proper movement of rail. We have been asking for help from the federal government.

Government Orders

In a minute I will be asking for a response from the minister on what kind of promises we can have. We cannot have the excuse that the mayors are not doing anything. They are at that task force. The mayors of Langley have been working hard. There are two mayors in Langley. We have Langley township and city. We have every stakeholder at that table. We have been working hard on it, trying to find solutions.

We need some money. We heard the announcement that there will be \$30 million to cover rail crossings between Masqui and Deltaport. That is not enough. One rail crossing is going to cost \$30 million. In Langley alone we need five.

What is the federal government going to do? We have all the stakeholders there at the table. The mayors and I are all working hard. What is the federal government going to do that will be sufficient?

• (1705)

Hon. Stephen Owen: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a good point. Grade separation would deal with the issue of traffic congestion while long trains go by.

However I find it a little strange that we are getting apparent criticism of this bill when the bill is meant to address some of these very issues. We have now attributed \$190 million of the first \$590 million to deal with some of these issues that are most pressing and are most obvious. We have another \$400 million, for which we will be looking for recommendations coming out of these broadly representative, including municipal, provincial and a full range of stakeholder committees and advisory councils, to deal with some of these very things.

From everything I have heard so far I would think that every member in the House would be roundly supporting the bill. We should make sure we get going.

As I said in my opening remarks, this has been described as just a down payment. We look forward to working with the hon. member and the people of the Langley area to ensure the grade separations needed there are dealt with.

With respect to the member's comments, I was not suggesting that the local mayors were not representing their people properly. I was suggesting that the hon. member who made the previous statement was not properly representing his constituency in ensuring that the issues that he claims are so important, and I believe they are, are brought forward as infrastructure projects by the province and by the local municipalities.

The \$12.5 billion for infrastructure, then the \$700 million GST rebate and now the \$5 billion for gas tax, we are looking for decisions to come from the bottom up, with the three levels of government agreeing on the due diligence and such.

A lot needs to be done in terms of the new governance and different levels of government getting together so that these local needs, whether they are a provincial or a federal responsibility, are properly looked after together.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-68, an act to support development of Canada's Pacific gateway. That is what the

bill is called, but upon reflection, the bill is much like any other Liberal bill and many other Liberal actions. It is misnamed. It is rhetoric with little action to back up the words. Perhaps a better name for this bill would have been an act to appear to support development of Canada's Pacific gateway, without actually doing much of anything. The bill does little to support actual development of Canada's Pacific gateway.

Instead, the bill sets up an official federal advisory council, most of the members of which are to be appointed by the Prime Minister. Based on what we have seen with recent patronage appointments by the government, I am not optimistic about the promise of the Prime Minister to end cronyism with the introduction of this bill.

Nor am I confident that Bill C-68 is the solution to this issue. However this tiny step forward is all we have had from this government in 12 years, so we will take what we can get.

In truth, there is little need for a new advisory panel to attempt to reinvent the wheel. The B.C. government has already studied the issue in depth and produced the B.C. Ports Strategy. While the government continues to dither over Bill C-68, the province of B.C. produced its final plan for the ports back in March.

Let us take a look at what the B.C. government has already set as its vision and goals.

Its vision is for British Columbia to become the leading gateway for Asia-Pacific trade and the most competitive port system on the west coast of the Americas. Achieving this vision will enable the port system to contribute an additional \$6.6 billion each year in economic output to the Canadian economy by 2020, with \$4.7 billion of that accruing to British Columbia.

The number of ports related jobs in B.C. will grow from 18,000 now to 50,000 by 2020, with the value of wages rising from the present \$1 billion to \$2.7 billion annually.

By 2020, British Columbia's port system will have: an international reputation for a secure, world-class port system with exemplary service performance from dockside to customer; state of the art port terminals that use an appropriate mix of technology and people; the needs of industry and local communities in balance while preserving the environment and ensuring safety and security; one consistent region-wide approach to infrastructure planning and development with integration across the entire supply chain, avoiding duplication and overlap; a common policy approach across all levels of government that treats the port system as a strategic asset and economic generator, stimulating investment; and finally, a growing, productive and prosperous workforce.

The growth in B.C. ports is going to happen in three areas. First, through maximizing Asia-Pacific container traffic growth opportunities. Second, through maximizing export and regional growth opportunities. Third, through maximizing B.C.'s position as a world cruise destination.

Government Orders

That is a great vision and one that is achievable and yet it is going to require significant investment. Absolutely essential is the need to expand our port capacity and transportation infrastructure. Unfortunately, the transport minister has offered only a pittance so far from the federal side.

While the \$590 million recently announced for roads and bridges is desperately needed and long overdue, much more is needed. The B.C. Ministry of Transportation has outlined a list of priorities that are needed right now to deal with the gridlock and congestion. Among these are the proposed Port Mann-Highway 1 project, which includes twinning the Port Mann Bridge, upgrading interchanges and improving access and safety on Highway 1 from Vancouver to Langley.

The project provides for extending HOV lanes to Langley, allows for transit over the Port Mann Bridge and includes cyclist facilities across the new structure. It will relieve severe congestion impacting commuters and the large number of commercial vehicles that rely on this route, the lower mainland's primary truck route.

Another project is the North Fraser Perimeter Road, which is a proposed set of improvements on existing roads to provide an efficient, continuous route from New Westminster to Maple Ridge.

TransLink is responsible for the section through New Westminster, while the ministry is responsible for the segments from King Edward Street in Coquitlam to Maple Ridge, including a new Pitt River Bridge to replace the aging swing bridges. The proposed upgrades will improve safety and reliability along this important corridor, serving goods movement, commuters and growing communities.

• (1710)

A final project is the South Fraser Perimeter road which is proposed as a primarily new four lane, 80 kilometre route along the south side of the Fraser River extending from Deltaport Way in southwest Delta to 176th Street and the Golden Ears Bridge connector road in Surrey and Langley. It will provide a continuous and efficient route to serve the port facilities, rail yards and industrial areas along this key economic corridor and will also benefit commuters.

Each of these projects is designed to reduce congestion and vehicle idling, as well as speed commercial traffic to the ports. These projects will not only help build the Pacific gateway capacity, but they will also help the environment. Yet, the tepid response of the government so far to funding all these projects demonstrates the minimal concern the Liberals have for the problems faced by the lower mainland commuters and industry and for addressing a real environmental problem.

As a lower mainland MP who has to personally deal with the transportation infrastructure in B.C., I can tell the House the gridlock is a major problem in B.C. and the paltry funding that the Minister of Transport put on the table recently barely scratches the surface of the problem.

I want to mention one other critical problem affecting B.C. ports which the government is actually responsible for causing. That is the lack of an adequate police presence at west coast ports and, indeed, at all Canadian ports.

As co-chair of the parliamentary border caucus, I hear regularly from various front line officers of the Canada Border Services Agency who are dealing with threats to their personal safety and who are aware of the presence of organized crime having a significant foothold in many of our international seaports.

Of course, the smuggling of narcotics, weapons, money, people, stolen vehicles and other contraband can be achieved most efficiently through the seaport, and yet the Liberals are directly responsible for disbanding the specialized ports police when they first came to office.

Restoring integrity to the operation of our ports is essential if we are to attract and keep new business. As part of the Pacific gateway strategy I would urge the government to revisit the issue of port security as not only a criminal justice issue, but also as an issue of strength and competitiveness for our legitimate ports business.

The Prime Minister told the nation at the beginning of his mandate that if western alienation remained unchanged he would have failed. I know that the Prime Minister often forgets the promises that he makes but let him be reminded that actions speak louder than words and Bill C-68 is mostly words and very short on action.

As my colleague from West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast pointed out recently, the Liberal government is willing to blow \$1 billion in an attempt to buy a seat for B.C. in this House, but it cannot seem to find the money to deal with the real problems that British Columbians face.

B.C. has long been a net contributor to equalization in Canada. Now, at a time when our ports need expansion, when traffic congestion grows, when our softwood producers need a national government to defend their interests, when street racing threatens lives, when the salmon fishery is in severe decline, when grow houses fill the suburbs, when waiting lists for surgery grow, when pine beetles threaten the interior forests and when tax relief is desperately needed, where is the Liberal government on these issues?

The view from the west is that Liberals are nowhere on these issues. They have consistently failed to defend B.C.'s interests. They have consistently failed to step up to the table with adequate funding for critical problems. They have consistently failed to reform our criminal justice system and they have consistently failed on every file.

Government Orders

Relationships, whether with people, provinces or other countries are a two-way street. This is something the Liberals fail to grasp. If the Prime Minister wants to know why western alienation is at perhaps an all time high, then he needs to recognize how each of these problems has grown worse under his Liberal administration.

We are willing to cooperate with the government even in its modest efforts to improve our B.C. ports. We are ultimately interested in standing up for British Columbia and Canada, despite our misgivings about the government and its lacklustre approach to the Pacific gateway initiative. As such, our party will be supporting Bill C-68.

• (1715)

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to pay respect to my colleague from South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale for his amazing efforts on behalf of the all-party border caucus and the work that he has done there. It is an important issue to his constituency and to all of British Columbia.

He spoke to many of the frustrations that I have with this bill as a British Columbian, which is to say that this bill is everything and nothing at the same time. It presents nothing. It outlines no specific spending formula and no specific projects that the government is going to announce. At the same time, it creates a body that will be discussing future potential projects so that the Liberals in the coming campaign can ask people if they are in favour of the South Fraser perimeter road for the Fraser port and to ease the traffic there, and they will say, "Of course we are. We had Bill C-68, the legislation that created the Pacific gateway council, so yes, we are for it because that council might recognize it".

The frustration that I have and I know that the member has is that his constituents deserve specific concrete action. The issue of the Pacific gateway has been studied ad nauseam in British Columbia. The provincial government tabled a comprehensive report just a few months ago. Less than a year ago the BC Progress Board put forward comprehensive ideas on how we can move forward. Rather than actually putting forward specific things that we can do, such as the South Fraser perimeter road which is very important for the member's constituency and very important for all of British Columbia, or dredging on the Fraser River, or any of the dozens of concrete ideas that are out there to actually make the Pacific gateway a reality, the Liberals have created a council which will study these issues and make recommendations.

Right now in this House, given the reality that a budget will be coming up perhaps in January or February, we should be discussing specific ideas like the South Fraser perimeter road, and we are not because the Liberals have put forward a bill that creates bureaucracy rather than a bill that offers solutions. I want my colleague to speak to that.

• (1720)

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Speaker, my colleague raised a good point. The fact is that this legislation does nothing to address the urgent and immediate needs of British Columbians.

We know in B.C. where the problems lie. We have seen them for more than 12 years now while the Liberal administration has laid back and done nothing about them. Now just prior to an election that

the Liberals are fearing they will lose, they are rolling out this council and are pretending to throw money at the problem, without being very specific. They just say, "Here is another slush fund. We will appoint this patronage council and that will solve all of the problems". That is the way they deal with these problems. That is not good enough for British Columbia.

B.C. residents want to know what the government is going to do. No more talk, let us get down to action. Specific projects like the South Fraser perimeter road and twinning the Portmann Bridge, the North Fraser road and some of these other projects that are clearly identified need action now. They are beyond the point of talking. They are beyond the point of conjecture or speculation. They are at the point where action is needed.

The infrastructure that we are dealing with in British Columbia was constructed in 1963, yet the population has tripled since then. We are drastically behind where we need to be if we are going to serve British Columbia, or serve the country for that matter, as the gateway to the Asia-Pacific region.

I thank my colleague for raising this issue and for the excellent work he is doing as our transport critic. I just wish we had the opportunity to form government and actually take action on the things that we have been talking about for so long.

Hon. Charles Hubbard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very much impressed with the first portion of the hon. member's speech. He did speak very effectively of his vision mainly in terms of the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. I will make a few comments and let the hon. member reply to them.

First of all, the Pacific gateway is not simply a gateway for Vancouver. It is a gateway for all of British Columbia, a gateway for the three prairie provinces and a gateway for all Canadians. It would appear from my perspective that in terms of what has happened, Vancouver for some time has been concerned with both air traffic and port traffic as it thought in terms of trying to develop an economy facing the Pacific.

With this concept of ports and airports, the improvement of those facilities, and above all the improvement not only of the gateway, the gateway being a gate, but the pathways that lead to that gateway and the opportunities that have to be available to people from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, they too have to participate in this debate. Bill C-68 shows that it is a bigger concept than simply one city or one province. It is a concept for all Canadians. In particular it is a very vital part of the economy of all of western Canada.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has raised the point that the gateway is in fact a gateway to the Prairies and that all of the Prairies will indeed benefit from these projects. But the Prairies will only benefit to the degree that the projects are actually done in British Columbia.

Private Members' Business

People from Winnipeg or Flin Flon, Manitoba probably are not aware of the South Fraser perimeter road and the impact that would have on the economy of Manitoba. They are just not aware of it. It is not on their radar screen. Yet it is front and centre for the people of British Columbia. They face it on a daily basis. The 13 hours of rush hour traffic over the Portmann Bridge is not something that people are thinking about in Lumsden, Saskatchewan.

The fact that the Prime Minister is setting up this council to have input from the Prairies is a novel one, but I do not see the Prairies having the direct impact or the direct insight or understanding of the urgent needs in the Lower Mainland. It would be like people in British Columbia telling people how to redirect a road in the greater Toronto area. That is what we are talking about here. We are talking about redirecting roads. We are talking about widening bridges. That is what is necessarily needed, and it is needed right now.

I am very disappointed that the government is trying to be all things to all people and is pretending that it has now solved the world's problems with this new council, but—

• (1725)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member, and I also thank the hon. member for sending me a note about dividing his time. However, it is customary, and it is in the Standing Orders, to announce that to the House so that we all know it is going to happen. We are going to do that anyway. We are going to go to the member for Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre on debate.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to share the time with my hon. colleague.

I must say that while I stand here to speak in support of Bill C-68, I do so with mixed emotions. I am sure we all understand the definition of mixed emotions, but I will give an example. Mixed emotions is defined as watching one's mother-in-law drive off a cliff in one's brand new Cadillac.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I am glad there was some laughter on this side. I want to put on the record, of course, that I am not trying to offend the mothers-in-law across Canada and I must say, again for the record, that I love my mother-in-law.

I am trying to illustrate that I do have some conflicting thoughts about the bill. On the one hand I can see some benefit from the bill, but on the other hand I can see, as is typical of most Liberal pieces of legislation, it is only dealing with half measures at best.

I agree, and I think all of the members on this side of the House would agree, that we should support anything that brings light to the Pacific gateway strategy. However, by establishing an advisory committee that is primarily comprised of Liberal patronage appointments to advise how best to spend the \$400 million allocated is really, in my mind, something that is almost useless.

The British Columbia port strategy has already developed a very comprehensive strategy of what initiatives in British Columbia should be best served and best funded on a priority basis. Yet the government once again has gone against the wishes and the advice of a very professional, blue level expert panel. The panel dealt with

the funding initiative on a very solid and comprehensive level and came up with very qualified and very professional advice as to which initiatives should be proceeding on a priority basis. The government chose to ignore that advice and instead decided to set up an advisory council, which could cost up to \$35 million over the course of the next few years.

This seems to be typical of a lot of Liberal initiatives. The Liberals either talk the talk and do not walk the walk, or in this case they decide to set up another commission to study a situation that has already been studied.

I do not know whether or not the citizens of British Columbia and the citizens of western Canada would ever truly see the benefit of the gateway initiative, because this initiative of setting up a commission to advise the government on how best to spend \$400 million could take years. It could delay the process that should be happening now.

This is so typical of why Canadians in my part of the world feel alienated from the federal government.

We heard much talk from the Prime Minister during the last election campaign about western alienation and how the Prime Minister admitted that in his view, western alienation was real. He said he would deal with it. He said that he would ensure that the west was included in all of the federal government's initiatives, that he would make sure that westerners felt part of the decision making process for all Canadians.

I can assure the House that nothing has been done in that regard to alleviate the feelings of alienation that we in western Canada have toward the government. There are so many examples, and I will try to list just a few to illustrate my point.

Most recently we have seen in the last few days the result from the Gomery commission. The report from Justice Gomery validated our concerns and the statements that we had been making for months that we have seen perpetrated upon the Canadian taxpayer the largest political scandal in Canada's history where, on a systematic basis, Canadian taxpayers were robbed. Their money was stolen and illegally diverted to the Liberal Party of Canada. All of this of course occurred in Quebec.

• (1730)

While we are not blaming anyone in Quebec except Liberals for the scandal, it again seems to reinforce the image that many people have in my neck of the woods, which is that Canada's western provinces are ignored and all efforts are made only in Quebec to placate the government and the Liberal Party of Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will have another five minutes to complete his thoughts at that time.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

AGRICULTURE

The House resumed from November 1 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 253 under private members' business.

Call in the members.

● (1800)

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

(Division No. 179)

YEAS

Members

Anders	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Batters	Benoit
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Carrie	Casey
Casson	Chamberlain
Chong	Desjarlais
Devolin	Doyle
Duncan	Epp
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Fletcher	Forseth
Gallant	Goodyear
Grewal (Newton—North Delta)	Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
Hanger	Harrison
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Jaffier
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
O'Connor	Oda
Poillievre	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Rajotte	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Schellenberger	Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Skelton	Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Sorenson	Stoffler
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tilson	Toews
Tonks	Trost
Tweed	Ur
Van Loan	Vellacott
Warawa	Watson
Williams	Yelich — 80

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)	André
Asselin	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Bakopanos	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bell	Bellavance
Bennett	Bevilacqua
Bigras	Blaikie
Blais	Blondin-Andrew
Boire	Boivin
Bonin	Bonsant
Boshcoff	Bouchard
Boulianne	Bradshaw
Brison	Broadbent
Brown (Oakville)	Brunelle
Bulte	Byrne
Cannis	Carr
Carroll	Catterall
Chan	Christopherson
Clavet	Coderre

Comartin	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies
Demers	Deschamps
Desrochers	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Drouin	Duceppe
Easter	Eyking
Failla	Folco
Frulla	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)	Gaudet
Godbout	Godfrey
Godin	Graham
Guay	Holland
Hubbard	Ianno
Jennings	Julian
Kadis	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Khan
Kotto	Laframboise
Lapierre (Outremont)	Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lastewka	Lavallée
Layton	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lévesque	Longfield
MacAulay	Marleau
Maloney	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Matthews
Masse	McGuire
McCallum	McLellan
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Ménard (Hochelaga)
McTeague	Minna
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Murphy
Mitchell	Owen
Neville	Perron
Paradis	Picard (Drummond)
Peterson	Plamondon
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)	Powers
Poirier-Rivard	Redman
Ratansi	Robillard
Regan	Rota
Rodriguez	Saada
Russell	Savage
Sauvageau	Scott
Savoy	Siksay
Sgro	Simard (Saint Boniface)
Silva	Smith (Pontiac)
Simms	St. Amand
St-Hilaire	Steckle
St. Denis	Szabo
Stronach	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Temelkovski	
Basques)	
Thibault (West Nova)	Torsney
Valeri	Valley
Vincent	Volpe
Wasylycia-Leis	Wrzesnewskij
Zed — 157	

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being 6:04 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

* * *

● (1805)

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC) moved that Bill C-408, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (change of political affiliation), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Private Members' Business

He said: Mr. Speaker, during this Parliament, we have seen need for legislation such Bill C-408.

The people of Elgin—Middlesex—London chose me as their representative here in Ottawa. It is a duty that none of us take lightly. The choosing of MPs can include many decisions, most important, the people themselves, their moral character, work ethic, past behaviour and the ability to problem solve. We are now shown that in the world of instant media of 30-second sound bytes, of CNN and other news channels, we are not judged as strongly or as closely as individuals in our ridings, as we may have once been. We are now chosen for our party affiliation, at least partly for that.

We could dispute whether it is good or bad that we are now chosen as members of a party rather than as individuals for the role of MP. However, I do not believe it is inaccurate that this is now happening.

The policies of a party or its leader now have a great deal of weight on the elector's decision. It is not only a choice made about the party today, but most likely an historic decision about the decision making process. What has this party done in the past? What are the current practices? What is the potential future behaviour of that party?

I came to this place with the true altruistic motives of continuing to help the voters of Elgin—Middlesex—London, to work hard to represent the interests of the riding. I also have discovered the need to help the government bring back this proud tradition to the House.

The beast of democratic deficit must be slain. We must return to a time of responsibility, a time of personal, individual and political responsibility. It is time to stand and be counted. Members are either here to represent their constituents and their wishes or they are not. If this is true and members elected find they cannot remain in the political party that they arrived in the House representing, then they should stand up for the constituents, go back to the people and let them verify the decision members have made to leave.

I would like to read a bit from the bill. It simply asks that:

If a member of the House of Commons leaves the political party to which that member belonged when the member was elected to the House of Commons, that member shall sit in the House of Commons as an independent for a period of 35 days.

At the end of that, it states:

Once the period of 35 days has elapsed, the member's election to the House of Commons shall become void, the seat of that member shall be vacated, and a writ shall be issued for the election of a member to fill the vacancy.

The bill proposes that a member should to take it back home to ask his or her constituents if the choice is the right choice. They elected that person as a member of a party and as an individual. When one of those two things no longer becomes valid, we believe it should be the choice of the voters to make the difference.

We speak highly of this House, the decisions we make and what we stand for. There are times when what one party stands for is drastically different than what another party stands for. It is easy to see that in these days of Gomery reports and other scandals that perhaps a member may not be as proud to represent the party, but his or her electorate sent that member here to do that.

The point I am making is if members substantially change their affiliations, they must go back to the people who sent them here and ask them if that is what they want. It is not about what the member wants. It is about what the voters want. It is only right and fair that the decision making process remains with the group who is supposed to make it, and that is the voters.

• (1810)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London talk about an idea that in my view has very little root in the tradition of British parliamentary democracy.

You will know, Mr. Speaker, that from time to time in the life of a Parliament new political parties may be formed and groups may choose to sit in different caucuses for different reasons at a different time. From my perspective, to impose such a draconian and rather unparliamentary measure would be something that has no precedent in our parliamentary system.

My question is more around the potential cost of what the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London is advocating. For example, the road from the Reform Party to the Conservative Party has been a long and difficult one for many members. By my count, there are 21 members of the current Conservative Party who may have started out as Reformers and some of them may have changed parties a number of times, sometimes three or four times.

At roughly \$200,000 per byelection, by any account, the different changes of some 74 members during that period from Reform to the Conservative Party might have cost \$14 million. I am interested to hear the member explain how he views the cost that taxpayers would have to bear from these convulsions that sometimes certain political parties go through on the road to their current status.

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat amazing that the member talks to us about waste. I believe he used the term “draconian measures”, and “convulsions” was in there too.

He has said that going back to the people to ask them if that is what they want, or taking it back to the voters of his own riding to ask them if that is what they would like him to do, is somehow a draconian measure. I can see how that party will be judged in the next election if that is the typical response we might we get; that asking the voters what they would like to see in their riding is a draconian measure.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member's premise was that people elect members on the basis of leader and party. I would reject the premise personally because I know many members in this place have earned a great deal of respect within their ridings and in fact probably have received the number of votes necessary to give them the majority need.

The other reality is that less than one-quarter of members receive more than 50% of the votes. It would seem that this kind of change would shift away from the premise that the member made in the first place, that it was based on party and leader and away from a quality member of Parliament.

Would the member comment on that?

Private Members' Business

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, it is fair for the member for Mississauga South has asked me to comment on it. He is right. A fair number of members of the House come here with less than 50% of the vote. We sit with a three or four party system. However, I sit near some colleagues who achieve better than 50% of the vote on a regular basis, the seconder of my bill being one of them.

I do not think that makes it wrong. It makes it more important to have this type of legislation. When we come here with margins that may not be a full majority, then the people who came out to vote for a member would want to know that the person was representing them.

The member spoke also about how leader and party may not make the difference in an election. I recognize it is not the overall difference. I recognize there is a mix, that party affiliation and the leader of that party is part of what gets us sent here, part of what makes people vote for us in our ridings. However, the good work members do once they get here certainly helps them. The reputation they had before then also is a part of it.

It is such a large part that we cannot ignore it. We cannot ignore the people who may have voted for us because of the party. We will need to have the voters tell us whether we can stay or not.

• (1815)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-408 today because it raises vitally important issues of democratic governance that no member of the House should hesitate to confront: How do we balance our roles as parliamentarians with those of party members?

The development of a national party system affected Canadian democracy in fundamental ways. It spawned a new dynamic in the way we do democracy. It created a new terminology in political studies and it enlarged the power and responsibilities of parties as democratic institutions.

Parties were a major player in transforming Canada, from colonial rule to an independent democracy based on responsible government. However, at the same time, we must monitor our institutions to appropriately accommodate concepts such as party solidarity, party loyalty and party discipline. We must always ensure that our ties to the party continue to be a means of enhancing our responsibility to the people rather than diluting it.

In short, parties make our jobs more complex, but it is this complexity that can be used for the good of democracy. The greatest danger would be to oversimplify our role as parliamentary players in this system because it would prevent proper scrutiny of how parties affect that role. This is why Bill C-408 is important to debate.

As I see it, the greatest oversimplification that government observers fall prey to is the simple reduction of democracy to a vote. The vote is essential and fundamental to democracy, but democracy is so much more, as are our relationships to our constituents and our role as members of Parliament.

Democracy is complex and multi-faceted, and the party system adds another layer to this analysis. Parties have the unique ability to enhance and fortify democratic representation, but a well mediated

balance must be obtained so they do not supercede it. Let me explain what I mean.

Often it seems to me democracy gets boiled down to a vote. First, the vote cast at the ballot box and second, the vote that MPs make standing in the House. However, it does a disservice to characterize our mandate as deriving solely from that first vote or our role as encompassing merely that second vote. We do too much here and our constituents expect far more for that to be true. We are advocates, deliberators, debaters, strategizers, coalition builders, mediators, legislators and more.

Were it otherwise, we would need to return to the ballot box every time a policy was debated that was not presented to voters during the election campaign. We would need a byelection every time a new and pressing national issue faced the country. We would no longer be a representative of democracy but a group of spokesmen. The capacity to govern the country would be undermined because a unified voice on every issue simply does not exist in a nation as diverse and as complex as Canada.

In this way, parties provide an invaluable means of making representative democracy effective. Were we simply delegates to the constituents, then nothing would be done in the national interest because each MP would be purely focused on re-election rather than representing. The truth is our party affiliation does play a significant role in voter choice, and this is a good thing. It expresses the national direction that voters want their representatives to take when they arrive here in Parliament.

Again, it is a balance. To be purely a party delegate is not good for democracy either. Constituents must have a voice and a role in their government. Their responsibility does not end at the ballot box either. They are our ultimate line of accountability and their engagement is vital to a healthy democracy.

• (1820)

The party system provides a useful means of organizing and consolidating information, but the relationship between the voters and the MP is a primary one. Of necessity, this relationship must continue in our constituency work and in the day to day functioning of Parliament.

The core principle of elected representation is that our work only begins with winning a seat in the House. More than being voted in as part of a party slate, our role is to continually be responsive to local concerns, communicating parliamentary developments back to constituents, and working continuously and tirelessly to keep Canadians engaged with their government.

The House schedule is premised on the reality that we each have significant constituency duties at our riding offices and that we have time to speak with and get to know the people in our ridings. This indispensable and invaluable role is performed generally apart from party affiliation because we represent the whole constituency, not just fellow party members.

Private Members' Business

The Lortie Commission on electoral reform characterized these competing roles very eloquently when it rejected the idea of a recall mechanism for parliamentarians. In its words:

In Canada's system of parliamentary government, MPs are not elected as representatives who randomly come together in a national legislature simply to advance the views and interests of their constituents on matters of national policy. Rather, the House of Commons is a collective decision-making and representative institution that must weigh the competing interests of citizens against the national interest. The weakness in the argument that recall should be used against individual MPs who do not take direct instructions from their constituents is that MPs who isolate themselves from the collective deliberation of public policies will be less equipped to represent their constituents, not more so.

In short, Bill C-408 raises important issues of party politics and representative democracy, but it responds to them by falling prey to both extremes of oversimplification.

First, it presumes that MPs are members of parties first and foremost, rather than representatives of their ridings. Second, it assumes that voting is the only means of democratic expression and engagement in the relationship between MPs and their constituents. As a result, adopting Bill C-408 would upset the balance between the representative democracy and party politics we currently have, creating the conditions for an ineffective and unstable governing system.

MPs seek office for a single overriding reason: they want to do good. Often this means joining a political party because doing the most good is easier in a group of dedicated individuals with the same aspirations and ideas for bettering the country. Should changes in circumstances, policies or people mean that a member's and party's ideas of the good no longer coincide, then the member has a difficult choice to make. In the event the decision leads to leaving the party, then to legislatively prohibit such a result would realign the basic building blocks of our representative democracy.

Notably, the official opposition's party platform explicitly states that it would not endorse any electoral system changes that would weaken the link between members of Parliament and their constituents or that will strengthen the control of the party machinery over individual members of Parliament. Ironically, in just two pages, the opposition member does exactly that in Bill C-408.

No one understands better than the governing party that party solidarity is an important asset in maintaining the stability and responsibility of government. In addition, however, no one more than the government wants to ensure the continual renewal of the Canadian democracy. In the complex project of democracy, this must include maintaining an appropriate balance between party politics and voter representation.

May I sum up that Bill C-408 seeks to upset this balance by oversimplifying our roles and responsibilities. It replaces the traditions of party solidarity and discipline with a strict centralization of power with the party executive. Parties should serve to support the democratic functioning of Parliament and not hinder it. This is the responsibility of each of us to ensure. This is why Bill C-408 should not be supported.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first I want to say how important this evening's debate is. It is

extremely important and fascinating because it presents two opposing arguments, that of the Conservative Party and that of the Liberal Party. I want to cite Marleau and Montpetit, the procedural reference book of the House of Commons. It clearly states that members must assume the responsibilities inherent in their status. They have a central and very important role since they are the incarnation of direct democracy. They are elected directly by their constituents. It is their name, as incumbent or candidate, that appears on the ballot and not just the name of the party with which they are affiliated. That is extremely important.

At home we say that once your face is on the poster, you are the one people vote for or not. According to Marleau and Montpetit, members sit in the House of Commons to serve as representatives of the people who have elected them to that office. They have wide-ranging responsibilities which include work in the Chamber, committees, their constituencies and political parties. The members assume responsibilities in many areas. Among others:

They act as ombudsmen by providing information to constituents and resolving problems.

They act as legislators by either initiating bills of their own or proposing amendments to government and other members' bills.

They develop specialized knowledge in one or more of the policy areas dealt with by Parliament, and propose recommendations to the government.

I was elected in June 2004 and that is precisely the work I do in this House and in the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. It is an extremely important role that transcends the role of the party, once the member is elected. We are members of a party, but we represent and defend our constituents.

We have done some research. I will not even read the figures on defectors, or as Quebeckers often call them, turncoats. We have analyzed how often they were re-elected or were candidates in another election. It is not right to say that Canadians scorn a turncoat, because most of them were re-elected. It is important to stress that. Are we to interpret this as a gesture of political indifference, or as a gesture of support for the individual rather than his party? I would prefer to think it was the latter.

If this is not the case, the price will be paid by poorly represented citizens. Clearly, it is not necessary to have an MP who has crossed the floor for people to be poorly represented, judging by the statistics we consulted. People's confidence is, no doubt, shaken by a defection, because crossing the floor is no small thing. Regardless of the reasons, the MP owes an explanation to his constituents, and they must be the only ones to judge the validity of his explanation. The figures clearly demonstrate, however, that independent members are far less likely to run again. This is absolutely normal, because not only are they unable to benefit from the logistics of a political party, they have the machinery of other parties to contend with.

● (1830)

Moving on to Bill C-408, it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the Bloc Québécois to vote in favour of this bill, for a number of reasons.

Private Members' Business

First, we absolutely want to help democracy. This bill, however, is even more restrictive because it does away with the possibility for an independent, or someone who wants to become independent, to complete his mandate.

Let us imagine the following scenario, which is a realistic one. Taking the Bloc Québécois as an example, let us assume that it decided at its congress to do away with article 1, which is on the promotion of sovereignty. I can assure you that a number of Bloc Québécois members would leave this party to sit as independents. Under Bill C-408, byelections would have to be called within 30 days.

Let us just imagine the situation for a moment. The government has just had a general election, in June 2004. There are 54 of us, and there would have been a convention in September. At first glance that makes no sense. It gets worse. If our constituents are displeased, I can assure the House that, particularly in a riding like mine, Abitibi-Témiscamingue, they will let us know. We are really tough on turncoats, and very often they are not accepted. The voters in my riding will have the power to sanction that individual in the next election if they do not agree with his decision.

However, even if the MP is independent, his responsibility remains unchanged, that is, to represent his electors ahead of meeting his party's demands. Oftentimes, that can cause considerable debate. I sit in the House of Commons and represent Abitibi-Témiscamingue in Ottawa and not Ottawa in Abitibi-Témiscamingue. I have always maintained this and it must be understood. I also felt much better placed within in the Bloc Québécois in order to defend the interests of my region and Quebec in Parliament in Ottawa. This is why I am in the Bloc.

Instead of trying to reduce the democratic deficit, this bill accentuates it. Under the bill, a member expelled from his caucus loses his seat. This amounts to giving each caucus the power to dismiss a person. Let me explain.

Let us say that a member of your party is unsuitable and causes trouble. The best way to resolve the problem is to expel him from caucus. If this bill were passed, it would mean a new election at the end of 30 days. It would be the best way for a party to divest itself of someone less popular.

That is what I saw when I studied this bill. Clause 21.1 warrants careful reading:

If a member of the House of Commons leaves the political party to which that member belonged when the member was elected to the House of Commons, that member shall sit in the House of Commons as an independent for a period of 35 days.

That means exactly what it says. If you are expelled, you become an independent.

Once the period of 35 days has elapsed, the member's election to the House of Commons shall become void, the seat of that member shall be vacated—

This is why, based on all of these remarks, we will be unable to support this bill.

• (1835)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to further debate this particular

issue that the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London has brought forward today. I congratulate him for the initiative, although he knows, and I have spoken to him privately, there is one serious flaw in his initiative and I will debate that as we go on.

I have had a bill very similar to this, in some ways maybe a little better but we will discuss that as well, since 1998 in the House of Commons. I have had two elections and at three different times I entered the bill in order to get it debated in the House of Commons. Two weeks ago we had the first hour of debate on it and when we come back on November 17, we will have the second hour of debate, barring any unforeseen elections, of course. Then on the November 22 or 23, the House will actually get a chance to stand up and vote for democracy.

My hon. colleague and one of the most senior statesmen of the House of Commons, our colleague from Ottawa Centre, has given all of us an opportunity to change the morality and the ethics of this place with his code of ethics, which has seven points. Number one in his code of ethics is “Thou shall not cross the floor”.

If the hon. member from Edmonton, who represented Oshawa for many years, one of the most respected politicians and human beings in this country, honestly believes with all his political experience that the time for crossing the floor has to stop, I think it is time that we, not only as members of Parliament, but as Canadians, stand up and take notice.

I simply cannot comprehend for a second how somebody can go to the electorate in a general election under a political banner, get elected under that banner, come to the House of Commons and, for a variety of reasons, decide to walk across this very expensive broadloom, which costs a lot to clean, by the way, to move over to the other side to join another political party in the middle of their term, saying “I can no longer justify being with this political party under which I was elected. I now have to join another one”.

We do not own these seats. They do not belong to us. In my case, this little square that I have and this really uncomfortable chair belongs to the 90,000 people I represent in Sackville—Eastern Shore in Nova Scotia. They are the ones who determine what I should or should not do.

If I were to decide to cross the floor and become a member of another political party because I had a falling out with my own party, that would be fine, but I should do the honourable thing and quit. Once we quit, we can do whatever we want. However the premise would be that we would seek the mandate of the new political party, go back to our constituents in a byelection or a general election and tell them our reasons for flying under another political banner. We should allow our constituents the final determination of what we do and whether they want to be represented by another party. That is called democracy.

I noticed in the first hour of debate on my bill, unfortunately, that the Liberals, a Conservative representative and the Bloc all said no, which is not too hard to understand because when it comes to democracy, sometimes those parties need to be, for lack of a better term, knocked on the head a bit to figure it out.

Private Members' Business

It is quite simple. I encourage every member of Parliament to go back to their riding and ask their constituents whether they should have the final say on whether he or she should cross the floor? I guarantee that the results would be almost unanimous throughout the entire country. In most cases, if not in every case, the majority of people in our ridings would say yes.

I do want to tell the member that I support the premise of the bill going to a committee, but that is it. In committee I will rip it apart and we will fix it for him. The New Democrats are good at doing that. We take very flawed legislation and fix it.

If the New Democrats had introduced it in the first place, which we did in this case, there would not be a problem. However that is okay. He is a new member of Parliament and we will help him get along.

In the meantime, I agree with the premise of the bill and hopefully it will go to a committee where we can debate and discuss it. We can get people from across the country, a lot of constituents to debate it, which is democracy, and let the people of Canada have the final say on this. We should not be deciding this on our own.

● (1840)

However, the flaw in the member's bill, as my hon. colleague from the Bloc said, is that it gives too much power to the leader of a political party. If, for example, the hon. member who brought forward the bill were to have a major fallout with the leader of his party over a particular issue, the leader could tell him that by the next day he would be sitting as an independent and in 30 days there would be an election.

There is also a thing called the employment or job aspect of it. Why would we give the leader of any political party that much power? It is a huge mistake. I know he is listening to me and writing this all down and understanding that he should be corrected on this one. I know the hon. member well enough to know that he will do that.

The reality is that we should never give the leader of any political party that much clout. Members should be able to sit here and make decisions based on their constituency. However I do believe that there comes a time in our political life when we can no longer sit with our party and we may choose to sit as an independent. I believe members should have the right to do that or, if one is being a real rabble-rouser within one's party and is not a team or caucus player, then the leader should exercise the right to make the member sit as an independent, but we should not go to an election immediately because of that.

Our hon. colleague from Churchill, Manitoba, a wonderful woman who I really miss not being in our caucus, but we have a democratic process, we had a nomination and, unfortunately, she was defeated, so she decided to sit as an independent. Should she go into an election right away? No. She has the right to sit as an independent.

Another member from the Liberal caucus was being a bit of, I guess, a hard-nose within her caucus and the Prime Minister said that she could no longer sit as a Liberal. Should she lose her job because of it? No. She can sit as an independent until the next election.

The member from Juan de Fuca, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, did it right. When he left the Conservative Party after it became the Conservative Party, he said that he could no longer sit with the Conservatives and decided to sit as an independent. He said that in the next election he would make his intentions known to run as a Liberal. That is the way it should be done.

Sitting as an independent in this House is not the easiest thing to do. Independent members have no committee work, have very little say with regard to what happens and are isolated with very little press coverage in that regard unless we are in a minority situation. I know some people do not like going to committee so maybe that would be a good thing but the reality is that they are isolated, on their own and no longer part of a team. I think it is important to be part of a team when we are here, regardless of our party affiliation.

Our bill will come up on November 17 for its second hour of debate. We would hope to continue on with this debate and we would hope that other members of Parliament will understand that crossing the floor is no longer acceptable.

I can give the classic example of how bad this is. There was a member of the Alliance Party who ran in Richmond, British Columbia in the 2000 election, Joe Peschisolido. He sought the nomination of the Alliance Party and won it. He ran against a cabinet minister at that time and beat him fair and square. The hon. member at that time accepted his defeat because he knew that was how things went.

Within six months, that Alliance member got an epiphany and decided he could no longer be an Alliance member and became a Liberal. What about the member he defeated? The Liberal Association of Richmond wanted nothing to do with Joe Peschisolido but the prime minister told the association that it did not have a choice. What kind of democracy is that? That is unbelievable.

The one thing I will give Preston Manning a lot of credit for is that he believed the constituency aspects were the way we dictated our lives, which is the way it should be. We represent the people of our riding. We also represent a political theme or ideology and that is why we are here. The reality is that we should go back to our constituency if we decide to cross the floor and run under another political banner.

The hon. member's bill is severely flawed. I would like to see it get to a committee so, as we said before, we can fix it for him. We could make his life a lot easier by getting his party to vote for our bill and Bob's your uncle after that.

● (1845)

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a minute ago I wanted to rise on a point of order because I was really concerned about the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore advertising his own bill. I did not know if that was a point of order or not, so I did not rise, but he did get a good plug in for his bill and we certainly will be watching for it very carefully.

Private Members' Business

In the member's discussion he kind of painted the NDP as the epitome of democracy. At the same time he mentioned the hon. member for Churchill who, I agree, is a wonderful member of Parliament. She is very effective, always does her homework and is very knowledgeable. However that epitome of democracy would not allow her to vote the way she wanted to on a recent bill. I am not exactly sure what happened but eventually she ended up being an independent member of Parliament rather than being a member of the NDP.

If the NDP had allowed a free vote on that issue, I think she would still be a member of the NDP. Therefore I do not think the member can stand and say that the NDP is perfect.

I have been here since 1988 and I have seen Progressive Conservative members go across the floor to the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives go to the Bloc. I have seen Liberals go to the Bloc, Bloc members go to the Liberals, Alliance members go to the Liberals and Liberals go to the Conservatives so I can understand why the member is so frustrated and why he felt the need to bring forth this bill.

Every time there is a change like this it means people back home are wondering what happened to the person they elected. Let us take the example of my first election. The whole election was based on free trade. The Progressive Conservative Party was in favour of free trade and the Liberals of course were against it and they were going to tear it up. Theoretically, if someone changed parties, the people who voted for free trade might find their member now voting against free trade. Therefore it is really a legitimate complaint that the very distinguished member for Elgin—Middlesex—London raises with this bill and the motive is correct.

However I agree with some of the other points that have been made. I even agree with the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore when he raises the issue. I do think there is a flaw in the wording of the bill and it should be fixed.

The bill simply says “if a member of the House leaves the political party to which the member belonged”, but it does not say why. If just says, “under his choice”, but it does give tremendous power to leaders.

I have had eight leaders and every one of us from time to time disagree with our leader but if we happen to run into a particularly nasty leader who might be particularly vindictive that leader could evict us from the party and we could be out on the street. As has been raised by other members, that is one little flaw that should be addressed.

The member mentioned that the member for Mississauga—Erindale was evicted from the Liberal Party but she still sits in the House and represents the people she was elected to represent. However if the leader of the Liberal Party were a particularly vindictive and nasty person, which I am not saying he is, he could evict a lot of members under the bill and they would be sent home. Even though thousands of people had elected the member to come here, one person could send that member home.

The bill raises a lot of issues. Who do we represent? Every time a bill comes to the House we have to decide how to vote. We have to weigh what our constituents want, what we feel in our heart and

what the party wants. It is not a simple decision. People often try to make it simple but it is not simple. Some of these are very deep moral issues that we must decide on. Some have no affect on us sometimes but some have a big impact and we have to weigh every aspect when we vote because we represent the people who elect us.

● (1850)

As I have said, I have had eight leaders. I have had four prime ministers. Many times I have seen members of Parliament off side or off message with their leader, including perhaps the member for Churchill. We need the ability to be off message with our party, otherwise there would be no freedom for an exchange of ideas. Nor would we be able to bring forth the concerns and beliefs of our constituents. It is important we have that right without the threat of being evicted and then losing our seats. Otherwise it really is not a democracy.

I support the motive of the bill. I admire the member who brought the bill forward. However, one line I home in on does not say the member of the House of Commons would leave the political party. If there were a description, it would be better. Perhaps if it does go to committee, that could be corrected. Otherwise it would give total power to the leaders. I would not want to be under that because from time to time I am off message.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's bill attempts to address a matter of some frustration for constituents when their member decides to leave a particular caucus and cross the floor. However, the bill fails to hit the nail on the head. I understand its purpose and many of us here have some sympathy for the purpose. The fact is in the House none of us has a party membership, per se. We have caucuses.

We have talked about members who have left the party caucus, but it does not mean they have ceased to be a member of the party. Members who have left their caucus to sit as independents may well retain their party membership. In addition, I sit with the Liberal caucus, but I may have let my membership in the Liberal Party expire, although I have not. Does that mean under the terms of the bill that I have ceased to be a party member? I do not know. This is a curious thing.

I also want to point out that clause 2 of the bill deals with the concept of a member leaving a political party, which is problematic as I have just pointed out. We never know when the party membership does or does not exist around here because we do not publicly record it. In clause 3 of the bill, the criterion is not the leaving of the political party. It is the decision by the member to leave the political party. How does one know when there is a decision to leave? How does one know when one has really ceased to be a member of the party because the parties do not register anything here?

There also is the concept of caucus expulsion, which is not addressed in the bill. The caucus decides to remove a member from caucus. That is against the will of the member often but it happens. That member could still remain a member of the particular party. He or she simply ceases to sit with the caucus. How is that covered here? It is not clear. As I said, the member could stay as a member of the party and sit as an independent.

Private Members' Business

At the end of all of this, constituents have the ability to make judgment on what the member has done in the following election. Granted the electoral term is a maximum of five years, usually an average of four. In a minority government scenario it could be a lot less. In this Parliament we could end up with a two year term. In previous Parliaments they have run three and a half to four and a half years. However, the electors always have the ability to make the judgment.

I am not sure I agree with members who say what we do around here is not democratic. Everything we do here is democratic. Canada is a democracy. I sometimes get uncomfortable when members say, "If you do not do this my way, you are not being democratic". We are democratic. We can change the rules from time to time.

Using the perspective of the member's bill, it may be that some of us will get our head around this. It may be that there will be a mechanism available to deal with the issue of members crossing the floor. That is slightly disconnected from the issue of whether a person is a party member. Crossing the floor, leaving the caucus, sitting as an independent, joining another caucus are all concepts that will have to find their way into legislation.

Also, there may be some constitutional underpinnings for members of Parliament and for constituents that may have to be addressed as well.

• (1855)

The privileges of Parliament are constitutional. It may be, and I am leaving this as a thought, that simple passage of a statute that undermined the constitutional privileges of a member of this place or the constitutional rights of electors to place a member here in a federal election maybe should not be undermined by a statute that simply says when a member ceases to be a member of a party or changes caucuses. I am just throwing that out there, that a simple statutory amendment might not have the ability to rearrange certain basic fundamental constitutional concepts, which we rely on here all the time and which are often not recognized, but underpin our Canadian democracy.

I leave those thoughts on the record. I congratulate the member for making a really good faith attempt to address a matter which I think concerns a lot of Canadians, when members cross the floor.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-408 is a bill toward which my own party will be taking the approach of allowing a completely free vote, that is to say each of us will be voting as we see best.

I want to start by saying that I have a great deal of respect for the hon. member who proposed the bill and for his intentions, which I think are very reasonable ones. He has seen, as we all did earlier this year to our enormous surprise, the switching of parties by one member having the effect of causing the government to survive on a tie vote. This occurred after the government had arranged to delay the confidence vote long enough to give time for that member to be brought over from this side of the House to the other side of the House. That kind of spectacle dispirits all of us. It is hard not to sympathize with the goal of trying to prevent that kind of thing from occurring.

That being said, I do have some reservations that relate very much to the kinds of reservations already expressed by other members of the House. I have concerns about the increase in party discipline and the discipline of parties over individual members. I have concerns about the ability of members to leave their party and sit as independents, not merely crossing the floor to another party, nor indeed crossing the floor to another party and being rewarded with a ministerial post as is the case with the hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora, but also people leaving their party and sitting as independents, or as has happened in the past, leaving their party to create a new faction or group within the House of Commons.

This took place when the Bloc Québécois was created some years ago. This also took place with the Democratic Reform caucus when a number of people left the Canadian Alliance, of which I was a member, and formed a new group that worked with the Progressive Conservatives. Some people thought that was a very bad idea. I have to admit I did not think it was a great idea at the time and I did not join it. Others felt that it was a step that assisted us to bring together the two parties eventually to create one new party. That in itself involved a shift in labels.

One can argue whether or not the new Conservative Party of Canada was a successor party to the old PC and CA or was a new creation. Under the electoral law of the country, which is not relevant to standings in the House, the Chief Electoral Officer, when he was talking about the Canadian Alliance and its ancestry in the Reform Party, said that it is really the same party under a different name. That was his argument. Therefore, if we take his ruling outside and impose it on the House inside, which might or might not be permissible under the terms of this law and the privileges of Parliament to which my hon. colleague from Rouge River drew our attention a moment ago, it is conceivable that that was only a change in name. For the two predecessor parties to the current Conservative Party, it is a little harder to say what the exact rules were. This could potentially be a problem in this regard.

These are legitimate concerns to have when dealing with a bill such as this one. These changes that have gone on have not been judged illegitimate by the voters of Canada. The voters of Canada did not consider it illegitimate to create the Canadian Alliance out of the Reform Party. The fact is the first election the Canadian Alliance contested was the election in which I ran as a candidate in 2000, and we did substantially better than we had done in the 1997 election. We won many more seats.

In the first election contested by the new Conservative Party of Canada, once again there was a substantial increase in the number of seats over those won by either the old Canadian Alliance or the old PC Party, in fact more than both put together. That suggests these were not regarded as illegitimate actions.

Speaking for myself as someone who started off as a Canadian Alliance MP and became a Conservative MP, did I change parties? It all depends on a person's interpretation. The point is I went from winning in my riding by a margin of 1,800 votes to winning by a margin of 10,000 votes. Therefore, the voters ultimately did not think that was an unacceptable thing to do.

• (1900)

There are other things that concern me, for example, if a member crosses the floor shortly before an anticipated election, and a number of members moved around in the month or two prior to the 2004 election. One was the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, who is currently a parliamentary secretary. There was another member who is no longer a member, John Herron, from New Brunswick. There was yet another member from the Hamilton area who moved over from the Liberals to the new Conservative Party. None of those people were required to resign their seats, and here is what happened to those three individuals.

The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca ran as a Liberal and was re-elected. Formerly he had run as a Canadian Alliance candidate. The voters basically said that they agreed with what he did, but the point is they did it in the election and we did not have to have a byelection shortly before a general election.

The member from New Brunswick, John Herron, ran as a Liberal and was defeated by the Conservative. So the voters dealt with him, again without the need for recourse of this bill.

In the third example I cited, the member was defeated in a nomination and did not even get the chance to run.

There are number of ways to deal with the problem of members who cross the floor. We do not want it to be too automatic or invoke the kinds of costs that the hon. parliamentary secretary drew our attention to. I think he cited \$14 million as a potential cost if all of these various changes had been regarded as requiring byelections. How do we allow people to say to their member of Parliament that they do not agree with the member's crossing the floor or the member's change of party affiliation, or alternatively that they do agree with it? We could potentially put something in a law to allow people in a riding to petition for a byelection if their member had left the party the member had been elected with. That might allow for some kind of compromise. It would not force a byelection automatically. I think that would be a good idea.

However, that is not contemplated in this particular piece of legislation. Notwithstanding its good intentions, that is a genuine flaw in this bill. I would like to see either an amendment of that sort made to the bill or ultimately I would have to vote against the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1905)

[*English*]

COPYRIGHT ACT

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the current government has chosen to table a piece of copyright legislation, Bill C-60, which ignores the fact that the legal copyright

Adjournment Proceedings

framework for Internet use in the classroom or for educational instruction is not addressed. It is silent on the rights and use of the Internet in schools. This silence reaches right into the classrooms and has far-reaching ramifications for our students.

The absence of an educational amendment to Bill C-60 will have devastating consequences for both educators and students in my riding of Kildonan—St. Paul and all across Canada. Schools cannot afford this added cost of paying for otherwise free materials from the Internet.

I rose in the House and asked the minister opposite to support an amendment to the legislation. The minister replied:

—we introduced Bill C-60 to amend the Copyright Act as promised. The bill will help clarify the scope of copyright, and it makes it possible for Canada to join other countries. We are taking this issue very seriously. We want to have material available to students, but we also want to protect the rights of those who are giving that material. We are taking this issue and putting it aside because it needs some discussion and clarification.

Should we put it aside? This issue needs to be addressed today to ensure that this bill does not find its way to a vote without going to committee, where teachers and educators will have a chance to voice their concerns. Does it need some discussion and clarification? Educators and parents are ready to discuss and clarify.

Last year, concerned ministers of education, school superintendents, principals and teachers in every province met to make their voices heard at the federal level. These are voices that have to be listened to in this bill, and that is evident by the people who have joined us in the gallery this evening.

It is mandatory that the educational needs of students and teachers across our nation be recognized in this new digital copyright law. It is mandatory that schools be exempt from paying every time they surf the Internet for valuable research materials. This law does not have to penalize students who are trying to study and learn.

The deferment of this issue in this bill exasperates the current reality that has students and teachers breaking the law to use Internet materials in the classroom. With the growing cost of education and the challenges school boards are facing, avoiding an educational amendment for the use of Internet in schools and educational institutions is not only irresponsible but damaging to the education of our children.

Canadian Teachers' Federation President Terry Price said:

It took eight long years for the federal government to provide a very limited education amendment providing teachers with restricted rights to photocopy materials and video tape programs for educational purposes. How many more years must Canadian students wait to have legal permission to access use of publicly available Internet materials.

The Canadian educational system cannot afford the luxury of waiting another eight long years for the amendment to the copyright legislation. This minister has said on record that the current government will have public consultation. Let that consultation be in committee. Let us not delay.

Adjournment Proceedings

This evening a petition is being launched across this nation, one that stands up for our Canadian school system. It states: "We, the undersigned, support an educational amendment that will free teachers and students from the worry of breaking the law under the new government regulations outlined in Bill C-60, the copyright law".

Even today, as we speak, the *Globe and Mail* outlines the rise of e-classrooms. This is an important issue and it has to be addressed today.

[Translation]

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is well known that the Internet has become an important tool in education. The Government of Canada not only supports the use of the Internet in schools, it has also been instrumental in ensuring the universal access to the Internet enjoyed today by all Canadian educational institutions.

●(1910)

[English]

This was achieved through a program called SchoolNet. Another program called Canadian culture online has been instrumental in providing educational institutions with rich Internet-based educational content.

We have made great efforts at making Internet content available to educational institutions. The needs of these institutions surpass what we in the government make available. In this context, provincial and territorial ministers of education have asked that the Copyright Act be amended so that so-called publicly available material on the Internet may be copied or communicated without having to seek authorization or having to pay rights holders. I should mention at the outset that Quebec has not asked for such an exemption and I will say more on that later.

The Internet is very different than the world we have known so far. When one publishes a book, for example, a significant investment will have been made in terms of effort and financial resources. It has always been clear that creators and publishers of such books want to recover their investments.

On the other hand, posting content on the Internet may require little effort and minimal investment. One may post material on the Internet with a view to making a statement, sharing family pictures, advertising, or any number of other possible reasons. Remuneration for the use of such material may not be relevant. In certain cases, people posting material on the Internet may even invite users to copy or communicate such material.

At the outset, let me be clear. Everyone agrees that when material is posted on the Internet without expectation of payment, schools, or for that matter anyone using the Internet, should not have to pay for certain uses of such material. However, how can one know what the creator's intentions were when he or she posted material on the Internet? One could obviously ask such a person if there was an expectation of payment, but that would be very time consuming and onerous.

This is not an easy issue. It basically boils down to one main thing, how does one define what is publicly available?

It has been suggested that where a rights holder has not taken positive measures to restrict access to the material, it should be considered publicly available. This however imposes an obligation on rights holders to take steps to protect their copyright. This may not be consistent with international principles on when and how copyright arises. The question remains, what is publicly available?

I mentioned earlier about Quebec. Quebec advocates that any reference to publicly available material be included in licensing agreements between users and rights holders. The use of such material would not be subject to payments. Other ministers of education advocate that an exemption from payment be provided in law. This is a complex issue.

Given the lack of consensus, internationally or among Canadians, regarding this issue, the Government of Canada has undertaken to consult more broadly. After such consultations, the government will be in a better position to put forward a policy position regarding this matter.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, this is what makes me a little nervous. There has been lots of public consultation. There has been input from the Canadian Teachers' Federation, teachers' unions, universities and libraries from across Canada.

Public consultations can be done in committee and that is where they should be done. This could be a stalling tactic because it has taken eight long years for this to happen. I want a commitment from the government tonight that public consultation will take place in committee and that it will take place soon.

I want a commitment from the government that we will have a complete dialogue in committee, not all of this smoke and mirrors about going across the nation at taxpayers' expense. Public consultation has already been held that way. I want a commitment to the schools, libraries and universities here in Canada that an educational amendment will be—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Speaker, representatives from the copyright consortium of the Council of Ministers of Education have argued that, given that consultations have already occurred, the government should move ahead with a legislative amendment immediately to address their concerns.

It is true that we have consulted with stakeholders who are directly concerned with this issue. However, this is an issue of concern to all Canadians. The Internet is a publishing tool and information resource that is used by all. For this reason, it is important to hear from all Canadians.

●(1915)

JUSTICE

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to ask the government what it is going to do about auto crime.

Adjournment Proceedings

Approximately 450 vehicles per day are stolen in Canada. Over the last decade this has grown dramatically. We are now one of the highest countries in the world for auto theft. We actually have more vehicles stolen per capita than the United States. It is a huge problem that is often linked with organized crime. The proceeds of auto theft directly fund crime and terrorism.

As I have been involved with different panels, town hall meetings and knocked on numerous doors, this is a common occurrence and people want something done.

My previous vocation was as a loss prevention officer for the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia. I dealt with auto crime. The common denominator of the problem is that auto thieves, high risk individuals who are addicted to illegal drugs like crystal meth, are released back into the community. They are high risk and the courts know they are high risk, but they are not being dealt with in a way that is appropriate. Typical sentencing is probation. If they reoffend, they get probation for breaching their probation.

Because of that, I am honoured to be here to represent my community of Langley. I came up with a private member's bill, Bill C-293. Through consultation with other members, I thought it was a very good bill. It gave direction to the courts that there had to be minimum sentencing involved with this.

I am expecting the parliamentary secretary to answer in a moment and I am going to ask him not to read from a prepared speech, but actually share with us what the government is planning to do in tangible ways to come up with an attack against auto crime. It is a problem. My private member's bill dealt with it, I believe, but the government voted against it. It does not support minimum sentences.

What is the government going to do about it? Chuck Cadman had a bill. He had a similar background to myself, being in insurance. He had an important private member's bill. The government voted down Chuck's bills and reintroduced a watered down portion of Chuck's bill, Bill C-64. Bill C-64 is not what Chuck wanted.

I pushed and got Transport Canada to invoke the immobilizers starting in 2007. Actually, for the last five years I have been working on that. It is one of the things I am very happy about.

In tangible ways, how could we direct the courts to come up with sentences that are practical and proportionate? Releasing high risk people back into the community is not the answer. What is the government's answer to come up with practical solutions to auto crime?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to prove to my hon. colleagues the Government of Canada's commitment to fighting auto theft.

[*English*]

I would agree with the hon. member for Langley that auto theft is a serious issue in Canada. The statistics for this type of crime revealed that Canada had a rate of roughly 531 vehicles stolen per 100,000 people last year. That is why in January 2005 federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for justice asked their officials to examine the issue of auto theft and to determine whether

our current Criminal Code provisions respond appropriately to this form of crime.

In this regard, I am pleased to report that last week a very important federal-provincial-territorial auto theft forum was held here in Ottawa, which involved federal and provincial justice officials, co-chaired by the Government of Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia. This forum also included representatives from the national committee to reduce auto theft, a multi-stakeholder group made up of law enforcement personnel and insurance industry representatives.

This forum was a success. It involved an open discussion of potential legislative and non-legislative responses. These officials will be reporting back to federal, provincial and territorial justice ministers on their progress and will continue working collectively on this issue.

It is essential that our provincial and territorial colleagues are involved in the examination of this issue as the provincial Crown prosecutors are the ones who normally prosecute auto theft offences. In the meantime, the Government of Canada has shown its commitment to addressing a particular form of auto theft, namely, organized auto theft, with the introduction of Bill C-64, as my hon. colleague from Langley cited.

● (1920)

[*Translation*]

Government Bill C-64 would make it an offence to wholly or partially alter, remove or obliterate a vehicle identification number without lawful excuse in circumstances that give rise to a reasonable inference that the act was committed in order to conceal the identity of the motor vehicle.

[*English*]

The punishment for this offence would be, if proceeded with by indictment, a five year maximum term of imprisonment or, if proceeded with by summary conviction, a six month maximum term of imprisonment and/or a \$2,000 fine.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Association of Police Boards, the Insurance Bureau of Canada and the National Committee to Reduce Auto Theft have all called on the Government of Canada to bring forward a VIN tampering offence. We have answered that call.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member across will answer the next question not from a prepared speech, but actually from his heart. It was yesterday at justice committee that he endorsed the concept of minimum sentencing.

We are dealing with a very high risk individual. If my private member's bill were to deal with just indictable offences, the most serious offences, would the member's government support having mandatory minimum sentences—maximum sentences are never used—as a guideline to the courts for the most serious indictable offences?

Adjournment Proceedings

[Translation]

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-293 introduced by my hon. colleague from Langley provided for the use of mandatory minimum sentences.

[English]

It is inconsistent. That is the problem with the bill. It is inconsistent to provide for a mandatory minimum penalty, presumably justified by the seriousness of the offence, while at the same time lowering the maximum available term of imprisonment for its commission. That is the fundamental flaw with respect to the position that the member has taken with this bill.

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I intend to address an issue that arose in my riding, the closure of a pulp and paper mill at Prince Albert. Once that plant closes, there will be 700 people out of work.

From what I can gather we have approximately 300 forestry communities across the country that are suffering from various problems associated with the forestry industry. Clearly, one of the major causes of problems in the country is the ongoing softwood lumber dispute with the United States and the \$5 billion that has been stripped out of the books and the revenues of our forestry producers in Canada. It is making it very difficult for those employers to weather the storms that exist in that industry.

It is quite apparent that for the past four or five years since this problem began, the government has been hoping the matter would just go away. It has had no action plan to assist communities with the troubles they are facing.

The Conservative Party and its predecessor the Canadian Alliance, back in 2002, proposed a plan to assist these communities and the employees affected by backstopping the industry through the export development agency to turn these accounts receivable, the duties collected illegally in the United States, and have that cash flow into the books of the companies. Then they would have the cash to deal with the many problems and challenges they are facing.

The Liberal government has refused to accept that proposal. It uses Export Development for the aeronautics industry and other things to backstop an industry, but it refuses to stand up for an industry that is responsible for employing a million people directly and indirectly in the country. I find that disturbing.

What is even more disturbing is the recent announcement that the two negotiators, Mr. Ritchie and Mr. Tellier, are now resigning as negotiators. They are saying that the government is not serious about trying to resolve this matter and that it is not going to get resolved until after the election.

The clear implication of that announcement is that the government wants to use the problems of the forestry industry to conjure up its core of anti-American sentiment that it caters to. It wants to use that as an election issue. That is very unfortunate.

I have a very specific question. On October 21 the government announced a \$50 million program to assist forestry communities. There was one slight problem. The program was restricted to forest communities in the province of Quebec. There are hundreds of

communities outside of Quebec. My community of Prince Albert cannot access that fund.

Tonight I am asking the parliamentary secretary to explain how this NDP-Liberal coalition government could design a forestry program to assist communities that basically leaves communities like Prince Albert and hundreds of other communities on the outside looking in.

• (1925)

Hon. Jerry Pickard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during question period on October 5, the hon. member for Prince Albert linked the recent announcement of the closure of the Weyerhaeuser pulp and paper mill in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, to the softwood lumber dispute with the United States.

Since the hon. member has raised the softwood lumber issue, allow me to speak to the issue now.

The Government of Canada is exploring every possible option to resolve this dispute, including litigation, high level political intervention and advocacy. To do this, we are working closely with industry, provincial governments and other stakeholders. We expect the United States to live up to the NAFTA obligations, revoke the duty orders and refund the duties. We will continue to defend the interests of Canadian industry and workers in our WTO and NAFTA litigation.

The Canadian forest products industry is one of Canada's most important sectors. Approximately 300 communities across Canada and hundreds of thousands of workers depend on it. The government has a sensitivity to the impact of the lumber dispute and, as a result, has made available over \$400 million in federal assistance to forestry workers, communities and industries.

However, as was stated in the House when this question was first raised, the Weyerhaeuser mill in Prince Albert is a pulp and paper mill. Consequently, it is not directly involved in the softwood lumber issue.

Worldwide, the pulp and paper industry has been rapidly changing in recent years. New technologies have increased optimal mill size. New low cost sources of wood fibre have developed offshore and begun exporting to Canada's traditional markets. North American markets for paper products are not as strong as they once were. As a result, the North American pulp and paper industry is in the process of rationalizing its capacity.

Given these and other factors, Weyerhaeuser made the business decision to close the Prince Albert mill, despite the company's significant investments to upgrade and modernize.

The federal government is concerned about this decision and the potential impact on the 690 workers and the hundreds of additional indirect workers and their families. The Prince Albert region is heavily dependent upon the forest industry and the Weyerhaeuser pulp and paper mill is the region's largest employer.

Adjournment Proceedings

Prince Albert is the major regional centre for northern Saskatchewan and serves a number of smaller communities. First nations play an important role, both in the forest industry and the regional economy, and rely on Prince Albert for a number of essential services. It is important to the region as a whole that Prince Albert remain a viable, vibrant economy.

We view as very positive Weyerhaeuser's plans to keep the pulp and paper mill operating through the coming winter to ensure that the cold weather does not damage the equipment. The company says it plans to explore all viable options, including identifying possible purchasers.

The province of Saskatchewan has a significant forest resource and is hopeful that investors and new forest industries can be attracted to this region. The federal government has been contributing \$4.5 million over the past years, funds which have been matched by the province, to support the Saskatchewan forest industry.

• (1930)

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick: Mr. Speaker, I will ask this question for the fourth time because it is relevant. This government, on October 21, announced a special program of \$50 million to assist forestry communities in the province of Quebec in dealing with problems that are being caused for the forestry communities.

I am not criticizing a program that would help forestry communities, but I am absolutely amazed by this. What really bothers me and my constituents is why this government would design a program for only one province in the country.

There are hundreds of communities in Atlantic Canada, northern Ontario, the prairie provinces and B.C. that are dealing with major,

profound problems in the forestry industry. They cannot access funding under this program. The task force that the NDP government set up in Saskatchewan cannot access funding under that program.

Why does this NDP-Liberal coalition government design programs that leave hundreds of forestry communities on the outside looking in?

Hon. Jerry Pickard: Mr. Speaker, there are two points that I would like to reiterate. We have set up a program. We have \$400 million that are available to the forest industry. We have contributed money to Saskatchewan and have worked with the Saskatchewan government in that case.

We need to focus on our communities, workers and their families and the Canadian industry to improve what has happened.

In 1993 the government did much to foster a vibrant economy. The Government of Canada has eliminated the deficit and paid down some of the debt. We are putting money into ensuring that companies and people in each region of Canada can operate in a very efficient way.

It is clear in my mind that what is being related as a border issue, one that has been a problem between Canada and the United States, is not the issue that is occurring in this community.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 7:33 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Wednesday, November 2, 2005

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Citizen Advisory Committees

Mr. Carr 9397

Agriculture

Mrs. Yelich 9397

Guelph Human Resource Centre

Mrs. Chamberlain 9397

Summit of the Americas

Mr. Paquette 9398

Association of Women of India in Canada

Ms. Ratansi 9398

Bereaved Families

Mr. Lauzon 9398

Cyprus

Mr. Cannis 9398

Inverness Bronze Sculpture Gallery

Mr. Boulianne 9398

Underground Railroad

Mr. Lastewka 9399

Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada

Mr. Carrie 9399

Chiropractic

Ms. Dhalla 9399

Bell Canada

Ms. Crowder 9399

Japanese-Canadian Veterans

Ms. Oda 9399

Sponsorship Program

Mr. Desrochers 9400

Sponsorship Program

Mr. Bezan 9400

Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada

Mr. Zed 9400

ORAL QUESTIONS

Sponsorship Program

Mr. Harper 9400

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) 9400

Mr. Harper 9400

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) 9401

Mr. Harper 9401

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) 9401

Mr. MacKay 9401

Mr. Brison 9401

Mr. MacKay 9401

Mr. Brison 9401

Mr. Duceppe 9401

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) 9401

Mr. Duceppe 9401

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) 9401

Mr. Gauthier 9401

Mr. Lapierre (Outremont) 9402

Mr. Gauthier 9402

Mr. Lapierre (Outremont) 9402

Mr. Layton 9402

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) 9402

Mr. Layton 9402

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) 9402

Mr. Harper 9402

Mr. Brison 9402

Mr. Harper 9402

Mr. Brison 9402

Mr. Lunn 9403

Mr. Brison 9403

Mr. Lunn 9403

Mr. Brison 9403

Mr. Guimond 9403

Mr. Lapierre (Outremont) 9403

Mr. Guimond 9403

Mr. Lapierre (Outremont) 9403

Mrs. Lavallée 9403

Mr. Lapierre (Outremont) 9403

Mrs. Lavallée 9404

Mr. Lapierre (Outremont) 9404

Mr. Poilievre 9404

Mr. Lapierre (Outremont) 9404

Mr. Watson 9404

Mr. Brison 9404

Mrs. Ablonczy 9404

Mr. Brison 9404

Mrs. Ablonczy 9404

Mr. Brison 9404

Agriculture

Mr. Boshcoff 9405

Mr. Mitchell 9405

Sponsorship Program

Mr. Blaikie 9405

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) 9405

Mr. Blaikie 9405

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) 9405

Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam) 9405

Mr. Brison 9405

Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam) 9405

Mr. Alcock 9406

Canada Post

Mr. Pallister 9406

Mr. McCallum (Markham—Unionville) 9406

Mr. Pallister 9406

Mr. McCallum (Markham—Unionville) 9406

Sponsorship Program	
Mr. Sauvageau	9406
Mr. Lapierre (Outremont)	9406
Mr. Sauvageau	9406
Mr. Lapierre (Outremont)	9406

Aboriginal Affairs	
Mr. Harrison	9406
Mr. Scott	9407
Mr. Harrison	9407
Mr. Scott	9407

Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness	
Ms. Sgro	9407
Ms. McLellan	9407

Softwood Lumber	
Mr. Menzies	9407
Mr. Peterson	9407

Canadian Heritage	
Mrs. Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)	9407
Ms. Frulla	9407

Presence in Gallery	
The Speaker	9408

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Government Response to Petitions	
Mr. LeBlanc	9408

First Nations Commercial and Industrial Development Act	
Mr. Scott	9408
Bill C-71. Introduction and first reading	9408
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	9408

Criminal Code	
Mr. Cotler	9408
Bill C-72. Introduction and first reading	9408
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	9408

Veterans	
Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre)	9408
Mr. O'Connor	9409
Mr. Bachand	9409
Mr. Layton	9410

Committees of the House	
Agriculture and Agri-Food	
Mr. Steckle	9410
Industry, Natural Resources, Science and Technology	
Mr. Masse	9411
Motion for concurrence	9411
Divisions deemed demanded and deferred	9411

Petitions	
Foreign Adoptions	
Mr. Hill	9411
Canadian Wildlife Service	
Mrs. Gallant	9411

Autism	
Mrs. Chamberlain	9411

Citizenship and Immigration	
Ms. Wasylcia-Leis	9411

Labelling of Alcoholic Beverages	
Ms. Wasylcia-Leis	9411

Canada Post	
Mrs. Yelich	9412

CN Rail	
Mrs. Skelton	9412

Marriage	
Mr. Vellacott	9412

The Environment	
Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	9412

Taxation	
Mr. Warawa	9412

Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. LeBlanc	9412

Questions Passed as Orders for Returns	
Mr. LeBlanc	9413

Motions for Papers	
Mr. LeBlanc	9413
Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	9413

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Pacific Gateway Act	
Bill C-68. Second reading	9413
Mr. Carr	9414
Mr. Julian	9415
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	9416
Mr. Julian	9416
Mrs. Redman	9419
Mr. Jean	9419
Mr. Warawa	9420
Mr. Owen (Vancouver Quadra)	9420
Mr. Owen (Vancouver Quadra)	9421

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Committees of the House	
Procedure and House Affairs	
Mrs. Redman	9423
Motion for concurrence	9423
(Motion agreed to)	9423

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Pacific Gateway Act	
Bill C-68. Second reading	9423
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	9423
Mr. Warawa	9424
Mr. Hiebert	9425
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	9427
Mr. Hubbard	9427
Mr. Lukiwski	9428

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Agriculture

Motion	9428
Motion negatived	9429

Parliament of Canada Act

Mr. Preston	9429
Bill C-408. Second reading	9429
Mr. LeBlanc	9430
Mr. Szabo	9430
Mr. Cuzner	9431
Mr. Lemay	9432
Mr. Stoffer	9433
Mr. Casey	9434

Mr. Lee	9435
Mr. Reid	9436

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Copyright Act

Mrs. Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)	9437
Mr. Cullen (Etobicoke North)	9438

Justice

Mr. Warawa	9438
Mr. Cullen (Etobicoke North)	9439

Softwood Lumber

Mr. Fitzpatrick	9440
Mr. Pickard	9440

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