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(Part A)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 7, 2006

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

• (1000)

[*English*]

POINTS OF ORDER

ALLEGED SIMILARITY OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: The Chair is now prepared to rule on a point of order raised by the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River on November 1, 2006, concerning Bill C-257, standing in the name of the hon. member for Gatineau, and Bill C-295, standing in the name of the hon. member for Vancouver Island North. Both bills amend the Canada Labour Code in relation to replacement workers.

[*Translation*]

I want to begin by thanking the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River for having raised this matter and the hon. member for Vancouver East for having made a submission.

[*English*]

In his presentation, the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River argues that these bills are substantially the same, except for some minor differences relating to fines. A decision was taken by the House on October 18 to adopt Bill C-257 at second reading and refer it to committee. The hon. member argues, in light of this decision, that debate should not continue on Bill C-295 and that the bill should be removed from the order of precedence.

The hon. member for Vancouver East contends that although both bills deal with the same subject, they are different and, therefore, Bill C-295 should not be removed from the order of precedence.

[*Translation*]

Let me first clarify our practices with regard to items of private members' business which are similar. Standing Order 86(4) states:

The Speaker shall be responsible for determining whether two or more items are so similar as to be substantially the same, in which case he or she shall so inform the member or members whose items were received last and the same shall be returned to the member or members without having appeared on the notice paper.

[*English*]

When this Standing Order was first adopted, private members' business operated very differently than it does today. The Standing Orders provided for only 20 items of private members' business to be

placed by lottery on the order of precedence and provided that, of those, only three bills could come to a vote. Realistically, then, there was little chance that bills considered substantially the same would ever be drawn together and placed on the order of precedence, let alone be debated and voted upon. Given those odds, Standing Order 86(4) came to be involved only rarely: only when a bill was identical to one already introduced would it be refused. This generous interpretation is referred to in a ruling of Mr. Speaker Fraser on November 2, 1989, at pages 5474-5 of *Debates*, where he states:

I should say that in the view of the Chair, two or more items are substantially the same if, first, they have the same purpose and, second, they obtain their purpose by the same means.

Accordingly, there could be several bills addressing the same subject, but if they took a different approach to the issue the Chair would judge them to be sufficiently different so as not to be substantially the same.

The intent...was to give members an opportunity to put before the House items of concern to them, but to prevent a multiplicity of identical bills being submitted...

[*Translation*]

As Mr. Speaker Fraser explained, this interpretation had the practical effect of giving a member an opportunity to bring forward a legislative proposal on any subject, regardless of what other members might be doing. This practice has served members well until the present case.

[*English*]

The current Standing Orders, which were first adopted provisionally in May 2003, provide for a single draw of the names of all members at the beginning of a Parliament. On the 20th sitting day following the draw, the first 30 members on the list who have introduced a bill or given notice of a motion on the notice paper, constitute the order of precedence. Following the draw, the subcommittee on private members' business needs to determine if any of the items should be designated non-votable pursuant to Standing Order 91.1. In determining whether any of the items should be deemed non-votable, the subcommittee considers whether or not any of the bills or motions are substantially the same as ones already voted on by the House of Commons in the current session.

Routine Proceedings

In the case at hand, a careful examination of both bills reveals that they have exactly the same objective, that is, to prohibit employers under the Canada Labour Code from hiring replacement workers to perform the duties of employees who are on strike or locked out. The following minor differences distinguish them: First, Bill C-257 provides for a fine not exceeding \$1,000 for each day that an offence occurs, whereas Bill C-295 provides for a fine not exceeding \$10,000; second, Bill C-257 contains subparagraph (2.1)(f) in clause 2 concerning prohibitions relating to the use of replacement workers, text that is not found in Bill C-295; and third, subclause (2.2) in Bill C-257 appears as subclause (2.9) in Bill C-295.

Other than these three differences, both bills are identical in terms of their legislative and procedural impact. The only concrete difference between them relates to the sum of the fines. While this is an important matter, it does not make the bills into distinctly different legislative initiatives. The Chair must therefore conclude that both bills are substantially the same and achieve their objectives through the same means.

The question then becomes, should the second bill, Bill C-295, be allowed to proceed?

It seems to the Chair that there is considerable risk involved in allowing bills that are substantially the same to be debated. It puts at risk a key principle of parliamentary procedure, namely, that a decision once made cannot be questioned again, but must stand as the judgment of the House.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, at page 495, explains that the principle exists for very good reason.

This is to prevent the time of the House from being used in the discussion of motions of the same nature with the possibility of contradictory decisions being arrived at in the course of the same session.

In the present case, we have an unusual convergence of circumstances. Not only were the bills sponsored by the hon. members for Gatineau and Vancouver Island North both placed on the notice paper, their names were also among the first 30 drawn for the order of precedence. Moreover, the subcommittee on private members' business faced with the fact that debate had yet to begin on items of private members' business could not deem one of the bills to be non-votable since the House had not yet taken any decisions on such business.

Today, the Chair has found itself in an unprecedented situation. I have concluded that Bill C-295 is substantially the same as Bill C-257. Ordinarily, I would order Bill C-295 to be dropped from the order paper in conformity with this standing order. However, given that this situation has never arisen before, I am reluctant to make a final ruling since this may be the only opportunity in this Parliament that the hon. member for Vancouver Island North gets to have an item on the order of precedence. At the same time, the Chair cannot allow the bill to go forward for its last hour of debate and the vote that would follow.

So, instead, in accordance with Standing Order 94(1), which provides the Speaker with the authority to make all arrangements necessary to ensure the orderly conduct of private members' business, I am ordering that Bill C-295 be dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence.

This delay in the consideration of Bill C-295 is designed to provide the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs with sufficient time to examine this matter and suggest some resolution to the situation for the sponsor of the bill. The committee should also consider whether our practices in relation to the application of Standing Order 86(4) continue to serve the House in an effective manner given that our rules respecting private members' business have changed since this Standing Order was first adopted.

In the absence of a solution to the predicament of the sponsor of Bill C-295, the Chair will have no option when the bill next reaches the top of the order of precedence, I will order that debate not proceed, that the order for the bill's consideration be discharged and that the bill be dropped from the order paper.

●(1005)

Once Again, I thank the hon. members for Scarborough—Rouge River and for Vancouver East for having brought this situation to the attention of the Chair and of the House. It is an important contribution to the evolution of private members' business.

I believe the effect of the ruling will be that there will be no private members' business taken up this evening.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

●(1010)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure this morning to ask my hon. colleagues in this House to concur in the fourth report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women which essentially is comprised of the motion adopted on May 19 by a majority of committee members, which reads:

That the Departments of Justice and Human Resources and Skills Development draft and table legislation based on the recommendations of the Pay Equity Task Force by 31 October 2005 and that the legislation be referred to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

The report calls upon the government to move forward on the pay equity task force recommendations from May 2004. The task force had over 113 recommendations and the report from the Standing Committee on the Status of Women highlights four of those recommendations.

First, replace the current complaint based model of pay equity with new, stand-alone, proactive legislation that would frame pay equity as a fundamental human right.

Second, expand the coverage of pay equity legislation to cover all federally regulated employers, including Parliament and federal contractors.

Third, extend pay equity protection to members of visible minorities, persons with disabilities and aboriginal people.

Fourth, require all employers to develop and implement a pay equity plan.

The committee specifically asked the government for a comprehensive response to this report and the committee received from the government a response to the 570 page pay equity report in the form of a one and a half page letter. The government's comprehensive response was less than two pages. This is not good enough, nor is it comprehensive.

The government made it clear that it would not address the need for new pay equity legislation and that it was satisfied with the current complaints based model. The government also indicated that it would meet with its key stakeholders on the issue. The government further argued that there was no consensus for the implementation of many of the recommendations.

The task force report clearly outlines that there is an issue with pay equity in this country and that the current complaints based system is not working. The proof is in the numbers. Today, a woman earns 72.5¢ for every \$1 that a man earns. For aboriginal women, women of colour—

The Speaker: I apologize for interrupting the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, but apparently the Chair was not notified that an hon. member wished to introduce a private member's bill today. [Translation]

The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques wishes to introduce a bill. I therefore seek unanimous consent of the House to revert to introduction of private members' bills, to allow the hon. member to introduce her bill at this time. I apologize to the hon. member for London—Fanshawe for interrupting her speech.

Is there unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

BANK OF CANADA ACT

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ) asked for leave to introduce Bill C-380, An Act to amend various legislative provisions relating to head offices.

She said: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I apologize to my hon. colleague and thank her for giving unanimous consent. I would like to point out that my seconder is the hon. member for Gatineau.

I have the privilege of introducing a bill to amend various legislative provisions to remove the requirement that certain agencies, corporations and courts have their head offices in Ottawa. Federal legislation requiring of a number of federal entities that they have their head offices specifically in the national capital is out of step with the times.

Routine Proceedings

This legislation unduly benefits Ottawa in terms of government procurement, property leasing as well as jobs, at the expense of other regions of Quebec and Canada, and the Outaouais region in particular. I hope that all my hon. colleagues in this House will support this bill.

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

● (1015)

[English]

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for London—Fanshawe to continue her speech. I apologize for the interruption. I hope it has not distracted the hon. member from the serious remarks she was making.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STATUS OF WOMEN

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I was indicating to the House, the 570 page report of the task force on pay equity received a less than adequate response from the government. The response was two pages in length and certainly not comprehensive.

It is our hope that the situation will be addressed, because the task force report clearly outlines that there is an issue with pay equity in this country and that the current complaints based system is not working. The proof, as I said, is in the numbers. Today a woman earns 72.5¢ for every \$1 that a man earns. For aboriginal women, women of colour and racialized or new immigrant women, the wage gap between their earnings and the earnings of white men is even greater than the wage gap between white men and white women.

For pay equity to be truly realized, which is equal pay for work of equal value, comparisons between different types of female predominant and male predominant jobs need to be made in order to locate and remove wage discrimination.

The impact on women of sex-based wage disparities is reflected in the rate of female and child poverty, with its adverse consequences on the health, well-being and future of Canadian women and their children. Since pay inequity contributes to poverty, it can have devastating health and social consequences for children, such as poor nutrition, inadequate housing, and poor concentration and performance at school, as well as social isolation.

Pay inequity is also related to economic dependence, which affects a woman's ability to leave an abusive relationship. Many women are compelled to face beatings, threats and even the possibility of death at the hands of their abusers because they are unwilling to condemn their children to poverty if they leave the relationship.

It is also true that women bringing home lower paycheques also receive lower retirement incomes. Too often, senior women live hand to mouth until the end of their lives.

Routine Proceedings

Interestingly enough, achieving pay equity can have a number of benefits for employers. In addition to the reduction of wage discrimination, it facilitates the rationalization of compensation systems, which frequently become convoluted and cumbersome over time. It also demonstrates to employees in female predominant occupations that the organization is committed to the fair treatment of all employees performing different types of work. In these ways, pay equity can contribute to more efficient management and improved morale among employees.

I would like to point out why our current pay equity legislation does not work. According to the Canadian Human Rights Commission, complaints are not particularly well suited to addressing forms of discrimination that are subtle, largely unintentional and integrated into complex systems—in other words, systemic discrimination.

In February 2001, Michelle Falardeau-Ramsay, the chief commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, stated: “Major pay equity cases are at a virtual impasse because of the current system. We believe it is time the government made the necessary changes to ensure that pay equity becomes a reality”.

Allegations of human rights violations tend, by their nature, to generate a defensive reaction and lead to litigation and delays. A complaints based approach produces uneven implementation since employers not targeted by complaints often choose to keep a low profile and refrain from taking any initiatives on pay equity. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that it takes significant knowledge and resources to mount major pay equity complaints, which generally means that they are filed only by unions. The end result is that people performing female predominant work in non-unionized, federally regulated settings have benefited little from the federal pay equity provisions.

There are also potential competitive disadvantages. If an employer voluntarily launches a pay equity study or is the only organization in a specific sector to be the focus of a complaint, perhaps because it is unionized while competitors are not, the result may be that it is the only player in the industry to pay the price of correcting wage discrimination.

• (1020)

While competitive pressures are no excuse for maintaining discrimination, it does not seem sensible that a business should in effect be penalized for implementing pay equity. Also, according to the Canadian Human Rights Commission, there is ambiguity with respect to standards and concepts. More complete guidance on the meaning of terms and criteria for assessing compliance can usually be provided in the context of a proactive legal regime that is applicable to all employers.

The Canadian Labour Congress is also critical of the current legislation. It maintains that there is a lack of clarity about the nature of employers' obligations and consequences of non-compliance with pay equity obligations. Current legislation does not provide enough guidance on acceptable standards and methods for achieving pay equity.

Ken Georgetti, the president of the CLC, outlined the critical need for pay equity. He stated:

The arithmetic does not work for ordinary working Canadians.

The government squanders huge surpluses while workers can't find child care for their kids, can't get training to do their jobs better, can't protect their pensions when companies go bankrupt or can't get the money promised for pay equity.

Furthermore, the CLC contends that the current legislation is, instead, vague legislation that encourages and prolongs costly litigation, which women, especially non-unionized women, women of colour and poor women simply cannot afford. Consequently, the model fails to ensure that the average woman worker will see her pay equity complaint resolved and actually be paid equal pay for work of equal value.

Pay equity is a human right protected by the Canadian Human Rights Act. The current law prohibits differences in wages between female and male employees who work in the same establishment and perform work of equal value. We need to live up to our obligations outlined by the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Canada also needs to live up to its international obligations on pay equity. Convention No. 100 concerning equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value, the equal remuneration convention adopted by the International Labour Organization, ILO, in 1951 and ratified by Canada in 1972, requires that governments take active measures to achieve equal pay for work of equal value.

The international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1966 and ratified by Canada in 1976, lists equal pay for work of equal value as a fundamental right and stresses its importance to the achievement of fairness in conditions of work. The convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, adopted by the UN in 1979 and ratified by Canada in 1981, commits signatories to removing employment discrimination against women, in part by ensuring equal pay for work of equal value.

It is quite clear what needs to happen. Canada needs to adopt a new pay equity law. The federal government should develop a new, proactive, stand-alone pay equity law. The law should meet all domestic and international obligations and should frame pay equity as a fundamental human right.

The proactive components of the legislation should include an employer's obligation to review pay practices and identify gender based wage discrimination gaps. Employers would also have a duty to develop a pay equity plan to eliminate pay inequities within a specific timeframe.

Canada also needs to expand coverage of pay equity to aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and visible minorities. Pay equity legislation should apply to aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and visible minorities as well as women. New pay equity legislation must create mechanisms to measure and eliminate documented systemic wage discrimination against these disadvantaged groups.

This legislation should protect all employees.

Routine Proceedings

All employees in the federal jurisdiction should be covered by a new pay equity legislation act, including non-unionized employees, part time, casual, seasonal and temporary workers, employees of Parliament, and federal contractors covered by the federal contractors program.

Any new law should involve employees in pay equity plans.

All employers should have the obligation to work with unions and employee representatives through a pay equity committee. The committee would be responsible for developing a pay equity plan and monitoring any progress made to eliminate the wage gap. At least half of the representatives on the pay equity committee should be women workers from predominately female job classes.

• (1025)

This legislation would also need to have non-sexist evaluation methods. Evaluation methods used to review predominately female and male job classes should be equal and free of gender bias.

The legislation should ensure that pay equity is not negotiable. Pay equity is a non-negotiable human right. It should not be included in the collective bargaining process. Pay equity needs to be addressed separately to identify and remedy past pay discrimination against women and other equity groups.

Canada's legislation should have sustainability. An employer should have an obligation to maintain pay equity once a plan has been implemented. Where there is a union, the union would share the responsibility to ensure that pay equity is being respected in the workplace.

There also needs to be a pay equity commission. A new Canadian pay equity commission should be created to administer the pay equity law. This commission would provide education and assistance to employers, unions and employees, review complaints, conduct investigations and conduct random workplace audits. It would offer advocacy services for unrepresented workers, conduct research, and issue orders to ensure the law is enforced.

The government should provide enough human and financial resources to allow the commission to effectively administer the pay equity legislation.

Finally, we need to create a pay equity tribunal. A new Canadian pay equity hearing tribunal would need to be set up to adjudicate disputes on any issues which arise in the implementation or maintenance of pay equity. It should be an expert tribunal, knowledgeable about pay equity and equality rights.

The Conservatives have clearly ignored the 500 page pay equity task force report saying that there is no consensus when there has been consensus to this report, a very clear consensus. The government has no intention of addressing inequality between the sexes in this country. This has been proven by its reaction to this report, its cuts to Status of Women Canada, its changes to the mandate of that department, and the elimination of the court challenges program.

Conservatives want to take Canadians back 25 years instead of moving Canada ahead. They are also eager to waste taxpayers' money by holding more consultations with stakeholders when the

2004 report was not only very thorough but is available for action now.

The Liberal Party's record is not much better. It had the chance to act on the 2004 task force report and failed draft legislation. It did not take the initiative to implement proactive pay equity legislation even after very high profile court cases.

It is not very clear to me why the Conservative government refuses to draft new legislation. In 1998 the now Prime Minister described our current pay equity law as follows:

For taxpayers, however, it's a rip-off. And it has nothing to do with gender. Both men and women taxpayers will pay additional money to both men and women in the civil service. That's why the federal government should scrap its ridiculous pay equity law.

He also pointed to specific flaws in the current legislation:

Now "pay equity" has everything to do with pay and nothing to do with equity. It's based on the vague notion of "equal pay for work of equal value", which is not the same as equal pay for the same job.

Just to be clear, in 1998 the member who is now our Prime Minister did not support the complaints based pay equity legislation now in place. Now that he is in government his party refuses to draft new legislation to remove the complaints based model. I am wondering if the Prime Minister has reversed his position or does he not believe in pay equity at all. It is my great fear that it is the latter.

Considering the Conservative government's recent attack on women's rights, it has become clear that Canadian women are going to have to fight. Women, sadly, have not achieved equality in this country. I promise to fight for equality and fight for proactive pay equity in this country. We need it now.

• (1030)

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments with respect to establishing a pay equity tribunal and a pay equity commission. My immediate observation is we have an awful lot of commissions in Ottawa. We have an Ethics Commission. We have an Information Commission. We have all kinds of commissions and they all cost us a substantial amount of money. They all do good things.

At this point I am not denying anything that the member is saying. I know she sits on the committee that studied these issues. However, has she or the committee any idea what the pay equity tribunal would cost the taxpayers of this country and what the pay equity commission would cost the taxpayers of this country?

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, certainly, the member has made a point that the things that we value, that are important to us, need to have oversight through commissions and tribunals. I would suggest that is the same for equal pay for work of equal value.

Routine Proceedings

I am not sure what a commission or a tribunal would cost, but I do know what not having one has cost. I know it has cost women their ability to earn enough to look after their families, particularly in the case of single-parent female-led families. I know it has cost the children in this country to live in poverty. Some 20% of the children in this country live in poverty. I know that women have been left to live in violent situations because they cannot afford to get out. I know that senior women receive less in terms of pensions.

This is a cost that none of us should ever be willing to accept. What is the cost? It is a cost in human dignity and human life, and I am not prepared to accept it.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in discussions with the hon. member, as we are both on the status of women standing committee and deal with these issues, we all recognize the need for pay equity legislation in order to ensure that everybody is treated equally.

When we talk about the issue of equality, what does that really mean? That should mean that women can earn the same dollar that a man earns, rather than a woman continuing to earn only 71¢ at that point.

However, there are many people, possibly people watching and some of the members that are here with us today, who do not really understand what pay equity legislation is all about and why it is that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women and the previous Liberal government were very much committed to bringing in legislation.

Would the hon. member address the reason that she feels it is important and, more importantly, perhaps give a brief explanation for the some of the members in the House who do not understand the value and the reason for it?

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, very clearly, pay equity is important to all Canadians. It exists now in two provinces, one of them being the province of Ontario. I had the privilege to serve in the Ontario Legislature when we brought forward and ensured pay equity.

Very clearly, the problem is that many women are locked into what we call job ghettos. They are in professions or in jobs that are traditionally regarded as female. As such, they have not been able to make the kind of wage advances that their male counterparts in similar jobs have been able to make. That simply is not fair, particularly, given the fact that the reality of modern life is that many women are the heads of families and they need to be able to provide for their children in an equitable way.

• (1035)

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment my colleague from London—Fanshawe on her excellent presentation today with all of the facts and figures, and rationale for why we need pay equity legislation in this country.

I was here some 13 years ago working on this very file at that time. Women then were earning about 70% of what men earned for full time work in this country. In all those 13 years, what have we seen? A little, teensy-weensy improvement to 72.5¢ for every dollar that men earn and it is just not good enough for Canadian women. It

is an issue of fairness, equity and human rights for women in this country.

After 13 years of a majority Liberal government, we are really no further ahead on this issue. Now we have a Conservative government that made some commitments in opposition to address this issue and refuses to be proactive on it. It is very discouraging for women in this country. I agree with my colleague that women have to continue to fight just as we have to continue to fight in this place.

I want to ask my friend from London—Fanshawe what she believes the actual impact would be if we did have appropriate pay equity legislation with targets, with timelines, and with a mechanism for enforcement? Just what would that achieve and how quickly for Canadian women?

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, the proof is in the jurisdictions where pay equity is the law. In the province of Ontario we saw a real benefit to women and their families in terms of respect for the work that they do, their ability to provide for their families, and the ability to provide for themselves in later years when they are receiving pensions.

My hon. colleague has made a very significant point that after 30 years our progress is marginal at best. Women across this country still face violence, poverty and systemic inequality. What is good for the women of Ontario is good for the women of this nation. Their economic contribution to the country and their contribution to the social fabric of this community has to be recognized and addressed by giving them the opportunity to earn at an equal rate to men.

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today on the important topic of pay equity.

I would like to take a moment and thank the hon. member for York West for raising this important issue. It is a great honour to participate on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, which the hon. member chairs. As she full well knows, we have many important topics for Canadians and, in particular, for Canadian women.

This topic has been a matter of debate in the House and undoubtedly within provincial legislatures across our country, as it relates to the provincial end of this important issue as well.

We all agree that the just and equitable treatment of women in our society is of paramount importance. In this day and age we know it cannot be denied that women have a fundamental and absolute right to be treated equally. In particular, working women deserve to be paid the same as men performing work of equal value. That is the baseline tenet of this legislation, of this initiative that began decades ago in our country.

It speaks to a fundamental human fairness, and we need to recognize that it is also the law. Yet we know there are still situations where we see women today underpaid and marginalized, trapped in job categories that are undervalued by their employer and diminished by their male colleagues.

Routine Proceedings

Even though the work performed by women is as useful to the organization as work performed by men, there remain instances where women are paid less. This is wrong. It is a situation that has dragged on for too long. That is why our government is moving forward to correct discrimination where it exists. We are taking action to ensure that all employers under federal jurisdiction must fully comply with pay equity legislation that, after all, has been in place since 1977.

For nearly 30 years, section 11 of the Canadian Human Rights Act has banned wage disparities for men and women who perform work of equal value within the same establishment. Equal wage guidelines were passed in 1986 to prescribe the manner in which section 11 was to be applied and to outline factors that could justify exceptions.

At the core of this pay equity legislation was the elimination of wage gaps that were due to gender based discrimination that could not be explained by differences in factors such as education, labour market experience and seniority.

The pay equity law applies to the federal public service and also to some 12,000 private companies that fall within federal jurisdiction. With 875,000 employees, these private sector firms are engaged in industries such as air, rail, marine and road transportation, longshoring, banking, broadcasting and telecommunications.

Since the human rights law was passed, we have seen lots of progress. In terms of pay levels, women today are certainly much better off now than they were 30 years ago, but we recognize there is still much to do.

Even now some corporations are uncertain about how best to implement pay equity laws. Confusion and uncertainty has led to litigation and irritation. A pay equity task force was established to examine this situation, and in 2004 it recommended legislative reform. On behalf of the new government, we appreciate the hard work and the insights of the task force, but in all honesty we do not feel that a new legislative regime is the right solution at this time.

For one thing, women should not have to wait until a whole new law winds its way through Parliament. They deserve and need action now. My government has opted for a proactive package of changes that will strengthen compliance with existing legislation, not at some distant point in the future but now. Women should not have to wait any longer for fairer working conditions. They are entitled to them now, as a moral imperative and under the law.

• (1040)

The new action plan that we are putting forward will help enterprises under federal jurisdiction comply fully with their obligations under the existing pay equity law.

First, the labour program will produce educational materials that outline the roles and responsibilities of employers, employees and their representatives. This will help to address one of the key obstacles experienced by many companies, which is the full challenge of understanding their obligations and how to meet them. Labour officers will receive specialized training that will enable them to more effectively support employers and unions in rectifying gender based wage gaps during the negotiation of collective agreements. These labour officers will provide timely assistance

through information, feedback and guidance toward cooperative solutions.

The second element of our action plan relates to mediation assistance. New specialized mediation services will be introduced to make the mediating efforts more efficient and effective on pay equity.

The third change we will see under our action plan relates to compliance monitoring and employer audits, which will help identify and correct problems in an effective and proactive manner.

The labour program that the government is proceeding with will conduct regular site visits to ensure that employers understand how to comply with equal pay requirements.

These are all important measures and I am confident they will prove to be effective. They will foster an environment where pay equity is achievable, measured and sustained. However, in the event that an employer fails to comply, additional recourse is available to enforce the pay equity obligations. Individuals who believe they are being treated unfairly can continue, as now, to file a complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission and any Labour Canada inspector has the ability to refer cases to the commission for further investigation and resolution.

I have one last point. From our perspective, this is not a one-off solution. We realize that the effect of these changes needs to be monitored. We need to ensure they are achieving the results we expect right away and for the long term. That is why my government intends to consult stakeholders further and assess the impact and the effectiveness of these measures as we move along.

I want to underscore that pay equity is a complicated policy. It requires change in culture and in attitudes. It requires a sustained good faith relationship between employers and employees, indeed, between men and women in the workforce.

I am sure we would all agree that changes like this just do not occur by themselves and they surely do not happen overnight. They need to be advanced through a thoughtful legislative regime, which we have, supported by effective education, monitoring and compliance.

I believe the action plan that we are putting in place will achieve those ends. It will help address the wage disparities between men and women. It will correct situations in which women are paid less than men in the same organization, even though they perform work of equal value.

The changes we are bringing forward will ensure progress toward ending an injustice suffered by too many women for too long. The best of all these changes is that they need to take effect now, not at some distant, unknown point in the future. Therefore, I call on all my hon. colleagues on both sides of the House to support these measures.

Routine Proceedings

●(1045)

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the government side for his sensitive comments about the status of women in Canada today and the issue of pay equity. I am glad he agrees that women's equality is of paramount importance to him and to his government.

He also says that the government is bringing in measures to strengthen compliance in terms of pay equity in Canada. As we said earlier, at this point Canadian women earn 72.5¢ for every dollar that men earn in full time work. This is a very damning statistic and one that has not improved measurably over the last 15 years, of which I am aware, and a very small amount over the last 30 years.

Could he inform the House and Canadian women exactly how the government will improve pay equity for women in our country? Will there be targets? Will there be a timeline? Will there be an enforcement mechanism? Without those tools in place, we know we will not make progress and women will not make economic progress without that kind of mechanism.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. There is no doubt that the issue of pay equity is an important and complex question. It is an issue that the workforce has been dealing with for many years, both at the federal level, within federal jurisdiction, and also at the provincial levels, as workplaces begin to deal with how to redress these gender wage gaps that seem to prevail in the workplace.

Our approach to this is to put an emphasis on interventions in the workplace that will help employers understand and work within the existing legislation, which in itself is designed to redress this problem. As well, we recognize it needs to become a matter of culture and attitude within the workplace. This takes time, it takes intervention, it takes pressure and it takes training.

The kinds of measures we are talking about now, we are advancing right now, not at some point a year from now. To consider the opposition's idea of trying to get into yet a new round of legislation that is not needed could well take years or more. We recognize there is a certain importance in moving this along quickly. Therefore, we are talking about our program with labour inspectors, our labour officers, who will work with employers and their representatives in education and training, in mediation assistance, compliance monitoring and employer audits. These kinds of interventions will be positive and effect the kind of changes needed and effect them right away.

●(1050)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member who just described how the government views pay equity to clarify for us how the interest of employers will be sparked, how employers will be made to see that this is really their responsibility and that something has to be done. Are we talking only about incentives, as he seemed to be suggesting? Past experience has shown that, with incentives alone, employers tend to put considerations such as the profits they are expected to make to keep their financial backers happy first.

There is a contradiction between what my colleague on the government side hopes for and market reality. I would like him to explain how this leap can be taken. For now, I get the feeling that we are dealing with dreams and pious hopes, and that nothing will ever come of it.

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Mr. Speaker, how employers should be dealt with on this question is certainly an important one. I am inclined to believe, as the hon. member has suggested, that compliance is of the utmost importance if we are to make substantive progress on this important issue. However, I do not believe that employers, when shown the full breadth of this issue and the full knowledge and understanding of what needs to be done, need incentives to do what is right.

These are important attitudinal and cultural changes. We will work with employers and have our labour officers show them the right way to work with their employers in their workplace, men and women. We realize that all members of the workforce need to be part of the solution. We need to work with them on the educational and training side. We recognize that there will be some employers who ultimately will not to comply with this. For that, there is recourse. Individuals and labour officers, on their behalf, can file a complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission for those employers, or shall I say the bad actors, who do not comply. Unfortunately, we do encounter those who ultimately need that type of recourse, but hopefully it would be a last resort.

The importance of the goodwill in the workplace is necessary to make any advances on this issue, and that is where we need to work. We need to take a cooperative approach to this. That view is shared by the government. What is also shared is the urgency with which we need to move on this important issue.

●(1055)

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to the hon. member that the goodwill has run out. We have been waiting for a very long time. His acknowledgement that there are bad actors is certainly true and it is time to address that.

There is a comprehensive task force report which was delivered in 2004. It is 570 pages and has recommendations and guidelines. Why on earth would we not utilize that incredible report and make things happen now? Why should it take years? I find that very hard to understand and very hard to believe.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we wish to do. We need to move on this now.

The important information in the task force report was forwarded for the consideration of the previous government and this one. I am sure it can be the basis by which a prudent and proper approach to this issue can now be in front of us. What was imperative in that task force report, as the member has acknowledged, is that we get going now.

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The fear is that we leave this to a process that could get embroiled in legislative depth and discussion and debate when frankly the facts are known about this. Interventions are needed now.

Continued work in the workplace with qualified labour officers and the Government of Canada working in these areas of federal jurisdiction can and will advance this issue and will begin to redress pay equity issues as they arise within those jurisdictions that are within the federal realm. We will make some progress, as there has been progress in the last 30 years. This is not going to happen overnight. We need continued vigilance to keep moving forward. We do not agree with an approach that would see any stop in the progress that has already been made by holding up some fictitious speculative legislation that may or may not come in the future.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, progress with respect to pay equity in this country has been extremely slow and remains slow even today, in 2006. For 25 years, this country has had legislation that promotes the pay equity principle and that even makes it discriminatory to violate that principle. Twenty-five years later, we still have flagrant proof of pay inequity in many workplaces. At present, as we all know, the pay equity principle is enshrined in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

For 25 years, we have had legislation in place stipulating that it is discriminatory not to enforce pay equity. As we all know, the pay equity principle ensures that men and women receive equal pay for work of equal value, even if the work itself is different. What has this legislation done for us in the past 25 years? We see complaints filed before the Canadian Human Rights Commission, which end up before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. This simply means that it still takes years to resolve the problem of women experiencing a wage gap in the workplace.

Let us remember what happened with our employees in the public service. When I had the privilege to be named President of the Treasury Board, I remember very well the dispute that had been going on for years. The dispute before the courts was an argument between lawyers over the interpretation of pay equity. Millions of dollars had been spent on legal fees, while the principle itself had not been recognized. Do you know how we settled that matter? We asked the lawyers to leave the room. We sat down with the representatives of the employees and the unions, and we reached a compromise. We made the payments that were due to all of the women and even to some men who were working in certain categories in the public service.

Our current procedures are strictly based on the filing of a complaint that takes an eternity to settle in the courts.

In this country, the provinces are well ahead of the federal government. Why are we unable to recognize the work of the provinces? At this time, the experience of our provinces confirms the need for a law on pay equity. We have no choice: we must have a law to compel employers and employees to sit down at the same table and discuss a pay equity plan.

A few years ago, in 2004, we set up a working group. I recall very well, it was in the parliamentary committee chaired by my colleague from Winnipeg-South-Centre. All the groups came to tell us that we had to put an end to the complaints-based system and that we needed

to have a bill on pay equity. Employers themselves recognized that a complaints-based system is not satisfactory for reaching a decision on pay equity.

Why does the Conservative government tell us today, 25 years later, that it is going to work in cooperation with workers and employers; that this is a change of attitude and of culture? It has been 25 years, and the change of culture still has not happened. We realize very clearly that, in this area, we must have a bill that compels the parties to sit down at a table and discuss a pay equity plan.

Even today, the statistics prove to us that there is still a pay gap in Canada. Current statistics show that, on average, women who work full time receive 71% of the equivalent salary for men. That is going on in Canada in 2006. It is unbelievable.

• (1100)

Why this resistance by the Conservative government to the introduction of pay equity legislation? All members of Parliament from the various parties could work on creating good legislation that would meet with the satisfaction of both employers and employees.

We do not deny the fact that this is a complex issue and that employers may be somewhat reticent. Agreed, evaluating different jobs and deciding whether they are equal in value is a difficult thing to do. It is true that pay equity methodology is very complex. Why though, when some provinces have managed it, is the federal government not capable of doing so within its bodies governed by the Canada Labour Code?

For the past 25 years, we have tried to encourage the people of this country, our employers, to implement pay equity. Twenty-five years later, it still has not happened.

The former government, which I belonged to, launched a major initiative, working with a task force that met with numerous parties. An exhaustive report was submitted to the parliamentary committee. Why would the current Conservative government, which is still calling itself a new government nine months later, not take a very close look at the recommendations and propose some legislation to us that we could all study together? What is going on? Why this resistance from the Conservative government?

I cannot help but make the link with other files of special concern to women. When you have a hard time acknowledging the very principle of equality of women in an agency called Status of Women Canada, I understand that you may have a certain resistance to pay equity. Pay equity concerns mostly women, but it can also affect some men.

I very clearly recall at the time debates here in this House where the opposition critic—now in power—absolutely did not want to recognize the principle of pay equity.

Is that what is behind the resistance of our current Conservative government, which is not tabling specific legislation?

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Everyone agrees that we need specific pay equity legislation. Everyone agrees that legislation will force employers and employees to sit down at the same table to discuss the company's pay equity plan. At present I do not see any valid reason for delaying the introduction of such a bill.

My party fully supports the motion put forward by the member for London—Fanshawe for pay equity legislation in Canada.

• (1105)

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was glad to hear my Liberal colleague, who was in power for 10 years, refer to the 25 years of effort that has gone into settling the pay equity issue. Her party, which was in power for 12 years, was unable to resolve the issue.

Today, I am very glad to see that the Liberals have solutions to propose and that they would like the Conservatives to follow their lead and act much more proactively, in some ways at least, and make recommendations to improve things or at least try to resolve the issue.

Now that it is in opposition, the Liberal Party seems far more open to some issues on which the Bloc Québécois introduced legislation and amendments to certain Liberal policies, only to come up against a brick wall. When a party is in power and in government, the members are like horses with blinders, closing their eyes to certain realities of people's day-to-day lives.

I would like to ask the member why her government was not proactive when it was in power.

I remember the answers the government gave us in this House on pay equity. I know that my Liberal colleague was Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development. She had full authority to act. Now I am happy: she is in opposition with us, and we hope the issue will really be resolved.

The Bloc Québécois and the NDP have been very active on this issue and on the issue of replacement workers. A bill has been passed in this House, and the vast majority of Liberals voted in favour of it. But when they were in power, they did not want to agree in principle to a bill introduced by the Bloc Québécois.

I would now like to hear what the member and Liberal House leader has to say about this.

Hon. Lucienne Robillard: Mr. Speaker, first I would like to remind my colleague from the Bloc Québécois that we resolved the pay equity file for all women employed in the federal public service. This was a file that had dragged on for years and which was based on a system of complaints. A complaints-based system keeps us before the courts for years and results in wars between lawyers; in the meantime the problem does not get resolved.

I would also like to remind my colleague that the parliamentary committee that was set up was chaired by my colleague from Winnipeg South Centre, and that this committee had done an extensive study complete with recommendations to the government.

I will not deny that there are varying points of view when such a decision is discussed within the government nor will I deny that this is a complex decision. I will nonetheless remind my colleague that

we were ready to introduce a bill on pay equity after many discussions. That is why I encourage the Conservative government.

I do not want to deny the fact that this is a very complex challenge for employers, but I am among those who believe we need legislation to absolutely require employees and employers to sit down at the same table to come up with a pay equity plan. Some provinces have succeeded in doing so. Why can the federal government not manage to do so despite any waves of resistance there might be?

That is why we, the men and women of the Liberal Party, are happy to support the motion by the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

• (1110)

[English]

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the Liberal Party obviously has a very good understanding of pay equity legislation, of some of the barriers to women effectively receiving equal pay for work of equal value, and of how difficult that struggle has been for Canadian women over the last 30 years.

The fact that Canadian women have seen very little progress on this file overall is frustrating to all of us in Canada. We have to pay tribute to the women's movement across this country, which continues to push this file forward. Without the grassroots involvement of women's organizations, I am confident in saying this would have fallen totally off the table of any parliamentary agenda.

I have some information from the report that was tabled. One of the statements, on page 108, says that in all of this consultation process among workers, trade unions, employers and tribunal members, the "virtually universal agreement among them was that the current system does not constitute an effective means of advancing towards equitable wages". Another statement in the report says that the data results from Ontario, which has pay equity legislation, "conclude with certainty that, where pay equity was implemented, total costs to organizations are clearly lower than the cost of the complaints-based" system we have now and that "the financial burden borne...by society in general is also lower".

I want to ask the member opposite, who has had experience with the past government as a cabinet member, why on earth did the Liberals not move proactively on this file in all the years they were in government, in all the years that Canadian women have struggled for pay equity legislation? Why did the Liberals not do more after this report was tabled than talk about it? Why did they not bring in effective legislation to address this issue?

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the principle of an important piece of parliamentary legislation, the Canadian Human Rights Act, had already been recognized. From then on, we were able to take it for granted that the principle would be applied nationally because it was important human rights legislation from Canada's Parliament.

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People will often support something in principle, but when it comes to the methodology—how to implement those principles in practice—that is when arguments and problems arise. That is why we did not get tangible results and why the issue was drawn out over several years.

I agree with the member: our experience proves that a complaints-based system does not work. It wastes a lot of time, and the courts and lawyers prolong the litigation process. In the meantime, women and some men are being penalized in the workplace.

After our Liberal government received the working group's report, it developed a pay equity bill that was to be introduced in Parliament. This is why we must demand that the Conservative government follow up on this request.

[*English*]

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too am puzzled by the member's comments. She laments the fact that there has been so little progress on pay equity for the last 25 years in Canada, and yet for the last 13 years she and her government were in power.

She knows that our government is actually moving forward on pay equity. We are implementing a number of initiatives that are going to beef up enforcement and improve education in this area. I do not believe she is suggesting that we should send the pay equity police out to every business in this country. What we want to do is work collaboratively.

I am glad to see that she has had a conversion on the road to Damascus and is now supportive of moving forward on this file, but I would ask her, what actions that she and her government were unwilling and unable to undertake during the 13 years the Liberals were in power is she now expecting our Conservative government to undertake?

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard: Mr. Speaker, the former Liberal government always supported the principle of pay equity. Not only did we support it, we succeeded in fixing the pay equity problem for all women working in the public service. I would like to tell the Conservative member that he can say whatever he wants about collaborative approaches in the workplace, but for the past 25 years in this country, we tried the collaborative approach, and it never produced concrete, comprehensive results for all women who are being penalized in terms of pay equity.

I would say to the Conservative government that we got that far. My own government, which believed in this principle, concluded that we need specific pay equity legislation to force both parties—unions and employers—to sit down at the table and work out a pay equity plan. My own government came to that conclusion when it was in power.

I would strongly encourage the Conservative government to adjust its attitude if it thinks a collaborative approach will solve the problem. It will not. We have already tried and it did not work. We got as far as developing a pay equity bill.

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are women and men in Quebec and Canada who for decades have been

receiving less pay than other people for work of equal value. Why? Simply because they have jobs traditionally filled by women.

Having a traditionally female job means that the pay will be less, both in this country and in many others around the world. Unless there is some coercion, unfortunately, man loves to exploit man, especially when the latter is a woman.

In view of this injustice, what has been done in Quebec and Canada? I want to take advantage of the 20 minutes I have to quickly trace a little of the history.

After Manitoba and Ontario, Quebec passed pay equity legislation. As a result, there has been concrete change in Quebec, and therefore more equality, in the public and private sectors. More and more people in traditionally female jobs have received salary adjustments. There is more justice in Quebec, but that does not seem to be the case in Canada for people who still have the misfortune of working for companies, I hasten to add, under federal jurisdiction.

I remind the House that Canada has been making national and international commitments to pay equity for more than 50 years. This did not happen yesterday. It is quite amazing that Canada could have made so many undertakings while at the same time people working under federal jurisdiction have not seen any concrete improvements in their lives.

In 1970, Canada ratified the international convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, which guarantees the right of everyone without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law, including the right to equal pay for equal work and to just and favourable remuneration.

In 1972, Canada ratified the International Labour Organization's equal remuneration convention, 1951, which requires governments to "ensure the application to all workers of the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value".

In 1976, Canada ratified the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights, which recognizes the right to equal pay for work of equal value.

In 1977, the Canadian Human Rights Act came into effect. Section 11 prohibits wage discrimination between male and female employees performing work of equal value.

In 1979, the United Nations adopted the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, which states that women have a right to equal remuneration for work of equal value. Canada ratified that convention in 1981.

In 1985, Canada joined with other UN member countries in signing the Beijing platform for action, which states that governments must take action to apply the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.

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Canada joined with other UN countries in signing the Copenhagen declaration on social development and programme of action of the world summit for social development.

That document indicates that signatory governments should safeguard and promote respect for basic workers' rights, including equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value. In 2000, the Canadian government reiterated its commitment towards those two documents.

• (1120)

In 2001, the Canadian government established the pay equity task force, which was tasked with reporting on the pay equity situation in Canada.

In 2004, the pay equity task force submitted its report—which was enormous, quite a tome—and it concluded that federal pay equity legislation was ineffective. The report recommended the adoption of proactive pay equity legislation. It recommended an act. It is quite simple. The report recommended an act. It seems to be more difficult to understand this on the other side of the House.

In 2006, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women called upon the government to introduce a bill on pay equity. What did this government do? Through a letter from the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Labour, this government is creating confusion by claiming that pay equity legislation already exists. I do not know where to find this legislation. The government will have to tell me and tell all the women of Quebec and Canada. Only section 11 of the Canadian Human Rights Act addresses this issue, yet this has proven extremely ineffective to date.

Furthermore, the government is proposing measures that have proven ineffective for the past 20 years, but it is proposing them anyway.

Women who have full-time jobs earn only 71¢ for every \$1 earned by their male co-workers. This results in a higher poverty rate for women and a significantly higher poverty rate for immigrant women. The government must take action to live up to its international obligations on pay equity and human rights and also to fulfill its legal obligations. All members in this House, upon acceptance of their duties, made those commitments. Justice, equality and equity are part of our values and are part of Quebec and Canadian values. It is vital that they find expression in our laws.

We are here to make laws. We spend innumerable hours, five days a week, creating laws. The laws must be just and equitable for the entire population of Quebec and Canada. The government must take steps to recognize and value the contribution of working women to the Canadian and Quebec economy. It is one way of showing that we respect the work they do.

Unfortunately, as we just heard from my Liberal colleague, for years the successive Liberal governments produced nothing tangible. What I find interesting in what my colleague just said is that with the passing of years the Liberals recognized that it was not working and that a law was needed.

In life, better late than never. I wholeheartedly hope that this government will also take the advice of my Liberal colleague who stated, "We recognize that it took some time. It takes time and we

recognize that it is not working. And now, we urge you to do everything possible to put into practice what we thought should be done".

In my opinion, when I survey what has been done since we came here—not just in this session, but also in the previous one—I realize that this Conservative government puts up roadblocks, on the grounds of ideology, for the future of women. It has cut grants to Status of Women Canada and abolished the court challenges program.

• (1125)

It is eliminating literacy programs and this has major repercussions. In a society, everything is connected: literacy is connected with getting a job and a decent wage.

Everything is connected, whether it be literacy or fighting for rights. How can women fight for their rights if they do not have the money to do it? Money is essential. Unfortunately, we live in a society where everything we do is based on the financial resources we have.

Some women are volunteers and others work themselves to death defending the rights of all other women and all children. Children live in extreme poverty in Canada, and Canada is not a developing country. It is unacceptable that in Canada—I cannot say my country, because Quebec is my country—there are still a million poor children. That is not right. In fact, there will be a demonstration in Montreal in the near future, this Thursday I believe, to fight child poverty. Some of my colleagues will be going to put in an appearance at the Palais des Congrès. Making an appearance is a fine thing, but there are people living on the street and children who do not even have food. I will get back to my subject.

I am sorry to have gone off on a tangent, but it is unacceptable to me for policy to be made on the backs of children. That is my Achilles heel.

I believe that we must do everything possible to put policies in place that are fair, because when a woman is poor it means there is a child who is poor. When a woman is poor, it may mean there is a husband who is not working and who is poor. When a woman is poor, it means there is a family that is poor. We can say the same thing about men who are poor as well, because a man who is working in what is traditionally a woman's job is also affected by this inequity. When there are poor men or poor women, there are poor families, and poor children. Poverty, delinquency, malnutrition and illiteracy; it is all connected. Everything is connected.

When will we stop compartmentalizing politics and the policies we make? When we have a labour policy, it has an effect on family policy. When we take action based on a criminal policy, or a justice or public safety policy, it has a direct effect on people's families. Everything is connected.

Deciding to enact pay equity legislation means doing something fundamental to combat delinquency and to combat poverty.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Speaker?

• (1130)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member has six more minutes.

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Mme Maria Mourani: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Moving on, following this rhetorical aside of mine.

So, women's groups in Quebec, like FAFIA and the FFQ, are right to fight for that. They have been fighting for years, the reason for that being that everything is interrelated.

To address racial discrimination, there has to be proactive pay equity legislation in place, which applies both to the private sector and the public sector. Like it or not, it would give the assurance that these workers too are finally given fair recognition for their work and their contribution to society. It is that simple, and it is only fair.

I am sometimes taken aback, because it is only normal in my mind to have equity legislation. One does not need to have a doctorate in political science to understand that. My 12-year-old son can tell you whether a man and a woman holding any job in a female-dominated industry deserve equal pay. His answer will be yes, because he is being taught equity and values in school. He is learning that he and the little girl sitting next to him are equals with equal rights to life and equal rights to work, and that they need not worry because the lawmakers understand these things and will ensure that they live in an equal society.

If six-year-olds get the idea, so can we. We are quite capable of understanding. This is not complicated. Federally regulated workers require effective pay equity legislation.

Following years of these women's groups making representations and lobbying for their rights, justice and the basic respect of individuals, Quebec acted. And so did other provinces across Canada. They acted, and that is why we are now seeing cuts being made at Status of Women Canada.

We do not know where the \$5 million that the government says it is cutting from administration will come from. Status of Women Canada officials told me that they had been told to cut \$5 million, but that they had not yet sat down with anyone to decide where to make cuts. Personally, I think the minister got up one day and just decided to cut \$5 million somewhere. That was his logic. When you want to cut \$5 million from a budget, the first thing you need to do is sit down with someone who can tell you where to cut. Then, you can say that you are going to cut \$5 million from administration, or you can say that you were mistaken and that you are going to cut \$2 million or \$3 million from administration. That is logical, but the logic of this move is still a big question.

By deciding to change the terms and conditions of the women's program, for example, the government, as if by magic, is denying women access to a way of defending their rights. Not only does the government not have equity legislation, but it is preventing women from standing up for their rights.

I find this a highly strategic move. One the one hand, the government is saying that legislation already exists, and that women can assert their rights, yet it is preventing them from doing so. How? By abolishing the court challenges program. Go ahead, assert your rights.

I would be surprised if a woman or a women's group with financial problems could spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to claim their rights without the benefit of the court challenges

program. What does this mean? The government is reducing rights, is not creating pay equity legislation and is telling women to be quiet. They are not even entitled to claim their rights. All they can do is take to the streets with placards and shout that they want pay equity legislation.

• (1135)

And what will we do about it? Will we stick our heads in the sand and wait until it goes away? Is that what we do in this country? Is that the image we want to project to the international community? Is that the image we want our children to see? We teach them about equality, and when they grow up, what do they see? They see injustice every day. They see poverty, iniquity, lack of solidarity. We tell our children how they should behave, yet we cannot even be bothered to do as we say.

In closing, I would like to say that I think it is deplorable and I am deeply saddened to see these direct attacks on the poorest people in our society—and they are under attack—people who just got a bad start in life, a difficult start. I should not say “a bad start” because there is no such thing as good and bad; everything in life is shades of grey. I should say “a difficult start”.

These are people who got a difficult start and who are living in poverty, who have to work so hard to make sure their children get an education and do not drop out or get involved in violence. It is all connected to work. When families cannot feed their children, of course they will have trouble and fight. The government has to understand that pay equity legislation is about fairness and, above all, compassion.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise and ask a question on this important subject matter before the House today. Pay equity is very important for our society. It is a social justice issue. It is a fairness issue.

In my previous employment at a not for profit organization we went through the implementation of a pay equity model. At that time there were many people who argued that this would drag us down, that this would destroy the organization, and it would hurt our service delivery because we would not be able to do more for our clients. However, at the end of the day we were able to develop and implement a model that actually provided a benefit. The benefit was that the morale of the entire organization went up because there was a fairness now applied in the workforce that was not there before. Our actual work with clients and our services improved.

As my colleague noted, many people use the extra income, that was a fairness element, to pay for their mortgage, to pay for their kids to go to school, and to have a direct impact on their health and wellness in society. In addition, perhaps they or their children had been missing out on certain things because either they were raising children alone or they did not have the resources to do some of the basics. That was an important morale boost that the whole organization had from the implementation of pay equity, something that contributed to better service.

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I would ask my colleague to comment about that aspect. Often it is seen from a one-dimensional cost element that is only going to create problems for an organization. I have seen and witnessed firsthand the implementation and successful service delivery that is improved because people deserve to be treated in the same manner, with fairness and equity. More importantly, there was an actual net benefit to the families in my community where people did not have the same fairness treatment.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate my colleague's remarks. The term "costs" is one that we very much like to use in our society.

I believe, as do many people, that you do not place a value on human beings. A human being is not something to be bought. A human being does not have a monetary value. Human beings are the foundation of every society. So I do not believe that there are enormous costs associated with equity. You cannot place a value on equity.

In Quebec, we have addressed an injustice. It cost us a certain sum, but now there is equity for men and women.

We have shown women that their contribution to society is invaluable, equal to that of men. In my opinion, no human being in our society can be assigned a monetary value. It is we who make our society better.

I would prefer that my taxes help children living in poverty. I would prefer to invest my money in peace, not war. I would prefer to put my money towards equity in Canada, rather than sending billions of dollars to Afghanistan for war. I would prefer to invest my money in having more justice in Canada rather than putting money into the military and armaments, and the so-called tough on crime measures, which get \$1 billion while there is only \$10 million for prevention for youth in Quebec. That is not enough, by comparison to the \$1 billion put towards law enforcement.

When the government wants to invest money, it does. However, we know where the money is being spent: on inspectors. The government answers that it will ask for a review by the labour program inspectors. More police. More police are being put in place. Could we stop with the police and put a bit of heart into what we are doing?

• (1140)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member from the Bloc for her excellent presentation and for the passion she is instilling in this place on a matter of great significance to women all across Canada.

Pay equity is one of those policy issues that have not been properly addressed in years. We are facing a big problem right now because of a very old pledge.

Here is my question to the hon. member. Does the government's position not concern her? Do Conservative members support the principle of pay equity? It is indeed essential to the advancement of women.

Also, it seems to me that part of reason for the problem we are now facing is that the report was presented to Canadians two years

ago, and the Liberals failed to act. They chose to completely ignore the recommendations contained in the report. That is also a big problem, and I would like to know if the hon. member would care to comment on the points I have raised.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her question, which presents two fundamental components, one of which is including the value of the equity principle.

I must admit that I do not know whether this government has the principle of equity at heart. We are all driven by our own values. I truly believe that, because I think that human beings are good and, for better or worse, they try to do their share—and do so properly—in society. I have a principle of values. I think that when people have values it comes through in their actions.

When I look at what this government is doing, I wonder about its values. Does this government have the value of equity at heart? I have my doubts when I see its actions. Maybe it has equity at heart, but it needs to prove it through its actions. We are judged by our actions. We cannot read a person's mind to see what their values are on the inside. It is not possible. We judge a person by his or her actions.

I see that the government's actions are not consistent with the principle of equity, since it refuses to pass legislation and it comes up with all sorts of impossible arguments even after the Liberals have acknowledged being wrong. The Liberals recognize the need for legislation on equity. They also acknowledge not having implemented it for years.

Earlier I provided some background on the problem of equity and the ratification of a number of international conventions on equity. In Canada, we have not taken action. The Liberal reign was characterized by inaction. Nonetheless, the Liberals have done the honourable thing by acknowledging they did nothing where they should have done something. The ball is now in the Conservatives' court.

After dealing with Liberal inaction, we are now facing the stubbornness of the Conservative government, which keeps repeating what the Liberals said when they were in power. Those who were in charge made a mistake, but have made amends. They say they were wrong and that we must do better; we must pass this legislation. What are we up against? The silence of the Conservatives. That is not right. They were told this was not working and they said they will make it work, but in the same way that has already failed. What can I say? It is not right.

• (1145)

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to take part in this debate on pay equity. I will share my time with the hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

I find it unbelievable that we are still debating and discussing this long-standing promise on pay equity. It is a question of human rights and justice. The fact that we are still stuck on the same point should cause us all, on both sides of the House, to ask ourselves some questions. We have the right to wonder why the Liberal government failed to act when it could have.

Routine Proceedings

I doubt that the current government intends to do anything, given the cuts it made to the Status of Women and the court challenges program. I will discuss this further in a moment.

I would especially like to discuss some women I met during my travels with the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, which is conducting a study on employability. A number of women talked to us about the conditions they must face. I would like to talk about these women, whose situations are not only touching and moving, but also often tragic. First I want to go back to the task force, which, in its report, clearly favoured an alternative approach to the current, complaints-based system for enforcing the pay equity principle.

Contrary to what the Conservatives seem to indicate, women in Canada have not achieved equality. Statistics prove it.

[*English*]

I would like to talk about women at work. Clearly, women are concentrated in low wage and part time jobs and often jobs with little security. The average pre-tax income of women was \$24,400, 62% less than men actually earn. This is something that should be of concern to us.

It is not only a question of salary. Many of the women who are employed in low paying jobs with little security speak of conditions that we should be ashamed of in Canada. In Montreal I met women from the Filipino community who are home care workers. They were almost indentured servants. This should concern us all, not just members on this side of the House. The Conservative government needs to pay attention to conditions of this kind in Canada.

I have also met women in Vancouver from different communities who have recently spoken out about abuse in their lives. This speaks to the government's and to preceding governments' and society's apparent indifference that this kind of abuse can be tolerated. Perhaps it is a reflection of the percentage of women in politics. Canada ranked 42nd in the world with only 20.8% of parliamentarians being women.

I would wager that if there were more women in this House the question of day care would have been resolved long ago. The question of poor housing would have been resolved a long time ago.

Women in greater numbers live in poverty. One in five Canadian women lives in poverty today, 2.8 million women. Forty-nine per cent of single, widowed and divorced women over 65 are poor. This should be a concern to us. It is even more so if we look at senior women and women's unpaid work during their lives. There are more women in this situation than men. Women's unpaid work makes their risk of poverty higher. When women retire, either because of unpaid work or because of lower incomes during their working lives, they receive smaller pensions because of the wage difference I referred to earlier. As a result, I have met many senior women in my community who are living in abject conditions of real poverty in an otherwise affluent society. This is unacceptable.

I reiterate the comments that have been made by some parliamentarians this morning that the government must take responsibility. The task force on equal pay for equal work was established in part because many observers, including the Canadian Human Rights Commission, favour an alternative to the current

complaint based approach to implementing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.

The objective of this proactive model is to provide coverage to as many women as possible who are presently victims of wage discrimination, whereas the complaint based model deals only with the cases of complaints. The Conservative government cut the court challenges program. That program provided access for women to challenge some of the unequal and unfair conditions they face. This program was cut recently by the current government, as was that part of the mandate of Status of Women Canada that would allow for advocacy when we see the conditions which, for example, Asian women in Vancouver have recently spoken about. Who will advocate for them?

• (1150)

I have heard members of the government recently say that they will not pass laws that are unfair. I believe the Prime Minister made that comment. Well, there are laws that are unfair. There are conditions that are unfair.

The government has tried to muzzle Status of Women Canada by cutting its funding and making a change in its mandate, demanding that it no longer advocate for women. This is unacceptable. I believe the women of Canada will not tolerate the government's arrogant attitude as it concerns them. I hope that the government will recognize its mistake in removing advocacy from its mandate and will redress that. It really is a question of justice and equality.

I would ask that the government act now and establish a law, not just regulations, and not just look at ways of redressing a little situation here and there, but really address it in a comprehensive way. After all, this is Canada. We should be leading in this area rather than trailing and attempting to muzzle organizations that attempt to speak out for women.

I will conclude by saying that Canadians, Canadian women and Canadian men, expect no less of this government. It is time for action and for legislation on equal pay for equal work.

* * *

• (1155)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I apologize to my colleagues on all sides of the House for interrupting the proceedings on this debate. I would like to move a couple of motions.

Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I think if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That, when ways and means motion number 10 is called today, a recorded division be deemed requested and the vote deferred to 5:30 pm this day.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, there have been discussions among all parties and I think you would find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That, notwithstanding the Standing Orders and usual practices of the House, the adjournment proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order 38 be taken up today immediately following the deferred recorded divisions followed by the debate in Committee of the Whole of all Votes under NATIONAL DEFENCE in the Main Estimates.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STATUS OF WOMEN

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming questions and comments. The hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi.

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my NDP colleague for her clear comprehension of this issue. I would just like to mention an article published in Montreal in *L'itinéraire* on November 1, 2006. I think the article said something very important about this government's attitude toward the status of women. The title of the article was "Prime Minister pulls out all stops to increase poverty in Canada". It reads:

Once again, the current government has shown that it intends to destroy Canada's social fabric... The government has made cuts to a number of sectors, including literacy, volunteerism, social economy and status of women. These measures will only help to aggravate social problems in Canada.

Today we are talking about the status of women.

We are wondering why this government does not want to pass a law and why it prefers to let market forces sort out the pay equity issue. If that were a viable option, why has the problem not yet been solved?

I would like to ask my hon. colleague whether she thinks the current government is turning this into an ideological debate. If so, perhaps she can help clarify the current government's ideology with respect to pay equity between men and women.

● (1200)

Ms. Denise Savoie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I find it very appropriate.

We could ask ourselves what is the purpose of government if not to protect the interests of its people, given the events of recent weeks. The government has slashed literacy programs and, as mentioned, the ability of Status of Women Canada to help women

and protect their interests, has abolished the court challenges program and made cuts to the social economy. The most vulnerable groups and individuals have been affected.

The conservatives have put all the savings into the debt.

For our part, we do believe that we should pay off our debt in an orderly fashion, but there is a great divide between that and forgetting the purpose of the economy and of government. That definitely shows a direction, an ideological approach, that is not in step with the reality of Canadians and Quebecers. It is beyond comprehension.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to ask my colleague a question with regard to this issue.

It is important to note that this is a social justice issue and a fairness issue as much as it is a monetary issue. There are those who argue that we do not have the funds or that society does not have the funds to pay people fairly, which is absurd to begin with.

We have had record tax cuts by the Liberals and surpluses as well. Now the current government has put \$13 billion toward the debt and it also has a surplus already of about \$6 billion. We could also close tax loopholes, for example, the Barbados loophole, where billions of dollars are syphoned outside this country per year in the tax cycle which could be used to rebuilding this nation.

I would like to ask my colleague why there is such resistance to this when those fair payments to people would allow them to pay their mortgage, send their kids to school and end some of the poverty we have in our country because women are so disproportionately affected by poverty?

Ms. Denise Savoie: Mr. Speaker, I am reminded of Tommy Douglas' analogy of an election in mouseland where mice who for white cats or black cats, but basically they are cats and they have no interest in the mice. We have had two governments that really fit that analogy.

The government certainly has many opportunities to make choices in where they apply funding. The government has chosen to put all the surplus on paying down the debt. On our side of the House, we support an orderly payback of the debt, but the government seems to have completely forgotten ordinary Canadians.

I just want to give a quick example of the data on the results of Ontario's proactive legislation where pay equity was implemented. Total cost to organizations are clearly lower than the cost of the complaint based process—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I apologize to the member for Victoria, but we are out of time.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think it would be pretty clear to anyone in the House today, who has listened to many of the women speak to this issue, the frustration that women in the House of Commons feel about the lack of progress on the issue of pay equity for women. It is incredible to me that in all the years that the Liberals have been in power they did not do anything in a proactive way to address this issue through legislation.

Routine Proceedings

The frustration of women at the grassroots level across the country, women who have worked in organizations for the past 30 years to advance women's equality, is very high and it is past time that the Canadian government took that seriously and made advances in legislation on pay equity to address the issue effectively.

Analysis of the gender wage gaps for university grads in science and technology confirmed that for even the most recent university graduates of the same age and education, the wage gap increases when they enter the labour market. I do not think a lot of Canadians who have not studied this issue or even a lot of young men and women graduating from universities today really understand that, that with the same level of education, doing the same kind of work, the wage gap is there for women in science and technologies too.

When we talk about the level of the wage gap for university graduates, we should also be very cognizant of the fact that for visible minority women and immigrant women, the wage gap is even much larger and much more difficult for those women. They are, in actual fact, in double jeopardy in terms of the wage economy in Canada.

The other thing for all of us in this House to remember is that Canada has signed many international accords which recognize the principles of equal pay for work of equal value. Signing these accords by our government is supposed to mean a commitment to implementation measures. The failure to act by the previous Liberal government and by the present government are tantamount to ignoring the international covenants that Canada has signed.

In the meantime, we have a new government, which has only been in place for nine months, that has cut the very instruments that women and disadvantaged groups in our society have been able to access to push forward an agenda of equality and fairness.

The government has totally cut the court challenges program, a program that cost a pittance in terms of government spending but was very important to disadvantaged groups in our society in pushing forward an agenda of equality, fairness and justice. It cut Status of Women Canada. It cut literacy programs. All of the cuts that the government has made recently most adversely affect the welfare of women. That is a condemnation on the actions of the government that has a huge surplus right now and yet cuts the very programs that may bring the bottom levels of our society up to a more acceptable standard of economic justice.

The Canadian Human Rights Commission, which now deals with the complaints based system, has asked for legislative changes to get away from the complaints based system which clearly does not work and which the Canadian Human Rights Commission has said does not work. We need legislation. Our only legislation now relies on a voluntary compliance and a complaint mechanism that is totally inadequate.

We can see the results of the current system in how little progress women have actually made for economic equality and closing the wage gap. When I was in this House in the early nineties, we were pushing this agenda forward and, in reality, women may have closed the wage gap by less than 1%. At that time women were earning, on average, 70% of what men earned for full time work. Women are

now earning 72%. At this rate, it will take another 100 years or more until women actually have economic equality in the workplace.

The consultation of this report was very thorough. There was consultation with workers, with trade unions, with employers and with tribunal members. Virtually everyone who was consulted, along with the tribunal members, agreed. There was a universal agreement that the current system does not work.

• (1205)

The system that we have in place now does not constitute an effective means of advancing justice for women in pay equity. The current system breeds frustration, anger, uncertainty, lengthy delays and an acrimonious atmosphere, but, even more than that, a staggering cost. The government claims to be the astute guardian of the public purse and yet it is happy to continue with this antiquated process that does not help women and actually costs more than effective pay equity legislation would cost. A proactive model favours cooperation over confrontation and we know that where pay equity has been implemented, the cost to organizations themselves are lower than the complaint based process.

The cost to society in general is even higher when we factor in the reality of women's lives, such as lone parent families where women are trying to provide for their children in a country where there is no national child care system. The lack of support for the Canadian family by the government and the previous Liberal government is actually staggering.

If the government will not act in the name of justice, equality and fairness for women, it should look at the financial burden to society and address the issue from an economic basis. We had the failure of the previous Liberal government over 13 years to bring in any effective measures to counter women's economic inequality in our society and now we have a government in place that appears to ignore all the hard work that has been done and based on facts in the report to implement a system that will finally address women's inequality in our society.

The evidence to support pay equity is before us. We have it in this report. It is clear what we need to do. What we need now is the political will to implement legislation that does have targets, timetables and effective enforcement mechanisms.

We leave far too many women behind with this antiquated complaint based system. Far too many women are left without a process to advance their own human rights in terms of pay equity. It is really past the time for the government to take this issue seriously and implement legislation that will work to close the wage gap for Canadian women.

• (1210)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague touched on a number of issues but the one that I think is important to discuss is conflict versus consensus in this file.

Routine Proceedings

The current system, as she noted, is creating conflict and people need to literally fight through a process which is very insensitive in the sense that it leaves relationships that need to be rebuilt. This is an issue where if it is properly mandated and delivered by the federal position, it will create a better environment so organizations will no longer be in those elements of conflict and fighting each other internally as opposed to seeking solutions and moving forward with pay equity.

As I noted in my earlier comments, coming from an organization that implemented pay equity, we saw a significant morale boost post-implementation because those workers, who were not being treated fairly and who did not get the same remuneration that they should have had at that time, were then lifted up throughout the organization. I can say that other people in the organization did not see it as they were stuck. These people were actually getting a benefit that they would otherwise share. What they saw is that there was a general leveling of the environment that was healthy.

Past those employees are the new people coming into the organization who no longer inherited this conflict and this situation and so we kept our operations and our focus on providing services to people.

I would ask my colleague to expand upon the conflict that could be avoided in this situation as we could look at models that would actually resolve the situation and let organizations move forward together and not have to spend their energy, time and resources fighting something that could leave long term negative repercussions.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to hear the perspective of my colleague, the hon. member for Windsor West, who comes from an organization that has gone through this process to address the issue of pay equity. It was interesting to hear his comment that it actually strengthened the organization and brought about cohesion.

We know that a proactive model favours cooperation over confrontation. There is a lot of documented evidence to support that. I urge the government to look at it.

In terms of what has happened in Ontario, where there has been proactive legislation for some time now, it has been shown that, where pay equity has been implemented, the costs to organizations are lower than the costs for organizations under a complaints based system. It has also been shown that this kind of system builds a more active workplace, with people showing cooperation on the issue and understanding that pay equity is actually an issue of human rights, women's rights and a matter of justice and equality.

•(1215)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to ask my esteemed colleague a question on this important issue of pay equity.

The member for New Westminster—Coquitlam has had a long, rich experience in the House and has made an enormous contribution to the pursuit of women's equality. I can only imagine, given her time in the House, that she shares our disappointment about the lack of action on something as fundamental as equal pay for work of equal value.

I am wondering if the member could explain for the House what was undertaken over a decade ago in this area and how she accounts for this inaction.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has a long record of fighting for women's equality, both here in the House of Commons and in the legislature of Manitoba.

I spoke earlier about the frustration of Canadian women with the lack of progress on the issue of pay equity. I know she shares that frustration and, quite frankly, that anger of Canadian women, who feel that their government does not address the issue that would in fact advance their economic equality.

What has happened in the past is a lack of political will on both sides of the House of Commons. What we need is political will to enact legislation that is meaningful.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate today in this debate on the report produced by the status of women committee. This is a very significant day. This is one of the rare opportunities we actually have in this place to debate, discuss and have a dialogue on an issue that is fundamental to over half of our population.

The question of pay equity goes back decades. The question of treating women as equal participants in our society has long been a matter of debate and discussion in this place. In fact, like my colleague from New Westminster—Coquitlam, I go back probably 30 years in this struggle. In fact, one of my very first obligations in public life was to work within my own party, the NDP, to ensure that members of the NDP caucus were vigilant about pursuing pay equity.

I can remember back 30 years to a time when we put out publications, buttons and slogans, anything we could, to raise awareness about this issue. In fact, we came to the House of Commons with a T-shirt that read "A Woman's Place is in the House of Commons". Colleagues of mine back then, such as Stanley Knowles, Ed Broadbent and others, took up this campaign with real energy and determination. Going back all those years, I think the NDP has always led the path in Parliament for the achievement of some very fundamental equality goals.

Today, here we are in November 2006 debating something that we thought was done with. We thought the debate was over, that the discussion had been finished, and that the dialogue had ended. We thought that we all had understood by now the importance of equal pay for work of equal value.

Twenty years ago when I was in the Manitoba legislature, as part of the NDP government, we developed at that point a sophisticated but sensible and pragmatic approach to this issue, and that was legislation entrenching equal pay for work of equal value, with a scheme, a system, for actually evaluating on the basis of skill, education and responsibility. It is a set of criteria that has been well recognized across this country by every think tank, every academic institution and every government organization as one that is workable and certainly reflective of a fundamental principle.

So why are we debating pay equity in 2006? Why are we talking about a report that has been gathering dust over a number of years? What do we need to do to finally achieve equality for women?

Routine Proceedings

I suppose we could start today by all voting in favour of the recommendation in this report, which is basically to finally get some government action on a study that has been going on for years about the need to advance the issue of pay equity, to entrench the notion of equal pay for work of equal value in all aspects of our daily living, and to ensure that a mechanism is in place for women to seek justice if they are not able to enjoy the benefits of equal pay for work of equal value.

If we do not do this today, if we do not convince the Conservative government today to take up this banner when the Liberals failed Canadian women, then we are only delaying the day when women can be equal participants in our economy, contributing to the fullest their abilities, paying taxes, growing our economy and making a difference.

●(1220)

What a shame this is in this day and age, when we are talking about the need to be competitive in the world economy, about the need to ensure productive workforces and about the need to ensure that our economy is growing and prosperity is on the horizon. What a shame that we do not recognize one of the fundamental aspects of that dream of being a prosperous, wealthy nation. That fundamental, of course, is equality for all people: paying people the same based on their contribution to the workforce.

I know the Conservatives have some trouble with this concept, or at least they did at least in opposition. We have had debates before about what equal pay for work of equal value means. I hope, now that they have had some time to think about it and are actually in government and know the value of tapping an individual's fullest potential, that they will see the importance of actually acting on this report and entrenching the notion of equal pay for work of equal value right across the board.

If we do not, we will lose an important resource. We will set aside a major contributing factor to our future prosperity.

Let us look at some of the statistics. We have heard them before. When we think about poverty in this country, I do not think we can ignore the fact that one in seven Canadian women lives in poverty. That means 2.4 million women. Forty-nine per cent of single parent families headed by women are poor and 41.5% of unattached women over 65 are poor.

In general, women in this country are poor and less wealthy than men because of the fact that they are not treated as equal participants in our society today. The very notion that we can get away with paying women less than men for doing comparable work is antiquated, out of date and hurtful to a modern day civil society. What other reason would account for that kind of disparity than this notion that women are, in this day and age, still a source of cheap available labour to be brought into the labour force as needed and to be pushed out when it is perceived that women are taking jobs away from men?

Gosh, we have been through this so many times. I think back to probably about 30 years ago when the Liberals were in government and the minister of labour at that time said that full employment was an actual fact because the majority of able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 55 were working, implying that as long as women

were working for pin money, then we did not include them in the figures. I remember at that time a Conservative actually suggesting that working women were a social phenomenon.

We have been through so many ups and downs on this issue that it is high time we actually come to grips with the fact that women are equal participants in our society today and ought to be paid on the same basis. That brings us to this report.

It was agreed long ago that there would be a study and a task force on the whole question of the application of equal pay for work of equal value across the board. The Liberal government took it upon itself to ensure that this study was undertaken, and that, as we know from the committee's report that we are discussing today, was in 2001. The minister of justice and the minister of labour at the time announced the establishment of a pay equity task force to develop some options and recommendations to improve the legislative framework for dealing with the issue of pay equity.

●(1225)

Finally, after long deliberations and some difficulties on the part of the task force in getting access to all the information it needed, a report was handed to the government in 2004. Here we are two years after this report was handed down and we are debating whether or not to implement it. What happened in those two years? Why did the Liberals leave this issue to languish? Why was it put on the shelf to gather dust? Why was there no action?

I go back to some of the questions I asked in the House then. From my *Hansard*, dated May 5, 2004, I asked in the House:

The task force report came down today and it has the support of women across Canada. I want to ask the Prime Minister about this and only the Prime Minister.

After a decade of stagnation under the Liberals there is still a large gender gap in the workplace. The Prime Minister knows about gender gaps and credibility gaps too. He need only look at the list of Liberal candidates in this election.

If the Prime Minister will not run more women, will he at least commit to the recommendations released today? Will he commit to implementing those pay equity recommendations immediately and provide Parliament with a plan of action?

Needless to say, I did not get an answer from the Prime Minister. As one would expect, I received an answer from the President of the Treasury Board and guess what the answer was?

Once we have had a chance to study it and understand the implications, we will report back to the House.

That was from my good friend Reg Alcock who is no longer with us. I wonder why. That kind of inaction was unacceptable then and it is unacceptable today.

The report that was handed down was a very fine blueprint for future action. Many groups commented on it. Many in fact described it as a useful, pragmatic document that should provide good direction for government and should lead to expeditious implementation.

I want to refer to a document prepared by Margot Young for Status of Women Canada dated September 2002 where she said:

There are clear and strong arguments to be made that pay equity legislation, removed from a human rights legislation context, should nonetheless be granted similar interpretative treatment - at least to the extent of being given a liberal, purposive and organic interpretation. Pay equity legislation should contain textual recognition that pay equity is a fundamental human right,—

Routine Proceedings

When the report came out other groups commented and one of the most significant responses was from the Canadian Labour Congress which had been working on this issue for a long time and representing women in the workforce for eons. It knew full well the importance for its members of equality between men and women. The Canadian Labour Congress at that time said in a press release on May 5, 2004:

Canadian working women have been waiting for this report for a long time. The federal government should move quickly to implement its very positive recommendations. There is no reason to delay and every reason to proceed with new pay equity legislation based on the report.

It went on to talk about how the report had been based on years of study, research and consultations that happened with unions, employers, women's organizations; how it based its recommendations on a solid understanding of human rights commitment here at home and internationally; and how it was certainly consistent with the history of this country in pursuing equality and justice.

It was a resounding vote of "yes" given to this report by people deeply involved in this field. It should have provided the basis for action and it did not. Why the Liberals continued to drag their feet I do not know. They had time enough. They had resources enough. They had rhetoric enough, but the rhetoric never went beyond this supposed commitment to women's equality. That was true on a number of fronts.

● (1230)

I am reminded daily of this as we fight the Conservative plan to dismantle the Status of Women program and to eliminate funding for women's resource centres because they help to empower women to help themselves. I am reminded as we deal with this daily onslaught of cutbacks from the Conservatives how in fact the Liberals started this whole path we are on. In fact, the Liberals gave the directions to the Conservative government on how to do it. The Liberals gave them the road map by in fact eliminating core funding for women's groups.

Let us not forget that it was under the Liberals that the National Action Committee on the Status of Women was gutted. It was under the Liberals that organizations representative of women across this country, whether it was NAC, NAWL, FAFIA or whether it was advisory councils right across this country, all of them depended upon recognition that the work they did was important and that government financial support was there to ensure that their work continued.

What the Liberals did was decide that no longer would such organizations receive core funding, receive money they could count on year in and year out. From that day henceforth, after the Liberals made this big meanspirited decision, women's groups were forced to start appealing for funds on a project by project basis, thereby diverting most of their energies into administrative paperwork just to meet the new and evolving criteria that the Liberals had put before them.

We are reaping today the results of that kind of negligence, that kind of meanspirited agenda, and that kind of a Liberal approach which always puts rhetoric over action, never keeps its promises, and

pretends that it is doing the best for vulnerable groups in our society today.

Frankly, I am getting a little tired of hearing from Liberals about their self-righteous indignation about how the NDP caused them to lose their culture of entitlement, and to lose their belief that they are somehow the natural governors of this nation. I am not any happier with the Conservative Party's approach, but it sure is galling to hear Liberals stand up these days and talk about their belief in pay equity and their belief in child care, when they spent years dilly-dallying and fiddling away without action.

The Liberals promised for 13 years to implement a national child care program. They came forward with a program when they knew they were in trouble in the dying days of a minority government. They used this as if it was intended all along and we should have automatically kept believing them and kept putting our faith in the them because they said they were going to deliver.

How can we keep doing that? It is impossible. There has been no action on child care and no action on pay equity. Here we are debating a fundamental issue for women's equality at a time when the Liberals dropped the ball and where the Conservatives have always said they really do not understand or accept the concept of equal pay for work of equal value.

We are in a real difficult spot. If the Liberals had acted when they had opportunity to do so, we would have been well on our way to trying out a legislative approach and seeing in fact if moving away from a complaints based regime and toward a more proactive legislative scheme would make a difference. I am sure by now we would have been assessing the legislation, making judgments, and determining whether or not to fine tune it and improve it.

Instead, here we are debating the concept. We are debating the very notion about whether or not it makes sense in this day and age, even though women still only make 60¢ on the dollar that every man makes for doing roughly the same work. We are not talking about different jobs. We are talking about work of equal value and suggesting in fact that it is not conducive to a productive economy nor is it conducive to a healthy population to discriminate.

We, as a society, have a job to do to address systemic discrimination. That is what we are dealing with, something that is deep rooted in our system because it has served this country well to keep women as a cheap resource of labour. It is high time we dealt with that, put it to bed, and started working on the basis of the fundamentals of civil society.

● (1235)

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to rise to take part in the debate today and I thank the member opposite for her comments on the motion.

Routine Proceedings

I would like to bring a couple of things to the debate and maybe get closer to the surroundings we are in today. I want to talk about the fact that in our cabinet we have a number of women, ministers and parliamentary secretaries. In my personal opinion, they are doing a tremendous job. The issue of their gender never comes into the discussion at any time because of the tremendous work they are doing.

I would like to draw to the attention of the member the comments that came from the Climate Action Network. Maybe we could get her comments on it as we talk about the status of women. This was brought to our attention yesterday regarding the Minister of the Environment for the Government of Canada, who is a lady.

These comments, to me, were completely inappropriate. That organization posted comments on its website about the minister's hair. This is a minister who has worked extremely hard, probably as hard as any member in the House or any minister, to bring forward a clean air act, which took a tremendous amount of effort. Whether the hon. member agrees with that or not, the effort that was put into the clean air act to make it happen was huge. She has the support of the government and many good people in Canada on this issue. One of the comments was, "Since assuming the presidency, Rona found time away from her hairdresser—"

This, to me, is completely inappropriate. I would like the member who just spoke to let Canadians know how she feels about this type of comment coming from this type of organization.

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I, for one, do not believe there is any place in public and political life for descriptions based on gender or for cultural stereotyping to occur anywhere in our midst. For someone to describe a cabinet minister in terms of her hair is certainly inappropriate, just like it was inappropriate way back when I started politics. I was appointed to the cabinet in Manitoba and the first profile piece done on me had nothing to say about my policies or my views, but described everything I was wearing, from the dress to the stockings to the jewellery. I found that offensive.

When I had a playpen in my office to have a place for my two-year-old son to play when he came to visit, I was also offended when a Conservative member stood up in the Manitoba legislature and accused me of being a high priced babysitter.

We have dealt with this kind of stereotyping in many different ways. If we are commenting on that organization's views about a certain cabinet minister's hair, we should also reflect on the fact that, on the Conservative benches, there is no shortage of derogatory or demeaning language. We had the most recent example, of course, being the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the apparent reference to a certain other member being considered a dog. It does not help for any of us to go down that path. I agree it should not be part of our jargon or our approach today.

When he talks about women in his cabinet, I am glad they are all treated equally. I would hope so. That is just a given. What I am concerned about is that there are so few women in the cabinet and in the Conservative government generally. The percentage of women is deplorably low, the lowest of any party in recent times, and it has dragged the percentage down in the House generally to the point where the female representation in the House has been stagnant at about 20%.

I hope the government is doing more to encourage women to run and to get involved in politics. I am not so concerned about how the women are treated in the Conservative cabinet because I assume they are treated equally. What I am concerned about is the failure of both men and women in the Conservative government to actually talk about the issues that matter most to Canadians.

Here we have a good example today. When was the last time we heard a Conservative stand up in the House or in public generally and talk about the fact that the gap between the earnings of women and men has not changed substantially in the past decade?

When was the last time a Conservative stood up in the House or anywhere and talked about the fact that 43% of all children in low income families live with a single parent family? When was the last time the government stood up and said it had to deal with this inequity and that it had to move on equal pay for work of equal value?

That is the issue at hand. That is the true testament and the true measure of a government's commitment to equality and justice.

● (1240)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to talk about the report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. My colleague was very eloquent in her speech in outlining the effects and connection to poverty in this situation.

It is very important to note that this is an issue of social justice, fairness and remuneration. It affects some of the most vulnerable in Canadian society. Having gone through the pay equity process in an employment situation, it grounded my belief that it can be done in a way that is very progressive and it can improve organizations.

The committee's report would be positive move for our country. We know jurisdictions in Ontario and Quebec have introduced these measures and there have been many successful stories. It addresses a long outstanding problem of women in Canadian society who have had to fight and claw their way up to the level of respect and support that should have been automatically present. It has been done in many different ways in the past, whether it be through my colleague's experience in politics, or the fight for the right to vote, or the current fight for pay equity.

We are not only talking about women getting to where they should already be. Some studies indicate that women have fallen further behind in this situation. Some reports note that women earn 71¢ for every \$1 a man would earn, in the same profession and position. They are doing the same relative jobs, but they are not being remunerated at the same level.

A general analysis of what has happened shows that women have moved from 75¢ down to 71¢. That is not fair to the individuals who are affected by this. As collective of Canadian society, women are seen to be an available labour resource of less value in terms of remuneration, and this has been noted outside our boundaries.

Routine Proceedings

Canada has received a number of notifications from different world organizations about the way we treat our vulnerable populations. This one is damaging not only internally, but it shames our country and it affects our credibility. We speak internationally about respect for women across the globe. We speak of them as being real contributors, as being equal in civil society.

We can improve upon this as a country. This would improve our international credibility, which is vacant right now. It would also provide domestic social justice to citizens who are so important to our society.

I will read the preamble of the report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. It is important for the recommendations to come out in today's debate, as well as the preface to why we are having this discussion. It states:

Despite the fact that pay equity has been the law in federal jurisdiction for over 25 years, women continue to earn less than men. Statistics show that, on average, women who have full-time jobs earn 71¢ for each dollar earned by a man, and that this discrimination is even more acute for women of colour, aboriginal women and women with disabilities. The objective of pay equity is to ensure that women and men who are performing jobs of equal value receive equal wages, even if their jobs are different.

My background consists of working for Community Living in Mississauga, as well as the Association for Persons with Physical Disabilities. Currently, there is disproportionate unemployment as well as lower hours in wage earnings by persons with disabilities. I worked as a job developer in both of those great organizations for a number of years. We sought to provide a skilled workforce and assist in the training and development of individuals. However, we found there was a double whammy in the respect of women or persons with disabilities. They had even more difficulty entering the workforce because of some systemic discrimination. Sometimes it is not overt.

● (1245)

I have learned that sometimes people do not even realize the actions they take discriminate against others. What we did was work toward an implementation model to overcome those different types of analyses out there such as a person with a disability or a woman could not do the job as well as somebody who was able-bodied or a man.

It is important to note this because the problem is so significant with other groups and organizations. There are some great organizations in my community such as the new Canadian Centre of Excellence, the Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County, the WWWIW and a series of others. They provide employment services for new Canadians and women who are often of different colour. They may have difficulty entering the workplace at a fair rate of pay, which we would expect in a general population. Compounding that is the fact that once they do find employment, they earn 71¢ to every \$1 paid to men. There are a bunch of different barriers that are very difficult for these individuals to go through.

I spoke a bit about the fact that one of the organizations I had worked with had gone through this process. We saw it as a net benefit at the end of the day. Often this is viewed as big government coming in and raising a series of problems and measures, which organizations are unable to address sufficiently, like remuneration. There is no recourse for the organization to see itself through this path.

The process we went through required some skilful management on behalf of the employers and the labour organization. As well, it took some work with the different partners in government to bring forth a process that would work for everybody. Coming from that process, a number of different conflict situations were resolved. Once the organization had been given a mandate to fix what was wrong and once it understood those pretexts, it came up with a plan that everybody could work toward. Then we had to deliver. It was a good expectation though. It was stressful and there was pressure. At the same time, it was what was necessary to trigger the effective change that everybody desired at the end of the day.

The obstructionists in that process said that it would cost too much money and there would be too many problems. However, we found that the process lent us an opportunity to create committees and working discussion groups to look at the fiscal management of the organization, not only the short term but the medium and long terms. We also discussed how we could bring in an implementation model that would be successful as we delivered regular client services. The organization also had a mission statement to meet the mandate developed by the board of directors.

That context opened up all kinds of different opportunities. People developed relationships that continued. Later on these relationships were very important in dealing with other issues like health and safety, how a workplace could organize and be effective, working together. It also became a better place to work. People, who had not been paid the remuneration they justly deserved, were paid fairly. Also, as co-workers, we understood there was now a sense of balance in the organization. That was a healthy environment to work in.

Once we took off the film that covered the lens of a good organization, like the lifting of a fog, we knew we could move forward with better service delivery. Coming from a not for profit organization, for those who received pay equity, it was important not only just in the sense of social justice. Co-workers could pay their mortgages down. They could send their kids to school and have the proper clothing and different types of supports for their children that they previously did not have.

● (1250)

All that went back into our local economy. These people cannot take advantage of the loophole, of which the previous minister of finance continues to take advantage, where billions of dollars get funnelled outside the country to Barbados to avoid paying taxes. These people contributed that money back into our local economy. It was important for everything, including the construction trade because people were renovating their homes. People felt they could do things that were important. They were not investing in different accounts offshore so they could weasel out of paying taxes.

This is important to note. We are talking about bringing wages of people up to a proper level. There were extensive consultations in this process. My colleague, who spoke prior to me, talked about the years with the Liberals. They promised one thing and for 13 years they did not deliver. I know once in a while some members whine and cry about the NDP bringing them down. If we went back to that time and place, we did not even have the votes to prop them up, even if we wanted to that. They do not have their math right again, and we knew that from before. It is pretty pathetic to hear that about something that could have been delivered. I was here when this went through our parliamentary system.

I am ashamed to hear some of the language from the Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec and other regions in Canada and from the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, such as:

In order to ensure the effectiveness of these measures, it is our intention to consult our key stakeholders to obtain their views on how to improve the measures that are being put in place to achieve positive pay equity results.

They wrote that to the committee as a response to basically say, "We're noting and filing all the work that you did".

There were over 200 people and 60 written submissions in a process that has gone on for over several years. It is not like it was a big hidden secret in Ottawa. This has been out in the public format for many years. It has been debated, it has gone through a couple of committee reports and it has had massive consultation. Why can we not move forward?

I want to read the four recommendations. It is important for the people listening to today's debate to hear them, and I think they are reasonable.

The first recommendation is:

replacing the current complaint-based model of pay equity with a new stand-alone, proactive legislation which would frame pay equity as a fundamental human right;

That avoids the issue with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that we have right now. People have to jump through a whole series of loops and different types of barriers to get the proper rights that are supposed to be there.

The second recommendation is:

Expanding the coverage of pay equity legislation to cover all federally-regulated employees, including Parliament and federal contractors;

That should be obvious. We have to get our own house in order. I and my party support that completely. That could be the first thing, to be the role model to move that forward. There is no reason the government cannot do that.

The third recommendation is:

Extending pay equity protection to members of visible minorities, persons with disabilities and Aboriginal people...

This is important. Earlier I talked about the fact that we have a compounding factor, and that is the way people are treated in more difficult situations and the need to identify that specifically so we avoid future problems.

The fourth recommendation is:

Routine Proceedings

Requiring all employers to develop and implement a pay equity plan.

Once again, I know that sounds difficult for some organizations to get their heads around, creating an action plan that will hold them to commitments and things that they do not want to necessarily do. However, this creates openness and dialogue in organizations and it can later be very helpful in other types of issues and challenges that they may face.

It is about building communication networks that are often taken for granted in a variety of different sectors. It is a reasonable thing to do. If the goal at the end of the day is fairness and equity, then I think they will see a net benefit in the improvement of morale in the workplace. That is what happened in my organization. At the end of the day we all felt better for having gone through this. We were completing a sorry chapter in our organization's life that, for whatever reason, even beyond our own timeframe, had evolved through our system of employment in Canada. It was very positive to get that done.

● (1255)

I will conclude by noting that this is something which can be afforded to support in terms of organizations. A proper plan brought in responsibly can be done working with different individuals and groups in the workplace.

I come from a city that has a history of collective bargaining rights on behalf of the labour movement. We all want to keep our jobs and we all want to make sure that the environment is strong and sustainable and able to compete.

This is one of the productivity issues that could be an improvement for our country. Study after study indicate that morale and productivity improve in a workplace when people feel comfortable and have a sense that there is social justice and they are working together. This is something that has to be done by this country if we want to stand up strong and say that we treat all our citizens with fairness and equity.

● (1300)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): In my opinion the yeas have it.

Government Orders

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the division on the motion be deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Accordingly, the division on the motion stands deferred.

The House will now resume with the remaining business under routine proceedings.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition calling on the government to renew the SCPI and the RHF immediately.

These programs must be improved. The government must expand them, because needs are steadily growing. These programs must also be made permanent. At present, the fact that the programs are subject to ministerial discretion can cause insecurity and distress.

This petition was signed in Drummondville by officials of organizations in the network known as the Réseau SOLIDARITÉ Itinérance du Québec. The signatories are from Quebec City, Montreal, Trois-Rivières, Longueuil, Labrie, Chicoutimi, Saint-Charles and Sherbrooke. This program must continue, because people at risk of homelessness need comprehensive support and services, including housing, food, psychological support, education and integration. That is what the petition is calling for.

For all these reasons, all these people in charge of services and organizations are asking that this program be renewed.

[*English*]

MARRIAGE

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to present a petition from residents in Trail, Rossland, Salmo, Fruitvale, Victoria and Montrose.

The petitioners call on the House to reopen the issue of marriage in Parliament and to repeal or amend the Marriage for Civil Purposes Act in order to promote and defend marriage as the lawful union of one man and one woman.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

JUDGES ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-17, An Act to amend the Judges Act and certain other Acts in relation to courts, as reported (with amendments) from the committee

Hon. Loyola Hearn (for the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in at report stage and read the second time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the vote is to be deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Accordingly, the vote stands deferred until 5:30 p.m. today.

* * *

● (1305)

AERONAUTICS ACT

The House resumed from November 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Aeronautics Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, I am pleased to support the amendments to the Aeronautics Act introduced by my hon. colleague the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. In many ways the proposed amendments are critical.

[*Translation*]

The proposed changes will modernize the Aeronautics Act and help improve the safety of Canada's military aviation system.

*Government Orders**[English]*

More specifically, Bill C-6 will provide new powers that will ensure that the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces have all the necessary authority to conduct full and proper investigations into military aviation accidents. At the same time, the bill will promote openness, independence and integrity in military flight safety investigations.

[Translation]

I would like to begin by describing for my hon. colleagues where things stand at present with the flight safety program.

Since 1942, the Canadian Forces have had an official flight safety program, designed to prevent accidental loss of aviation resources.

[English]

This program has proven to be very effective, and after nearly 65 years, is now firmly entrenched in the culture of the air force. The flight safety program includes investigating aviation accidents and developing recommendations to reduce or eliminate the same type of incidents from reoccurring.

Military flight safety investigators use processes, techniques and training that are similar to those of the Transportation Safety Board which investigates, under the provisions of the Canadian Transportation Accident Investigation and Safety Board Act, civilian aircraft accidents. This act, however, precludes the Transportation Safety Board from investigating a military aircraft accident, unless a civilian aircraft or facility is also involved. In such circumstances, a coordinated investigation is required. Therefore, it is very important that both agencies, civilian and military, operate in the same manner.

For many years military air operations and training were exclusively military. The aircraft were Canadian Forces aircraft and all of the maintenance and flying instruction was conducted by military personnel. However, over the past number of years, civilians in the private sector have become increasingly involved in military air operations and training. For instance, one can now find civilian contractors conducting maintenance on Canadian Forces search and rescue helicopters, our Sea King helicopters, and transport aircraft. Also, one may find civilian personnel providing military flight training associated with base support services and aircraft maintenance services at the NATO flying training in Canada program at Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan and Cold Lake, Alberta.

As well, a new civil contract has just been awarded to a company to conduct basic flight training along with advanced helicopter and multi-engine aircraft training at Southport, Manitoba. It is a program that employs civilian aircraft maintained by civilian personnel and operated by either civilian or military instructors.

[Translation]

Civilians are therefore increasingly involved in military aviation in Canada.

These changes in the way operations and flight instruction are supported are raising concerns about whether all the necessary powers to investigate aviation accidents and incidents are in place.

[English]

Specifically, today there is no legal means to compel civilian personnel who are involved in an accident to provide information to a military flight safety investigator. This means that under the current legal framework the Canadian Forces do not have the necessary powers to conduct flight safety investigations of military aircraft accidents when civilian personnel are involved. This is a very significant issue for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces.

[Translation]

Unless a full investigation into aircraft accidents is done, we may miss out on important safety lessons, and major safety problems might remain undetected and unresolved.

In the worst case scenario, a similar accident might occur again and result in death or serious injury because appropriate safety measures have not been determined.

This is a serious safety problem that we will address through Bill C-6.

• (1310)

[English]

Under the new part II of the act, military flight safety investigators will be specifically designated by the airworthiness investigative authority for National Defence and the Canadian Forces. As a result, they will have the necessary powers to investigate military-civilian aviation accidents. One of these new powers will require civilians to provide information or a statement relevant to the investigation. At this time no such requirement exists and this can be problematic to the investigation process.

Moreover, these amendments will ensure that any additional powers and duties from military flight safety investigations remain consistent with those of the Transportation Safety Board investigators.

One of the key segments of this proposed legislation will extend privilege to oral and written statements made to investigators and also to on-board aircraft recordings and communication records. This will make release of these statements without proper authorization an offence under the law and will prohibit their use in disciplinary and other legal proceedings, except in a prosecution for perjury.

This means that National Defence will be able to ensure that flight safety information reported by civilians involved in military aviation will be protected under the law. It is a move that will strengthen the military flight safety system and will ensure the best possible flight safety program for the Canadian Forces.

[Translation]

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada guarantees full protection of flight safety information, but investigations have shown that this protection has not been optimal when it comes to the military.

*Government Orders**[English]*

With Bill C-6, the Department of National Defence will be able to seamlessly share investigation information with the Transportation Safety Board during coordinated investigations.

I would now like to address what would happen to flight safety information in on-board recordings if a military aircraft accident occurred outside Canada.

First, a flight safety investigation would be conducted according to the new amendments to determine the cause of the accident. In addition, other investigations could also be ordered by the department for purposes other than flight safety. Such investigations would normally be conducted by the military boards of inquiry convened under the National Defence Act. Currently, during coordinated investigations with the Transportation Safety Board and during court proceedings, coroners would have limited opportunities to use on-board recordings.

The proposed amendments to the aeronautics act will provide investigators with the tools they need to fulfill their mandate. However, as an accident outside Canada could well raise significant international issues with allies in other countries, the new amendments will provide access to these records for military boards in limited circumstances. Canadians can rest assured that these amendments will only be provided during an investigation related to a Canadian Forces military aircraft accident outside Canada and only if the board of inquiry had been personally convened by the Minister of National Defence.

Furthermore, the minister will have to direct that these on-board recordings be released on a case by case basis. However, we should be reminded that use would still remain prohibited in disciplinary proceedings or any other proceedings relating to the capacity or competence of a Canadian Forces member to perform his or her functions.

I must now also acknowledge another significant problem that is currently frustrating military investigators. It concerns how next of kin of deceased personnel are engaged by the flight safety system.

[Translation]

Ideally, next of kin would be informed of the progress of the investigation and of the findings as they come up throughout the investigation.

However, this is currently not possible given the lack of a legal impediment to prevent the unauthorized and premature distribution of information during an investigation.

[English]

The early release of information can easily compromise flight safety investigations. Let me explain. If one of the suspected causes of an accident is the failure of an aircraft component, the military investigators would be very interested in reviewing the reasons for the failure with the manufacturer. The manufacturer will have all of the technical data to complete this analysis, and therefore the importance of this interaction cannot be understated, but if this information were also made known to the next of kin, there is currently no legal sanction if the next of kin in turn passes this information on to the media or another third party.

Such sharing of information could cause the equipment manufacturer to cease all communications with the investigators before they can complete their analysis and necessary recommendations. As a result, next of kin are currently not given an update on the cause of the accident until the investigation is completed because of the risk of premature release of information. This has created a situation that is inappropriate and insensitive to the needs of the families involved. The next of kin of our personnel deserve much better.

The legislation before us today will prohibit the unauthorized release of specific investigation information. This will allow full disclosure of the progress and findings of the investigation as it unfolds. Not only will this keep the next of kin in the loop, this amendment will also allow them to be consulted as the investigative reports are being prepared. This process will permit the next of kin to review early drafts of a report and provide valuable feedback on the human factor to investigators. In essence, the amendments to the Aeronautics Act will create a more transparent process that will serve to bring comfort to the loved ones of those lost in air accidents.

Once again, it is important to note that, under the proposed legislation, statements made by the next of kin of personnel involved in military aviation accidents will be privileged. As I mentioned earlier, unauthorized disclosure of privileged information by anyone will be strictly prohibited by law. This will allow the next of kin to remain informed of the progress of an investigation. It will allow them to contribute to the investigation, but it will ensure that they do not release that information to the media or the public. This is crucial to the security and effectiveness of the investigation process.

We all know that sometimes people may find it difficult to come forward and speak about a problem. These amendments to the Aeronautics Act will help address this critical and important issue. As I mentioned before, under the amendments, flight safety information such as oral or written statements, on-board aircraft recordings and communication records received by military flight investigators will be privileged.

● (1315)

[Translation]

We will encourage voluntary statements and we will protect those who disclose information or reprehensible acts. We could, at the same time, implement safety measures that will make the workplace safer for soldiers and civilians taking part in Canadian Air Force operations.

[English]

Another factor that must be considered is the safety of the public. When aircraft accidents occur, the aircraft accident site can pose a number of risks to the health and safety of the public. It is therefore very important that public access to the crash site be restricted without delay. This measure will ensure that the site is secured while protecting the public from the dangers posed by such accidents.

Government Orders

Currently, if the crash site is on government controlled property, access of the public is not an issue, but if the accident occurs on privately owned land, public access can be problematic. The proposed amendments to the Aeronautics Act would correct this problem by giving accident investigators the authority to restrict access to the accident sites on private land in the interests of public safety. This in turn will ensure that the aircraft wreckage is as undisturbed as possible.

The proposed amendments will also place additional responsibilities on my department. For example, in order to ensure for the public that an open and independent investigation has been conducted, there will be a requirement that the flight safety investigation report be released to the public on completion of the investigation. These reports include appropriate recommendations for public and aviation safety. Though this is something we have been doing voluntarily since 2001, this practice will now become a legal obligation.

I must emphasize that civilian aviation accidents will of course continue to be investigated by the Transportation Safety Board.

The new amendments will also establish the requirement that a confidential interim report on the progress and findings of an investigation be shared with other departments with a direct interest in the investigation. If an occurrence involves a death and significant progress has been made in an investigation, then an interim report could also be provided to the coroner.

Taken together, these new powers and responsibilities will ensure that the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces have the authority necessary to promote openness, independence and integrity in military flight safety investigations.

Military flight safety investigators will be thoroughly trained in respect to all aspects of the new powers and they will be tested before being allowed to exercise them.

Our military has identified some significant gaps in the current legislation and the government has responded.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

Amendments to Bill C-6 will improve the capacity of the Canadian Forces to ensure the safety of the men and women in the air force community, civilians involved in military aviation and the general public.

[*English*]

I think all of my colleagues will agree that these amendments show that the government is committed to independent, complete and open military flight safety investigations. I strongly encourage and recommend that all members support these amendments to the Aeronautics Act.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David McQuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the debate on Bill C-6 concerning the Aeronautics Act.

When this bill was first debated, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport Canada told us that it provides for a

legislative framework to further enhance aviation safety and, through safety management systems, to have a system in place that will actually allow a continuous method of keeping Canadians safe. According to him, Australia and the United Kingdom have had great results from this system.

Bill C-6 does indeed deal with integrated management systems and does allow for voluntary reporting programs under which information relating to aviation safety and security can be reported. Bill C-6 is indeed also based on the work done by the previous Liberal government.

However, it will be up to the present government to persuade us, to persuade us and Canadians, that the bill is still a good one.

[*English*]

Before I delve into the provisions of the text, let me make perfectly clear the principle upon which this side of the House's comments are predicated. The average Canadian citizen trusts that when it comes to boarding an airplane in this country, to fly to any destination, our federal government carries out its responsibility to ensure that the flight will be safe.

When parents send their teenage daughter on her first trip away from home, they trust in our federal safety system. When children see their father off on a business trip, they trust in our federal safety system. When a family waits patiently at the airport for a visit from their grandmother, they trust in our federal safety system.

The government has assigned this responsibility to Transport Canada and this bill seeks to amend a large piece of the legislation that safeguards passengers on the planes in our skies.

Bill C-6 amends the Aeronautics Act, which, as we know, establishes the Minister of Transport's responsibility for the development and the regulation of aeronautics in Canada and the supervision of all matters related to aeronautics. In particular, the Aeronautics Act enables the minister to apply the Canadian aviation regulations, which are, in effect, the rules governing aviation in Canada.

Keeping this in mind, I believe all members in the House will understand the caution that we as an opposition will bring to our examination of Bill C-6.

There are four avenues of inquiry that I would like to raise here today. If Bill C-6 is acceptable in premise to this House, then we will soon see it in committee and will be able to apply a stringent analysis of it, beginning, I hope, with these questions.

A large portion of this bill deals with the decision to make "integrated management systems" the basis for a broad range of important regulations, but what exactly are integrated management systems?

Over the past 10 years, companies in the transportation industries have adopted complex plans to achieve certain goals. These are management tools. These plans are systemic, in the sense that they coordinate activities throughout the company to achieve their goals, and they are integrated, in the sense that they bring together the standards set by outside authorities with the processes used by modern transportation enterprises.

Government Orders

Safety management systems are an example of an essential kind of integrated management system. Under a specific safety management system, an airline may, for example, set out how and how often its mechanics have to check an airplane's engines. The plans, the safety management systems, are meant to prevent problems from occurring by taking every reasonable precaution.

By planning how often mechanics are to check the engines and by planning what they should do if there is a question mark of any sort, hopefully there will never be a safety incident. This is the role of a safety management system.

Transport Canada has been working with airlines and safety management systems for several years. Up until now, they have guided a company's actions but have not had the force of law. Instead, Transport Canada has continued to enforce safety regulations, enabled by the existing Aeronautics Act, as the legal standards for safe flying.

If an airline did not comply with the actual aviation regulations, including the paperwork submitted to prove that it was in compliance, it did not matter how good the safety management system was. The airline was simply breaking the law.

Now, with Bill C-6, the government would like to change the obligations of airlines and certain other aviation organizations. The government is saying that Transport Canada should be able to compel these organizations to meet their safety standards, these requirements, and do away with the old prescriptive Transport Canada regulations.

The argument for this evolution is that airlines have many things to do to ensure safety. They have every incentive to be safe and so have already come up with the systems that are most effective.

• (1325)

It is a waste of time and energy, the government argues, for these companies to verify to Transport Canada at every turn that the safety checks are done. Instead, Transport Canada should focus on ensuring that the system agreed to is actually in effect through audits and inspections.

Let us think about this for the average Canadian as if we were taking care of a truck. Right now, Transport Canada tells the company to inspect the brakes every month. It asks for paperwork stating that the inspection was complete. The company's representative declares that the inspection was done and that there was no problem. With Bill C-6, Transport Canada would instead require the company to plan to check the brakes and it would check to see that the plan was being followed, but no paperwork would be submitted on a continual basis attesting that those individual checks were done successfully.

Is this a better way of ensuring safety for travelling Canadians? Does it allow precious safety resources to be better focused on integrating a whole safe system so that incidents do not occur? Or, does it relieve pressure and ultimately lead to gaps that could have tragic consequences?

Despite the enthusiasm of the parliamentary secretary and the minister for Bill C-6, I do not see a clear-cut answer to this yet. We need to know that the safety measures that are to be used are accurate

and encourage the safest possible flights. We also need to know that the safety indicators, tracked by different airlines, are comparable, that when we raise the bar, we are comparing apples to apples in establishing our safety standards.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-6 contains the provision on voluntary reporting of information relating to aviation safety and security, a provision that gives rise to another concern.

The bill authorizes the minister to establish a program under which individuals working in the transportation industry may report to his department any information relating to aviation safety that they consider to be relevant, in the strictest confidentiality. The goal here is for people who are responsible for mistakes to have every reason to admit them as soon as possible so that they can be remedied before any damage is done.

I fully support the creation of an environment in which employees and others will do everything possible to ensure safety. In fact, from the important work done by our government in the area of intelligent regulation, I have observed over the years that we must be more flexible in the instruments we choose to achieve the desired result. The desired result in this case is clear: safe aircraft—period.

• (1330)

[*English*]

The government has a spectrum of possible tools at its disposal to achieve this clear goal of safety. They range, on the one hand, from specific command and control style regulations, with Transport Canada saying, "Thou shalt abide by this rule", to, on the other hand, purely voluntary measures. My concern is that voluntary reporting of critical safety information may not be sufficient in a situation where people's lives and people's livelihoods are at risk.

Undoubtedly, we need a mix of rules and regulations that provide for the best opportunity to prevent air disasters. We have a good track record. Let us be careful about what changes we are ready to make here.

My third area of concern is the powers of the minister generally. There are several pieces of legislation before us this fall, during a minority government no less, that intend to increase the powers of the Minister of Transport.

Bill C-3 would give the minister the direct power to authorize the construction of international bridges and tunnels without parliamentary oversight. Bill C-6 would open the door for the minister to devolve his powers and responsibilities for aeronautical safety to other organizations. Bill C-11 would allow the minister to review mergers and acquisitions in all federal transportation sectors, hardly the hallmark of a Conservative government. Bill C-20, if we ever see it come to the fore, proposes to let the minister oversee and constrain the operations of airport authorities in new and restrictive ways.

Government Orders

[Translation]

When taken as a whole, these measures indicate clearly that the government is moving forward on all fronts to give the Minister of Transport new powers.

It is fear of this very tendency, what was described as a power grab, that prompted a loud outcry from the members of the Conservative Party when they were in opposition. I note that they have been strangely silent for several months now, however, when it comes to expanding government powers. This is particularly true in the case of the backbenchers on the government side.

I would note that I am not opposed to the principle of greater powers when that is necessary, but I would like to remind the minister and the government side of what they said and the expectations they created on the part of the Canadian public. They still have the onus of demonstrating the urgent need to expand the minister's powers, not only in Bill C-6, but also in four other transport bills.

[English]

Finally, let me turn to my fourth subject and my fourth area of concern, the proposed creation of the Canadian Forces airworthiness investigative authority. The new CFAIA, as it is called, would take on the responsibilities of the Transportation Safety Board for aeronautical incidents, including accidents that involve Canadian Forces aircraft.

The information surrounding these events would now fall under the clear jurisdiction of the Minister of National Defence, as we have just heard from his parliamentary secretary. This is, in and of itself, a sensible development. However, the concerns expressed to me by various groups, which I wish to express to the government, regard incidents that involve both military and civilian aircraft.

The new CFAIA would be given the authority to investigate these incidents and accidents in Bill C-6. However, Canadians want to be assured that they will still have access to full and complete information in the unfortunate circumstance that an accident affects them or their loved ones. In fact, they would like access to full and complete information whether or not the accident directly affects them because transparency is of the utmost importance in a democratic society such as ours.

The new subsection 17(2) of the Aeronautics Act would read that investigation observers from outside the forces are "Subject to any conditions that the Airworthiness Investigative Authority imposes...". It is incumbent upon the government to now clarify what measures are being taken to guarantee that the facts of any future incident will not be covered up using the proposed provisions of the Aeronautics Act.

I know that the government is committed in words to transparency, but Canadians need to see that the government is equally committed to act in a transparent manner.

I am pleased to see that under Liberal leadership, the government did extensive consultations with industry, labour and other stakeholders, and that there appears to be widespread support for some of the provisions in this bill, but as a responsible opposition,

we are not yet convinced that the bill as written meets the appropriate societal tests.

There is no doubt in my mind that we must be constantly vigilant to ensure that the federal government, which is constitutionally seized with and responsible for aeronautical safety, and the private aircraft operators and companies who compete today in a low margin, highly competitive international marketplace, have struck the appropriate balance of rule and regulation to provide for safety in the greater public interest.

The families who depart and arrive in airports throughout Canada, every minute and every hour of every day, deserve no less than our full attention to Bill C-6.

We will support the bill at second reading and I look forward to the opportunity in committee to hear witnesses explain, in much greater detail, what will actually happen on the ground should Bill C-6 earn our ultimate approval.

• (1335)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member gave a well organized, concise and clear presentation on this important bill.

I would like to come back to the idea of smart regulation, which is important if we want our economy to be productive and competitive. Whenever we talk about safety, I personally believe that it is better to be safe than sorry. The hon. member made a point about how this bill would require airline companies to keep records but that somehow there will be a change in focus. In other words, under the bill, as I understand it, the airline companies would no longer need to show their company records to the government for verification. It would simply require them to submit record keeping plans to the government.

I was watching an interesting program on television the other night about an air accident that occurred in Hawaii a few years ago, where part of the plane came off in mid-air. It turned out, after the investigation, that one of the screws used when the fuselage was being repaired was actually too small for that particular piece. In fact, using the naked eye, one could almost not see it. The investigators discovered the problem by pouring over the company's very detailed records of which screw the engineer took out of inventory, so on and so forth. It was all because of very detailed records that the citizens of the world found out why the accident happened.

I would like the hon. member to comment on whether he thinks the bill, as it is written now, could perhaps lessen the likelihood of finding the answers in cases like the one I just mentioned.

• (1340)

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, deep concerns are being expressed by many individuals around the balance or not in the bill with respect to record keeping and making operational this concept of a safety management system.

Government Orders

The airlines will say, on the one hand, to the travelling public and to Canadian consumers and citizens that they could not possibly afford the damage to a brand. I would point, for example, to the Air France accident at Toronto's Pearson airport a year and a half ago. The damage to the brand had a great impact on sales and on the choices being exercised by consumers not to fly one airline over another. On the other hand, we have heard from mechanics on the front lines of Jazz Air who have gone public to say that the government is compromising airline safety for other reasons now, for example, in terms of some of the existing standards.

We will need to watch for this in committee. I would say to my hon. colleague that any views that he can bring forward as a member who is very engaged with the Montreal airport, the Trudeau airport, and some of the challenges we are facing, if those views could be brought forth to committee we would be in a better position to strike the appropriate balance.

However, we are in good shape because we will be able to use the incredible work that we did as a government on smart regulation, having asked the Privy Council Office to create a smart regulation panel. There is much for us now to glean from those learnings and apply to this bill.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the comments of the member opposite on this bill. We on this side of the House have a number of concerns about the bill and I wonder if he would address one that stands out to me, which is the issue of the number of flight attendants on aircraft.

My understanding is that the regulation may be reduced by up to 25% fewer flight attendants per plane. That raises a lot of concerns for many people because flight attendants are actually the key people on a flight. If something goes wrong, they are the ones who look after passengers during turbulence, cabin decompression or emergency evacuations. They have a very high standard of training in order to deal with this.

We know after the crash of Air France in Toronto last year the plane was on fire and it was actually the flight attendants who successfully evacuated all the passengers and crew on that plane without the loss of life or serious injuries. That was remarkable but they were at full capacity under the old regulations.

I am wondering how the member feels about this potential of fewer flight attendants on aircraft in Canada.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, it is a matter that has been debated in committee. In fact, to be frank, we are not quite sure where this regulatory shift stands, but for the average Canadian citizen, so that they have a better understanding, it involves shifting the number of flight attendants on an airplane from one flight attendant per 40 passengers to one flight attendant per 50 seats, whether or not those 50 seats are filled.

The shift, the argument goes, would take the country more in line with European Union standards and American standards.

When this came to the attention of the committee, the minister then stood up in the House several days later to say that the issue of changing the flight attendant ratio in Canada was not going to be pursued. For the sake of Canadians and for the sake of transparency, it would be important for us to know just what the evidence actually

says about this issue. Members of the committee are deeply concerned about this potential shift, particularly from a health and safety perspective.

For most Canadians who fly, they know how hard flight attendants work. They know how difficult it is in terms of the amount of time they have to serve an average group of passengers for example. More importantly, from the point of view of safety in exiting the plane there are some deep concerns.

The question of a regulatory shift in flight attendants appears to have evaporated under this minority government just as Bill C-20 that we are waiting for on airport authorities appears to have evaporated. We have not seen this at all even though it was supposed to be in and out of the House several times. It is a mystery to me, as the critic, to know where this is heading, but we are tracking it very carefully and we will report back if we get better and more information.

● (1345)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about some elements of the bill first and then use the opportunity to go on to talk about some safety elements related to my riding. They may not be totally connected to the bill, but as everyone knows, I always like to talk about my riding and the issues that are important to it.

Bill C-6 which amends the Aeronautics Act, will provide Transport Canada with an increased ability to maintain and increase safety and security of Canada's aviation systems.

If an imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, we in the Liberal Party are very flattered as this proposed legislation mimics Bill C-62 introduced by the former Liberal government in the last Parliament. When talking about flattery, I must say you are doing an excellent job, Mr. Speaker, for your first time in that chair.

Where the safety and security of the flying public and air transport employees are concerned, there can be no compromise. That is why this legislation is so important. There can be no compromise on safety.

Canada is a geographically large and vast country. It is essential that we have the ability to travel by air safely and securely between our large urban centres as well as between the outlying remote communities. Air transport links us as a country from sea to sea to sea.

Air travel is necessary for Canada to compete in the global economy, to allow our tourism industry to flourish, and to unite family and friends who may live half a continent away. Canadians have come to rely on, indeed most take for granted, the safe, secure transportation system of our aviation industry.

We can see that particularly in the north. There are many communities that we cannot even get to except by air. Just to get to work every week I fly every month more than the entire circumference of the world. When I get home, I have to cover an area larger than any country in Europe. Often we use small planes. It is instrumental, part of commuting, that there be safety provisions, both mechanically, legislatively and personnel wise.

Government Orders

This act and its predecessor, Bill C-62, have resulted from extensive consultations through the Canadian Aviation Regulatory Advisory Council and reflect the learned input of labour and management organizations, operators and manufacturers, and aviation associations, all of whom consider safety their number one priority.

I would not be as comfortable in sending this to committee for further study had there been not all this consultation done with labour, manufacturers and those companies that are involved in the industry. They are the experts in the industry and know what needs to be done to ensure the highest level of safety.

The legislation addresses a myriad of administrative clauses so essential for the smooth and safe operations of our aviation systems. The devil is in the details and this devil has been put in its place by the legislation.

The act provides for the establishment of an integrated management system providing for the cumulation of dates that will help Transport Canada to better manage and regulate safety and security concerns, and to set standards leading to continued improvements to adapt changing circumstances. The aim is create a culture of safety and to continuously engage the aviation industry in amending or developing regulations.

One interesting and innovative approach is that the legislation authorizes the establishment of a voluntary reports program under which information relating to aviation safety and security may be reported without fear of reprisal. The program provides for individuals to provide confidential reports of regulation violations, not with the view of punishment but to identify and correct mistakes and to make safety improvements.

To err is human and if mistakes do happen in a less safety regulated environment, let us learn from those errors with immediate disclosure.

● (1350)

It is one of the whistleblower protections in the public service with essential safety and security as its end good. Better to prevent a tragedy than not to have the information.

The protections in section 5.396, part (1), will not apply. However, if there has been a prior contravention of the act within a prior two-year period before to or subsequently, there is a management system of the employer that encourages an employee to disclose a system if the employer did not do so.

I would add a cautionary note, however, that the government and Transport Canada in particular must be vigilant on the safety performance of airlines and by monitoring violations of safety rules must ensure that the whistleblower aspect of this clause in fact has the intended effect of improving aviation safety.

We must be mindful of an incident reported by the media where airline mechanics acknowledged being pressured to release planes with defects that could compromise public safety. Such conduct is simply and utterly unacceptable, not only for the confidence of our flying community in the planes that crisscross our skies but also for the economic stability of airline companies. Second best or next time just does not cut it.

In an earlier hour of this debate I asked about, and I hope the witnesses in committee will be prepared to provide some information on this, mandatory reports. What was the incidence of non-compliance when these reports were missing? What type of percentage? What was the number and with this new voluntary reporting system, what effect will that have? Will there be more chances for abrogation or less chances? Would it result in more reports being put in or less reports?

As my colleague mentioned in his speech before mine, there would not be, on occasion, reports to be collected. What effect would this have? If Transport Canada does not have all the reports to do analysis on, is there a possibility that these reports could act like the canary in the mine shaft and be a warning?

There are all sorts of excellent airline companies in the north. There is Air North flying out of Whitehorse, and I know the member from Thunder Bay will be happy to hear about that one. There is First Air, Canadian North, Alkan Air, all small airlines in this country that are very useful and helpful.

However, in their combined reports there may have been one particular mechanical failure to a particular part of the plane. Hopefully, there are not very many in this industry because the results could be devastating. If Transport Canada has all these reports and sees the very same mechanical failing and maybe two months later the same mechanical failing elsewhere, could it put those together and analyze them and prevent a potential tragedy by having that accumulated information? By having the information regarding an airline, a manager of an airline would be quite interested in having this information regarding the safety of his airline. I am hoping the witnesses can comment on this and how it would relate to the new reporting system and its effect.

I also want to mention inputs I have had from local airlines. One flying out of Watson Lake in Yukon was unhappy about some of the conditions, not necessarily safety but related to maintenance on the runways related to gravel. That was for the Dawson City Airport.

Transport Canada has an excellent program that provides grants for improvements to help airport safety across the country. It is an excellent program. We have had excellent projects in Yukon, but unless the amount of money increases in that program, all the projects that need to be done to improve safety at Canada's airports cannot be completed.

Statements by Members

●(1355)

On the other side, I had a letter a few days ago about an aircraft flying from Watson Lake to Whitehorse, I believe, a flight of a couple of hours. It was a small plane. In the north, of course, it is a whole different environment, with all sorts of small planes with different technologies. There are bird dogs for the forest fires and the mining camps. There are float planes taking in tourists for canoe trips. This particular small plane landed at place called Teslin, about two hours from Whitehorse, because there was bad weather. These people complimented Sue and Linda at the Teslin airport for the wonderful reception. They were delighted that there was an airport in a town of only several hundred people.

This is an essential investment in Canada's north. It may not seem at the outset to be very economical, but we cannot put a price on a life. That airport was ready for that small plane to come down in bad weather. It is essential, and we need to keep up the investment in the small and rural airports across this country, not underestimate them for something as simple as dollars and cents at the expense of life.

Another thing I want to talk about is one of our major airlines in the north. Although it is a major airline and uses the same planes, like 737s, to be economical and to survive in that environment it needs to put baggage in part of the plane and passengers in another part of the plane. Otherwise, it would need much smaller planes, which would not be economical and would not be as comfortable for the passengers. The airline could not survive.

We do not need any regulations that are unnecessary, regulations that would, for instance, preclude putting baggage in the main compartment. It has been done for years. It is totally safe in the northern environment. It is absolutely essentially that it continue.

As always, I am promoting a rural lens on regulations, a northern lens, to make sure that legislation is effectively looked at from the perspective of small rural communities where we can maintain safety but also be flexible so that it is realistic in the environment we are talking about.

This will probably be the last bit of time we have before members' statements and I thank the Conservatives for all their support for my speech as well. I know they are always enthralled with my speeches.

It is a fact that we now have thousands of flights going over the north pole, the circumpolar area. That never occurred in the past. That is a whole new safety regime. The distance from airports is longer and there is a different type of landing potential in emergencies, but most important for me is the lack of search and rescue north of 60.

Many members have heard me talk about this in the House and in committee and have seen it in the newspapers. The fact that we do not have a single DND search and rescue plane north of 60 is unacceptable. We definitely have to work on that. Why would we have all our search and rescue planes close to the Canada-U.S. border and have to fly all that distance to save someone on one of these flights?

I am happy to have contributed to the debate. We look forward to sending the bill to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The hon. member for Yukon will still have six and a half minutes left for his speech after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, October 29, the killer highway, Trans-Canada Highway 17, claimed the life of another victim.

Seventeen-year-old Stacey Tabbert was returning home from running errands when she was killed after the vehicle she was driving crashed into a tractor-trailer. Stacey was a popular grade 12 student at Fellowes High School in Pembroke and will be sadly missed by her friends, her family and the community.

The need to make Highway 17 four lanes from Arnprior to North Bay has become even more critical now that our new Conservative government is investing \$520 million in Chalk River laboratories as well as the expansion of CFB Petawawa. Traffic will only get worse.

The residents of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke congratulate the people of Quebec and their premier for working with our Prime Minister to improve their roads.

The time has come for the premier of Ontario to put aside his petty partisan bickering and work with Canada's new Conservative government to improve highway infrastructure for the safety of all the people of Canada.

* * *

●(1400)

ANNA MAE SIMINGTON

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Anna Mae Simington, who passed away on October 19 of this year. Anna Mae was passionate about establishing new programs and generating public awareness about drinking and driving.

Lawrie Palk, who volunteered with Anna Mae on the Brant/Brantford impaired driving committee, echoed the thoughts of many who knew her, saying, "She inspired countless numbers of people to the cause. Because of her work, a number of laws have been changed and things are a great deal better".

Anna Mae was also a trailblazer in the area of victim services and helped establish victim crisis assistance services in my community and across the province. She was the president of the board of directors for Victim Services of Brant, a position she held since 1990.

Anna Mae was the beloved wife of Skinny Simington, mother of Kathy and Jennifer, and grandmother of two grandchildren. She will be missed by many and has left a tremendous legacy.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

SOPHIE THIBAUT

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise again to inform the House of another event that illustrates the pride of Quebecers. The source of that pride is a woman, a woman whose name evokes compassion, humanity, professionalism, dedication and integrity. Those are the qualities that led her from community radio to the TVA network, where she has held the enviable position of chief news anchor since spring 2002. Sophie Thibault is the first woman in North America to occupy this position, and she is also one of the most admired news readers in Quebec.

She was the winner of the Métrostar award in the category of news anchor for three successive years in 2003, 2004 and 2005. Yesterday, she was inducted into the Broadcast Hall of Fame by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters.

It is with great pride that my Bloc Québécois colleagues and I, in turn, warmly applaud her and say to her, "Madame Thibault, you deserve this honour. Bravo and thank you for representing so well the talent of Quebecers".

* * *

[English]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian students and their families need a comprehensive needs based grant system in Canada. Liberal and Conservative policies have only facilitated the rise of student debt to an average of over \$24,000 now.

Today the NDP proposed a cost-neutral program to shift funding from the Liberals' ineffective Canada education savings grant program and the Conservatives' token textbook tax credit. These two programs disproportionately benefit high income Canadians and do nothing for students when tuition is due.

Our proposal would double current federal grants and reduce the debt of Canada's low income and middle income students by 25%.

We are refocusing this funding because student debt is bad for students and their families. With mortgage-type loans, students must foreclose on career and life opportunities. We ask the government to borrow this idea, interest free, and tackle student debt now.

* * *

VETERANS

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today for two reasons. The first is to pay tribute to the past. My community of St. Catharines is home to many veterans of the second world war, whether they be Dutch, British, Polish or other immigrants who fought against the injustices that caused the war. Their commitment and sacrifice remind us all of our proud history of fighting for the freedoms and privileges we all enjoy today.

This ties into the second reason I rise today, which is our future. The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, CASA, is an organization made up of university students from across our country. The students are here in Ottawa today to promote their issues, but what is more important, they represent the future of our country.

I cannot think of a better way for my son, who is celebrating his 15th birthday today, to see and understand the importance of the sacrifices Canadians made for our way of life.

When we see students, especially those from Brock University, focused on making our country the best it can be, we can see that our future is indeed a very bright one.

* * *

TOURISM

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 15 the finance minister announced a number of cutbacks directed at certain groups such as women, students, youth, aboriginals and people with literacy issues.

Another group he attacked was the 625,000 Canadians employed in the tourism industry.

In eliminating the GST tax rebate for foreign visitors, he puts our industry at a competitive disadvantage with other foreign destinations, this at a time when the industry is being hit with a rising Canadian dollar, security issues and a lack of international marketing. This is especially so for the bus tour and international convention segments of the industry.

The finance minister does not understand that international tourism is an export industry. He also announced that the figure is approximately \$78 million. This is wrong, as it does not include the volume purchasers such as bus tour operators, who do not remit at source. According to industry officials, the figure will be three times this amount.

In addition, this decision results in 60 to 100 job losses for the town of Summerside, Prince Edward Island.

The decision will have devastating consequences for our Canadian tourism industry. I call upon the Minister of Finance to do the right thing and reverse this decision.

* * *

● (1405)

VETERANS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Ottawa this week are 18 students and their chaperones from my hometown of Lacombe, Alberta. They are here to watch democracy in action.

Statements by Members

What better time to visit Parliament Hill than Veterans' Week? As they walk through these historic halls, tour this grand chamber and pause to reflect in the Memorial Chamber, I hope they recognize that none of this would be possible without the sacrifices of Canada's veterans.

Growing up in a peaceful, prosperous Canada, it is easy to forget that freedom is not free. The freedoms that we take for granted were won with courage, determination and valour. They were won by young Canadians, many not much older than the students here today, who gave their lives so that we could enjoy a quality of life that is envied throughout the world.

This week we celebrate the accomplishments of our veterans, praise their courage and honour their lives. As the torch of remembrance is passed on to the youth of today, I want to encourage these leaders of tomorrow to learn from the lessons of the past and preserve the legacy of peace and freedom. Canada's future depends on it.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TAXATION

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last December 19, the Conservative Prime Minister made a solemn commitment to correct the fiscal imbalance in the 2007-08 budget. Obviously, the Conservatives have been working for some months now to lower the expectations of Quebecers.

It is unfortunate to see today that this political operation is being orchestrated with the Liberals of Jean Charest, as can be seen in a text written by the Quebec minister of finance this morning in *La Presse*. Not only does the minister clumsily try to disassociate himself from the figure of \$3.9 billion, which he himself advanced last April 12 in the National Assembly as the amount needed to correct the fiscal imbalance, but worse still, he twists his own words by reproducing the text of his remarks minus the last sentence in which he says of that \$3.9 billion, and I quote, "That is what we have demanded and that is what we are going to discuss in the coming months".

The original demand of the Government of Quebec is very clear; it is \$3.9 billion and nothing less. The Charest government must be steadfast and not back down on the amount. The best interests of Quebec are at stake.

* * *

[*English*]

FRASER RIVER

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, British Columbians cherish the Fraser River. It is a crucial element of our economic well-being and must be protected through dredging. Dredging allows vessels transporting goods on the Fraser to travel safely along designated shipping channels. The economic benefit of this trade is enormous.

Even more important to British Columbians, particularly to my constituents in Port Coquitlam with homes along the Fraser, is what dredging means in terms of public safety and flood protection.

Dredging eases the threat of flooding each spring when the snowpack melts, swells the Fraser and brings over two million cubic metres of sediment with it.

In 1998 the federal Liberal government stopped all financial support for Fraser River dredging. It was wrong to do so.

I am proud to report that this Conservative government is committing \$4 million to dredging on the Fraser River. We are securing trading on the Fraser and providing flood protection while keeping homes and families safe.

I am proud to be part of this government, one that listens to and delivers real results for British Columbia.

* * *

CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to highlight today the achievements of a dedicated and well respected Canadian, Mrs. Trudy Comeau, outgoing president of Canadian Parents for French.

Canadian Parents for French is a national network of 24,000 volunteers who value French and who are engaged in the promotion and creation of French second language learning opportunities for young Canadians.

Mrs. Comeau has been a member of CPF since 1993 when her daughter attended a CPF French immersion summer camp. During her tenure, she worked tirelessly with partner organizations, government agencies and professional associations. Her dedication was inspiring, particularly her two years as national president.

Her calm demeanour and her friendly and effective leadership have been most beneficial to Canadian Parents for French. On behalf of all of my colleagues, I wish to say an enormous thank you to Trudy.

* * *

ATLANTIC CANADA

Mr. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the agenda of the Liberal Party toward Atlantic Canada is emerging and Atlantic Canadians have cause for concern.

Bob Rae, one of the leading contenders for the Liberal Party leadership, recently showed his disregard for Atlantic Canada. When asked about the out-migration and dwindling population being faced by the Atlantic provinces, Mr. Rae simply stated, "Mobility is not a bad thing. Look around the world—it's a pattern".

That is easy to say when one does not care about Atlantic Canada. Mr. Rae could have shown leadership by proposing ideas or suggesting solutions but he instead accepts the status quo.

I am proud to be part of a government that is working for Atlantic Canadians. Unlike the Liberals, we are working together with a view to a better future, not dismissing real concerns by saying that it is a pattern. Mr. Rae showed his true colours and Atlantic Canadians are not impressed.

Statements by Members

I am proud to be part of a party that respects and stands up with Atlantic Canada.

* * *

• (1410)

WINDSOR-DETROIT BORDER

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Windsor-Detroit border is the busiest and most important border between Canada and the United States. Approximately \$1 billion in trade and tens of thousands of vehicles and trucks cross per day.

For years, various Liberal ministers and prime ministers gave empty promises and lip service to fixing the congestion, pollution and safety problems that jeopardize our most important economic link to trade.

Now it appears that the Conservative government is following in the Liberals' footsteps by not providing answers and not taking the leadership that our community deserves and was promised.

The NDP has proposed a long term funding solution that creates a bypass; supports non-obtrusive infrastructure solutions, like tunneling; compensation for property owners that is accountable; public ownerships; and, an environmental legacy fund to enhance our ecosystems.

These solutions are not only good for the local community but the economic vibrancy from Windsor to Montreal. Real investment decisions throughout Quebec and Ontario are being decided today. It is about time the Conservatives stepped forward and supported the community like they promised or showed that they are just like the Liberals and there is no difference and Canadians need to make a change.

* * *

[*Translation*]

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Remembrance Day approaches, I would like to salute the many volunteers who are participating in the annual poppy campaign. I would particularly like to highlight the work of countless veterans who are distributing pins and collecting donations, often in very bad weather.

[*English*]

In 2005, the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 23 in North Bay raised more than \$45,500 through the poppy campaign. The money was shared between veterans care, bursaries, donations, charities and service officer education.

This year Branch 23 hopes to raise even more funds for these worthwhile causes.

[*Translation*]

Boxes of poppies have been placed in many schools and businesses. Some legions are even campaigning door to door.

On behalf of all members, I would like to thank everyone participating in the annual campaign and encourage Canadians to

buy a poppy in memory of Canada's fallen heroes. We will not forget them.

* * *

ROBERT A. BOYD

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we were saddened to hear of the passing of Robert A. Boyd, a former president of Hydro-Québec.

Mr. Boyd was an outstanding francophone engineer who witnessed the nationalization of electricity and the creation of the crown corporation, Hydro-Québec. Over a period of 37 years, he climbed the corporate ladder, ending his career as the corporation's president and chief executive officer.

Hydro-Québec's innovations in a number of areas made the corporation North America's foremost renewable energy producer and distributor. Its success was due to the design and construction of transmission lines that enabled it to transmit electricity over great distances. Thanks to a number of developments that boosted its production capacity and the deregulation of bulk energy sales, the corporation realized enviable achievements. There is no doubt that Mr. Boyd was a key witness to this success and a key player in making it happen.

The Bloc Québécois extends its sincere condolences to Robert A. Boyd's family, friends and former colleagues.

* * *

[*English*]

MILITARY VALOUR DECORATION

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the men and women in our Canadian Forces are the finest military personnel in the world. Day in and day out they work with courage and distinction.

Recently four of these soldiers were awarded our highest award for bravery, the Military Valour Decoration for extraordinary bravery in the face of extreme danger.

Sergeant Patrick Tower was awarded the Star of Military Valour. Sergeant Michael Thomas Victor Denine, Master Corporal Collin Ryan Fitzgerald and Private Jason Lamont were awarded the Medal of Military Valour.

Each displayed the utmost courage in the face of oncoming danger and enemy fire and many saved the lives of their comrades. Their actions and heroism deserve our greatest praise, respect and admiration.

On behalf of Canadians from coast to coast and my colleagues in the Liberal Party, we salute these and all of the soldiers in our Canadian Forces. They are true Canadian heroes.

Oral Questions

●(1415)

*[Translation]***BYELECTION IN REPENTIGNY**

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the people of Repentigny have been stunned and amazed to learn that the Bloc Québécois candidate in the November 27 byelection apparently urged his fellow citizens to vote for the Liberal Party of Canada in the midst of the sponsorship scandal.

That is right, the Bloc Québécois candidate was telling people to support the Liberal Party while that party was mixed up in the sponsorship scandal. One has to admit that this was pushing the limits of inconsistency.

As November 27 nears, what the people of Repentigny need and deserve is respect, consistency and a minimum of logic. They deserve a candidate who will sit on the government side, a consistent man like Stéphane Bourgon, who will deliver real results for his riding.

The Bloc's inconsistency is quite obvious. How could their candidate express support for a party that has yet to finish giving back to the taxpayers all the money taken by the LPC? How can a BQ candidate support the Liberal Party, whose culture of entitlement corrupted Canadian political mores before our government took office? I would like some clarification. How could the leader of the Bloc Québécois support a candidate who himself supported a corrupt party? Do the Bloc and its leader support corrupt parties?

ORAL QUESTIONS*[English]***CANADA-EU SUMMIT**

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the air we breathe, the environment on which we depend for our existence and the policies we need to deal with the most important issue of our times, the government continues to twist in the wind.

Yesterday, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister directly told this House that the government had not seen an agenda for the Canada-EU summit. We now know that the agenda was set two weeks ago and climate change was on it.

Will the Prime Minister tell us whether this was an ill-advised attempt at dissimulation by his parliamentary secretary or is it just more evidence that they do not have a clue of what is going on over there?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, whenever the Prime Minister travels I receive numerous invitations to extend or continue that travel. In the next few weeks I will be travelling to Europe, Asia and in the Americas. I also have duties I need to perform in this country.

I met with the leadership of the European Union earlier this summer and I hope to do so again at the next available opportunity.

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what every member of this House knows is that those agendas are prepared weeks in advance.

The fact is that our own citizens do not know where the government is going on the environment and now our international partners no longer believe us or trust us.

Will the Prime Minister finally admit that he cancelled the summit at the last minute in the most embarrassing way possible for Canada just to avoid criticism over his failure on climate change?

Will the Prime Minister now agree to accept our offer, a reasonable, principled offer of an opposition, to go to the summit and avoid further embarrassment for our country on this important file for our country and the world?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I say once again, I am travelling to NATO for a NATO summit and I do not plan to extend that travel. I have met with the European Union leadership earlier this year and I hope to meet them again in the months to come.

The Minister of the Environment will be meeting with her European Union counterparts in Nairobi to discuss these very matters.

[Translation]

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the environment will be discussed this fall; that would be a good idea. The ambassador clearly told us that there was an agenda for the summit and that climate change was on it.

The Europeans, our allies, feel that it is high time to hold this summit. Either this government is completely incompetent or it is deceitful.

Why is the Prime Minister hiding his real reasons for cancelling the summit? Can he explain to Canadians why he is adding to the confusion about the environment issue? Why does he have no plan for the survival of our planet?

These are questions—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, I do not plan to extend my travel in Europe. I met with the European Union leadership earlier this year, and we will meet again next year.

As I just said, the Minister of the Environment plans to meet with her European counterparts in Nairobi next week.

* * *

●(1420)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Minister of the Environment is not the one in charge of the environment file.

Oral Questions

After the Prime Minister disavowed the bill, the Minister of Industry and the Minister of Foreign Affairs contradicted the environment minister regarding a carbon credit trading market in Montreal. Her colleague, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities added his two cents by supporting her, yet the Prime Minister's press secretary denied the environment minister's remarks.

We would like to know who really is the Minister of the Environment in this government? Will Montreal have a carbon credit trading market?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government believes that any such system must be based on market forces for trading of credits with respect to greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants.

Unlike the Liberals, our government does not believe that it should use taxpayers' money to create a market. Those who pollute must pay the price.

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government changes its mind like the wind. Only a month ago, the minister ruled out the creation of a carbon credit trading market, but we now learn that she wants to create one in Montreal before the spring.

The Prime Minister has distanced her from the file, her colleagues contradict her and she changes her mind from one interview to the next.

How can Canadians and the international community take our Minister of the Environment seriously, when even the Prime Minister and her colleagues cannot take her seriously here, in Canada?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I invite the opposition to read sections 27, 29 and 33 of Canada's clean air act, which allow for a North American trading system.

As for the acid rain agreement, what we need is a North American solution.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is utter confusion within cabinet as far as the creation of an emissions exchange is concerned. While the Minister of the Environment announced yesterday that a climate exchange would see the light of day in spring 2007, the Prime Minister's Office seemed less sure.

The Prime Minister's press secretary contradicted the minister by saying, "The creation of such an exchange cannot be seen as a done deal. That does not mean the idea is good or bad. We are not taking a position on the matter".

Could the Prime Minister tell us who speaks on behalf of the government: the Minister of the Environment or his press secretary?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois can find his answer by reading the notice of intent on Canada's Clean Air Act.

It recommends the possibility of having an emissions exchange. The government is clear on this: industries, not taxpayers, will have to cover these costs.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is one of the responsibilities of the industries and the oil companies. Nonetheless, his press secretary is saying they are not taking a position and the Prime Minister is not prepared to answer the question either. Furthermore, for there to be an emissions exchange, greenhouse gas emissions targets need to be set. The Minister of the Environment's plan does not set any targets until 2011.

Does the Prime Minister realize that next spring is in 2007 and not 2011?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, our government intends to set targets in the coming year. By 2011, we will have a system for the entire Canadian economy. This is major progress. This is the first time a Canadian government has been determined to reduce pollutants and greenhouse gases and to adopt a mandatory regulatory system.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the Minister of the Environment and the Prime Minister's Office are contradicting each other about the Kyoto protocol and establishing a carbon exchange in Montreal, other countries are getting organized and moving ahead.

Will the Prime Minister admit that, while his office and his Minister of the Environment contradict one another, elsewhere, such as in Europe or Chicago, they are organizing and starting to put in place the infrastructure required to take advantage of the new international market, which we cannot do here because we do not have targets?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will say it again. I invite the opposition to read clauses 27, 29 and 33 of Canada's clean air act which provides for a North American trading system. Also, it will be easier to develop ties with the European market.

With regard to the acid rain agreement, we need a North American solution.

• (1425)

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we ask the minister to reread the statements she made yesterday because she is out of step with what the government has said.

Montreal has already expressed an interest in establishing a carbon emissions exchange and the Montreal Exchange is working on it.

Will the Prime Minister promise that if a carbon emissions exchange is established, there will only be one and it will be located in Montreal?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government believes that any system must be based on market forces for trading in rights to emit greenhouse gases and air pollution.

Unlike the Liberals, our government does not believe that it must maintain a market with taxpayers' money. We believe that polluters must bear the full cost.

*Oral Questions**[English]***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the additional costs of this wrong mission in Afghanistan are continuing to escalate. The latest in the ballooning costs is \$157 million to send tanks to Afghanistan and now \$17 million for six howitzer artillery pieces. The cost for the artillery pieces alone is the equivalent of the taxes paid by 5,000 Canadians.

Why does the government keep pouring the hard-earned money of the taxpayers into a mission that even the Minister of National Defence has said cannot be won militarily?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, the request for the additional equipment came from the Department of National Defence itself. Its view is that this equipment is necessary for the military to complete its mission, which as we know is not simply a peace and security mission but is also aimed at development in Afghanistan.

We stand firmly behind our military and we will always make sure they have the equipment they need when they are in the field.

[Translation]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in June, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that the mission in Kandahar would cost \$1.25 billion. We now know that the information the minister gave was incorrect. Government documents indicate that the mission costs will be half a billion dollars higher.

Why is the government not being honest with Canadians and taxpayers about the costs of the mission in Afghanistan?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, we are paying the bills to provide our soldiers with the equipment they need.

[English]

The truth of the matter is this. It costs money. It costs money to do the work of the international community in this dangerous country. It costs money to help the Afghan people. It costs money to support our troops. Whether the NDP is there or not, Canadians will always be behind our men in uniform.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the fisheries minister admitted that global warming is likely contributing to the declining fish stocks off the shores of Newfoundland, but here is the real irony. While the Worm report predicts that all the fish stocks will collapse by 2048, the Conservative government's clean air act does not have any hard caps on greenhouse gas emissions until 2050, two years later. Whoops.

Does the minister agree with his government that there is no need to tackle global warming until the last fish is gone?

Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a report put out recently certainly put everybody on notice that if we had kept going the way the Liberals were going, we probably would not have any fish left 50 years down the road.

However, we have made major changes not only in how we operate in our own country but how we operate internationally, because for once in many years, Canada has taken the lead in dealing with fishery problems around the world. If the Liberals had done that several years ago, we would not have such a report on the record.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in today's paper the minister is quoted as saying that he believes the Worm report takes it very seriously and that he is worried about the impact of global warming on fish stocks. Yet on October 8 he told the House that he places his trust in his government's made in Canada plan, no action until 2050. Fish are not impressed.

Why is the minister willing to watch all our fish die before doing anything concrete to fight global warming?

● (1430)

Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is quite evident that the minister is mixed up considerably between the environment and the fisheries.

If the former minister had done his job when he was the minister of fisheries, like many of his colleagues, we would not be in the mess we are in today. But by taking some leadership and bringing our international partners onside with us, things are changing. Hopefully the brain food that all of us need will be there when we need it. It is too bad the Liberals did not use it when they had the opportunity.

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans made a rather surprising statement for a member of the Conservative cabinet. He said he was concerned about the impact of climate change. Asked to comment on the demise of nearly all fish stocks by 2050, he said, "—then there is the temperature. Off St. John's, for example, the temperature has risen by 4.5 degrees. That has an enormous impact".

Can the Prime Minister assure us that he will not fire the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans because he dared contradict him and tell the truth about climate change?

[English]

Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no doubt about the fact that all of us are concerned about what goes on in the ocean. We have been saying that for many years.

For five years I was a member of the standing committee. We kept trying to convince the then government that it should do something about what is going on in the ocean and protect our stocks. We saw absolutely no leadership, but we are seeing it now.

Oral Questions

Not only is Canada showing leadership, but many other countries are willing to work. It was just a matter of somebody going to the table and asking them to participate. We are glad—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Honoré-Mercier.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he is trying to muddy the waters. A major study shows that there will be no fish left in our oceans by 2050.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is saying that that is due, in part, to the impact of climate change. At the same time, his colleague, the Minister of the Environment, is saying that there is no urgency and that it is not necessary to set targets before 2050, when there will be no fish left.

Will the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans set his colleague, the Minister of the Environment, straight? Will he tell her that in 2050, it will be too late and that her refusal to act now will have disastrous consequences for fish stocks in Canada, including Quebec?

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the hon. member that he knows full well through the introduction of our legislation and our notice of intent to regulate, the regulations are proceeding already.

We have set a very ambitious target. In fact, it is the same target that the Liberal leadership candidate he is supporting has said, of up to a 65% reduction by 2050.

We also have hard targets that will be in place for the medium term and we will be setting short term targets in the new year. I would encourage him to work with the government if he thinks this issue is urgent.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADA-EU SUMMIT

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister said that the Prime Minister's absence from the Canada-EU summit had nothing to do with his fear of being confronted in public about his U-turn on the Kyoto protocol because he did not know what was on the agenda.

Yesterday, the Finnish ambassador said that the agenda has been known for months and that the Kyoto protocol is on it. Does the government have a new story for the House now that the ambassador has discredited its previous story?

L'hon. Rona Ambrose (ministre de l'Environnement, PCC): Mr. Speaker, we will be meeting all of Canada's Kyoto protocol obligations, except for the Liberals' unrealistic targets. We will set new targets so that we can make real progress together with our international partners.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as I am sure you will agree, it is becoming more and more difficult to ask questions when the government members do not even understand what they are being asked.

The Prime Minister does not hesitate to attend APEC and NATO meetings. Furthermore, his government refused to support a

unanimous motion to defer votes during his absence. Yet the Prime Minister claims that his government's minority status justifies postponing the Canada-EU summit.

Is the real reason for this the fact that the Prime Minister is afraid European leaders will confront him about his pathetic climate change record?

● (1435)

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): In fact, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to meeting with our European counterparts. I am meeting with a commissioner of the European Union next week as well as the environment minister from Finland to discuss our new legislation and discuss our new regulations so that we can share with the international community, the first time the federal government will finally regulate greenhouse gases and air pollution in this country.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a British officer responsible for training the Afghan army said that it would be at least 10 years before that army could take on its responsibilities without help from other countries. The government's response to this yesterday was far from clear.

Can the Minister of National Defence tell us whether he agrees with this statement and especially whether this assessment corresponds to those of Canada's defence staff?

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that it may be the British officer's opinion, it is not necessarily ours. We are dealing with the police and the army within the Kandahar region. We are providing them with great assistance to try to make them more efficient.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my but it is difficult to get a clear, specific answer out of this government.

Yesterday, the parliamentary secretary did not want to answer. Today it is the Minister of National Defence's turn not to answer the question. It is not very complicated though. The Afghan army will not be able to assume full responsibility for at least 10 years. This leads us to think that NATO will have to carry on for 10 years. The Canadian Forces are now part of NATO. Is he saying that we will remain in Afghanistan for another 10 years, regardless of the parliamentary resolution that granted an extension until February 2009?

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are committed in Afghanistan to the end of February 2009. With respect to 10 years for the army, that is only the opinion of an individual.

If the hon. member is around in 10 years he will find out that the colonel's opinion was wrong.

*Oral Questions***GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY**

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, less than a year in and the Conservatives are breaking promises faster than the foreign affairs minister drives; income trusts, an elected Senate, patronage, clean air and now accountability.

The Prime Minister and the Conservative Party promised to follow the rules of the accountability act from the day it was introduced. They specifically promised to vigorously enforce the \$1,000 donation limit they imposed for their party.

Why then do we now learn from Elections Canada that the Conservatives broke their promise on donations, not once, but 44 times? Does accountability end for the Conservatives when someone signs a cheque?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our party is doing its very best to voluntarily comply with the new legislation that we put forward, even though it has not passed.

The good news is that we can bring certainty to this situation. We can pass the federal accountability act right here, right now, in this building today and we could even make it retroactive to April 11. Would the Liberal Party agree to that?

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government should talk to the Conservative Senate which has 50 amendments holding the bill up right now.

One of the 44 violations was made by Conservative Senator Hugh Segal. Was he sorry? We should know better.

The Conservative senator had this to say about his transgression, "I actually don't feel governed by the...federal accountability act at all".

I guess that sums up the actions of the Prime Minister and his minister of hot air; promises made, promises broken 44 times.

What will it be? Will the Prime Minister apologize for misleading Canadians yet again and pay back this money or serve notice that all Conservative promises have no meaning?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would say to the hon. member opposite that it is time for him to walk the walk.

Will the Liberal Party call upon the Liberal Senate to end the 140 day delay that we have seen in the other place? Will he get that bill back here today and allow us to put the teeth back into it? Will the Liberal Party say, once for all, that it will agree to make these changes retroactive to April 11 and the 139 people who gave \$5,000 will need to give it back too?

• (1440)

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the accountability bill was introduced last April 11, the Treasury Board president said that the Conservative Party would feel bound from that day on by the \$1,000 limit on contributions to it. We know now that since then, the Conservative Party has accepted hundreds of donations over \$1,000. Even senator Hugh Segal boasts that he has broken the rule.

Will the Treasury Board president repeat his solemn promise today in the House and reimburse the people who broke it?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to state very clearly that the Liberal Party of Canada had a real choice, a choice that it can still make today. The Liberal Party can ask the Liberal Senate to pass the accountability bill. If the Liberal member and her party were really concerned about this, we could implement this legislation retroactive to last April 11.

[English]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is the party and that is the government that made the promise that the Conservative Party would not accept over \$1,000 in contributions per donor. That party and that government has broken that promise.

Will the President of the Treasury Board repeat in this House his commitment that no one in the Conservative Party will accept donations over \$1,000 and reimburse the 44 violators of his promise?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will one-up my friend from Montreal. Let us stop the voluntary rules. Let us make this bill law today. Let us put these proposals on the statute books here in Canada. However, it requires one thing. It requires the Liberal members of Parliament to tell the Liberals in the Senate to stop dithering and to make this bill law so we can deliver real accountability that Canadians have demanded for far too long.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

For some weeks now, the leader of the Bloc Québécois and his big brother, the leader of the PQ, have been talking about a fiscal imbalance of \$3.9 billion between Quebec and the Government of Canada. Does this figure reflect the reality?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois is certainly not very good at math. This morning, the Quebec finance minister criticized the sovereignist parties' manipulation of the facts. Contrary to what the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie said, the provincial finance minister wrote in most Quebec dailies, including *La Presse*, that he never put Quebec's fiscal demands at \$3.9 billion.

The Quebec finance minister concluded that the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois shamefully manipulate both figures and quotations.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Oral Questions

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, next week, the heritage minister is holding a major fundraiser and, for the price of a ticket, one gets access not just to the heritage minister but to the industry minister. The woman who is flogging the tickets for the minister just happens to be Charlotte Bell who is head of regulatory affairs for CanWest. She just happens to be the go-to gal for industry trying to influence the upcoming regulatory review affecting both heritage and industry.

The broadcast review happens in two weeks. The cash grab happens next week. Why is the minister using her office to trade political access for political contributions?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have observed every rule existing right now. I concur with the President of the Treasury Board that we need to get the accountability act enacted, which we could, in fact, do this afternoon, but I would still be adhering to the laws next week.

• (1445)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister does not even blush. Everybody knows that the television, broadcast and telecom review is up for grabs. That is the minister charged with the review. We have a lobbyist trying to influence that review and they all come together around a big fancy fundraiser.

I listened to her response. How tawdry. What a sad excuse.

Is the message from the government that if people want access to the reclusive minister, then they need to get out and hustle for her political machine?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Parliament has an amazing opportunity to change the way this city operates, to change politics and to eliminate the influence and the role of big money in politics, which is why the very first piece of legislation that the Prime Minister brought forward was to ban corporations and unions from making donations to any political party and to reduce from \$5,400 to \$1,000 the contributions to political parties.

The NDP has been a great ally in reform. If we could only have the support of the unelected Liberal Senate we could make this law today.

* * *

INCOME TRUSTS

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every day we hear more stories from main street Canadians, like Mr. Mitchell who lives in the finance minister's own riding, who have seen their savings evaporate by the Conservatives' double-cross.

Mr. Mitchell writes, "I am retired, 59 years of age, have no pensions, only investments in RRSPs. I am writing to express my outrage at your recent decision to tax trusts in spite of your election campaign promise to the contrary".

The Conservatives run multi-billion dollar surpluses and yet their first instinct is to attack investment vehicles that can make the difference between bare survival and dignified retirement. What does the minister—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are many letters and we have heard many of them, for example, from Thomas in Victoria. He said, "I'm a senior and a pensioner. I want to congratulate you both on the courage you had to impose a tax on distributions from income trusts. It had to be done but previous governments lacked the resolve to do it".

We also heard from Alice in Guelph, Ontario. She said, "I know we are more inclined to write when we oppose something a member of our government does. It must have taken a lot of courage to face up to the affected big businesses. You did good. We little people are proud"—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): It would be a novelty, Mr. Speaker, if the minister would answer his own constituent.

The minister has had a road to Damascus experience. He campaigns on one thing and then in office reverses himself. Who knew that the road to Damascus ran through Whitby?

I can see that the minister does not want to refer to his own announcement but no one is buying this line about ridiculous corporate taxes.

Mr. Mitchell goes on to say, "I feel robbed, raped, pillaged and definitely betrayed. The trusts in my portfolio were well researched, good quality stable businesses and purchased with the understanding that they would not tax trusts".

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Sue from Calgary wrote, "I am writing to applaud your decisive action in taxing income trusts. It is about time the government took action to stop the hemorrhaging of our tax dollars".

As Douglas from Kitchener, Ontario wrote, "Congratulations. This took some courage. As a small business owner, I agree with your decision to stop the mad rush to trust conversions. We need Canadians to invest and grow their businesses. I am involved with a number of U.S. companies that are aggressive and built for growth. We were turning Canadians into a nation of coupon clippers".

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only did the minority Conservative government break its promise on income trusts, but yesterday the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance said, "We are looking at allowing trusts to reconvert to corporations without tax consequences".

While the Conservatives are trying to find a way to help their corporate friends, all the Canadians who lost their shirts because of a Conservative deception get nothing.

Why does the Minister of Finance not care about ordinary Canadians who had their retirement plans go up in smoke?

Oral Questions

●(1450)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, only one party in the House supports the notion that large companies in this country should not pay their fair share of corporate taxes and that is the Liberal Party of Canada.

* * *

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only did the finance minister blow away lifetime savings of seniors, but now the Conservatives are also denying Canada's poorest seniors the support that was promised to them by the Government of Canada.

Because of the actions of the minority Conservative government, over 90,000 of Canada's poorest seniors will not receive their guaranteed income supplement. How could that be? It is because this group of Canada's poorest seniors missed the deadline set by the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development.

Why will the government not stop targeting seniors and guarantee that their cheques will be in the mail this week?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that the hon. member would be criticizing the department for following the same procedures that the hon. member's own government put in place. Nothing has changed in the way the programs were administered in the last several years. They are being done in the same way the previous government did.

That is why I have asked my officials to go ahead and try to find ways to prevent people from falling through the cracks.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program is not meeting the needs of the grain sector at all, and the government knows it.

How can the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food be satisfied with paying \$755 million to the grain sector when the American farm bill, applied to Canada, would be equivalent to \$3.5 billion in financial aid for Canada in 2006?

[English]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we realize that there are situations, especially in grains and oilseeds, where there has been a long term commodity price decline.

Thankfully, we are now experiencing some rebounding of those prices. We are very hopeful that prices, some at 10 and 15 year highs, will help the bottom line for farmers.

We are continuing to do programming. We started this year with grains and oilseeds programming directed at grains and oilseeds producers. We have changed the way that the CAIS program is

administered to get more money out. We will have \$2 billion going out between now and the end of the year directly to farmers.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister recognizes that there is a problem, but he is not doing anything. Grain producers in Quebec do not believe in magical thinking.

In a decision on March 15, 2006, the Canada Border Services Agency recognized that without dumping subsidies, the price of American corn imported into Canada would be 62% higher. Grain producers in Quebec cannot hold on for long against such heavily subsidized grain production in the United States.

How can the minister fail to see that grain production could disappear in the medium term if his government does not invest massive amounts in this sector?

[English]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are investing massively in the sector. We recognized there was a problem. During the last election, we campaigned on adding an extra half a billion dollars a year to the agricultural portfolio. This year we added \$1.5 billion extra dollars. A lot of that money is not just going to grains and oilseeds. It covers everything from science and technology to direct support systems for farmers.

The prices continue to rebound, and this is a good thing. We are working closely with provincial governments, in federal-provincial meetings, to ensure that farmers are looked after.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the time has come. The House unanimously supported the residential school agreement. A centrepiece to this agreement was to secure an apology to the survivors of the residential school for the atrocities that they suffered.

On behalf of my mother, my aunts, my uncles and my community, when will the Prime Minister offer a simple human apology to the survivors of the residential school?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows full well that the agreement was concluded under this government, and it was one that I have worked on very diligently. He is well aware also that the agreement, as structured, did not call for an apology. He is well aware that the agreement is currently working its way through the court system and that we are waiting to hear back. I have had regular briefings on the status of those court proceedings. I will advise the House accordingly once the court process has been completed.

•(1455)

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Montreal, elsewhere in Quebec and throughout the country, the phenomenon of street gangs is gaining ground and becoming a growing concern. The Bloc Québécois, doomed to remain in the opposition forever, will never be able to do anything to address this problem and support our adolescents and families.

Could the Minister of Public Safety explain to us what our new Conservative government intends to do to help young people at risk and thereby address the source of this problem?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of our government's five priorities is the safety of our communities. Yesterday in Montreal, I announced that we would invest \$10 million in Quebec for tackling street gangs and for local programs to protect young people from the effects and temptations of crime.

This is another good example of our fine cooperation with the Government of Quebec and with community organizations.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with a green plan that has environmentalists turning red, the federal government awash in billions of surplus dollars, the timing has never been better for the funding of meaningful environmental projects. An energy cogeneration facility at Hamilton's Stelco would reduce its production costs, massively decrease its energy consumption and reduce its greenhouse gas and smog emissions.

Will the finance minister finally show today that the government is committed to clean air and Canadian industry by funding this very worthwhile project?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly, technology is one of the keys to ensure that we can have cleaner air and we can address climate change. Our government feels that industry should take the lead on this, which is why we are introducing regulations that will push industry in the direction to make investments in their own technology. That is what we would like to see. We would like to see industry and the polluters pay. That is the principle by which we will govern in terms of our green plan.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what a shame. I thought the finance minister was going to respond.

The previous government did not act fast enough before its demise to secure the funding for this project and the Conservative government does not seem willing to act either.

For the thousands of people in Hamilton whose jobs depend on Stelco, and the 4,250 people who will seek emergency health care due to air quality related illnesses this year, I ask the finance

Oral Questions

minister, will he commit to supporting this important environmental and industrial project now?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member to support real regulations for industry, which is what we are putting forward, to ensure that industry invests in the kind of technology that will reduce air pollution, which will ensure that Canadians breathe cleaner air so we can have reduced childhood asthma and reduced lung cancer. Our government is focused on that. We will keep pushing industry in that direction.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the young professionals international program was an outstanding program that provided young people with the ability to gain valuable international experience, then come back and work in the Department of Foreign Affairs, in CIDA and in international NGOs. What did the Conservative government do? It shut it down. Without any rationale or explanation, the Conservative government cut this program.

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs explain to the House and Canadians why his government cut a program that enabled his department to acquire the young people it needed to continue to do its work?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to answer that question. It was in fact the previous government that cut this program and decided to wind it down.

The good news is the Department of Foreign Affairs will focus its international youth programs on opportunities for young Canadians, between the ages of 18 and 30, through programs consisting of four components: the working holiday program; the student work abroad program; the young workers exchange program; and the co-op education. These are comparable programs, more efficient and they target the same age.

Why did the member opposite have his government cut the programs?

* * *

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE BOARD

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal government the Immigration and Refugee Board appointments were highly politicized and developed in a place favoured for patronage appointments. Recently it has come to light that two refugee board judges have been misusing their powers and influences for highly inappropriate activities.

Could the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tell us what he is doing regarding the selection process of Immigration and Refugee Board members?

Points of Order

• (1500)

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are putting this review in place because the appointment system, which is there now, was put in place two years ago when a Liberal appointee was found to be in contravention of all kinds of Criminal Code activities, and is now spending six years in prison as a result of that.

We do not want to replicate that so we are reviewing the system. We want people on the board who are fair, accountable and competent. We have already started the process of reform. We have asked the IRB to work with us, and we have received 350 applications for new IRB positions.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has tried to balance his actions on income trusts with a package of measures for seniors, and that certainly is a step in the right direction. However, many other investors are also impacted.

Will the minister commit to giving Canadians a break by allowing the untaxed rollover of capital gains?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was a commitment in the platform with respect to working on capital gains. It is one of a number of issues that we are reviewing, studying and consulting with people on as we begin the preparations for the budget for next year.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Order, please. I would like to draw the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Dianne Whalen, Minister of Government Services and Lands for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. member members the presence in the gallery of well-known hockey personality and commentator and Kingston native, Don Cherry.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

When responding to one of my questions, the Minister of the Environment referred to the candidate I support in the current leadership race.

For her information, I would just like her to know that the candidate I support clearly stated that he would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50%, and perhaps even more, in 2050 compared to 1990 levels.

In addition, all the other Liberal candidates also have ambitious objectives. That compares very favourably with the Conservative plan, which refers only to 2003, with real reductions of only 31%.

The Speaker: The minister undoubtedly greatly appreciates this clarification.

[*English*]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster raised a point of order concerning the fact that he believed the international trade committee had exceeded its power in dealing with business before the committee. In your response to his point of order, Mr. Speaker, you pointed out that it dealt with matters that were dealt with by a committee, not by a chair making a unilateral decision to impose a rule. Therefore, you did not agree with his point of order.

However, I want to bring to your, Mr. Speaker, attention two new and additional concerns of which I believe you should be aware, and they concern this committee.

The first has to do with the fact that advertising was put forward. There was a listing for a televised hearing of the international trade committee, which yesterday or this morning was mysteriously and unilaterally cancelled, without notice and without any reason.

The committee did not make the decision to cancel the televised hearing. We do not know if it was the chair who unilaterally made that decision, or whether it was someone higher up at the ministerial level or the PMO. However, we believe this is a serious matter because the public relies upon televised hearings. They are advertised. They come to expect that it would be held for certain committees. Yet in this case, it was unilaterally cancelled.

Second, Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that this committee is now meeting without a break. Indeed, it sat through question period even though there were objections to that. I have never heard of a committee doing that. Usually there is a break during question period or for votes. Even if a majority of the committee members decided they wanted to do that, by doing so, they violated the privilege of one member, or any number of members, by preventing the member from coming to question period.

In fact, what has happened is the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, because he could not forfeit his right to deal with amendments clause by clause in that committee, had to forfeit his right to come to question period today. I find it astounding that this would be allowed to happen.

We would like to ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider this. We believe his privilege has been violated. He cannot even be here in the House right now to raise this question with you himself because he is stuck in the committee and cannot get out.

We want to know why televised hearings, which have been listed, can be unilaterally cancelled? This is something that should concern us all. Why was the member's privilege violated and why was he prevented from attending question period?

We would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to look into this and to give us a ruling.

Points of Order

• (1505)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The Chief Government Whip wishes to present arguments regarding the point of order raised by the hon. member for Vancouver East.

[*English*]

Hon. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order a couple of things come to mind.

First of all, as the Chair is well aware, not all standing committee meetings can be televised, so the cancellation of the televised proceedings of that particular committee could have been done for any number of reasons. We have some 20 to 25 standing committees and only three rooms have televised capability.

Second, as far as the extended sitting for this particular committee, as you know, Mr. Speaker, committees are masters of their own destiny. They make their own decisions about when they meet, how often they meet, and how long they meet. I would expect that the House would want to uphold the right of the Standing Committee on International Trade to do exactly that.

The Speaker: I think I can deal with the point of order raised by the hon. member for Vancouver East.

I fail to see the relevance of the argument she presented today to the argument that I received yesterday concerning the proceedings in the committee, and the allocation of time and so on for the deliberations of the committee.

However, the hon. member does raise the issue first regarding the televising of committee proceedings. I can only say that I could suggest that she have her colleague, who is a member of the committee, raise the matter in the committee as a point of order and complain there because the committee, as the hon. member knows, is master of its own proceedings.

If it decided or someone decided on its behalf or some decision was made not to televise the committee, I can only imagine the frightful disappointment in the eyes of the public who may have wanted to watch what was going on. That being the case, it is still a matter for the committee to decide whether or not its televising was cancelled improperly.

The hon. member's colleague, who is on the committee, ought to raise the matter as a point of order in the committee and have the chair of the committee deal with that point of order to find out how it was that something went wrong.

Her second argument dealt with the committee sitting through question period. I am sure she is aware that some members do miss question period from time to time. We do authorize committees to travel and be away from Ottawa all together on days when the House is sitting. Those members are torn because they either go travelling to hear evidence somewhere else or they remain here for question period and all the entertainment and information that that entails.

Trying to be very judicious in my choice of words, I do not think it is a breach of hon. members' privileges to be deprived of their opportunity to be in the Chamber for question period or indeed for some other part of the debate, unless of course they are being restrained from their attendance by an intervention from some third

party with the use of restraints. Then of course there would be a breach of privilege and the Speaker would be more than happy to intervene.

However, if a committee makes a decision to sit through question period or indeed, with the permission of the House, to travel somewhere else and have hearings during a day when we are sitting, I am afraid there is no question of privilege that the Chair can deal with to ameliorate the hon. members of the committee who do not want to go and who feel that they are being torn away from a very important aspect of House proceedings, namely question period.

While I can share the hon. member's concern on behalf of her colleague, again, it is a matter he should raise with the chair of the committee, present the argument in the committee, and convince his colleagues that sitting through question period is a waste of the committee's time. I am sure they would adjourn and come in here at the drop of a hat.

I would have to accordingly leave the matter in the hands of the committee.

• (1510)

[*Translation*]

PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to know under which Standing Order of the House of Commons is it acceptable to give a special greeting to an anti-francophone pseudo-commentator on national television who is against French Canadians and who has never had any intention of apologizing?

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer is well aware that there is a list of individuals available—if I may use that word—and that the Speaker may point out the presence of an individual in the gallery if such requests are made by the hon. members. We have a distinguished Canadian in the gallery who is well known and there was a request to point out his presence, which I did.

I accept the responsibility for having made the decision to do so. The list is there and the members can look at it.

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order.

You must not be aware of the history of the guest who you greeted and called a distinguished guest. He has distinguished himself by bashing French Canadians.

You should have known that and not pointed out his presence in this Chamber.

[*English*]

Hon. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just to ensure that you do not take the heat on this, as you correctly stated in your remarks, you received a formal request to recognize Mr. Cherry. That request came from me. I believe that Mr. Cherry is a distinguished Canadian. He is very well known to the public.

Government Orders

Regardless of whether individuals are controversial or not does not detract from the fact that they are well known to Canadians, are attending the chamber in the gallery, and I think it was very appropriate that the Speaker recognized him during his attendance.

* * *

• (1515)

[Translation]

WAYS AND MEANS

MOTION NO. 10

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC) moved that a ways and means motion to amend the Income Tax Act, tabled in Parliament on Thursday, November 2, 2006, be adopted.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier today, a recorded division is deemed demanded and deferred until 5:30 p.m. today.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, for the sake of clarity, we have had issues in the House recently and on several occasions the turmoil distracted from the exact proceedings of the House. Would you simply advise once again, because I could not hear you at all, what your disposition was with respect to the ways and means motion?

The Speaker: The vote was deemed demanded pursuant to order made earlier this day and deferred until 5:30 p.m. later this day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

AERONAUTICS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Aeronautics Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: When the House was last debating the matter now before us, the hon. member for Yukon had the floor and there are six and a half minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks.

We will hear now from the hon. member for Yukon.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take my hon. member's suggestion and wrap it up. I was actually at the end of my remarks.

I would like to conclude by saying that because this bill involves the safety of Canadians, it is very important that it gets careful consideration at committee, that the appropriate experts are called to committee from airline companies related to maintenance, labour laws and aircraft companies. Anyone who could provide input, such as experts in safety inspection, to ensure the modernization of the new rules will be in the best interests of Canadians and will increase the safety of Canadians, should be invited.

For that reason, the Liberals support this bill going to committee where it will receive a thorough investigation and no stone will be left unturned in ensuring the safety of Canadians.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-6. I want to note that my colleague, our critic for transportation, is presently tied up in a very important committee proceeding dealing with softwood lumber. The member would have loved to have been here to begin the debate on this bill from the point of view of the New Democratic Party. I am only too pleased to take his place and to put on record our deep concerns with this bill.

I want members to know right at the outset that we find this bill to be seriously flawed and needing more than simply a referral to committee for verification purposes or for purposes of checking to see whether or not it jeopardizes the safety of Canadians in any way. Rather, we see the importance of basically beginning again or, in fact, making such major amendments at committee that we can deal with these concerns.

Let us put this bill into perspective. It is allegedly an extensive rewriting of the Aeronautics Act. Members of the opposition were given a short briefing on the bill and found a number of concerns.

I want to be clear that we know from the outset that this is basically a Liberal government bill. It is roughly the same bill as that which was put before the House by the Liberals. Back then it was known as Bill S-33. It was slated to go through the Senate before the House. It was introduced last summer in the Senate by the transport minister and was subsequently challenged in the Senate by the Senate Conservatives and ruled out of order as a money bill. The bill then reappeared as Bill C-62 in the fall of 2005 where, of course, it died on the order paper with the election.

Here we are back at it. This time it is Bill C-6 and not much has changed from the days of Bill S-33 and Bill C-62. It is still a flawed bill.

I am surprised that the Conservatives chose not to address some of the serious shortcomings of this bill and actually bring forward a decent piece of legislation that could be supported by all members of the House. Clearly, we want to see some up-to-date, modern legislation in this era of rapid travel around the globe by air, given all the controversy around airlines these days, and the numbers of problems that people have run into such as the efficiency of airlines, costs and, of course, safety and security. It is a timely piece of legislation, but I am afraid that this bill just does not meet the goal.

As it now stands the NDP will have to oppose this bill. We will continue to oppose it until some major flaws are dealt with. In the meantime, we are consulting with stakeholders. We will be seeking input and advice from concerned Canadians and involved organizations all over this country to get the best advice possible.

Needless to say, it needs some more time or it needs to be scrapped. Members can pick, but I would almost prefer to scrap it and start again. If the government is intent upon bringing forward a regurgitated bill from the Liberals, then let us ensure that it is done properly.

Government Orders

We will be looking for serious consideration of our amendments which we will propose at committee to address the serious flaws in the bill. Those areas include new safety management systems, immunity from prosecution for airlines that violate safety rules under certain conditions, and heightened secrecy and more accurate information on the safety performance of airlines. Those will be the broad areas that we will look at in pursuing amendments at the committee stage.

• (1520)

Needless to say, there have been numerous concerns about the way in which government, the way in which both the Liberals and the Conservatives are dealing with this area of aeronautics policy and safety management systems.

One of the biggest concerns that we and other Canadians have is on accountability, accountability to Parliament, accountability to the people of Canada, open and transparent decision making, all of the things that the Conservatives said were intrinsic to their mandate, inherent in their philosophy and would be fundamental to the work they would do in this House. Yet here we are again, as we have been faced with on so many occasions over the last little while, with another example of the Conservatives deciding to let all that talk about accountability float off into thin air and be set aside in the interests of expediency and, I would guess, extreme ideology.

Speaking of extreme ideology, it is interesting that today we received the news that the government has appointed an extreme right-wing thinker, Dr. Brian Lee Crowley, to the very important position of special adviser or visiting economist in the Department of Finance.

On a personal basis I have nothing against Brian Crowley. In fact, 30 years ago this year we were both parliamentary interns in this place. At that time Brian Crowley was a rather progressive individual. I thought if anything he was leaning toward the New Democratic Party, but clearly he has had a metamorphosis along life's journey and has emerged at the other end of his life as a radically extreme right-wing individual who has the audacity to oppose such fundamental policies as pay equity for women. He feels that is not a real public policy issue and has no basis in fact in terms of it being an economic question and a fundamental human rights issue. He opposes employment insurance on most accounts. He has recommended basically a continental integration scheme between Atlantic Canada and the Atlantic northeastern states. He has certainly spoken out against notions that are important for this country such as equalization and sharing of resources and talent across this land.

I found it very interesting that the Minister of Finance named him as his special adviser, filling a very important position in the Department of Finance. I thought that with some of the minister's recent statements and some of his concerns about corporations paying their fair share of taxes he had seen the light and was coming around to more New Democratic thinking. I thought he was beginning to realize the importance of a more balanced approach on economic and fiscal matters, and then he turned around and did something like this today. I do not know.

Needless to say, that is an indication of where the government really is going. It is probably a good thing that this happens every so often, that the government will make one of its patronage

appointments just like it did in terms of climate change. It appointed to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council someone whose thinking is alien to the very notion of climate change. And here we are with someone from a right-wing think tank in Atlantic Canada in the Department of Finance.

Maybe it is a good thing, because then we really get to understand and see that despite all their attempts at trying to portray themselves as warm and fuzzy Conservatives, they are really hard-nosed extreme right-wing reactionaries. These kinds of appointments actually remind us what kind of battle we are in, what we are up against and how we always have to be vigilant. We should never let our guard down. We must always question authority, as we tell our children, question government and continue to push and press and fight for change.

• (1525)

Today we are dealing with the Aeronautics Act. On a fundamental issue of accountability, safety and security of people in this country, the government once again is going the route of expediency rather than the route of what is in the best interests of Canadians.

Let me go through a few of our concerns. Let us start with safety management systems. For members who are interested, this issue is found in clause 12 of Bill C-6. That clause seeks to give authority to the governor in council to establish and implement management systems, better known as safety management systems, or SMS. It is important to note that this is at the very heart of the changes to the Aeronautics Act that will affect the safety of the travelling public and crew members.

This process of SMS is well under way and it is being quarterbacked by the director general of civil aviation, Mr. Merlin Preuss. It is important to note there are real concerns about this whole approach in the bill. There must be strong accountability measures built into the bill and there must be a clear attempt to protect the public interest. Our question is how is the public interest protected under SMS?

It would seem that if anything, there will be increased reliance on time consuming and costly lawsuits to deal with inevitable systems failures. Many of these problems and complaints will be initiated by the victims or the surviving families of these breakdowns. Let us face it; we have to think about the future, and if we have not put in place an ironclad safety system that is not so overwhelmed by process and leads to possible lawsuits, we are only asking for doom and gloom or disastrous consequences.

It should be noted that Transport Canada officials have candidly admitted that some U.S. Federal Aviation Administration officials have said that Canadians are giving away the store with SMS. That whole area is of deep concern to us. I could go on at length about some of the problems under SMS, for example, that it will be the airlines that decide safety levels for the travelling public. Robert Milton will now be safeguarding the public interest. Henceforth Air Canada's bottom line will be the factor in setting safety levels for that airline.

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I could talk about the fact that there will be a consequent shift in relationship between airlines and Transport Canada. As Marc Grégoire, the ADM of safety and security has said:

There must also be a willingness on the part of the regulator to step back from involvement in the day-to-day activities of the company in favour of allowing organizations to manage their activities and related hazards and risks themselves.

We would like to see this whole area dealt with in a serious way, if not by throwing out this bill and starting again, then certainly by the Conservatives accepting some very major amendments to the bill. That is one concern.

Let me go to another one that has to do with the delegation of rule setting to private bodies, obviously a deep concern. Whenever we give away authority from Parliament or an authorized body, then we are causing problems for ourselves down the road. I am referring to clause 12, the new parts of section 5 of the act.

● (1530)

Through SMS we are supposed to enhance aviation safety because it supposedly builds on a robust set of minimum standards set by Transport Canada in the public interest. In the various public and private statements, there have been very evasive comments on the level of basic regulation that will be maintained in the future.

We are concerned, given the way the legislation is worded and given the rather vague description around all of this in the bill, that actions will speak louder than words. Transport Canada has already transferred the actual operation of the regulatory regime for certain classes of air operators entirely to the private sector. It has done so even though the new section 5.31 in clause 12 of the bill has yet to be passed authorizing such designation to organizations. That is shocking. Here again the Conservatives are doing exactly the opposite of what their words intended, which was to allow for due process and to ensure open and transparent actions and to put in place strong measures of accountability.

This transfer which was not authorized in any way actually occurred for business aircraft in March 2005. Who is next? What else will happen? Transport Canada is now openly speaking about doing the same for commercial operators, most recently at the Canadian aviation safety seminar last April in Halifax.

I guess the fox is in charge of the hen house. If not now, certainly soon the foxes will be running their own hen houses. It fits with the general philosophy of the Conservatives who have often said that the least government is the best government. Their idea of government is very narrowly focused. When they think of government they think of very narrow specific roles for government.

An hon. member: Hear, hear!

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised any Conservative would yell hear, hear at this point. We are talking about people's safety. We are talking about travelling in a mode of transportation that has huge risks, and we know those risks. We do not have to go very far to hear about them. When we turn on the TV we can hear about different air crashes and serious loss of life as a result of problems with our air transportation system. I do not want to exaggerate the point, but goodness gracious, when we are talking about human safety, surely we would want to make sure this area has very strong accountability measures built in and that it is in the hands

of government and that members of the Conservative government would want to have some control over the whole process and do the right thing.

Since I only have a minute left, let me conclude by referring to an article written by Sue Lott, who is counsel for the Public Interest Advocacy Centre. She made a very important statement:

Transport Canada should win the prize for the most secretive government department.

Conflicted by its dual mandate to both safeguard travellers and ensure Canadian airlines remain economically viable, it's no wonder Transport Canada has many things to hide.

Consider, for example, the airline industry's cost saving proposal to fly with up to 25% fewer flight attendants. Transport Canada supports these cuts, even though it denied a similar rule change in 2001 because of safety concerns.

Why is it safe now when it wasn't safe in 2001?

Canadians may never know. The current Access to Information law has loopholes that allow Transport Canada to withhold this vital safety information from the public and hide evidence that is damaging to their planned regulatory change.

Near the end of her article, she said:

Passengers on the ill-fated Air France jet that crashed last summer in Toronto can attest to the value of having enough safety professionals on board. All passengers and crew survived in spite of the plane bursting into flames within seconds of coming to a halt, thanks to the full complement of flight attendants on board.

Transport Canada is one of many government departments with a highly developed culture of secrecy that must be broken and broken soon. The safety of the travelling public could well depend on it.

For that reason and others I have enunciated in my remarks today, we believe that the bill needs to be thoroughly overhauled and major amendments accepted by the government before its passage.

● (1535)

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was rather surprised that at the beginning of the member's speech she became rather shockingly vitriolic and demagogic about the appointment of a very distinguished Canadian as the Clifford Clark visiting economist to the Department of Finance. I think the hon. member and Canadians should know that Mr. Crowley is the founding member of the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, a policy think tank. He has published many books and papers on a wide range of public policy from a wide range of perspectives.

He has taken a leadership role in work on equalization, health care, Canada-U.S. relations, public school performance, accountability, employment insurance reform, natural resources, public finances and regional development policy. In addition, I can advise Canadians that Mr. Crowley holds degrees from McGill, an honours B.A., the London School of Economics, a master of science and economics, and a Ph.D. in political economy. He is also a former member of the editorial board of the *Globe and Mail*.

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I am puzzled and rather shocked that anyone in the House would suggest that such a distinguished individual, a Canadian with an incredibly wide perspective and experience, would not be an ideal appointment to this post of visiting economist.

I ask my friend, what does she have against Atlantic Canada?

● (1540)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. First of all, from talking to some folks in Atlantic Canada, I know that they are sort of happy he has moved on to the Department of Finance so that he is not quite so in their face all the time.

Let me also say that, as I said at the outset, I have nothing against Brian Crowley. I know him quite well, at least from 30 years ago, and I think he is a fine person. He has a lot wonderful credentials that I do not dispute and think are important.

What I disagree with are his ideological bent and his public policy leanings, which I think are hurtful and harmful to the future of this country. For example, on health care, Mr. Brian Crowley has taken a very strong position of being against universally accessible, publicly administered, not for profit health care and in fact has been one of the major advocates of a parallel private health care system.

Dr. Brian Crowley has also very recently been in the news for taking his very strong position against equal pay for work of equal value. Here we are, on the very day that we are debating the report by the status of women committee, which is asking for the implementation, finally, of a report that was undertaken by the Liberals and then allowed to gather dust. It is asking that to be implemented to ensure that the notion of pay equity is recognized, acknowledged, supported and put into law, entrenched into all aspects of decision making, so that women are finally paid what they are worth.

Since when does it make public policy sense or good economic sense to pay women 60¢ for every \$1 that a man makes for doing roughly comparable equal work? These are the kinds of issues that cause me and many others grave concern when we hear about the likes of Dr. Brian Crowley being appointed into the Department of Finance, directly into the bureaucracy where he will have enormous influence over future decisions that will shape the department to take a certain direction long after these Conservatives are defeated and gone from office.

It is an insidious way of accomplishing one's objectives without actually being up front, open, honest and accountable to the people of Canada. He is not there because he achieved a certain competition. He is not there because of a particular expertise that the minister needs in terms of fiscal planning, let us say. It is just like the fact that we saw a person who is totally opposed to climate change appointed to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council. We are seeing the same thing happen on numerous fronts, causing, of course, this true portrayal, this true position of the Conservatives, to come to light and reveal to Canadians exactly where they stand, and that is with a set of values that are contrary to those of most Canadians in the country today.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while I thank the member from Winnipeg North for her intervention on Bill C-6, I want to remind her that it was on Bill C-6 that she stood to

read somebody else's speech and then segued into finance and a number of other areas, doing a fine job as a parliamentarian and not answering any questions.

As a warm and fuzzy Conservative, or an alien, because I do not remember what she called me, I do have a question. She talked about accountability and an open and due process and how the bill has been in front of the House and the Senate numerous times.

What does she think about the committee process that Parliament has had for many years? In regard to those amendments, she finally got to at least one of them. I am not sure if she said there were three. I only heard about one. Does she not think that at least those amendments could be dealt with at committee? They may or may not be approved, but is it not an open and accountable process that Parliament always has had? Why is she not in favour of getting this to committee?

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, obviously I hold out hope that through the committee process we will be able to do the proper amendments to eliminate the serious flaws in the bill.

For the member's information, and since he obviously was not listening, I listed three areas that need amendments. I will repeat them. They are: new safety management systems, and I talked at some length about the problems there; immunity from prosecution for airlines that violate safety rules under certain conditions; and heightened secrecy and less access to information on the safety performance of airlines.

Those are the three areas that I said have to be addressed in terms of amendments. Obviously we had hoped that since this was a flawed bill to begin with we would have seen some of these issues dealt with. I thought the Conservatives understood this when the Liberals brought forward this bill in the last Parliament. We are disappointed. We will be working hard to continue to raise these issues.

I want to be clear that we cannot support a bill that is so flawed. The whole process around the bill constitutes an abuse of the supremacy of Parliament. The substance of the bill causes deep concerns. We have major issues with respect to Bill C-6 and the process around it. We will work hard to improve the bill, but obviously we will not take a two-faced position and give support now when we are so deeply concerned about it.

If the member has the support to get this bill to committee, we will debate it there and we will try to improve it. I just hope that he and a majority of members on the committee are willing to take these amendments seriously and improve the bill.

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• (1545)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I saw a report in a newspaper regarding airline safety. It referenced the Air France crash of last year. One of the things it spoke about was the crew on that flight. One of the things that happens to people when they are in their seats and are so used to having a seat belt on is that they forget to push a button. In the shock of the situation, they do not lift the lever and that is why so many people who are in a fatal crash are found in their seats.

To my mind, what we are talking about is the deregulation of the safety aspects of the airline industry. At least two years ago, Bill S-33 was denied in the Senate and then Bill C-62 died on the order paper because there was no will to move it along.

On the immunity to prosecution, does the hon. member not think it would be better if the bill just died?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member has 20 seconds to reply.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I would have to agree with my esteemed colleague from Hamilton. If the bill is so flawed that it cannot be overhauled in a major way and if the committee process does not give serious attention to major amendments, it ought to be shelved.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak on this subject.

The proposed amendments to the Aeronautics Act will help to improve the safety of Canada's military aviation system. In order to fully appreciate the need for the proposed amendments to the Aeronautics Act, a brief explanation of this flight safety program would be beneficial.

Unfortunately, aircraft accidents have been part of aviation since its inception. This was highlighted during the first world war. In the Canadian air training system alone, there were 56 accidents involving 48 fatalities between April 1917 and May 1918. In those days, flight safety was a secondary consideration. The prime focus of the organization was to complete the mission at all costs.

This attitude prevailed during the interwar years and the early stages of World War II, but as the war progressed, the air force determined that aircraft losses due to accidents equalled or exceeded operational losses. It became obvious that Canada could not continue to sustain this high accident rate and that some standards and measures of safety had to be created. Accordingly, in 1942 the Royal Canadian Air Force Aircraft Accident Investigation Board was formed.

It is interesting for me to speak in the House on this subject. During the war, my dad was in the air force and was stationed in southern Alberta. Southern Alberta is one of the areas that pilots trained in because the terrain was very similar to that of France, so these air force training facilities are scattered throughout southern Alberta. My dad was on the force that recovered and salvaged damaged airplanes. The one comment I remember him making was that he was surprised we were able to have any planes at all in theatre, what with the number of planes being damaged here in Canada.

One of the prized possessions I have in my home is the centre part of a propeller off one of these airplanes. I believe it was an Anson. It is just the centre part because the blades were broken off and buried in the ground. I have the brass bolts that held the propeller on and just the centre part. I prize it very much. However, for me to be speaking on aircraft safety some 60 years later and referring to what happened during the war is possibly more than just ironic.

The mandate of this board was to reduce non-operational losses through the investigation of aircraft accidents. That was a very tall order. Unfortunately, not much progress was made in accident prevention prior to the end of the war.

During demobilization following the second world war, the Aircraft Accident Investigation Board was downsized and eventually, in the early 1950s, renamed the Directorate of Flight Safety. This small directorate was overwhelmed by the rapid expansion of the Royal Canadian Air Force in the early 1950s as a result of the Korean conflict and the cold war.

Once again the concept of flight safety apparently took a back seat to completing the mission, as the air force suffered 405 fatalities and lost 476 aircraft in accidents between 1953 and 1957. This loss rate could not be sustained, so in 1957 the chief of the air staff directed that the development of an effective flight safety program receive the highest priority.

One of the first steps taken was to employ carefully selected pilots and engineers with specialized training for the investigation of aircraft accidents. The mandate of these investigators was to find the true cause of accidents so that effective corrective measures could be identified and implemented. Accident investigators were no longer required to assign blame.

Over the next 10 years, this new approach to flight safety resulted in a gradual reduction in the losses of both personnel and aircraft. By the early 1970s, a formal comprehensive flight safety program was developed and the *Manual of Flight Safety for the Canadian Forces* was published.

The objective of the flight safety program continues to be the prevention of the accidental loss of aviation resources. Today, this program consists of three basic elements: analysis, education and promotion. Let me explain each of these.

The first, analysis, involves the investigation of aircraft occurrences and the analysis of information derived from those investigations. The program is designed to foster a culture of free and open reporting as well as voluntary acknowledgement of errors and omissions.

• (1550)

All personnel associated with air operations are encouraged to report all hazards and potential hazards to the safety of the operation. This includes the reporting of occurrences where there were no injuries to personnel and no damage to equipment, but there was potential for loss.

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In the current system, each flight safety occurrence is recorded and, if necessary, investigated. The occurrence information is also entered into a database of the flight safety occurrence management system for analysis. Approximately 2,500 to 3,000 occurrences are recorded annually in this database.

In order to foster voluntary reporting, a long-standing policy of treating information provided to the flight safety system as privileged has been in place. This means that the information provided by personnel to the flight safety program would not be used for administrative, disciplinary or legal purposes.

This is a critical component of the Canadian Forces flight safety program. By not assigning blame, personnel are encouraged to admit their mistakes, allowing others to learn from their mistakes. This gives investigators a much better opportunity to determine what exactly happened during an occurrence, since there is no need to hide anything.

The second element, education, involves the formal training of flight safety specialists. These specialists are then employed as flight safety advisers to commanders at various levels in the chain of command. These advisers work directly for the commander and have direct access to the commander on flight safety matters.

The third element, promotion, involves raising awareness of the flight safety program with the military and civilian personnel who conduct or support flying operations in training. This is done through a system of regular briefings, posters and pamphlets, such as *Flight Comment*, an illustrative flight safety magazine that is published four times a year and distributed to all Canadian Forces units. A testament to the quality of this magazine is that over 40 countries have requested that they regularly be provided with copies of this publication.

Over the years, our military personnel have grown to trust the flight safety program and it has now become part of the air force culture. This program is very effective and has gained a reputation as one of the best in the world.

The military flight safety program is administered by a network of trained flight safety specialists who are an integral part of each flying unit, as well as each unit involved in the support of aircraft operations.

Unit flight safety staff are assisted by wing flight safety personnel, who are normally employed full time in running the wing flight safety program. A full time staff of six personnel supports the flight safety program of the Commander of the 1 Canadian Air Division in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This staff is also responsible for conducting the basic and advanced flight safety courses that are used to train flight safety specialists. The 1 Canadian Air Division flight safety staff also regularly conducts flight safety surveys at the wings and units.

At National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa, the director of flight safety has a staff of 21 personnel who administer the flight safety program on behalf of the Chief of the Air Staff. Their activities include the oversight of the flight safety promotions program, the management of the flight safety occurrence database and associated software, and the analysis of trends and the information contained in the database.

The director of flight safety is also the Airworthiness Investigative Authority for the Minister of National Defence. As such, 12 members of his staff receive specialized aircraft accident investigator training from accredited international accident investigation training establishments. This training is exactly the same as that undertaken by the Transportation Safety Board air accident investigators and other aviation investigation organizations.

These military investigators are responsible for preparing the final reports on all investigations for the Airworthiness Investigative Authority's approval.

Canada has a robust military flight safety program, however, circumstances change and the Canadian Forces flight safety program must continue to evolve.

Bill C-6 would help the Canadian Forces adapt to a recent change, including the involvement of far more civilian contractors in the conduct and support of air operations. This change has resulted in a gap in the current authorities for Canadian Forces flight safety investigators when they are dealing with civilian contractors. As the minister noted, Bill C-6 would close this gap.

• (1555)

In order to allow the Canadian flight safety program to continue to meet its objective of maintaining a safe workplace for our military and civilian personnel who are conducting their operations, it is important that they have all the tools needed to do this important job.

The proposed amendments to the Aeronautics Act will give them those tools and ensure that the critical objectives for the flight safety program are met.

The Canadian Forces has made a significant investment in the flight safety program over the last 60 years. This investment is critical as our military cannot afford to lose personnel and equipment due to aircraft accidents. In addition, this investment has paid off as it has been a key factor in reducing the aircraft loss rates of the 1950s to the low levels that we see today.

The Canadian Forces maintains a cadre of highly trained accident investigators to ensure that the causes of aircraft accidents can be quickly determined and the appropriate safety measures put in place to eliminate or reduce the risk of recurrence.

The proposed amendments to the Aeronautics Act will help this excellent program adapt to changing times and ensure that the flight safety program continues to be as effective as it has been in the past.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am a little baffled. How can he possibly feel that added immunity from prosecution for airlines that violate certain safety rules under certain conditions, or heightened secrecy with less access to the information on the safety and performance of airlines, which have been endemic in Bill S-33, Bill C-62 and now in Bill C-6, make airlines safer?

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•(1600)

Mr. Rick Casson: Mr. Speaker, I reject the premise of his question. I believe the amendments put forward in this act, whether civilian or military, to do with aeronautic safety will make things safer.

As I have outlined in my presentation, through the evolution of the aircraft industry and the growth of aircraft operations in the world, we have had to adjust as government to this reality. I believe the process and the evolution of these programs over a period of time has helped to create safety in the aircraft industry and aeronautics in general.

The member's question is somewhat misplaced, if we look at the record. Over the period of time, and if we go back for 60 years and more forward, we have seen marked improvement in aeronautic safety.

I believe Bill C-6 would fill some gaps, allowing further safety measures to be implemented. I look forward to the bill being put into law because the safety of all Canadians, not only our military personnel as I indicated in my presentation, is critical to this government.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been following this debate with some interest. I know there were been wide-ranging consultations as the bill was in development. I remind the House of some of the stakeholders. They include the Air Transport Association of Canada, the Canadian Airports Council, NAV CANADA, the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association, the Airline Pilots Association and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Airline Division. As members in the House know, the Department of National Defence is co-sponsoring the bill.

Has my colleague from Lethbridge taken, in anyway, the concerns of CUPE to heart? Could he speak to those and let me know how his government attempts to address those very real concerns that have been put before the House?

Mr. Rick Casson: Mr. Speaker, I must admit that my intervention today is concerned with issues facing the air force and our military personnel. I am not aware of the issues that CUPE might have brought forward. However, I indicated in my presentation that one of the gaps we found was that some of this work was being performed by contractors. Possibly this is a concern that some have as far as unions and such go.

Overall, whether it is interventions by CUPE or the other organizations that have put forward the recommendations and suggestions to the government, the end focus of the bill is to improve the safety of our airline industry and our aircraft in general.

I will take the point the member makes that there were interventions from many sources to deal with many angles of the industry. However, the scope of Bill C-6 is to ultimately make our industry safer for all Canadians, not only our people in the air force and in our national defence and military.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me ask my hon. colleague from the Conservative Party about the issue I raised in my speech, for which I have yet to receive a satisfactory response. It has to do with the actual changes that were

made by Transport Canada, even though there is no legislative authority for such changes.

Specifically, I refer to the fact that Transport Canada has already transferred the actual operation of the regulatory regime entirely to the private sector for certain classes of air operators. It seems to me that this is exactly what is entailed in part of the bill before us. The bill gives that authority for delegation of authority.

How is it possible for that to have happened already? How did that transfer occur in March of 2005? What other changes are being planned along the same lines? Is the member satisfied that the public's interests and questions about public safety will be protected, when rule-setting is now being transferred to private bodies, away from government and outside the parameters of parliamentary checks and balances?

•(1605)

Mr. Rick Casson: Mr. Speaker, as we know, being members of Parliament, there is legislation plus there is regulation involved in most bills that come forward. If there have been some regulatory changes, they would have been made under the guidance of overriding legislation.

On the issue of parliamentary oversight, we take very seriously the safety of Canadians as they travel back and forth across Canada and around the world. Whether it is a service provided by a private sector or through the public, there is legislation that governs the regulation, that provides the incentive to improve the system is how a lot of the system works.

The fact that we are today debating a bill dealing with aeronautical safety proves my point. The government is aware of the issues that are there. We realize some of it is dealt through regulation, some through legislation. The process that we are going through today on Bill C-6 is the legal aspect of preparing legislation that will govern the industry.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues today in speaking in opposition to Bill C-6.

As others have said earlier, the bill constitutes an extensive rewriting of the Aeronautics Act. It is a bill that was introduced by the previous government but had not been passed into law. Nevertheless, key pieces of this proposed legislation had been put in place under the direction of the former transport minister. We believe that these changes should be dealt with in Parliament by members elected to consider new legislation.

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The issues dealt with in Bill C-6, which would amend the Aeronautics Act, are very broad: a new purpose clause; new safety management systems; immunity from prosecution for airlines that violate safety rules under certain conditions; heightened secrecy and less access to information on the safety performance of airlines; designation of private industry bodies to self-regulate their safety activities; new employee reporting procedures for hazards and risks; revamped enforcement mechanisms; new levels of fines; new administrative penalties; new airport zoning and land use rules; new procedures for investigations; permission for the operation of fractional ownership aircraft in Canada; abuse of exemptions procedure; changes to the procedures for review of ministerial decisions and actions; and a host of technical issues are dealt with in the bill.

We have identified, through our analysis, a number of problems with Bill C-6 in some key areas that I will now review. The first area concerns the safety management systems. This seeks to give authority to the governor in council to establish and implement management systems, better known as safety management systems or SMS. This is the heart of the change to the Aeronautics Act that will affect the safety of the travelling public and of crew members.

A number of airline crew members who live in my riding have contacted me in the past out of concern, for example, about increasing the ratio of crew members to passengers. They are concerned with their own safety and the public welfare, as they are trained to be.

We know that the SMS process is well underway, quarterbacked by Transport Canada's director general of Civil Aviation. Some of these regulations have already been passed by the *Canada Gazette*. They were then exempted the same day by Transport Canada officials and replaced with a three year implementation plan for safety management systems, even before Parliament had the opportunity to debate, much less approve, this new enabling legislation. They are now near the end of the first year of the SMS implementation.

What is this new system? It is supposed to be a management system that allows air operators to improve their safety levels by building on existing safety regulations. While Transport Canada insists that SMS is not a deregulation of safety, that is precisely what it is in two ways. First, it is a new role for the regulator with increased delegation of previously performed Transport Canada duties to the airlines themselves. We are talking about self-regulation as opposed to government regulation. It is a transfer of the determination of appropriate "risk levels" from Transport Canada to the airlines or from the public interest to a determination in the interests of private shareholders.

Transport Canada embraced SMS as a result of anticipated budget cuts even before the May 2 budget. Transport Canada officials have openly stated that the current safety framework is not sustainable due to a lack of technical personnel in the industry in the future.

• (1610)

Given the anticipated rate of inspector retirements, which is at the rate of about 40% over the next five years, this will mean a shortage of qualified personnel to oversee the current system.

Budget constraints are expected to continue for the foreseeable future in an era of what is called fewer regulatory resources. These resources are the inspectors enforcing the regulations that determine the safety of the travelling public, not to mention the crew members working in the industry.

Internal budget documents indicate flatline resources for Transport Canada aviation for the next two years, with a more than 5% cut beginning in 2008. However, Transport Canada has refused to provide internal documents to one of the unions involved, CUPE.

SMS is Transport Canada's way to cut its coat to fit a quite limited financial cloth. As a result, there will be a shifting relationship between airlines and Transport Canada. An assistant deputy manager for safety and security was quoted in an aviation magazine saying:

There must (be) a willingness on the part of the regulator to step back from involvement in the day-to-day activities of the company in favour of allowing organizations to manage their activities and related hazards and risks themselves.

This was done through SMS regulations, where the determination of the level of safety has been explicitly transferred to the air operators who will decide how to manage the risks, including the level of risk they are willing to accept in their operations and impose on air travellers and their employees. Under SMS, it will be the airlines that decide safety levels for the traveling public.

The head of Air Canada will now be safeguarding the public interest. Air Canada's bottom line will be the factor in setting safety levels for that airline. Transport Canada staff admitted, as late as last December, that such a redefinition of the role of the minister raises legal questions about the government's responsibility and liability for future system failures. It is also a naive and dangerous change in the relationship between Transport Canada and the airline industry.

Maintaining adequate safety costs money and the public counts on government regulations and the enforcement of those regulations to ensure their safety. However, SMS will foster a tendency to cut corners in the name of efficiencies in a very competitive aviation market wracked by high fuel prices. Today wine bottles are being abandoned to lessen aircraft weight and save a few litres of very expensive jet fuel.

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What will happen to safety when the need to save money and make profits is paramount? Leaving enlightened business to manage themselves properly will not mean that safety will take care of itself. How will the public interest be protected under SMS? If anything, there will be increased reliance on time-consuming and costly lawsuits to deal with inevitable system failures initiated by the victims of surviving families of these breakdowns. We simply cannot let this happen.

Transport Canada officials have candidly admitted that some U.S. federal aviation administration officials have said that Canadians are giving away the store with SMS.

I would like to say a few words now about the delegation of rule-setting to private bodies. This is found in the bill's clause 12, specifically the new proposed subsections 5.31 through 5.38. SMS is supposed to enhance aviation safety because it builds on a robust set of minimum standards set by Transport Canada in the public interest.

In its various public and private statements, Transport Canada has been evasive on the future of the level of basic regulation it will maintain in the future. However, actions speak louder than words. Transport Canada has already transferred the actual operation of its regulatory regime entirely to the private sector for certain classes of air operators. It has done so even though new proposed subsection 5.31 of clause 12 of this bill has yet to be passed authorizing such a delegation to organizations. This transfer occurred for business aircraft in March 2005. Who is next?

• (1615)

Transport Canada is now openly speaking about doing the same for commercial operators, most recently at the Canadian aviation safety seminar in Halifax last April. The foxes will be running their own hen houses and it is up to us as parliamentarians to represent the public interest, the interest of Canadians and blow the whistle on this. We cannot let this happen.

We know the government has a very narrow view of the rule of government but we cannot play around with the safety of the travelling public.

The concept of management systems is not defined in Bill C-6. Rather, the key definitions of safety management systems and accountable executives and the basic elements of SMS are confined entirely to the already enacted regulations. While safety management systems exist already in Canada in railway security, Nav Canada and in other countries, not all SMS are created equal.

Key deficiencies in the current aviation version of safety management systems include: under intense industry pressure, the personal liability of the accountable industry for the proper functioning of the SMS has not been added to the Aeronautics Act; the definition of SMS contains only a vague purpose, which is "to ensure aviation safety or the safety of the public", rather than a specific and achievable performance objective, such as, to reduce risks to the lowest level reasonably practicable; an emphasis on managing risks, rather than eliminating, controlling or minimizing them; the absence of clear and measurable requirements for continuous improvement in the SMS itself; the disappearance of a promised regulatory provision to ensure the effective involvement of employees and their unions in the development, implementation and

operation of SMS; established minimum elements to be part of SMS's safety policy, including adherence to minimum legal and regulatory requirements; and, poorly defined risk matrices that have more to do with technical engineering standards than human failures of the costs of human injury.

The biggest failing of Transport Canada's SMS is that it has not been empirically validated against the actual track records of similar SMS where they have performed poorly, failed or missed their objectives.

I would like to speak briefly about the encroachment of SMS on part II of the Canada Labour Code, which addresses occupational health and safety for workers in the federal jurisdiction.

As "notwithstanding any other act of Parliament" legislation, part II of the code has exclusive authority to deal with occupational health and safety for these workers.

Flight attendants and pilots were added to the scope of part II in 1986 as an aviation extended jurisdiction shared between Transport Canada and the labour program of what is now HRSDC. Part II of the code provides a series of important rights. It provides the right for working people to know workplace hazards. It has a hierarchy of proactive measures to deal with such hazards, such as, eliminate, control, minimize and self-protect. It gives workers the right to refuse unsafe work and the right to participate, including in joint employee-employer investigations and inspections.

The introduction of SMS has emboldened employers to try to turn the clock back before 1986 for flight attendants. Safety data available by law to joint occupational health and safety committees are now being routinely denied by air operators as part of the new SMS confidentiality mentality.

Employee occupational health and safety representatives are being excluded routinely from legally mandated joint occupational health and safety investigations in favour of management only SMS investigations. Managers are applying risk indices to determine if corrective action should be taken on health and safety issues contrary to the precautionary principle found in sections 122.1 and 122.2 of the Canada Labour Code.

• (1620)

Air operators such as Air Canada and Air Transat are openly disregarding a joint Transport Canada-HRSDC interpretation document on SMS by integrating health and safety committees into their new SMS programs with the resulting denigration of employee rights.

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Transport Canada inspectors, who enforce health and safety under a memorandum of understanding with HRSDC, have limited ability to enforce code rights when their senior managers have overwhelmingly embraced SMS. SMS must be carefully circumscribed within the Aeronautics Act, so that it does not subsume, impact or denigrate other existing rights provided under part II of the code.

There are new, very complex but distinct levels of confidential reporting associated with immunity provisions or protection from reprisals in Bill C-6 and promulgated under SMS regulations. There are three levels of such reporting and immunity. At the air operator level, the SMS regulations call for employers to implement a non-punitive safety reporting policy that requires employees to voluntarily report safety hazards and other problems to air operators. The conditions under which protection from discipline is available to employees can be imposed by the air operator or possibly negotiated with the union.

At the level of Transport Canada, proposed new subsection 5.392 (1) stipulates that safety information from an air operator or its employees that comes into the minister's possession will be confidential. It can only be provided to the courts if it is de-identified or if the air operator is about to be shut down. This proposed new section adds that this information, including self-reporting contraventions of the law and regulations, cannot be used against the provider of the information to impose any penalties. Such information will also be beyond the reach of the Access to Information Act.

At a national level a new section would allow a person, conceivably employees or air operators, to report safety information and violations of the law and regulations without fear of reprisal subject to specified limitations on immunity in another new section by a yet to be created national safety body. This information will also become a mandatory exclusion from the Access to Information Act and be held in confidence.

The premise of these changes is that air operator employees may be reluctant to report their mistakes if they fear reprisals from their employers or Transport Canada, but these legislative changes go far beyond this, making all safety information now confidential. This new culture of secrecy has already limited the operation of joint occupational health and safety committees under part II of the code.

The minister's April 27 news release describes these amendments as allowing individuals and operators to confidentially report, on a voluntary basis, less safety critical regulatory violations, but clearly, there is a real concern that this will give the operators a get out of jail free card for self-reported violations of the law or regulations to Transport Canada with no enforcement taken on the self-reported regulations.

In summary, my concern is that this bill would mean more secrecy and would be a threat to the safety of the Canadian travelling public. It would provide operators working in the industry less access to information and action about the hazards that they are facing. I do not believe that this is in the best interests of either people who work in the industry or the travelling public. I urge hon. members to oppose this bill.

● (1625)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member's words today took me back to the time when Ronald Reagan fired all the air traffic controllers in the U.S. I have not felt this nervous about flying since then. The reality is that we are talking about the further deregulation of our airlines and I am very concerned.

It is somewhat like union members who clean hospitals. If they see something wrong, they can go to their health and safety committee and deal with it. If we think in terms of putting non-people in hospitals without those rights, they put their heads down and that is how infections spread from hospital to hospital.

In this particular bill, we are taking away health and safety rights from workers who, when they speak out, are protecting not only themselves but the travelling public. Does the member see this as an almost American style deregulation of health and safety?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, that question captured much of my concern about the bill. For the travelling public, safety has to be paramount. It should be the number one consideration.

I remember well that when the airline industry in Canada was deregulated, the one assurance that the government made to the travelling public at that time was that occupational health and safety and the safety of the travelling public would not be deregulated. These were of paramount importance to Canadians and they would not be deregulated.

Fundamental to these concerns are access to information, scrutiny by the public, enforcement of government regulations by independent government inspectors, and the scrutiny of the people who work in the industry. My concern and the concern of my colleagues in the NDP is that this oversight and these protections would be eroded with this new bill.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although I do not have a question for my colleague, I do want to tell her that she has done a fantastic job of putting on the floor of the House the position of the NDP and our concerns about why the bill needs further examination and should not be passed. So, I will just restrict myself to making a comment rather than asking a question.

Between the member for Parkdale—High Park and the member for Winnipeg North, our position has become clear. I know millions of Canadians are riveted to their TVs watching the debate this afternoon. What should matter to everybody is that the NDP's transportation critic is not able to be here to articulate our position himself.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Order. I know the hon. member will learn with experience that we do not refer to the absence or presence of other hon. members. The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park has the floor.

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•(1630)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, the concerns that we are articulating today are the concerns that most Canadians would articulate if they were here with us in the House of Commons. Public safety must be paramount. There must be transparency in the operation of our airlines. When there are safety problems in the airline industry, there must be regulations on the books that people know about and these regulations must be enforced by independent oversight and the action of inspectors.

People do not want industry to be self-regulating in a sector so fundamentally important as the airline sector. People who work in the industry are concerned about it. We are concerned about it and we know that the travelling public would be concerned about it if they had this information in front of them. We hope that the debate today will help to get that information to them.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Parkdale—High Park made a very important reflection on the issue of the appropriate number of flight attendants or crew members on board any flight. I think she connected that with the issue of the safety of passengers being paramount.

Over the years we have battled long and hard for this issue to be dealt with, going back as far as 1991 when former transport critic for the NDP, Iain Angus, had Bill C-5 amended to regulate flight and duty times for flight attendants. Since then we have had numerous occasions to ensure that the Conservative government develops effective hours of work and limitations on flight attendants. More recently, I believe the NDP played a role in improving the ratio of flight attendants to passengers.

From the member's experience, with so many constituents in her area who are crew members or pilots, why does she think it is so important to have an appropriate ratio of flight attendants to passengers? What are some of the issues pertaining to flight and duty times for flight attendants?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, yes, I was contacted, as I said earlier, by many flight attendants who live in my community. When the government was considering changing the number of flight attendants, reducing the number of flight attendants required on board commercial aircraft, they contacted me with a fury, calling on me and my colleagues to urge the government not to decrease the number of flight attendants on board aircraft. We were very pleased and proud to be successful in urging the government not to act by decreasing the number of flight attendants.

We saw with the crash of the Air France flight in Toronto in my community the critical importance of the number of flight attendants on that aircraft who saved those passengers from peril in what was a disastrous crash. No one lost their life, so we know the value of flight attendants. We want to ensure that the level of the ratios are protected, not weakened.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am reminded by the story that was just given here of a line from a Kris Kristofferson song which says "The law is for protection of the people". Would the member not agree?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I believe that in order for us to act in the public interest and to ensure that the rights of the travelling

public are protected, it is the duty of all members of the House to reject the bill and vote against it.

•(1635)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): 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 Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, Labour Unions; the hon. member for Windsor West, International Trade; the hon. member for Davenport, Citizenship and Immigration.

Resuming debate. Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Could the motion pass at second reading on division?

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, would there be agreement to postpone the vote until 5:30 p.m. and we can add it to the other bills?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC) moved that Bill C-31, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Public Service Employment Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to begin the debate on Bill C-31, the voter integrity bill. This bill is aimed at improving the integrity of the electoral process and reducing the opportunity for electoral fraud. Together with the measures proposed in the federal accountability act, this bill will help to maintain the confidence of Canadians in their democratic process.

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Many hon. members will already be familiar with much of what is in this bill. That is because it implements recommendations from an all party report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs tabled in this place in June.

In formulating its recommendations, the committee had the benefit of testimony from the Chief Electoral Officer, the Privacy Commissioner and representatives from the four political parties in the House. Of course, the committee also had the expertise of its members. We have all been through the election process and are well aware that there is always room to improve the process by which we come to this place.

The committee's practical recommendations will enhance the process for all parties and all Canadians.

The government has listened carefully to the committee and we have tabled a comprehensive response to the report, but in addition, we are taking concrete action by means of Bill C-31, the voter integrity bill. As members can see, Bill C-31 makes a host of improvements to our democratic machinery. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the measures in the bill.

Foremost, Bill C-31 establishes a uniform procedure for voter identification at the polls. Currently, there is no automatic requirement to provide identification in order to vote. I am sure that probably comes as a surprise to most Canadians. We need identification for everything that we do in society and most Canadians would expect that they would have to properly identify themselves if they want to vote.

Under this bill, a voter need only state his or her name and address before being given a ballot. In practice, voters may often just present a voter identification card. However, these cards sent to individuals to notify them of their polling station are not intended to be used as identification. Indeed, the committee heard evidence of bundles of these cards being left in the lobbies of apartment buildings or being otherwise open to abuse.

Under the Canada Elections Act now, a poll clerk, deputy returning officer, candidate or candidate's representative may request identification only when there is doubt as to a person's identity. However, this right to challenge is often implemented unevenly across tens of thousands of polling stations in the country. Some polling officials may be reluctant to demand identification when it is not legally required. Some candidates may overuse their right to challenge. In the meantime, voters are required to carry identification in case the right is revoked.

By introducing a voter identification requirement, this bill will address these issues by providing consistency and clarity, reducing the opportunity for electoral fraud and signalling to Canadians the importance of exercising the right to vote.

The bill will bring Canada into line with the system in the province of Quebec, a number of Canadian municipalities and many other democracies. These jurisdictions take a variety of approaches, including the development of a unique voter identification card or exclusive photo ID requirements.

The voter ID process in our bill was carefully crafted by the standing committee to provide a balance appropriate to our Canadian

system and consistent with our values. The balance is struck between protecting the integrity of the process and ensuring that no one is disenfranchised by reason of lack of identification.

Most voters who have photo ID with name and address, such as a driver's licence, can show that in order to vote. Alternatively, a voter without such ID can show two other pieces of acceptable ID, establishing name and address.

The bill requires the Chief Electoral Officer to publish the type of ID that would be accepted so that all voters will know what to bring in order to vote. We encourage and trust the Chief Electoral Officer to take the necessary public education initiatives to ensure voters are aware of these requirements.

• (1640)

Let me be absolutely clear. Under the bill, the voters who may not have acceptable ID will still be able to vote. These voters will need to take an oath or affirmation as to their identity and have another elector vouch for him or her. This also reflects a balance of providing reliable procedures to protect the integrity of the vote while maintaining the accessibility of the franchise. We, like all the parties in the House and on the committee, want all qualified voters to be able to vote. Under this bill, they will be able to do so.

The voter identification process will go a significant way to reduce the opportunity for electoral fraud. In addition, we will tighten up the vouching system, both for registration at the polls without identification and for voting at the polls without ID. People who vouch for those without ID will not be able to vouch for more than one elector, as is currently the case for registration. Someone that is vouched for because he or she does not have identification will not be able to vouch for another person seeking to be registered or to vote without their own ID.

The date of birth of electors, something already contained in the national register, will be added to the list of electors used at the polls. As also recommended by the committee, we will require a written affidavit to be signed by an elector where reasonable doubts are raised as to his or her qualifications.

For example, together these measures will assist where someone presents himself or herself at the polls and does not appear to be of voting age. The ID may indicate the date of birth and establish the entitlement to vote. It can also be used to confirm identity if it matches the name and date of birth on the list of electors. This is especially helpful if there are two names that are very similar.

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Or, if the identification does not indicate the date of birth but the person's ID establishes his or her identity, the person can be allowed to vote after signing the affidavit. If it is subsequently discovered that the person was not qualified to vote by being 18 years old, then there will be a record of the event. This reform remedies a gap in the current legislation for situations where someone's qualifications to vote are in doubt.

In addition, in its response to the committee, the government supported a number of recommendations that were not statutory in nature to deal with potential electoral fraud. We look forward to working with the committee and the Chief Electoral Officer to ensure such measures are pursued.

At this point, I want to underscore that we must be vigilant to ensure our electoral system is sound and functions with integrity. While the incidence of electoral fraud is difficult to pin down precisely, it is clear that it has occurred. There have been well publicized instances of non-citizens having voted, or people voting twice, or the clear potential for individuals presenting themselves at the polls as someone else, such as by using a voter identification card that has been discarded.

Such examples can erode public confidence in the democratic process, affect the results of a close election and create real harm to the integrity of our system. That is why Canada's new government is taking action to implement the parliamentary committee's recommendations.

Protecting the integrity of the electoral process of course means more than just reducing the opportunity for defrauding the system. It also means improving how the system operates. A well functioning electoral system will go a long way toward reinforcing public confidence in the electoral process.

There are four main areas of operational improvement that I would like to outline briefly.

First, the bill will implement measures for improving the accuracy of the national register of electors. Errors in the register have the potential to harm the integrity of the electoral process because it is meant to indicate who has a right to vote. For example, the committee heard evidence of the list of electors including multiple entries for a single elector, electors registered at business addresses, and even dead people on the list.

The bill will make important changes to the way the information on the national register of electors is updated to improve its accuracy. The bill will permit tax filers to be asked their citizenship so that only the information of qualified electors will be sent to Elections Canada if voters consent to the sharing of that information. The Canada Revenue Agency will be able to share information on deceased tax filers with Elections Canada so that deceased electors can be removed from the register in a timely fashion. Returning officers will be expressly authorized to conduct updating initiatives in relation to the register. This will enable, for instance, targeted updating in areas of high mobility or new development. The authority of a CEO to collect, retain and share identifying information for the purpose of updating the register will also be clarified.

●(1645)

Second, the bill will make reforms to avoid some electors being discouraged from voting due to operational hurdles. For example, no longer will voters with a physical disability be required to request a transfer to a polling station with level access three days in advance. This time limitation is impractical for voters, who may not realize their polling station is inaccessible until they arrive on polling day. Similarly, electors who have their polling station reassigned will now be able to vote at their original polling station. This avoids inconveniencing or discouraging voters because of an administrative change.

The bill also opens the accessibility of advanced polls. Under the act now, advance polls must group two or more polling divisions. In large areas of sparse population, this could require an elector to travel significant distances in order to vote.

Third, the bill will improve the way candidates and election officials communicate with Canadians. The way the Canada Elections Act is currently worded, candidates have access to apartment buildings to campaign but not to gated communities, all access to which is also controlled by someone other than the residents. The bill will clarify the wording in the act so that candidates may access such communities in order to canvass at homes in the communities. Individual Canadians themselves should be able to decide whether they want to speak to candidates seeking public office on their behalf.

Similarly, the bill will clarify the ability of elections officials to access apartment buildings and gated communities for the purpose of updating the register and list of electors, and candidates will have clear access to public areas for informing Canadians of their right to vote. They should be able to campaign. This is one that I am particularly pleased about. As for the shopping malls and strip malls, where sometimes candidates now find their way barred, if these areas are open to the public they are open to political office seekers to engage the public. I think this is a terrific step forward and one that I particularly like to see.

Lastly, the bill will make other improvements to ensure the electoral process runs smoothly and efficiently. For example, drafting errors in the act will be corrected and timelines for the production of annual lists of electors will be extended. Like all the changes I have already discussed, these reforms were recommended by the committee made up of all four political parties, often based on the suggestions and the experience of our Chief Electoral Officer. Like all changes already discussed, these reforms would improve the integrity of our electoral system.

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Before I close, I want to thank the committee for its important work. Canada is a great democracy. We should never lose sight of that. There is no greater democracy in the world, but it does not mean that we should not adapt to the times and that we should not be vigilant to protect our democracy. Even the smallest technical change can help the way ordinary Canadians exercise their right to vote.

This bill, based on the committee's recommendations, makes these operational improvements and does more. It ensures that all Canadians can exercise their right to vote while improving the integrity of the voting system. This bill will benefit all Canadians and all parties. I will say to hon. members that since this has already been supported at the committee and is an adoption of the recommendations that were made by the committee, I hope this bill will have speedy passage and will soon pass into law.

• (1650)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House leader for laying out some of the principal elements of Bill C-31.

I have run in seven general elections and voters lists are quite familiar to me as I know they are to the House leader. I have had the opportunity recently to look at the latest list issued by the Chief Electoral Officer. My frustration continues with the his office, from the standpoint that changes brought to the attention of the Chief Electoral Officer, through the returning officer of the riding, continue to be ignored.

In fact, it is very difficult for changes to be made in the current system simply because they have to come through sources which are direct from the person on the list. It is clear, simply by taking the list and sorting it by postal code, or by street or whatever, that there is information missing or information is in the wrong columns. There are numerous addresses that have far more persons apparently resident than is legally permissible. None of these things seem to be addressed.

I raise it with the member only from this standpoint. If the obvious things have not been taken care of first, how can we overlay more changes and expect even a greater level of accuracy within the voters list? If basic changes cannot be made by the current system of relying on information collected through other agencies, the provinces, et cetera, or through the income tax return where people volunteer that information, how will this help?

The other point I would raise with the member is this. Even with our existing system, there are some circumstances where a family may relocate. If children do not have documents, which they have to file, then children tend to be left on the list in the former home rather than following the parents.

These are things that over time have led to a very significant distortion in the actual number of electors in a riding. It affects, as the House leader will know, many aspects of the work that members of Parliament and candidates in elections for all parties undertake.

It would be a tremendous boon if the changes being proposed here would contemplate and address some of the existing problems before we ask for a greater level of sophistication. Would the member comment on that?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to comment on electoral lists.

I have to caution the hon. member. I am sure if information was transferred from the local returning officers to the Chief Electoral Officer, it was not deliberately ignored. We have been very fortunate to have an individual and a team that works very hard under the existing rules to ensure all the information is up to date and accurate to the extent that this is possible. As well, the Chief Electoral Officer and his team works very hard to ensure that the operation of Canadian elections is the envy of the world.

I should point out that our Chief Electoral Officer is invited on a regular basis to go to other countries to try to assist those countries in developing their electoral system.

Nonetheless, the member raises an interesting point with respect to the accuracy of those lists. I think the problem begins, to the extent that there is a problem, with the wording on the Canadian income tax forms. In my opinion, the forms do not make it clear that the information a taxpayer ticks off is only available to those who are Canadian citizens.

We are going to make it very explicit on the income tax return. The first question is, "Are you a Canadian citizen". Second, we will follow up with, "Therefore, do you consent to have that information transferred to the Chief Electoral Officer for his list?"

I think changes in the wording will increase the accuracy of that. I already indicated in my second reading address that there would be a greater exchange of information. One of the problems to which the hon. member alluded was the names of people who were dead remained on the list. There will be greater sharing of that information.

Generally, taken together, these recommendations, which came from all political parties at the operations committee, will improve the integrity and improve the accuracy because that is what we want.

Also adding on the list the date of birth of the individuals will clear up some of the problem of people with duplicate names. This will help to ensure that the person who gets the ballot is the person who is actually identified.

All of these taken together should improve the system.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have been in this House since 1997 and unfortunately, during that time, I have noted a decrease in voter turnout. We have got to the point where hardly 60% of the voters on the voters list go to vote.

I would like to ask the Government House Leader if he feels that having people vote on Sunday would improve voter turnout? In the majority of Canadian couples, both the man and the woman work and lack availability. So would Sunday voting improve turnout?

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[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member made an interesting point about voter turnout. One of the best elections for voter turnout was the January election, contrary to all predictions that it would be a disaster having an election just after the Christmas season. The evidence would point out that voter turnout, I believe, was up about 4%. That may be just a function of the desire of Canadians to toss out one government and bring in a new one. We could speculate on the reasons why.

Canadians, traditionally, vote on Monday in federal elections. This system has worked well for us. The hon. member knows the House just passed the bill providing for fixed dates for elections and extensive advance polling would take place on the weekend before. The hon. member knows the third Monday in October is Thanksgiving. The bill proposes that the election would be on the fourth Monday. If he worked his way back for the advance polling dates, it would be possible for individuals to go to a polling station on Thanksgiving Day. I do not have a problem with that. To get people out to vote, that would be a very likely weekend when members would be at home in their ridings.

The other advantage of having the fixed dates for elections is that all of us would be able to plan. We all have had constituents say that they would like to vote for us, but they do not know exactly when the election will be held, and nobody is able to tell them. Many of them may be going to Florida, they may be on vacation, they may be visiting their relatives, or they might be out of their constituency, so it is important for them to know.

I hear the hon. member's suggestion, but I think he will agree with me that taken together, these two bills are an improvement over the present situation.

• (1700)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard the government House leader say earlier that he hoped the bill would go through earlier. Maybe he knows something that we do not know. Maybe he knows there is going to be an election and he is hoping this will come into effect before that.

We have some concerns with the bill. The bill is called the voter integrity bill, which is very interesting. After reading through it, I have a lot of concerns about how it will impact people in low income communities who do not have identification. I take my own riding as an example. In the downtown east side, and in other ridings as well, potentially thousands of people will actually be disenfranchised by the provisions requiring two pieces of identification.

Has the government House leader considered the unintended consequences of the bill? Is the government willing to consider provisions that would make some changes so poor people, who do not have identification, would not be disenfranchised?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, it is not our intention to disenfranchise anyone. There is a fairly extensive system in place. I would point out to the hon. member that this was the unanimous report of the committee, which was comprised of all political parties. The committee suggested this to the government, and we are acting on it and being consistent with it.

The system that we have in place is a reasonable one. If someone has the voter identification card that is mailed out, they can present that. If they do not have the voter identification card, they can present some sort of government issued identification. If they do not have that, two pieces of identification, establishing who they are, is required. It could be done a fourth way as well. A Canadian citizen can vouch for the individual and swear out an affidavit. It seems to me that we have safeguards in place.

The right to vote is a fundamental characteristic of our democracy and of every democracy. I think the hon. member would agree with me that the committee took a reasonable approach.

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-31, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Public Service Employment Act.

On June 22 the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs tabled a report in the House entitled "Improving the Integrity of the Electoral Process: Recommendations for Legislative Change". The report was based in part on the recommendations that we had received from the Chief Electoral Officer. While there have been discussions about fundamental changes to our entire electoral system, these should not detract from the efforts that have been made to improve our existing system.

The government tabled a response to the committee's report on October 20 and agreed with a vast majority of the recommendations that were made by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Bill C-31 was subsequently introduced on October 24 of this year.

The proposed bill will amend the Canada Elections Act to improve the integrity of the electoral process by reducing the opportunity for electoral fraud or for error. It requires electors, before voting, to provide one piece of government issued photo identification that shows their names and addresses, or two pieces of identification authorized by the Chief Electoral Officer that show their names and addresses, or they can also take an oath, or they may be vouched for by another elector who does have photo identification.

The proposed bill also will amend the Canada Elections Act to, among other things, make operational changes to improve the accuracy of the national register of electors. It will facilitate voting and enhance communications with the electorate. It amends the Public Service Employment Act to permit the Public Service Commission to make regulations that will now extend to the maximum term of employment of casual workers. We see this as an improvement.

While the government did not incorporate the committee's recommendations into Bill C-31, it stated that when it did not accept these recommendations, it had a fundamental disagreement with principle, or the items required further study, or we had received inadequate testimony and had been unable to reach a definitive decision during the committee proceedings.

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A key concern of the Liberal committee members was to ensure that the bill allowed aboriginal status identification to be deemed acceptable proof for voting purposes. Government officials have clarified that the text of the bill requires government issued photo ID with an address, or government issued photo ID without an address. This would include band status cards, but they would have to be accompanied by a letter from the band council, or something like a phone bill that would have the person's number, name and address to corroborate the claim that he or she was indeed eligible to vote in that specific riding.

A second concern for the Liberal committee members is ensuring that the enumeration process is strengthened in reserve communities. The government has suggested that rather than send the bill to committee, that the committee simply pass a motion calling on the Chief Electoral Officer to strengthen enumeration in reserve communities, as well as other areas of low enumeration. With all sides in agreement with the goals of the bill, its passage could be accelerated in the House.

As the bill has emerged from the work of an all party committee, sending it back to the committee would be somewhat redundant, given that the government has assured the opposition that the aboriginal ID concerns are addressed in the text of the current bill.

On this side of the House, we support changes to the Canada Elections Act that protect against the likelihood of voter fraud and misrepresentation. We need to ensure that aboriginal photo identification is an acceptable form of voter identification. We also support strengthening the enumeration process, particularly on reserve communities and other areas of low voter enumeration.

The committee thought long and hard. The House procedures committee has a lot of veteran politicians on it and we all had many stories. We also asked our colleagues for some stories. My colleague, the chief government whip, has enumerated some of them. One of the best refinements we are recommending, and it is in the bill, is to include the birth dates of individual electors so there can be an objective kind of identification.

• (1705)

I also think a photo ID is essential because on election day it would allow the volunteers and the workers at Election Canada to facilitate Canadians who have the right to vote and ensure no mistakes or voter fraud are involved in what we know is an outstanding electoral system.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I would like to know her opinion on attempts at electoral fraud or attempts at undue influence in seniors' homes, when seniors may occasionally find themselves confused and easily influenced.

Does she think that these corrections and amendments will bring about greater respect for their intellectual integrity?

• (1710)

[*English*]

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, we have tried to move to greater signage when there are polls, but there is no doubt that there

are people who are infirm or people who are elderly or in special circumstances, which is why we have allowed Election Canada officials to go to those people who are not able to go to the polling station.

However, if the member is talking about a situation where there may be a seniors residence with a voting poll in that residence and whether they would be subject to any kind of influence from the people who are actually running the polling station, I would tell the hon. colleague that there is a complaint system. I would hope that anyone who saw anything that they thought was untoward would report it to the officials so it could be fully investigated.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate. I listened to both the member's comments and the minister's comments with great interest. If I understood the minister rightly, in his introduction of this bill to the House I believe he said that every effort would be made for people with disabilities to be taken to a polling station where they could exercise their right to vote.

It seems to me that the right to vote is a fundamental right for every Canadian citizen and, therefore, in my view, every polling station needs to be accessible for people with disabilities.

I wonder whether the member might be able to let me know what her party's position is on that very important issue.

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague. It is absolutely essential that every attempt is made to make every polling station accessible to disabled people.

I know in my own riding there was an occurrence where it was a school and there was a small lift and it was the only facility available in that area. I would contend, given the vastness of Canada, certain communities may not have an appropriate polling station and, therefore, having a transferrable ballot where somebody could go and avail themselves of the right to vote is absolutely essential.

Truly, the target and the key for everybody should be that all polling stations are accessible.

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the electoral system is the machinery on which Canadian democracy was built. However, it must be reviewed occasionally and we need to trust it.

However, one of the things that we need to look at is the accuracy of the voters' list that is put out. That is something we often question, so it is nice to see that something is being put in place to make it as accurate as possible.

What happens occasionally is that we have people saying that they should be on the list but that they cannot be or that they are not there. There seems to be a problem. It is okay to bring some information but sometimes we have someone there who will vouch for someone. We have seen it happen in the past where someone comes with a busload of people and says that he or she is vouching for all these people. A reasonable limit needs to be put on the number of people one can vouch for.

Government Orders

How did the member determine how many people a person could vouch for? What is a reasonable number and what are the limits under the bill?

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, we clearly want to avoid that, which is why we said that each individual could vouch for one other person. Obviously, the person vouching would need to have a photo ID and proof that he or she was truly eligible to vote in that poll.

I would also point out to my hon. colleague that a mechanism we thought would be helpful, and which this bill facilitates, is allowing people to say on their income tax returns whether they are Canadian citizens and are able to vote in an election. It is very clear to anyone who has been involved in any aspect of a federal election that it is very important that the permanent voters list be updated so that people who have passed away can be taken off the list and people who have moved have provided their current addresses.

As far as serial vouching, we felt that it was one of the mechanisms we could put in place to stop any kind of abuse. Certainly there is anecdotal evidence of this. I know in the past election the Chief Electoral Officer was actually asked to formally investigate two elections for what were seen as somewhat untoward events and he certainly performed those investigations. That kind of mechanism will still be in place for people who feel that fraud is involved in an election.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-31, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Public Service Employment Act.

This is a bill that the committee has studied exhaustively. When there are things that are not working, the role of the opposition is to point them out. However, when things have worked well, then as a matter of intellectual honesty they should also be pointed out. This is called not engaging in shamelessly partisan politics. Here in the House of Commons there is of course adversarial debate, by definition. It must be noted that if a lot more discussion and a lot more collaboration among the various political parties were sought, by all sides, we would be able to produce better bills, bills that were an improvement on what was initially proposed.

Bill C-31 is a good example of what comes of excellent collaboration among the political parties. I will explain what I mean by this.

At the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, the government responded to a report. To summarize the sequence of events for the benefit of the people listening to us, the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Kingsley, has to submit a report after an election campaign. The report is submitted to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. That report was studied in committee and all parties are represented on that committee. Our report was tabled in the House. On October 20, the government responded to the report. The response was in writing, in the form of a formal response. There was also a legislative response. Bill C-31 represents that legislative response, which reflects a majority of the points raised in the report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

In the opinion of the Bloc Québécois, when the bill goes back to committee, we will have an opportunity to suggest amendments to our colleagues in the other parties, to improve the bill once again.

The reality of a minority government means that there should be a lot more collaboration and consultation with the other parties, as I said earlier. In my view, the government should follow the example of Bill C-31 to amend the Elections Act and follow the same course for other bills.

For example, instead of insisting on pushing its law and order agenda, its right-wing agenda, the Conservative minority government should listen to the Bloc Québécois, which is calling for more emphasis to be put on rehabilitation rather than punishment. Instead of digging its heels in on its right-wing agenda, it should do the same thing with the opposition parties that are calling for the Kyoto objectives to be upheld. The Conservative government should also do the same thing for the gun registry, when it is bent on dismantling it.

I wanted to explain this point during my introduction in order to illustrate how it is possible to come up with better legislation by consulting the opposition. Why are we of the opinion that Bill C-31 is appropriate? The Bloc is in favour of it in principle. We are in favour of it because there is a whole aspect where the possibilities of fraud and error are reduced. Now, thanks to this bill, voters will have to present government issued photo ID, with the bearer's name and address.

• (1720)

At home, in Quebec, the basic document could be the driver's licence, which contains this information.

It seems to me that colleagues from New Brunswick mentioned that their driver's licences do not have photos. I am not sure, but I think that my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst drew attention to this. The goal is to have a document that is issued by the government and bears personal information making it possible to identify the person. It is true, unfortunately, that when voter identification procedures are inadequate, some situations may arise in which people are tempted, often in exchange for money, to go and vote for other people.

There was the classic case that occurred in the Quebec riding of Anjou. I think that someone voted 34 times in the Quebec elections in Anjou. If I recall correctly, the candidate, Pierre Bélanger, lost by fewer than 50 votes. Since then, this flaw in the Quebec electoral system has been corrected.

Voters who do not have photo ID will have to provide two acceptable pieces of ID so as to establish their identity and address. The Chief Electoral Officer will publish the list of acceptable ID. In a recent election, in 2004 or 2006, someone came to a polling station to vote, armed with a pile of magazines like *L'Actualité*, *Maclean's*, *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* and *50Plus*. These magazines can be purchased every week at the supermarket. In this case, this person received them at home because she was a subscriber. On the covers was the Canada Post seal. This person managed to vote, thanks to her pile of magazines.

When people live in an apartment building, they have no guarantees that no one will go through their mail. In multiple dwelling structures, the mail is not always protected. Anyone can take the mail. So we can understand the absurd example that I gave. This person wanted to vote using this process.

Under Bill C-31, each voter's date of birth will be added to the official list of electors used in polling stations.

For example, a person might know the Speaker's name. I know the Speaker is young; I believe he is not yet 30. A person could try to pass himself off as the Speaker. At the polling station, he says he is that person. The list of electors makes it clear that that person was born in 1918. Perhaps the Speaker remained young thanks to a fountain of youth or an elixir of youth even though he was born in 1918. The birth date provides some indication that there might be a problem. This raises a flag, perhaps not a red flag, but a warning flag nonetheless. The bill includes this improvement.

Given that we believe Bill C-31 can be improved upon, I wish to announce that, subject to consultation, we intend to amend it to ensure that voters lists provided to political parties also contain date of birth information, as is the case in Quebec.

Bill C-31 will also improve the accuracy of the voters list because the chief electoral officer will assign a unique, randomly generated identifier to each voter.

• (1725)

This is a continuing demand of the Bloc Québécois, which has been calling for a unique permanent identification number for each voter for a long time. We would have preferred that the bill was more binding on the Chief Electoral Officer and clearer on this subject. We give notice that we will also have some suggestions for amendments on that point.

Bill C-31 also seeks to remove the deadline after which voters who have a functional limitation can no longer request a transfer certificate to a polling station offering level access. In our opinion, voters in wheelchairs or with a physical disability should have an equal opportunity to democratically express their choices. Unfortunately, when voting places are located in facilities that do not have full and free access or that involve stairs, by definition, they do not in any way promote access by voters in wheelchairs.

It is our view that Bill C-31 will improve communications between election officials, candidates, parties and voters.

Bill C-31 will give candidates a right of access to common areas of public places for election campaign purposes.

I believe that all of our colleagues here today have encountered situations where the owners of some shopping centres have refused permission for us to meet and introduce ourselves to members of the public. An election campaign is a special opportunity to call attention to ideas, to talk about our record as a member or as a party, regardless of which party is campaigning. The government can speak about its record. In the present case, the record of the Conservative government includes the torpedoing of the Kyoto protocol and a disposition in favour of war, similar to the Americans. We will have the chance to return to that record at the proper time—in an election campaign.

Routine Proceedings

Bill C-31 will also provide election officials with a right of access to multiple residence dwellings and to gated communities to revise the voters list. Gated communities are dwellings to which access is controlled by a gate. How can voters be enumerated if no one is able to enter, or barely so? The accuracy of the lists then poses a problem.

Other provisions deal with certain operational and technical improvements, but I cannot list them in detail since my time has almost expired. In any case, we will have an opportunity to return to this topic. I wish simply to remind members that the Bloc Québécois will re-examine some aspects in committee or at third reading.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STATUS OF WOMEN

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the fourth report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, in the name of the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Call in the members.

• (1800)

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

(*Division No. 55*)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Angus
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Barbot
Beaumier	Bélanger
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Bigras
Black	Blaikie
Bonin	Bonsant
Boshcoff	Bourgeois
Brisson	Brown (Oakville)
Cannis	Cardin
Carrier	Chamberlain
Chan	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Dewar	Dhalwal
Dhalla	Dosanjh
Duceppe	Easter
Eyking	Faillie
Folco	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Gaudet	Gauthier
Godfrey	Goodale
Graham	Guarnieri

Government Orders

Guay
Holland
Jennings
Kadis
Karygiannis
Kotto
Laframboise
Lavallée
LeBlanc
Lemay
Lévesque
Lussier
Malhi
Maloney
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (LaSalle—Énard)
Masse
McCallum
McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Minna
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Nadeau
Neville
Pacetti
Patry
Peterson
Plamondon
Proulx
Redman
Rodriguez
Roy
Scarpaleggia
Sgro
Silva
St-Hilaire
St. Denis
Stoffer
Szabo
Temelkovski
Basques)
Thibault (West Nova)
Valley
Wappel
Wilfert
Wrzesnewskyj- — 153

Guimond
Hubbard
Julian
Karetak-Lindell
Keeper
Laforest
Lapierre
Layton
Lee
Lessard
Loubier
MacAulay
Malo
Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
McDonough
McGuire
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Merasty
Mourani
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nash
Ouellet
Paquette
Perron
Picard
Priddy
Ratansi
Robillard
Rota
Savage
Scott
Siksay
St-Cyr
St. Amand
Steckle
Stronach
Telegdi
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Tonks
Vincent
Wasylcia-Leis
Wilson

MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
Merrifield
Mills
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
Obhrai
Pallister
Poilievre
Preston
Reid
Ritz
Schellenberger
Skelton
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews
Turner
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Williams- — 113

MacKenzie
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Paradis
Prentice
Rajotte
Richardson
Scheer
Shipley
Solberg
Stanton
Strahl
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tilson
Trost
Tweed
Van Loan
Verner
Warawa
Watson

PAIRED

Members

André
Bouchard
Casey
Lalonde
Smith

Blais
Brunelle
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Mark
Yelich- — 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

JUDGES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at report stage and second reading of Bill C-17.

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think that if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to apply the results of the vote just previously taken to the motion before the House on Bill C-17, with Conservative members present this evening voting yes.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, Liberals will be voting yes on this motion.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois will vote against this motion.

Mr. Serge Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I will vote in favour of this motion.

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, the NDP will be voting yes.

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Albrecht
Ambrose
Anderson
Batters
Bernier
Blackburn
Breitkreuz
Brown (Barrie)
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casson
Clement
Davidson
Del Mastro
Doyle
Emerson
Fast
Fitzpatrick
Fletcher
Gallant
Goodyear
Grewal
Hanger
Harris
Hawn
Hiebert
Hinton
Jean
Komarnicki
Lake
Lukowski

Ablonczy
Allen
Anders
Baird
Benoit
Bezan
Blaney
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bruinooge
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrie
Chong
Cummins
Day
Devolin
Dykstra
Epp
Finley
Flaherty
Galipeau
Goldring
Gourde
Guergis
Harper
Harvey
Hearn
Hill
Jaffer
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lunn

Hon. Garth Turner: Mr. Speaker, I will be voting yes.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 56*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Angus	Atamanenko
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Batters
Beaumier	Bélanger
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bennett	Benoit
Bernier	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Black
Blackburn	Blaikie
Blaney	Bonin
Boshcoff	Breitkreuz
Brison	Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casson	Chamberlain
Chan	Charlton
Chong	Chow
Christopherson	Clement
Comartin	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cummins	Cuzner
Davidson	Davies
Day	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dewar
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dosanjh	Doyle
Dykstra	Easter
Emerson	Epp
Eyking	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Fry
Galipeau	Gallant
Godfrey	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Graham
Grewal	Guarnieri
Guergis	Hanger
Harper	Harris
Harvey	Hawn
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Hinton
Holland	Hubbard
Jaffer	Jean
Jennings	Julian
Kadis	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keeper
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lapierre	Lauzon
Layton	LeBlanc
Lee	Lukowski
Lunn	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Malhi	Maloney
Marston	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Mayes
McCallum	McDonough
McGuinity	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)

Menzies	Merasty
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nash	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Pacetti
Pallister	Paradis
Patry	Peterson
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Priddy
Proulx	Rajotte
Ratansi	Redman
Reid	Richardson
Ritz	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rota
Savage	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger
Scott	Sgro
Shiely	Siksay
Silva	Skelton
Solberg	Sorenson
St. Amand	St. Denis
Stanton	Steckle
Stoffer	Storseth
Strahl	Stronach
Sweet	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (West Nova)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Turner
Tweed	Valley
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Wallace	Wappel
Warawa	Warkentin
Wasylycia-Leis	Watson
Wilfert	Williams
Wilson	Wrzesniewski — 222

NAYS

Members

Asselin	Bachand
Barbot	Bellavance
Bigras	Bonsant
Bourgeois	Cardin
Carrier	Crête
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Duceppe
Faille	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Gauthier	Guay
Guimond	Kotto
Laforest	Laframboise
Lavallée	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Loubier	Lussier
Malo	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Mourani	Nadeau
Ouellet	Paquette
Perron	Picard
Plamondon	Roy
St-Cyr	St-Hilaire
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Vincent — 44	

PAIRED

Members

André	Blais
Bouchard	Brunelle
Casey	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Lalonde	Mark
Smith	Yelich — 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Government Orders

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

MOTION NO. 10

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier today the House will now proceed to the taking of deferred recorded division on the ways and means motion no. 10.

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. That worked so well, let us try it again. I believe that you would find unanimous consent in the chamber to apply the vote on the motion previously taken to the motion presently before the House on ways and means motion no. 10, with Conservative members present voting yes.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, Liberals will be voting emphatically no.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this motion.

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, the NDP will be voting yes.

Hon. Garth Turner: Mr. Speaker, I vote in favour of the motion.

[Translation]

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

*(Division No. 57)***YEAS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Allen
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Angus
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Baird
Barbot	Batters
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bellavance
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Bigras
Black	Blackburn
Blaikie	Blaney
Bonsant	Bourgeois
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)	Cardin
Carrie	Carrier
Casson	Charlton
Chong	Chow
Christopherson	Clement
Comartin	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cummins	Davidson
Davies	Day
DeBellefeuille	Del Mastro
Demers	Deschamps
Devolin	Dewar
Doyle	Duceppe
Dykstra	Emerson
Epp	Faille

Fast	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Flaherty
Fletcher	Freeman
Gagnon	Galipeau
Gallant	Gaudet
Gauthier	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guay
Guergis	Guimond
Hanger	Harper
Harris	Harvey
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Jaffer
Jean	Julian
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Komarnicki
Kotto	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laforest	Laframboise
Lake	Lauzon
Lavallée	Layton
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Loubier
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lussier	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malo
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Mayes
McDonough	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani
Nadeau	Nash
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Ouellet
Pallister	Paquette
Paradis	Perron
Picard	Plamondon
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Priddy
Rajotte	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Roy	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shipley
Siksay	Skelton
Solberg	Sorenson
St-Cyr	St-Hilaire
Stanton	Stoffer
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Turner
Tweed	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Vincent
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Wasylcia-Leis
Watson	Williams — 184

NAYS

Members

Bagnell
Beaumier
Bell (North Vancouver)
Bevilacqua
Boshcoff
Brown (Oakville)
Chamberlain
Comuzzi
Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Dhaliwal
Dosanjh
Eyking
Fry
Goodale
Guamieri
Hubbard
Kadis

Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Keeper	Lapierre
LeBlanc	Lee
MacAulay	Malhi
Maloney	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (LaSalle—Énard)	McCallum
McGuinty	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Merasty
Minna	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Neville
Pacetti	Patry
Peterson	Proulx
Ratansi	Redman
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rota	Savage
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sgro	Silva
St. Amand	St. Denis
Steckle	Stronach
Szabo	Telegdi
Temelkovski	Thibault (West Nova)
Tonks	Valley
Wappel	Wilfert
Wilson	Wrzesnewskyj — 82

PAIRED

Members

André	Blais
Bouchard	Brunelle
Casey	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Lalonde	Mark
Smith	Yelich — 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[English]

AERONAUTICS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Aeronautics Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-6.

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Once again, I think that if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to apply the results of the vote just previously taken to the motion presently before the House on government Bill C-6, with Conservative members present voting yes.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, Liberals will be voting yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois will vote against this motion.

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, the NDP will be voting no.

Hon. Garth Turner: Mr. Speaker, I vote in favour of this motion.

[Translation]

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

Government Orders

(Division No. 58)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Batters
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bell (North Vancouver)	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Bonin	Boshcoff
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brown (Oakville)	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannis	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Chamberlain	Chan
Chong	Clement
Comuzzi	Cotler
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cummins
Cuzner	Davidson
Day	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dhalwal
Dhalla	Dosanjh
Doyle	Dykstra
Easter	Emerson
Epp	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Flaherty
Fletcher	Folco
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Godfrey
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Graham	Grewal
Guarnieri	Guergis
Hanger	Harper
Harris	Harvey
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Holland
Hubbard	Jaffer
Jean	Jennings
Kadis	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keeper
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lapierre	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lee
Lukiwski	Lunn
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Maloney	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (LaSalle—Énard)	Mayes
McCallum	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Menzies	Merasty
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Neville	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Pacetti	Pallister
Paradis	Patry
Peterson	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Proulx	Rajotte
Ratansi	Redman
Reid	Richardson
Ritz	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rota
Savage	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger

Business of Supply

Scott	Sgro
Shipley	Silva
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	St. Amand
St. Denis	Stanton
Steckle	Storseth
Strahl	Stronach
Sweet	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (West Nova)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Turner
Tweed	Valley
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Wallace	Wappel
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Wilfert
Williams	Wilson

Wrzesnewskyj — 195

● (1810)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CANADIAN FORCES

The House resumed from November 2 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 2 the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore relating to the business of supply.

The question is on the motion.

● (1820)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 59)

NAYS

Members

Angus	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Barbot	Bell (Vancouver Island North)
Bellavance	Bigras
Black	Blaikie
Bonsant	Bourgeois
Cardin	Carrier
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Comartin
Crête	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Dewar
Duceppe	Faille
Freeman	Gagnon
Gaudet	Gauthier
Guay	Guimond
Julian	Kotto
Laforest	Laframboise
Lavallée	Layton
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Loubier
Lussier	Malo
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	McDonough
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mourani	Nadeau
Nash	Ouellet
Paquette	Perron
Picard	Plamondon
Priddy	Roy
Siksay	St-Cyr
St-Hilaire	Stoffer
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Vincent	

Wasylcia-Leis — 71

PAIRED

Members

André	Blais
Bouchard	Brunelle
Casey	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Lalonde	Mark
Smith	Yelich — 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Angus
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Barbot
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Bigras
Black	Blaikie
Bonin	Bonsant
Boshcoff	Bourgeois
Brisson	Brown (Oakville)
Cannis	Cardin
Carrier	Chamberlain
Chan	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dosanjh
Duceppe	Easter
Eyking	Faille
Folco	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Gaudet	Gauthier
Godfrey	Goodale
Graham	Guamieri
Guay	Guimond
Holland	Hubbard
Jennings	Julian
Kadis	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keeper
Kotto	Laforest
Laframboise	Lapierre
Lavallée	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Loubier
Lussier	MacAulay
Malhi	Malo
Maloney	Marston
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
McCallum	McDonough
McGuinity	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Ménard (Hochelaga)

Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Minna
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Nadeau
Neville
Pacetti
Patry
Peterson
Plamondon
Proulx
Redman
Rodriguez
Roy
Scarpaleggia
Sgro
Silva
St-Hilaire
St. Denis
Stoffer
Szabo
Temelkovski
Basques)
Thibault (West Nova)
Turner
Vincent
Wasylcyia-Leis
Wilson

Merasty
Mourani
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nash
Ouellet
Paquette
Perron
Picard
Priddy
Ratansi
Robillard
Rota
Savage
Scott
Siksay
St-Cyr
St. Amand
Steckle
Stronach
Telegdi
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Tonks
Valley
Wappel
Wilfert
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NAYS

Members

Abbott
Albrecht
Ambrose
Anderson
Batters
Bernier
Blackburn
Breitkreuz
Brown (Barrie)
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casson
Clement
Davidson
Del Mastro
Doyle
Emerson
Fast
Fitzpatrick
Fletcher
Gallant
Goodyear
Grewal
Hanger
Harris
Hawn
Hiebert
Hinton
Jean
Komarnicki
Lauzon
Lunn
MacKenzie
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Paradis
Prentice
Rajotte
Richardson
Scheer
Shipley
Solberg
Stanton
Strahl
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tilson
Trost

Ablonczy
Allen
Anders
Baird
Benoit
Bezan
Blaney
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bruinooge
Cannon (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrie
Chong
Cummins
Day
Devolin
Dykstra
Epp
Finley
Flaherty
Galipeau
Goldring
Gourde
Guergis
Harper
Harvey
Hearn
Hill
Jaffer
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lake
Lukowski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
Merrifield
Mills
Norlock
Obhrai
Pallister
Poilievre
Preston
Reid
Ritz
Schellenberger
Skelton
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Thompson (Wild Rose)
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Verner
Warawa
Watson

PAIRED

Members

André
Bouchard
Casey
Lalonde
Smith

Blais
Brunelle
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Mark
Yelich— — 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

LABOUR UNIONS

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, June 8, I asked a question in this House concerning Mexican trade unionist Napoleon Gomez. That question followed up on a letter written by the national director of the steelworkers' union, Ken Neumann, who was rightly concerned about the treatment suffered by the Mexican trade unionist.

The National Union of Mine and Metallurgical Workers of Mexico, also known as Los Mineros, represents men and women who work in the mining and metallurgical industries of Mexico, including the major Mexican steelworks and mining companies. The union represents 250,000 people. In the past few years, under the leadership of Napoleon Gomez, Los Mineros has moved in a more independent and internationalist direction and has struck a more critical posture toward the PAN government and Vicente Fox, who was in office last spring, and the old line ultra-conservative PRI officials and unions.

After the Pasta de Concha mine disaster in which 65 Mexican miners were killed in February, Napoleon Gomez accused the Grupo Mexico mining company of industrial homicide. He further accused the government of negligence and called for an investigation and removal of the Minister of Labour. For all these reasons, the union has become a target of government and employer attacks.

Napoleon Gomez was ousted from his position as general secretary by the Mexican government, contrary to the basic rules governing freedom of association. Mexican labour law gives no authority to the Labour Minister to replace a union officer at the alleged request of the union or under any other circumstances.

In July we learned that an arrest warrant had been issued by Interpol against Napoleon Gomez in relation to accusations from union dissidents that Mr. Gomez had misappropriated a \$55 million payment received from Grupo Mexico to settle a 17-year long dispute over privatization of the Cananea mine.

Adjournment Proceedings

We also learned that it was up to the Canadian government to decide whether to arrest him. The response I was given by the Minister of Labour in June was full of innuendo. What he told me at that time was that he was not taking those allegations lightly and that his department was in the process of gathering information, but that the information was contradictory, depending on the sources. If I understood him correctly, the minister was cautioning me against taking sides with a partisan anti-Vicente Fox faction, Vicente Fox being the outgoing president of Mexico who was then preparing for his election campaign.

The election campaign took place several months ago and I would like to know what information the minister gathered and collected, since we know that this minister can make a request to the Commission for Labor Cooperation, which was created under the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation, a side agreement to the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA.

The Minister of Labour and the Minister of Foreign Affairs could also contact their Mexican counterparts to remind them that, under NAFTA, they must respect workers' rights, including the right to organize.

Basically, I want information. Has the minister in fact gathered any further information and can he share it with the House?

•(1825)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Before I recognize the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, there seem to be about 15 different conversations going on. That is why we have lobbies. I would ask members to take their conversations out into the lobbies. We want to hear what members who have the floor have to say.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, the minister would like to express his concern and dismay upon hearing news reports of the three bombings that took place yesterday in Mexico City at a Scotiabank branch, the federal electoral tribunal and at the headquarters for the former ruling party in the country's capital. Although no one has reportedly been injured, such incidents of violence cannot be tolerated and political disagreements should be handled with respect for the law.

It is critical that we keep in mind Canada's purpose for entering into international labour cooperation agreements.

Under the landmark North American Agreement on Labour and Cooperation, signed by Canada, Mexico and the United States, in conjunction with the Free Trade Agreement, these three countries agreed to work together to improve working conditions and living standards domestically in order to protect, enhance and enforce workers' rights.

The North American Agreement on Labour Cooperation creates a framework of values and principles that signatory countries must respect. This agreement is based on the promotion of internationally

agreed upon labour principles and it contains a mutual commitment to effectively enforce domestic labour laws.

Over the past decade, Canada, Mexico and the U.S. have explored fields of common interest, shared best practices and built networks for the purpose of updating and transferring knowledge in the field of labour.

We want to reinforce here today our sustained commitment to upholding this agreement.

Labour program officials are currently monitoring the situation and are in regular contact with their counterparts in Mexico trying to determine if the government of Mexico has met its obligations under the North American Agreement on Labour Cooperation. As well, officials have been in communication with representatives of the United Steelworkers, Canada.

The minister can assure everyone in the House that this government will not hesitate to activate the dispute resolution process available under the agreement if we conclude that the Mexican government has not met its obligations.

The situation concerning unionist Napoleon Gomez is a complex one. The allegations take place in a very delicate context and I would invite my colleagues to show some reserve in this matter. Members will understand that I cannot, nor can the minister, comment on any immigration or legal matters related to Mr. Gomez since the Privacy Act prohibits the federal government from discussing any individual case.

In regard to the legal status of Mr. Gomez in Canada, if he is still in our country, I would invite the member to ask the question to my colleagues, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the minister responsible for the Canada Border Services Agency. Questions related to any possible notice for apprehension or request for extradition will be handled by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Department of Justice, as appropriate.

•(1830)

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it was not very clear if the Minister of Labour wants to ask his colleagues some questions to obtain more information or if he expects to receive information. I would like further clarification on this matter.

As I mentioned earlier, I would simply like to remind the House that the minister can make a request to the Commission for Labor Cooperation.

Under the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation, any signatory country:

may request in writing consultations with another Party at the ministerial level regarding any matter within the scope of this Agreement. The requesting Party shall provide specific and sufficient information to allow the requested Party to respond.

If a matter has not been resolved after ministerial consultations pursuant to Article 22, any consulting Party—

Of course, if this step fails, the requesting country—the Canadian government—

—may request in writing the establishment of an Evaluation Committee of Experts (ECE) [which] shall analyze...patterns of practice by each Party in the enforcement of its occupational safety and health...standards.

Basically, we need to know what will happen to Napoleon Gomez. Does the Mexican government intend to reinstate him?

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, once again, I can only tell my hon. colleague that the situation concerning Mr. Gomez is extremely complex and of a delicate nature. I would assure my hon. colleague opposite that the minister is taking this issue and this case very seriously. However, it would be extremely premature for the minister or anyone else on the government side to comment further at this time.

Let me say that labour program officials are continuing to gather information from all parties with respect to the issues at hand. We will be taking action and we are taking action currently. We have initiated regular contact with our counterparts in Mexico and have been in communication with the United Steelworkers, Canada, in this regard.

I can assure the House that the government will not hesitate to activate the dispute resolution process under the agreement if we find the Mexican government has not met its obligations.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to follow up on a question I asked in the House of Commons on October 25 in relation to manufacturing.

Ontario and Quebec have witnessed a massive loss of manufacturing jobs. The auto industry in my riding has also suffered some critical losses in everything from assembly to parts. A series of different businesses involved in mould making have also gone under in the past number of years.

At the present time, the Conservative government is pursuing a free trade deal with Korea but it is not acting on an actual policy.

My question on October 25 was for the Minister of International Trade because, in the previous government, he was the Liberal minister of industry who had promised on a number of different occasions to table a national auto policy in this chamber. The flip-flopping, floor-crossing minister then joined the Conservative Party and now sits as the Minister of International Trade. Somewhere in this vortex, the file the minister had on auto policy has disappeared. I do not know whether it was left in his brief case or in a drawer, whether it fell on the floor or whether the Minister of Industry killed it.

When I asked another question in the House of Commons, it became quite clear that the Minister of Industry had killed the aeronautics file, which was something that was supposed to be brought forward.

I would like to find out whether the minister actually talked with his colleague. The public should understand that the two ministers sit together in cabinet. A document was supposed to be out there. Either the previous Liberal and now Conservative minister misled Parliament, this House and the people of Canada, which could be a possibility and he could own up to that possibility, or alternatively,

Adjournment Proceedings

the present minister could talk with his colleague. They go to work together and they sit together. They could actually roll out what was done before.

I would like to find out from the minister what happened to that auto policy. Did it ever exist like the minister in the previous administration said it did or is the current Minister of Industry out to kill any programs or services for the auto industry? I know the minister met with CAPC recently but that is not enough. We have been fighting for specific things for years and I want to see them tabled in this chamber.

However, the first step is to find out whether or not the Minister of International Trade, when he was the Liberal minister of industry, misled this Parliament and, as he sits now as a Conservative, did he ever have that policy? Is the current Minister of Industry killing those files?

• (1835)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's new government has a deep understanding and appreciation of the Canadian automotive industry. I am from Oshawa where the people and the community depend greatly on the auto sector, so I know how vital the industry is to the economic well-being of a city and a country.

We are aware that the auto industry in Canada faces significant challenges. Some of these challenges are global, some of these are specific to certain manufacturers and others are common throughout the industry here in Canada. It is clear that no one stakeholder can address all of these issues. Each has a distinct role to play. Only through collective action can we ensure the continued strength of the auto industry here in Canada.

That is why two weeks ago the Minister of Industry met with the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council to discuss how we can collectively address the industry's needs. It was a very successful meeting, which included senior industry representatives, representatives from the Quebec government and the minister's counterpart from the Ontario government.

The minister was impressed by the high level of enthusiasm and commitment to the CAPC process. The auto industry representatives around the table were pleased with the CAPC meeting, with the minister's commitment to the CAPC process and with the efforts the government has made to support the industry.

We know there is more work to be done. CAPC working groups will identify priority areas where action can be taken to help the industry grow. Together, we will develop clear, focused and measurable actions to effectively support the Canadian automotive industry.

The Minister of Industry has committed to CAPC to working with his cabinet colleagues to advocate for and support the industry. The CAPC discussions were an important step and the minister looks forward to the next meeting in May 2007.

Adjournment Proceedings

We know that many of the challenges faced by the auto industry are shared by other manufacturing sectors, which is why this government is committed to creating an overall business climate that leads to greater manufacturing investment, innovation and jobs. This includes a more competitive tax system.

Budget 2006 introduced 29 tax cuts for businesses and individuals, including the elimination of the capital tax, reduced corporate taxes and the elimination of the corporate surtax. We are also committed to ensuring that regulations are designed to meet their goals at the least possible cost to business. We are working with business groups to cut crippling red tape. Our border and infrastructure measures are helping all manufacturers, including auto, to more easily move their goods and reach their customers.

We continue to work with industry stakeholders to explore measures to support Canada's manufacturers. Canada's new government will work to ensure that Canada remains positioned as one of the best locations in the world for manufacturing.

I am looking forward to seeing the final report from the industry committee.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, we still have no answer to the specific question of what happened to that auto policy that was supposed to be there.

It is interesting that the parliamentary secretary seems to have the speaking notes of the former administration but he does not have the actual answer to the specific question.

The constituents of Oshawa and other automotive communities need to understand that there was supposed to be an auto policy. Taking nine months to meet with CAPC is completely irresponsible, especially going cap in hand and not offering a single thing to the industry during some of the most difficult times. That is unacceptable.

We have a series of different automotive struggles in this country. One of the most recent struggles has been in my constituency with Ford where we could have actually had something rolled out, some type of a program, an incentive or at least a carrot, something that would get things started in a positive way. We have not seen that. I have resolutions from the Corporation of the County of Essex and its municipal politicians who are calling for federal and provincial intervention.

It is not good enough for the government to wait nine months to call a meeting and actually bring nothing to the organizations that, at the end of the day, affect Canadian jobs.

The parliamentary secretary should answer the question. Did the auto policy come over from the previous minister or did the current minister kill it? It is unacceptable to not have an answer on that question.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, the new government is looking at this sector very responsibly and the member even mentioned Korea. A free trade agreement with South Korea has the potential to deliver significant commercial benefits across a wide range of the Canadian economy, from agriculture, to high tech services, to investment.

We are aware of the concerns of certain sectors, including the automotive sector, about the potential impact of a free trade

agreement with Korea. The government has studied the impact on the Canadian automotive sector of a free trade agreement with Korea. Our studies indicate that any impact will be very limited.

It is important to note that the Canadian auto industry has been a major beneficiary of trade liberalization through NAFTA and it currently exports 85% of its production.

The Government of Canada consulted extensively with Canadians, including the auto sector, prior to launching these negotiations. We continue to work with stakeholders to ensure their interests and concerns are reflected in the negotiating positions.

The government has not set a deadline for the conclusion of negotiations but we will continue to take the time necessary to ensure the best deal for Canada and that a good deal is made.

● (1840)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration about what he intended to do with regard to the issue of undocumented workers. Sadly, the response, as has been his habit, simply did not address the issue.

Let us be clear. There is a serious problem with our immigration system. The points system for assessing new immigrants to Canada is undeniably flawed. The points system clearly favours professionals who apply at a time when this country has a significant demand for tradespeople. The government actively recruits professional employees and has in place programs that facilitate a grant of citizenship to them. There is no such program for tradespeople.

Canada needs more labourers and skilled workers. Labour and management representatives, along with elected officials in Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver, have clearly voiced the need for more construction workers. We now know that rather than raising target levels in response to these realities, the minister has in fact cut the number of skilled workers his government will permit to enter Canada.

Indeed, rather than allowing foreign workers who want to work in the needed industries to immigrate legally to Canada, he is actually creating a situation where they are forced to come through the back door. Having come to Canada to work hard in jobs where they are so desperately needed, they are then forced to live in hiding. There are some instances outside of the protection provided by union membership where, without this union support, these workers find themselves vulnerable to such despicable practices as blackmail in the workplace and having to work in unsafe conditions.

Despite having to live and work in this way, they continue to participate in our economy. They and their families become a part of our communities. They have children who are Canadians and they raise them here in this country. Over time, they become the embodiment of the Canadian work ethic, embracing Canadian values and immersing themselves in this country's cultural life.

Adjournment Proceedings

There are as many as 200,000 undocumented workers whom we need as workers in this country and who desperately want to become Canadian citizens. They contribute to our society and are trying to do the right thing, yet they are being forced from this country. Opponents may try to claim that these people are breaking the law. In reality, the problem in this instance is the law itself, not the people. Our immigration system needs to be fixed now.

The previous Liberal government had begun the process of fixing the immigration system. The Liberal government set reasonable immigration levels for 2005 and subsequently admitted thousands more than the set goal.

We invested significant energy in and attention to the immigration system and were willing to invest even more effort. Before the last election, the Liberal government was moving forward to make some of the important and needed changes. A plan was created to regularize undocumented workers.

Today we have a Conservative government that does not have to begin the process of change all over again. A plan is already written. The various concerns that have delayed a solution in the past are already addressed. All that remains is for the plan to begin implementation.

This issue goes beyond the usual party politics. This issue is about what kind of nation we want to be. Let us work on building a better future for these people and, as a result, for this country. We should strive for a stronger economy that will create better cities and a real sense of justice and fair play within our borders.

The Canadian Labour Congress tells us that documented and undocumented foreign worker in low-skilled occupations represent an increasing proportion of the Canadian workforce.

This June, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration passed a motion to halt the deportation of undocumented workers until a humane and logical solution is found. The minister chose to disregard this motion, so my question for the minister is simple. What can we do to help regularize these workers and overhaul the immigration system? Will the government commit to setting up a task force to work across party lines to build a better immigration system and find a solution for the issue of Canada's undocumented workers?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt. This member has raised the fact that the system is flawed and needs to be fixed. The Liberals had 13 years to do something about it and failed.

Canadians see the strong and growing economy under the new Conservative government. So robust is Canada's economy that employers in some regions and for some industries are contending with labour shortages that they long ago warned the old Liberal government were coming.

Canada's new government is working to address this challenge. We passed a budget and are developing policies that end the Liberal immigrant funding freezes and neglect. We are standing up for Canada by putting Canadians to work and attracting and retaining skilled foreign workers and professionals. Canadians know that this is what a responsive immigration program does.

From the outset of his appointment, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration stated that Canada's immigration system must be geared to the needs of Canadians and to the Canadian economy. The new government increased immigration targets to their highest level in 15 years, demonstrating that Conservatives know Canada needs well educated, highly skilled people.

The minister also knows that this country was built with bricks and mortar and we need people with hard hands. Canada accepts 100,000 temporary workers a year. This summer, our government opened new temporary foreign worker units. This fall, the minister will be taking further steps to make Canada's temporary foreign worker program more responsive to labour market needs.

Temporary foreign workers get Canadian work experience. They learn our languages. They adapt to the Canadian way of life. However, under the rules the Liberals created, these workers, who have all the ingredients for success, get sent home just when they are getting settled here. As recently as this morning, the minister stated to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration that he is looking for ways to give people who take part in our legitimate temporary foreign worker program the chance to call Canada home.

Yet the member for Davenport voted against our budget and against increases for immigrant literacy and language training and programs that help them integrate into our new communities. He and his party stand opposed to our government's work to improve the temporary foreign worker program.

On January 23, Canadians showed that they knew the Liberals were ineffectual when it came to dealing with immigration and labour matters. What word other than ineffectual explains how one can be chair of a Liberal caucus committee on undocumented workers but fail to get anyone in the cabinet of the former government to listen or implement a plan?

The member for Davenport and some of his colleagues say that a regularization scheme was ready to roll out the door had it not been for the fact that the Liberals lost the confidence of Canadians last November. Neither the member for Davenport nor his colleagues explained why the Liberals did not think enough of this plan or this issue to make it part of their election platform. It was a pretty thick platform with a lot of commitments, where everything was a priority. They even included old promises that they broke for 13 years.

Still, there was no mention of undocumented workers or regularization schemes. In any event, Canadians voted for a government that reflects their values and commitment to fairness and the rule of law.

Adjournment Proceedings

The bottom line is that any scheme that gives legal status to foreign nationals who have not been authorized to immigrate to Canada and are not participating in a legitimate worker program is unfair to those who have applied to come here legally. Any scheme that rewards with legal status foreign nationals who are working in Canada without authorization undermines the rule of law, our existing employment programs for Canadians and for foreigners, and the work of Canada's new government in building a better, more responsive, legitimate foreign worker program.

• (1845)

Mr. Mario Silva: Mr. Speaker, with an answer like that, no wonder they could not get anybody elected in the three largest cities in this country.

I understand that the government either cannot or will not make a commitment here and now to truly fix the immigration system. Therefore, instead, I am asking the minister if he would be willing to set up a task force that would meet regularly to discuss the issue and include in these meetings the stakeholder groups, including union representation and community groups.

Many will say that the place for this work is the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. It is my experience that in terms of this portfolio and the ministry, the minister must be aware that the issue goes beyond just his ministry. It includes issues of justice, finance, labour and skills development, as well as many others. The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration is already busy and there are many other groups and partners that need to be brought in, including many unions who continue to work hard on this issue, municipal governments, community service organizations and so on.

If the minister has other suggestions, I am open to hearing them. Will he join me in setting up such a task force? If not, what are the alternatives? How does he see the resolution of this issue taking place? What is he planning to do to resolve the issue of undocumented workers?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes that the member for Davenport and his party failed to do anything about the number of people who are in Canada illegally except watch their numbers grow over 13 years.

We also recognize that the former Liberal government left a backlog of over 800,000 people waiting to come here through legitimate channels. We deal every day with the former Liberal government's failure to make immigration and labour programs work for Canadians and for Canada.

Canada's new government and Canadians also recognize that the solution to these failings is not to declare an amnesty to say the rules no longer apply. Canadians and their new government respect fairness and the rule of law. Amnesty would be patently unfair to the thousands of people who seek to come to Canada every year and are prepared to follow the rules.

Instead, Canada's new Conservative government is working to find ways to address labour shortages and encourage responsible and responsive immigration. This work is well under way and many groups and stakeholders will be part of that process, but we are not prepared to embrace a stopgap measure that compromises the basic principles of the rule of law.

• (1850)

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn and the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole to study all votes under National Defence in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007.

I do now leave the chair for the House to resolve itself into committee of the whole.

[For continuation of proceedings see part B]

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, November 7, 2006
(Part B)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 7, 2006

[Continuation of proceedings from Part A]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

NATIONAL DEFENCE—MAIN ESTIMATES 2006-07

(House in committee of the whole for consideration of all Votes under National Defence in the Main Estimates, Mr. Bill Blaikie in the chair)

The Chair: I would like to open this committee of the whole session by making a short statement.

Tonight's debate is being held under Standing Order 81(4)(a) which provides for each of two sets of estimates selected by the Leader of the Opposition to be considered in committee of the whole for up to four hours.

[English]

Tonight's debate is a general one on all of the votes under National Defence as provided in the motion adopted on Wednesday, November 1. Parties may use each 15 minute slot for speeches or for questions and answers by one or more of their members.

In the case of speeches, members of the party to which the period is allotted may speak one after the other. The Chair would appreciate it if the first member speaking in each slot would indicate how the time will be used, particularly if it is to be shared.

Please note that pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) hon. members may not speak for more than 10 minutes within the 15 minute period.

[Translation]

When time is to be used for questions and answers, the Chair will expect that the minister's response will reflect approximately the time taken by the question since this time will be counted in the time originally allotted to the party.

[English]

I would remind hon. members that according to the special order adopted on Wednesday, November 1, during this evening's debate no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be entertained. At the conclusion of tonight's debate the committee will rise, the estimates under National Defence will be

deemed reported and the House will adjourn immediately until tomorrow.

We may now begin tonight's session with the Leader of the Opposition.

• (1850)

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Vancouver South. I will not be making a speech but will be asking questions. I am sure this will be of great relief to all members of the House.

I would first like to ask the minister about the primary purpose of this mission. I am hoping he will agree with us that the primary purpose of Canada's involvement in Afghanistan is not to bring about a military victory but rather to rebuild that beleaguered country, and that military activities within Afghanistan must be properly tailored to ensure that we achieve that primary goal.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Chair, I do not think that the goals or the tasks given the government in Afghanistan are any different under our government. It is our intention to be part of the NATO alliance and as part of that alliance to help restore proper governance in Afghanistan, to help with the development of the people so they can live a decent life, and to provide security so that insurgents do not interfere with the average lives of the citizens. It is a combination of security, development and governance.

• (1855)

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Chair, I take it, then, that we are agreed, the minister and I, and that in fact in order to be successful in Afghanistan we cannot rely exclusively on the military victory, but rather, the goal we must have is to win over the support of the local population so that people will not in the end turn back to the Taliban.

The most effective way of doing this, obviously, is through a proper balance between providing security and humanitarian and development assistance, but if we do not provide the people with the basic necessities of life, with potable water, reliable electricity and sound infrastructure, we cannot guarantee success.

My question for the minister is this. Given the reality of the situation on the ground in Kandahar today, are those reconstruction goals truly achievable?

Business of Supply

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, as the hon. member knows, there are 34 provinces in Afghanistan. There are 26 to 28 provinces that are relatively stable and development is going on with relatively little security effort. In about six provinces, including Kandahar province, the insurgency is quite virulent at the moment and we have had to put in extra efforts, the British, ourselves, the Americans, the Danes and the Dutch, to suppress the insurgency.

Given that, we are still succeeding in Afghanistan. We are still succeeding in Kandahar province. We are proceeding with development. There is U.S. aid development, UN development, Afghan government development, our foreign affairs development. We have development projects and CIDA has development projects and they are proceeding.

Hon. Bill Graham: Speaking of aid, Mr. Chair, there is obviously considerable pressure to deliver timely aid and we cannot wait to deliver that. General Richards, the British general who is commander of all NATO troops in Afghanistan, said in September that in his view the heavy military phase of the mission was now over and it was time to focus on reconstruction. He went on to say that we have to show in the next six months that the government is on the winning side. He said that if we do not take advantage of this in the next six months then we could pour an additional 10,000 troops in next year and we still would not succeed because we would have lost by then the consent of the people.

Would the minister agree with the assessment of the general in command of our troops in that area and if not, why not?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I do not agree with the general's assessment of time. There are probably reasons behind his selection of six months. However, it is a critical time in the south, in Kandahar province and we have to suppress the insurgency. That is what we are doing. I believe that we are going to succeed. We have already broken the back of the insurgency in the Kandahar area in a sense that they are not prone to attacking us directly. They will have to revert to suicide bombings and IEDs.

Yes, it is a critical time, but I do not set a six month deadline to it.

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Chair, I am glad the minister mentioned the suicide bombings and IEDs because there is concern obviously that the tactics adopted by the Taliban and the insurgents are starting to replicate tactics that have been adopted in Iraq. Clearly those of us who watch the situation in Iraq are very concerned about whether similar military tactics in Afghanistan would be as unproductive as they are in Iraq at present.

There are questions we need to have answered for the Canadian people today.

The decisions on military tactics that are being taken, while successful from a military point of view, are they undermining the possibility of achieving a true political resolution of the conflict?

Are we assured that the tactics of our allies who may occasionally attempt to fight an underground insurgency with tactics that are more suited to fighting a conventional military force are not unproductive?

Are we concerned that the use of our equipment, the use of tanks among the local population and particularly the use of air power, is such that it is destroying our capacity to reach out to the local

population in such a way that we can ultimately achieve success with the overall mission?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I think that the military tactics used in the south are appropriate to the situation. Sometimes there are only a few insurgents in the area and they are dealt with in a certain manner. When there are large numbers they have to be dealt with in a conventional manner. For instance, in the Panjwai area when they concentrated into numbers of about 500, we had to deal with them in a conventional manner. They stayed and fought in trenches and so we had to deal with it that way.

With respect to tanks, we have moved tanks into our area to protect our infantry, to make sure that when the Taliban go into areas and fight from the equivalent of pill boxes, that we do not have to send our infantry into get them, that we can use tank fire to take them out.

I think that the tactics of our allies are appropriate to the case in the south.

● (1900)

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Chair, the minister would agree that it was never contemplated to use tanks at the beginning and that the use of tanks is an indication of the nature of the change in mission. That takes us really to the question of aid which will be my last question.

We are concerned that aid be delivered in the Kandahar region in ways which will support our troops. We heard in the Senate hearings that some \$1.9 million of the military's own money was being spent for local aid in the region. We recently heard in the House about the doubling of discretionary aid to be given to local commanders.

Is the aid from CIDA coming forward in such a way that our military commanders are telling the minister and the government that they are getting the resources they need to provide villagers in the region with the help they need so that they can get the backup to make a military success of a mission? Without that they will not be successful because the local people will not have the clean water, the roads and other infrastructure they need to make a success out of this mission.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: I will answer two issues that you brought up. The first one is tanks. It is quite appropriate for us to have tanks there. We are putting them there to protect our infantry, to reduce the risks against our infantry. We are trying to reduce casualties.

With respect to aid, CIDA has aid. You are going to have to ask the CIDA minister about her aid program. We have a program as you mentioned. We are spending some millions of dollars. In fact we have doubled that effort in the Kandahar area. I have asked the CDS to ask the commanders on the ground if they can develop projects that the military can run that are efficient and actually get results in the Kandahar area. We are looking at that now from a military point of view.

Business of Supply

The Chair: Just before recognizing the hon. member for Vancouver South, I want to remind members that even in committee of the whole House we are supposed to refer to each other in the third person. There has been a lot of you this and you that going back and forth. I would ask members to observe the rules of the House in that respect also in committee of the whole.

The hon. member for Vancouver South.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Chair, six months ago the House voted to extend the mission. At that time the Prime Minister said that he would extend the mission anyway, regardless of the outcome of the vote, for at least one year.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister said that NATO was requiring a force commitment the following week after the extension if one was granted. The fact is that the Minister of National Defence, when he was asked about what the troop commitments were at NATO, said that he would table the troop commitments, that he did not know. Obviously that was one of the questions that one should have asked at the time of the extension of NATO since NATO was asking us for a force commitment.

At the time of extension it is clear that the government had no plan for the extension. The military is scrambling to accommodate the extension now. "Scrambling" is the minister's own word. Why did the government not ask for and have enough troop commitments and workable caveats before the extension was granted by the House? Why not, since the government says the sacrifices of our soldiers give us the influence, why not appropriate caveats and troop commitments?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, before we made the extension to February 2009, we sought the advice of the military, the diplomats and the aid people to make certain that we could meet that commitment and we were advised we could.

As to the word "scrambling", I think the member took a clip from the weekend where I used the word. I was referring to the issue that I have asked the military to try to ensure in principle that no one who was in direct combat returns to Afghanistan before February 2009. I have set a higher standard than is required, but what I am trying to do is reduce the risk on the individuals who go outside the wire and who were in combat. The military advised me that they are quite confident they will be able to achieve that. We will be able to achieve that by our existing people in the military and by our recruiting.

The point about re-rolling people was also brought up. Let us not misunderstand that term. We have no intention of taking existing sailors or existing airmen and making them infantrymen. What we were talking about is making sure that the burden across the armed forces is equal. A truck driver in the navy could end up as a truck driver in Afghanistan. That is the kind of ideas we are talking about.

The advice I have is that we are fully confident that we can meet that commitment of mine.

• (1905)

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Mr. Chair, it is quite appropriate that the minister is talking about re-rolling because that is the question I have for him. We now know from General Hillier that there is going to be re-rolling. The minister has said there is not going to be any re-rolling. We are trying to finesse those answers.

The fact is that we are truly scrambling now because we do not have the adequate troops to meet the needs of an extension for two years that was granted here and was brought forward as a motion as a cynical political ploy by the government to play political games with our troops. I think it is absolutely abhorrent that this was done because now the fitness requirement is being watered down. We are truly scrambling.

General Hillier says that there is going to be re-rolling definitely. The minister had said there was going to be no re-rolling. We know that the troops in training are going to be re-rolled. In fact, I am told that those who join the navy might have to go for infantry training so they could actually be deployed to Afghanistan. We know there is going to be re-rolling of more than just truck drivers or cooks from the navy or air force.

The question is, who is in charge here? Is the minister in charge or is General Hillier in charge? Is there going to be re-rolling or is there going to be no re-rolling? I want a very clear answer in the House once and for all.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: I guess you are going to get it once and for all.

Fitness, let us talk about fitness. The hon. member mentioned that somehow we are lowering fitness. We have no intention whatsoever of lowering the fitness standard.

We are potentially going to take people in who cannot immediately pass the fitness test. We are going to train them for six or eight weeks. They are going to do physical training through that period and if they pass the fitness test, they are in the armed forces. No one who cannot pass the fitness test is going to be accepted in trench training in the armed forces.

That is just an error of understanding, or whatever term one wants to use. We are not lowering the fitness standard.

With respect to re-rolling, no one who is a sailor who has a sailor's trade or an air trade will be employed as infantry. What we are going to do possibly with infantry is we may ask some of the armour, or the field engineers, or the artillery who are in the combat arms to act in an infantry role if necessary. This, by the way, is historically quite traditional. Armoured regiments from time to time abandoned their vehicles and went into the line as infantry.

If we find that we need a few more infantry to get through to 2009 without repeating the tasking of the infantry battalions, we will attempt to do that.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Mr. Chair, we know that we are now talking about nine month tours instead of six month tours.

Business of Supply

The minister has now said that we are going to have some re-rolling of trucks, truckers and other people in the navy or air force. General Hillier has said that the trainees who are in navy training or air force training are also going to be diverted into infantry training. Is that going to be so or not? What is the real answer on that particular question?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, in the past up until about now, what the member would find if he checked the tasking in the armed forces is that about 40% of the armed forces do all the contingency operational tasks and about 60% of the armed forces do not.

We will find that many members in the armed forces have rows and rows of ribbons from going from one mission to another mission whereas other members have very few. The chief of the defence staff and the military are trying to make sure that the tasking is levelled across the armed forces so that if someone is qualified to do a task in Afghanistan or if we take on another mission somewhere else and that person happens to be in the navy or the air force and is qualified to do a job, we will employ that person in Afghanistan if needed.

The other issue the member brought up—

The Chair: I am going to have to interrupt the hon. minister. The time has expired, but the minister happens to be the next speaker so he can pick up where he left off.

• (1910)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Chair, a lot has happened since this government took office. In a matter of mere months we are getting things done for Canadians. We have begun to clean up government and politics by introducing the federal accountability act. We have strengthened crime legislation by tackling gun, gang and drug crimes. We have worked to keep the economy strong by cutting taxes and paying down the debt. We have protected Canada's sovereignty and advanced Canada's interest in the world and have taken a leadership role in international affairs.

On top of that, we have also done a lot for our Canadian Forces. I know that members of the House are unanimous in their desire to support Canada's military, but I also know we do not always agree on how we should do that. Indeed, investments in defence can be contentious. They often amount to very large sums and are paid for with hard-earned Canadian tax dollars. They demand the responsible and critical oversight of the House. So I welcome this opportunity before the committee of the whole today to assure each member and all Canadians that current spending by the Department of National Defence is well justified and in the interests of Canada.

[*Translation*]

To inform this debate, I want to explain the current government's vision of the defence of Canada.

I want to explain the departmental management framework that is guiding all our spending decisions while we are working to make that vision a reality. I especially want to stress that this government is going forward with a number of practical initiatives that will provide our troops with the support they deserve.

[*English*]

We all know that the world has changed considerably since the end of the cold war. We face new security challenges like global terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and failed and failing states. The stark reality remains that we lost 24 men and women in the attacks of September 11, 2001 and, unfortunately, September 11 was not a solitary event. Since that date, we have been reminded numerous times that international terrorism still poses a threat to us.

While the cold war is over, the need for diligence in Canadian defence and security has not decreased. More than 3,000 Canadian soldiers, sailors and air force personnel are deployed overseas in operations today. On any given day, about 8,000 Canadian Forces members are preparing for, engaging in or returning from an overseas mission. At home approximately 10,000 military men and women diligently work to defend our territory and its approaches, to assert our sovereignty and to serve our communities.

The expectations of a declining military role in the post cold war world have not panned out. The demand for defence capabilities continues to be strong. That is why the government is committed to strengthening the independent capacity of the Canadian Forces. We need a three-ocean navy, a robust army and a revitalized air force that is able to operate as an integrated Canadian Forces team to defend, to help protect the North American continent and to contribute to stability abroad.

To guide our steps forward, the Department of National Defence, in accordance with the Treasury Board's government-wide mandate, is implementing a new planning and accountability structure. It is called the program activity architecture and is based on three strategic outcomes that the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces provide to Canada.

The first is that Canadians are confident that the Canadian Forces have the capability and the capacity to meet Canada's defence and security commitments.

The second is that the Canadian Forces achieve success in operations, whether at home dealing with severe spring floods in Manitoba or abroad bringing security to southern Afghanistan.

The third is that the Canadian Forces and the Department of National Defence promote good governance, Canadian identity and influence in a global community.

Canadians identify with and are proud of the Canadian Forces. On the international scene, the professionalism, performance and bravery of our men and women bring much credibility to Canada.

[*Translation*]

To achieve these results, the program activity architecture describes three main activities around which the work of the department is oriented.

The first activity consists in generating and sustaining relevant, responsive and effective combat-capable integrated forces. The second consists in conducting successful operations, and the third consists in contributing to the Canadian government, Canadian society and the international community in accordance with Canadian interests and values.

• (1915)

[*English*]

Together these are obvious but profound goals for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces.

The government has moved forward on some major initiatives that will contribute to achieving these goals, which the recently tabled supplementary estimates support. For instance, we announced plans to expand the numbers of the Canadian Forces. We have initiated a program to increase the regular force by 13,000 and the reserves by 10,000.

A force expansion of such magnitude requires an aggressive national recruitment campaign, as well as the expansion and modernization of our recruitment and training systems. We are also working hard to retain existing military members by providing fair pay and allowances, improving base infrastructure and providing appropriate compensation for special forces and other members engaged in operations.

In addition, as I announced in June, we are planning to acquire medium size logistics trucks, medium to heavy lift helicopters, strategic and tactical aircraft and joint support ships. These procurement projects will not only enhance the capabilities of the Canadian Forces, but through the industrial regional benefits, policy they will also support our domestic defence industry.

To assure Canadians that their military is serving them at home, we are exploring options for Arctic defence initiatives and for territorial and rapid reaction battalions. Because Canadian security is inseparable from stability abroad, we are throwing our full support behind the mission in Afghanistan.

We have extended the mission to February 2009 and we have enhanced the configuration of our military contingent to address current military needs in theatre. They are extremely positive developments for the Canadian Forces and for all Canadians. Because the department has created a management framework that guides our resource allocation, we know that these investments are the right investments for Canada.

Having said that, the substantial efforts we have made so far cannot be the end of the story. It will take several years to restore the Canadian Forces to the level sufficient to meet Canada's defence needs. That is why in the coming months the government will release a Canada first defence strategy. This document will outline the capabilities that the Canadian Forces need for the next 10 years and beyond.

[*Translation*]

When I say that this government is determined to do more for the Canadian Forces this year and in the years to come, I do not mean that we are simply going to spend more money.

Business of Supply

We have also looked at a number of ways of reducing costs in order to make better use of every dollar allocated to national defence. For example, we are transforming our defence procurement process so that we can provide the Canadian Forces with what they need when they need it, but in an economical and timely manner.

[*English*]

Managing the resources of a federal department requires difficult decisions, but at the heart of every decision that this government makes is our fundamental commitment to enhance the security of Canadians.

The Canadian Forces need our support today, tomorrow and the years to come. We just cannot give them verbal support. The Canadian Forces need tangible resources to do their job. It is that simple.

I welcome questions from members and I welcome constructive debate.

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Chair, the Canadian Reserve force is composed of dedicated men and women who are enrolled for service other than continuing full time military service. The reserve force is divided into four subcomponents: the primary reserve, the supplementary reserve, the cadet instructor cadre and the Canadian rangers.

The role of the primary reserve is to augment, sustain and support deployed forces and in some cases, perform tasks that are not performed by regular force members. The Canadian Forces are continuing to explore ways to enhance the role of reserves in civil preparedness to respond to natural disasters and local emergencies. In fact, I would be remiss at this juncture not to mention the Brockville Rifles located in Brockville in my riding of Leeds—Grenville.

This is an outstanding reserve unit with a long, proud history and tremendous connection to its community. It proved its worth to the community during the now famous ice storm of 1998. At the height of that storm, 825 people were housed at the Brockville armouries, 75 of whom were regular forces members while the rest were from reserves across Ontario. It should also be noted that there was another similar contingent housed in Cornwall during the same crisis.

The reservists did a number of jobs during this storm including, but not limited to, assisting with police traffic control, patrolling vulnerable cottage areas, assisting older folks out of isolated rural homes and into care centres and hand delivering water to cattle. They put in thousands of hours of work clearing fallen trees with the city, individuals and hydro crews.

There are currently 125 reserve members in Brockville and the Rifles are looking forward to further expansion. Because many of its members are of high school age, the Brockville Rifles has received funding for the past two years as part of the local school board's cooperative education program. It is an important part of the community of Brockville and all of Leeds and Grenville.

Business of Supply

The Canadian Forces reserves are also an integral part of the Canadian Forces. They are playing a key role in our current operation in Afghanistan. As the report of the Department of National Defence on plans and priorities states:

Currently, reservists make up 13% of DND's deployed strength abroad, including one in seven soldiers in Afghanistan. make up 13% of the Department of National Defence's deployed strength abroad, including one in seven soldiers in Afghanistan. The CF Transformation and anticipated commitments in international operations suggest that this rate of reservists' participation in operations will be maintained, if not increased, under the new Integrated Managed Readiness System.

Could the Minister of National Defence provide an update on what the Canadian Forces is doing with regard to the primary reserves?

● (1920)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, the government extends its gratitude to the men and women of the reserves. The reserves are an integral part of the Canadian Forces. We could not fulfill many important roles, both at home and overseas, without them.

There are currently approximately 25,000 members of the reserve force within nine separate organizations, including the army, navy, air force, communications, medical and legal reserves. Forty-five per cent of the reserves hold full time civilian jobs and 40% are students. As we promised during the election campaign, we are working to expand the primary reserve to 35,000.

Not many Canadians know that our reservists fill such a diverse set of roles. For example, our naval reservists provide port security and operate maritime coastal defence vessels. Members of the air reserve perform squadron augmentation and support roles. The army reserve will participate in territorial battalions.

The Canadian Forces continue to work on the land force reserve structure, an ongoing project designed to help to ensure the long term relevance and effectiveness of the army reserve and the Canadian Forces as a whole by expanding the role and size of the land force reserve.

The second phase of the project, which focuses on change in growth, wrapped up this summer. The restructure of the land force reserves continues to move forward. The land force reserve restructure resulted in significant benefits, including improving the way the CF recruits reserves, development of personnel policies to support force generation for operations and the growth of the army reserve from its current strength to more than 16,000.

The land force reserve restructure process was recently integrated into the overall CF and army transformation process. Work is now underway for a third phase that will guide future growth and further integration of the army reserve.

Reservists are playing an invaluable role in our current mission in Afghanistan. The Canadian Forces currently have mechanisms in place to assist reserve members in maintaining their civilian employment while they are deployed. For example, the Canadian Forces liaison council has a highly successful process in place to advocate on behalf of reserves. The council has lobbied more than 4,900 employers that have pledged to support the reserve and more than half of those have committed to allow their employees to participate in operations. Among them, the federal government, all

10 provincial governments and 147 municipalities have stated their support.

An estimated 40% of reserves are students. The Canadian Forces liaison council has launched a special project to reach the 308 post-secondary schools and obtain their support for reservists who attend their institutions. In the first year of the project, 163 institutions have pledged their support.

We will continue to work with the private sector to help them understand the important role reservists play in the Canadian Forces for their country and the skills and experience they bring back to their employer upon returning from a deployment.

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chair, before starting, I would like to clarify one point.

The last time I had the pleasure of participating in this kind of discussion, the current Minister of National Defence was sitting on my left and was in the official opposition. I had to let my friends who were watching the debate know that it was a committee of the whole. At the last committee of the whole, I was surrounded by Conservatives. I reassured my friends at the time that I had not become a Conservative. This was a committee of the whole where people can sit where they like and I had ended up by chance in the middle of the Conservatives. This evening, in order to be totally fair, I wanted to reassure my friends that I have not become a Liberal; I am a Bloc member of Parliament and this is a committee of the whole. So I can sit where I want.

Now that I have clarified this, I have a question for the minister.

The Bloc Québécois is not happy with the mission in Afghanistan. I will explain why. When we were last here some time ago, we asked questions of the Liberal defence minister at the time. Everybody wanted to talk about reconstruction and the urgent need for the Canadian Forces to intervene because schools and hospitals had to be built and protected and roads had to be reconstructed.

Since the start of the mission, though, there has been a change in its mandate. Canada is no longer there to build hospitals or schools; it is there to hunt the Taliban. Many people criticize the Canadian mission for just hunting the Taliban.

The minister himself agreed in committee that the main objective was to drive out the people who had sheltered and supported the authors of the September 11 attacks. If this is the objective of the current mission, the Bloc Québécois feels that it has not been achieved because reconstruction and diplomacy are also important. The 3D approach included not only defence but development and diplomacy as well.

My question is for the minister. How much time and money does he intend to spend before moving on to the two other Ds, development—or construction—and diplomacy? He has said himself on several occasions that it was not by military operations alone that Canada would accomplish its mission in Afghanistan.

Business of Supply

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, the primary purpose of the military in Afghanistan is actually to support development. We have recently committed extra forces to defend the provincial reconstruction team. We have now committed a full infantry company, a reinforced infantry company, to defend the provincial reconstruction team whose primary mission is to get out among the people and improve their lives.

The battle group is there not only to protect the PRT but to protect the Afghan aid programs, the U.S. aid programs, the Afghan government, the UN aid programs, and all the aid programs. The battle group is there to keep the insurgency under control so development can proceed.

When I talk to troops, I tell them that our mission there is to protect the development mission. That is why we have put so much military effort in there.

Our focus has not changed. It is the same mission that we inherited and we are carrying on with it. What has happened in the meanwhile is that the level of violence has gone up and we have had to react. If we do not keep the level of violence down, we cannot continue with our projects.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chair, the minister just confirmed my remarks. He tells me that 200 soldiers from Valcartier will be sent to Afghanistan to protect the provincial reconstruction teams, or PRTs.

However, I would like to remind the minister that 2,200 soldiers are currently in Afghanistan. If he needs additional reinforcements to protect the PRTs, that means that the other 2,200 soldiers are busy chasing the Taliban. A considerable ratio is chasing the Taliban as opposed to working on development and diplomacy. It seems that this is not a question of diplomacy or development.

The minister tells us that we are sending 200 soldiers to protect the PRTs, but what are the other 2,200 soldiers doing? Therein lies the problem. I say this because the Bloc Québécois does not believe that the solution to Afghanistan is military in nature. The minister said so himself.

I am asking the minister if he does not agree with us, by admitting that the 200 additional soldiers who are heading for Afghanistan are intended to ensure the protection and security of the PRTs. Is he not, then, also admitting that the 2,200 other soldiers are busy looking for the Taliban and, therefore, are part of an aggressive mission? We have a hard time accepting this. The international community and the people of Afghanistan, I believe, have a hard time accepting this. I would ask the minister to clarify his position on the 200 new soldiers in relation to the 2,200 other soldiers.

• (1930)

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I mentioned that we were sending, and in fact they are arriving this month, a reinforced infantry company to protect the PRT. The PRT itself is essentially military. There are some diplomats there and some CIDA people, but most of the people in the PRT are military. The PRT and the protection put together will have more than 400 people involved.

With respect to the battle group, it may vary in numbers but the battle group number is somewhere around 1,000 armour, infantry, artillery, engineers, et cetera. Their job is to protect development and townsfolk in the entire province of Kandahar, not just the PRT inside Kandahar City. Their job is in the entire province. There are about 1,000 in the battle group who are trying to suppress the insurgency throughout the entire province and there are about 400 in the PRT.

The remaining people represent those people who we have to have to support the mission, the logistics support, the command and control support, and the air support. That is what the rest of the people do.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chair, I would like to follow this train of thought a bit farther. We think this mission has become almost entirely a military one. As I just said, about 200 to 400 soldiers are working on protection, but more than 2,000 others are hunting the Taliban.

Furthermore, the military equipment in use in Afghanistan has changed. Not long ago, we were on a reconstruction mission. Now, news releases say we are sending more soldiers and more tanks. I think it safe to say we are not sending tanks to rebuild schools and hospitals. We are sending them to hunt the Taliban. This is more proof that the department is much too focused on the military aspect of the mission and not enough on its other aspects.

Does the minister agree that this is further proof that the mission is too military-oriented and not development-oriented enough?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, the member opposite obviously ignored my first answer. I guess I will have to say it again.

We have about 1,000 soldiers involved in the battle group protecting the entire province of Kandahar. There are 400 or so soldiers involved in the PRT, along with diplomats, policemen and people from CIDA. As I have said before, from our point of view, the main function of all of that military effort is to support development work. Development work is going on throughout the entire Kandahar province, as it is throughout the whole country.

It is not a military oriented mission as such, but we have to do what is necessary to bring the Taliban under control. We cannot allow the Taliban to win and take over. Remember what kind of murderous regime there was before NATO and the alliance moved in. The Taliban was running the country, executing people, suppressing women's rights, et cetera. I could go on but everyone knows the story. We need the military there to suppress the Taliban so we can get on with development.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chair, I just want to say one thing. I think it would be pretentious to say I had any influence on General Jones, who is responsible for the U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, but he said that if he had to choose between 5,000 additional soldiers and \$50 million for reconstruction, he would take the money.

Why am I questioning the minister's statements? Because media reports during the visit of the Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages to Afghanistan did not show a single school or hospital. No wonder we do not think there is any reconstruction going on at this time.

The government is focusing its efforts in Afghanistan on military action. I would like the minister to answer the same question General Jones answered: if he had the choice between 5,000 additional soldiers and \$50 million for reconstruction, which would he choose?

• (1935)

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, fortunately, I do not have to make that choice. What I try to do and what the government tries to do is find a balance among diplomacy, development and security. From our point of view, whatever it takes to be successful in the Kandahar area is what we are doing, so we do not have to make Hobson's choice.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair: Four minutes.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chair, I would like to move on to another topic now.

The minister is well aware that I take a keen interest in the aerospace industry. He also knows that I object to the way the aerospace contracts have been awarded. In addition, in the supplementary estimates that will soon be before us, certain sums of money are earmarked for that industry, which means that they will be used to purchase aerospace equipment. The government currently wants to purchase aerospace equipment worth \$13 billion.

We have gone from one extreme to the other. A few years ago, the government opted for a procedure that involved 12 to 15 years of waiting time because of a whole series of obstacles that had to be overcome before equipment could be purchased. The equipment was outdated by the time it arrived. Now, we are relying on the Americans, with the Boeing contracts and the like. I am talking about the C-17 aircraft and the Chinook helicopter. But the minister made a mistake, because now Boeing is deciding about content and industrial benefits.

And we are not talking about regional industrial benefits any more; now we are talking about Canadian benefits. That means that the aerospace industry in Quebec, which makes up 60% of the industry in Canada, could take a back seat and be told that the government has invested so many billions of dollars, but that Boeing is deciding where it will invest in Canadian content. The industry in Quebec would like the government to bear in mind that it would like

economic benefits in aerospace, not necessarily in fish, Pacific salmon or northern spruce. We want benefits in aerospace.

Did the minister not make a mistake when he used sole-source procurement with a specific requirement that ruled out everyone but Boeing? As a result, now, Canadian taxpayers will not get the best bang for their buck. What is more, the industry in Quebec could be hosed because of the government's approach.

I would like to hear the minister's opinion on this.

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I have to inform the hon. member that I am not the Minister of Industry and I do not know the details of benefits. He will have to contact the Minister of Industry for that. However, the equipment we are acquiring is what is needed by the armed forces and that every dollar spent on this equipment, no matter where it is spent, will be returned to Canada in investment, dollar for dollar.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask one last question. It is fine to say that every dollar invested will be returned to Canadians, and I do not know whether or not the contract with Boeing has already been signed. No matter, what I did find out from Boeing is that 60% of the contract must benefit the aerospace industry. That means that 40% will go elsewhere. Since 60% of the aerospace industry is in Quebec, we want the maximum amount of benefits for the aerospace industry.

That also goes for tactical aircraft. In their case, it is a question of 50%. I know that I am not addressing the Minister of Industry. Nevertheless, it is the Minister of National Defence who decided on the specifications for these contracts. He knew full well that with regard to the C-17 and the Chinooks, only Boeing could fill these specific orders. In my opinion, the taxpayers will lose out and I would like the minister to make a final comment on this matter.

• (1940)

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I do not know if that is a question or not. I will say again that the military need this equipment. They are getting what they need. Every dollar spent will be returned to Canada in investments.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to be here tonight to participate in this process. I would like to thank the minister for appearing here tonight and spending several hours answering questions from members of the House.

The expenditures of the Department of National Defence are really vast. It is the largest single expenditure that Parliament reviews at \$13.6 billion. The supplementary estimates alone are just over \$1 billion, which is actually a sum that is larger than most departments of government.

Business of Supply

In April of last year, in response to a written question that I sent the minister, I was told that the mission had cost, so far, \$1.4 billion in incremental costs. About six weeks later, the Minister of Foreign Affairs told me that the mission had cost \$1.8 billion and that the future costs of the mission would be \$1.25 billion. The Minister of Finance has told me that the rest of the mission will cost \$1.8 billion.

Clearly, these numbers are going up, and these are the incremental costs, not the full costs to DND. This number subtracts salaries and does not speak to the cost to the whole of government, to the costs of supporting veterans and their families. If we add up the full costs, as published in the department's report on plans and priorities, we get a sum of over \$4.1 billion.

Can the minister now give us an update on the full costs of the mission going forward to 2009?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, the incremental costs for the mission in Afghanistan to date is \$2.1 billion. It is estimated, going forward to the end of the mission, that there will be a further \$1.8 billion expended. So, total incremental costs estimated to the end of the mission, that is February 2009, and also getting the forces home if that is the decision at the time, will cost \$3.9 billion incrementally.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for the information.

Information that was previously provided to me by the minister stated that the added cost of deploying the Leopard tanks will be \$157 million. It is a fairly large sum of money, considering that his government made cuts to women's programs, to literacy and to the court challenges program.

When we compare this \$157 million with the \$1.5 million that the Department of Foreign Affairs is going to spend this year on civilian activities as part of the provincial reconstruction team, how much did it cost to send each tank?

I also asked through a written question to the minister, and I asked him in committee, and my office has even used the access to information system to try to find out the cost of a particular item of departmental spending. How much did Canada pay last November for each Excalibur round to be used with the M777?

The government spent \$5.5 million for these shells. That is about the same amount of money that was spent on the court challenges program, in fact a little bit more than that, before it was cut.

The minister promised me at the defence committee that he would find out this information, so I am wondering if he could share that with us now. What is the exact cost of each one of those shells?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, the hon. member had a number of questions. I hope I can keep track of them. The total cost to send the tanks, the cannon mortar and the engineers to Afghanistan was \$189 million and that was the transportation plus what was necessary to get all the equipment up to standard for operations.

With respect to Excalibur, we do not own nor do we have any Excaliburs in the armed forces. I think someone is still trying to find out what the theoretical price is from a company but we do not have any rounds in the armed forces.

● (1945)

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, in terms of the provincial reconstruction team, could the minister share with the House the amount of spending by DND that actually goes to reconstruction and is actually being spent on reconstruction?

We know an enormous of money has been spent so far on the tanks and on upgraded vehicles, but has there been a similar increase in the spending on reconstruction work by the PRTs, and what have they spent that money on?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, as I said, we have had to increase the protection on the PRT to ensure they are effective. The only money that I can talk about with respect to the PRT is the DND portion. I think we are spending something like \$3.4 million on projects there but I have asked the military chiefs to look at possibly increasing the DND portion of development projects under the PRT.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, I was hoping to get some kind of indication on what projects have been completed by the PRTs but maybe the minister could go into that later.

I would like to ask some specific questions regarding support operations in Kandahar. Who owns the Kandahar air base? I know we employ some local Afghans there but what about the base itself. Is it owned by the Afghan government, by the Americans or by a private company? If so, which one, and how much does Canada pay for the use of the facility for our troops and equipment?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, the base, as such, is owned by the U.S. government at this time but it will be transferred to the ownership of NATO. I do not have the immediate cost at hand right now but we pay a proportional share of running the base. There are British, American, Danes and a whole bunch of people at that base and we pay our proportional share.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, on procurement, I know the minister made a number of announcements over the summer. These included supply ships, new transport aircraft and helicopters. I wonder if he could tell us now how far along that process is and what considerations have been made for Canadian industrial involvement?

Many people have said that the process around the heavy lift aircraft seems to be tantamount to a sole source contract. I wonder if the minister can assure us that it will not be sole sourced and at what stage this is in the process now?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, with respect to the heavy lift aircraft, I believe the choice is the C-17. As I said about all the projects, all the projects are doing dollar for dollar. They will be invested in Canada so that hundreds of companies in Canada will benefit from this.

In the case of the support contract, I believe Boeing will manage the support contract but it will be employing Canadians in the support contract.

Business of Supply

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, I have spoken to the minister personally in the past about Arctic sovereignty and I know that he also takes this issue very seriously. One of the Conservative Party's election promises concerned icebreakers. I would like to know where the government is and where the minister is with that right now. There have been suggestions that instead of icebreakers, that hovercraft could be used in the north.

I wonder if the minister is aware of the significant difficulties experienced by the Canadian Coast Guard when using hovercraft in cold water and cold air conditions in the Gulf of St. Lawrence as the spray freezes and builds up as a thick ice on the equipment. Certainly this would be an even bigger problem in the north. I wonder if the minister could comment both on where we are with icebreakers and the other issue around hovercraft.

• (1950)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, our policy asks that the navy be able to operate in three oceans, that is the Atlantic, Pacific and the Arctic Oceans. The navy was tasked with looking at a number of options of how it would achieve that and, what kind of vessels it would need to achieve that. It is looking at a range of vessels and we are waiting for the recommendation.

Once we get the recommendation, which will be part of our overall defence strategy, we will need to seek the approval of the cabinet. At that stage we will know what we have.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, I am not exactly sure what that answer meant. Does that mean that the government is committed to the election promise that it made around icebreakers or does it mean that the government is waffling on that now?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I think the waffle was a part of the NDP in the past. It is not part of our group. We are not waffling on it. As I have said, the navy is looking at a range of options and I am waiting for the recommendation from the navy.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, I take it that is a commitment to proceed with icebreakers for the north.

I would like to ask some more questions with regard to the north. Are there any U.S. military forces stationed in the Canadian Arctic? Does the United States operate or maintain underwater acoustic sensors anywhere in the Canadian Arctic? If so, is the surveillance information obtained shared with Canada, especially now that the Norad agreement has been expanded to include the sharing of maritime surveillance, including, as the minister clarified to me earlier this year, in the Northwest Passage?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, to my knowledge there are no U.S. military stationed in our north and there are no U.S. military sensor systems operating under water in our north or in any other place.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for his very clear answer.

I want to return now to the situation in Kandahar. At the defence committee, a question was raised about the auxiliary police of the Afghan national police system. It was reported that they were hiring teenagers, giving them 10 days of training and an AK-47 to work as auxiliary police officers around the road in Kandahar that Canadians are working to build.

I am wondering whether the minister has had an opportunity to investigate that situation. What are the minister's feelings about youngsters with AK-47s being brought on board as auxiliary police officers for the Afghan national police?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, as I understand it, the auxiliary police were authorized by the Karzai government. These youngsters are 18 years or older. They may be teenagers in a teenage sense but they are adults and they are trained to use weapons. They reinforce the local police and the local army.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, in terms of Afghanistan and the Canadian mission there, the minister knows that we have had some very serious concerns with the counter-insurgency nature of the mission.

I would like to know how the road building is going in Kandahar? When does the minister expect that project will be completed?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I think the hon. member is referring to the road where we have had six Canadians killed. It is progressing quite well. There is now a sharing of costs. Basically, we have been building the road but there is now a sharing of costs and Germany will be picking up the price to pave the road. The Americans are picking up the price of building a bridge and we are picking up the price of other parts of the road. The road is progressing quite well and the number of attacks in that area have decreased over time.

• (1955)

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to hear that and I think Canadians will be pleased to hear that. Of course we all hope there will not be any further loss of life as Canadians work to provide that kind of transportation in Afghanistan.

The minister has said before that the situation in Afghanistan will not be resolved by military means alone, which is something we in the New Democratic Party certainly understand.

What kind of diplomacy is taking place at this point in Kandahar province? What kind of relationship do the Canadians on the ground have with the governor in Kandahar province? I guess I would ask the minister how he foresees the diplomatic part of our role in Afghanistan proceeding? It appears from any information that we are getting that is not part of the mission at this point.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Chair, I rise on a point of order. I just want to ensure that everyone is aware of the procedures here. Although the Minister of National Defence likes to take all questions related to the mission, it is quite clear in Marleau and Montpetit that the questions should pertain to the minister's portfolio. The question being asked by the hon. member would be one, I would suggest, better suited for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, not the Minister of National Defence. I therefore would humbly suggest, Mr. Chair, that the question be ruled out of order.

The Chair: Actually the 15 minutes has run out. The minister may or may not want to respond. If he does, I will give him a few seconds. If not, we will move on to the next section.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I will respond that it is basically a foreign affairs question. The only area in which we get involved with the government, the Karzai government not the Kandahar government, is with our strategic advisory team in Kabul.

Business of Supply

Mr. Russ Hiebert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Chair, this past August, I had a unique opportunity to get to know our Canadian Forces better. I joined in an all-night military training exercise in Kamloops, British Columbia. I had only an hour's rest that night but that was more than most of the camouflaged soldiers who stood around me. These soldiers were dirty, tired and had been living on military rations for weeks. However, as the dawn broke, their mood was jubilant. They were celebrating. After weeks of intense training in the wilderness of those mountains, these soldiers emerged into the early sunlight that morning to be congratulated as the members of Canada's newest regiment. They were now part of Canada's special forces and I was so fortunate to get the opportunity to tag along on their final night of training and to stand by them that morning during a mountaintop ceremony.

My conversations with the soldiers through the night had been brief because most of the time they had to remain silent. Their jobs require stealth. Despite the brevity of our conversations, I gained insight into the kind of people they are. They are strong, confident and even fierce, but they are also humble and very approachable. They have families and friends, homes, future plans and career ambitions.

Some members might be asking what that has to do with tonight's debate. Tonight's debate is about the 2006-2007 main estimates for National Defence. To some, these numbers are just financial allocations, but to me these numbers represent real people, equipment, support and operational achievement. They represent real things that are happening on the ground, in the mountains around Kamloops, at the air force base in Trenton and as far away as Afghanistan.

I want to remind the House that at the heart of every project, plan and initiative that we talk about this evening are people, real people, amazingly dedicated people. They are soldiers, sailors and air force personnel of our Canadian armed forces.

The Minister of National Defence framed this debate well by laying out the program activity architecture that is now guiding the work of the Department of National Defence. As he said, the overarching goals of the Department of National Defence are threefold: first, to have a military in which Canadians have great confidence; second, to succeed in our operations; and third, to support the Government of Canada, to contribute to Canadian society and to extend Canada's influence in the world.

[*Translation*]

However, National Defence is not alone in this. The Treasury Board requires that all federal departments use this type of planning and accountability structure. Nonetheless, it is important—if we want to debate defence expenditures—to remember the goals of the department.

● (2000)

[*English*]

When I reflect upon the department's three strategic outcomes, I am reminded that none of them can be achieved without the brave Canadians who volunteer to put on a military uniform every day. Our

investments need to reflect the essential role that people play in Canada's defence and security.

[*Translation*]

The current government is determined to do more.

[*English*]

We need more soldiers in uniform so that the burden on our existing troops is manageable. This year, the government initiated a program to increase the regular force by 13,000 and the reserves by 10,000.

To meet these targets, we are also working to expand and modernize both our recruitment and training systems. Indeed, as of this month, 30% of applicants are now being processed within one week and 50% within one month.

We are currently getting double the recruits compared to this time last year, but the answer does not lie solely in increasing numbers. We also need to take better care of the members we have, whether they are in training, on deployment or returning home.

Our forces can be sent on high risk deployments. When they return, some have to cope with painful physical, mental and emotional wounds. They endure long periods of separation from their families. Even when they are not deployed on operations, they and their families have to manage frequent postings across the country and abroad.

The demands of a military career are high and are borne by both members and families alike. They bear these burdens in order to serve our country. As a government and as parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to make sure they are well compensated for the jobs they undertake and are adequately cared for in their times of need.

That is why the Minister of National Defence personally went to the opening of the operational stress injury social support centre at Gagetown in May. Not all military wounds are visible. Many military personnel suffer from operational stress injuries that are difficult to detect.

In 2002, the operational stress injury social support program was created as a peer support program for Canadian Forces members suffering from these unseen wounds, but the dedicated program staff at CFB Gagetown had been working out of their own homes and coffee shops for the last four years, so the Minister of National Defence went to the opening of their first permanent office, confident that they will now be able to provide even better service to the Canadian Forces community.

That is just one small example. The government's efforts to support our military community are much broader than that. We are working hard to provide fair pay and allowances, to improve base infrastructure and housing, and to provide appropriate compensation for special forces and other members engaged in our operations.

Business of Supply

As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, I have visited military communities across the country to hear directly from our troops and their families and to find out what they need. I have toured bases from B.C. to New Brunswick. I have talked to the troops. I have visited with families and friends at the military family resource centres. I have been to London, England to talk to British officials about their experiences with military recruitment and retention.

I know, and this government knows, that more can be done for the army, navy and air force than has been done in the past. The supplementary estimates recently tabled by this government reflect our commitment to do exactly that.

Supporting the people of the Canadian Forces must be an ongoing effort. We must be attuned to the unique needs of our military personnel and we must be heartfelt in our response. It is often said that we have some of the most highly qualified military forces in the world, and that is absolutely true. I have seen at first hand how true this is. I am grateful that they are the people defending our nation. They can be assured that this government is fully dedicated to supporting them.

I would like to use the balance of my time to ask the Minister of National Defence a question. The new security environment requires that the Canadian Forces maintain multi-role, combat capable defence forces while integrating and increasing their interoperability with their defence partners. Combat capable and interoperable forces will become more important in the future as the Canadian Forces operate increasingly in failed and failing states, including complex urban areas.

In addition, the Canadian Forces must also strike a balance between capabilities required for domestic defence and those required to support international operations. In order to achieve this, would the Minister of National Defence outline the transformation that his department is currently undertaking to introduce these new groups of capabilities?

• (2005)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, transformation will help ensure that the Canadian Forces can act quickly in the event of a domestic or international crisis. The CF will arrive on the scene faster, will move more effectively within theatre and will have increased capability to sustain deployments.

The first step in achieving this was to establish a clear delineation between the strategic and operational levels of command by creating a dedicated strategic joint staff and four operational level command structures. I will speak to two of the operational level command headquarters as way of illustration.

The first is Canada Command. It has the sole authority for the conduct of all routine and contingency domestic operations in Canada. The second principal headquarters is the Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command, which ensures that the Canadian Forces will be able to address threats to Canadian security beyond our borders. CEFCOM is the sole operational authority for all conduct of international operations.

One of the hallmarks of transformation is establishing a clear delineation of command responsibilities, one for international operations and another headquarters for domestic operations.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Chair, the minister touched briefly on the issue of recruiting in the armed forces and the plan by the new Conservative government to increase the regular force by 13,000 and reserves by 10,000.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recently heard positive feedback from the Auditor General on efforts by the CF in recent years to improve recruitment and retention levels. By 2005, Canadian Forces had stopped the decline in the number of trained and effective members and was actually showing a small increase.

At that time, the department was working toward a national recruiting strategy to bring more focus and cohesion to its recruiting efforts and was working on performance measures for 2007 to help it assess the success of its recruiting efforts. As well, National Defence has taken action to improve its military human resources management and is examining ways of improving its human resources information.

That was a long preamble, I understand, but could the minister elaborate on the specific efforts by the Canadian Forces over the last few years to improve recruitment rates and highlight what progress has been made to date?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, in the fiscal year 2005-06, we have achieved 106% of our strategic intake plan, effectively increasing the strength of the Canadian Forces by more than 1,000. Over the course of this fiscal year, a larger force expansion was announced. This new plan will see the Canadian Forces move to a total paid strength of approximately 75,000 regulars.

Advertising plays a huge role in the attraction process. After all, if people do not know we are hiring, they are less likely to apply. The Canadian Forces advertising budget was recently increased from \$8 million to \$15.6 million, which is similar to a comparable allied nation such as Australia.

With respect to retention, we continue to develop and build a retention strategy with a view to enhancing the Canadian Forces culture for retention. From quality of life initiatives to fair compensation and education and training opportunities and to family and member support initiatives, we know that all of these types of initiatives contribute to establishing a two way commitment that is essential for creating and sustaining a culture of retention.

To establish conditions for success, the military human resources group has undergone an internal reorganization consistent with the chief of defence staff's principle in which we have established a command-centric, operationally focused entity known as the military personnel command, led by the chief of military personnel.

Business of Supply

Internally, we have reorganized the focus on specific lines of operations and to separate policy from service delivery. This new structure is more in keeping with the military personnel generation function and provides the command-centric view so necessary for providing clear direction.

• (2010)

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Chair, there is no doubt that Canadian Forces personnel serve Canada well, both in operations abroad and here at home. They are Canada's force of last resort and, as such, Canada asks them to put their lives in harm's way when necessary.

Therefore, it is important that this nation provide, sustain and improve the standard of health care offered to Canadian Forces members at home and abroad. Various parliamentary committees have been made aware of the initiatives undertaken by DND to implement a plan that ensures Canadian Forces members have access to comprehensive primary and occupational health care and that the Canadian Forces have an effective health service system that responds to training and operational needs.

Would the Minister of National Defence outline the initiatives that his department plans to undertake in the coming year to ensure that Canadian Forces members have proper health care?

The Deputy Chair: I would like to advise the hon. minister that he has only 20 seconds for a response.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, efforts to sustain and improve the standard of health care provided to CF members at home and abroad are managed under the umbrella project called Rx 2000. It involves mental health care. It also includes a joint mental health care project. It involves both the RCMP and the veterans, along with Canadian Forces.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am going to be sharing my time with the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca and the member for Wascana.

I am going back to the issue of re-rolling. The hon. minister is on record as saying at one point that there would be no re-rolling at all. General Hillier is on record as saying that there would be some re-rolling. Now the minister has said yes, there will be some re-rolling.

I have two basic very brief questions. Would the minister agree that General Hillier and his remarks have changed the minister's mind? Second, has the fact that this rushed extension of the mission for two years was poorly planned placed the military in a situation where they now have to re-role and scramble otherwise to meet the needs of the mission?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, there is no difference between my interpretation and that of General Hillier. We are of the same mind on these issues.

The extension of the mission was not rushed. It was considered. It was evaluated by all the departments. Advice was given on our capacity to achieve these goals from a military, a development and a diplomatic point of view.

What I have said is that recently I asked the Chief of Defence Staff to try to ensure that people who are in the direct confrontation or combat roles would not go back to Afghanistan a second time. This is a principle that I am trying to achieve. In doing that, the chief has taken that on and is looking at all the ways to achieve that goal.

That was not part of the original goal, but what I am trying to do is reduce the risk on individuals. If people are put in harm's way, I am trying to make sure that they are not put in harm's way within a short period of time.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Mr. Chair, the government has taken great pains, in fact, to hide the cost of this war and to hide the truth about this war from Canadians.

The government has stopped lowering the flag on the Peace Tower, tried to ban media from the repatriation ceremonies and is now even refusing to disclose the number of Canadian soldiers who are wounded.

Despite \$17 billion in defence purchases, much of which is needed, there is no defence capabilities plan. I am assuming that, one, it is not ready, and two, it will never be made public.

The CIA believes that the success of the international community is now in doubt in Afghanistan. The CIA believes that many Afghans think that, first, police and government are corrupt in Afghanistan, second, not enough reconstruction is being done, and third, not the government or the police or the army can protect the people from the Taliban.

In fact, American officials have given dire warnings about the state of matters in Afghanistan. NATO itself is concerned about its own strategy. One hears this if one is in the U.S. or in Europe. Our government continues to paint a rosy picture. We have lost the war, or almost lost the war, for hearts and minds. Is this not just another example of the government doing blithely as it wishes while keeping the truth from the Canadian people as to what the state of the issues is in Afghanistan itself?

• (2015)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, the member had a number of questions.

With respect to the wounded, we have not hidden anything. To give numbers as of today, since the beginning of the venture, which, by the way, was started by the Liberal government, there have been 176 wounded soldiers. Of those, 126 have returned to units. We have 50 soldiers remaining who are in various states of medical care and re-evaluation. That is the state of the wounded. I will note not to mix up wounded with injured. If one happens to fall down a ladder, one could be injured. These are wounded soldiers.

With respect to the CIA, I find it incredible that the members opposite are quoting the CIA when every day in the House they talk of George Bush and criticize the Americans. I guess it is convenient to take the American information and advice when they want to, but when they do not want it, they toss it away.

The evaluation we have is not the CIA evaluation. The evaluation is that we are making a success in Afghanistan. If one looks at the entire country of Afghanistan, the 34 provinces, there are about 26 provinces that are relatively benign. There are problems in about six provinces. These six provinces include Kandahar in the south, along with Helmand province and some of the other provinces. This is where the challenge is right now. We are meeting that challenge and development is going ahead in Kandahar province.

Business of Supply

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Chair, all of us agree that our troops are doing a heroic job, but the minister needs to understand that the reports my colleague was talking about were from the United Kingdom and Washington. Both reports say that we are losing the war.

The Taliban's control has increased, not decreased. Mr. Karzai's government is perceived as being corrupt and he does not have control over his country. Attacks are now happening in the north and the east which were not happening before. There will be war without end until the insurgency is dealt with.

What does the minister propose to do to deal with the insurgency coming from Pakistan?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, there may be reports from the CIA but we have 15 officers inside the Karzai government in Kabul, so we pretty well know what is going on in the government.

With respect to Afghanistan, most of the source of the Taliban comes from the Pashtun tribe. The Pashtun tribe in Afghanistan is in the south and east and numbers about 12.5 million. There are 22 million Pashtun across the border in Pakistan. It is a porous border. There is no documentation because the people in the Pashtun tribes have had rights for centuries to move back and forth to see their family members. It is quite a challenge to control who is coming and going between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

We have discussed with the Pakistan government the challenges that we face and the challenges that it faces because it also has to deal with the insurgency. What we have proposed in a modest start to gain confidence is that we have a liaison officer located with the Pakistan 12th corps which is opposite us in the Pakistan area south of Kandahar, and that Pakistan put a liaison officer with us. This would start to build up some kind of liaison with us and pass information to help our situation.

● (2020)

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Chair, for the information of the minister, the reports are from the United States and the United Kingdom. One liaison officer is not going to stop this insurgency. For our troops' sake, I ask him to please get it right.

My next question is with respect to the extension that took place when the government gave only 48 hours' notice for the extension of the mission. At that time our NATO allies had allegedly made troop commitments.

Will the minister tell the House what countries and how many troops were committed by our NATO allies when the government irresponsibly extended this mission for two years while giving the House only 48 hours to try to find and consider the evidence?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, the Liberal government gave the military 45 minutes' warning to commit 2,000 troops to Afghanistan. The army commander did not know about it. People down the whole chain of command did not know about it. The Liberal government, centrally the prime minister and the minister of defence of the day, made the arbitrary decision without even considering the problem. At that time the military said it could only handle 500 soldiers and the Liberal government committed 2,000 soldiers. The member should not give me any spiel about warning.

With regard to warning, it was the Liberal government that committed us to the commitment in Kandahar. Most members of the Liberal government, including the hon. member, did not support our troops when the vote came.

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Chair, with respect to the situation on the ground in Afghanistan, the minister's own troops are saying that development is not getting through to the people. I would like to ask the minister why.

He has a surge capacity of 600 troops. Will he commit to use at least part of those troops toward enforcing and implementing a chapter 7 peacemaking force into Darfur that has been authorized by the UN?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I think the hon. member asked two questions.

From a DND point of view and from our point of view, our projects are moving ahead. If the member wants to know about the projects from CIDA or foreign affairs or U.S. aid or the Karzai government, he can go to those sources and find the answers.

With respect to Darfur, no organization has ever asked us to contribute anything to Darfur. The member knows from reading the newspapers and staying in touch that the UN is trying to negotiate to take control of Darfur, and it has no intention of asking Canada to send troops. If it asks for any more troops, it will ask countries like Pakistan and African countries to do the job. The UN is quite content to have the African Union look after its own country.

Hon. Keith Martin: They can't. They are failing.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: That may be the hon. member's opinion. However, I am saying that we have not been asked.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am very interested in and very concerned about the NATO flying training in Canada program at 15 Wing near Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. There are worries that participating countries may be dropping out of the program and new countries are not being recruited to replace them or to expand upon them. I have several questions tonight for the minister.

First, which NATO countries are currently represented at the NFTC program at Moose Jaw?

Second, what is the duration of each of their contracts?

Third, have any of these contracts or will any of these contracts be terminated prematurely?

Fourth, what new prospects are being recruited to fill the vacancies?

Fifth, what would be the effect of a weakened NATO flight training in Canada program on the Canadian Snowbirds? Could the Snowbirds be sustained and remain in Moose Jaw without the NFTC?

Sixth, does the NATO flying training in Canada program continue to this day and going forward to be marketed professionally and aggressively by the Government of Canada, the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Forces and the Bombardier private sector consortium?

Business of Supply

• (2025)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, that is like a telephone book of questions the hon. member has asked. Some of the details I do not have at hand, but I promise to get those details to him.

Our training is very important. Moose Jaw is a very important training establishment for us. It trains our pilots. From our point of view, it will go on. It has a great future. The primary purpose of Moose Jaw is to train Canadian pilots. If we can get other people to come and fly there, that helps to reduce the costs, but Moose Jaw is vital to training Canadian pilots.

With respect to the Snowbirds, they also have a great future. We are now considering a number of options. We are looking at a number of options in the department about the future of the Snowbirds.

With respect to who is there, their termination dates and some of these other questions, I will get back to the member.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Chair, that will be followed with a great deal of interest by the people of Moose Jaw.

I have one other very specific question about the estimates. There is an item that notes a transfer from the Department of Western Economic Diversification to the Department of National Defence. I expect that to be for certain Métis issues associated with the Primrose Lake air weapons range.

Can the minister confirm that the Conservative government is in fact honouring that important commitment to the Métis people made by the former Liberal government in respect of the Primrose Lake air weapons range?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I cannot answer this question at this time. Again, I will get the answer for the hon. member as soon as possible.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Chair, briefly back to the topics raised by my colleagues having to do with the very difficult situation in Afghanistan, can the minister indicate to us specifically what he expects to be the duration of the Canadian rotation in Kandahar? When would he anticipate that the Canadian assignment in Afghanistan would move on to some other theatre in the normal practice of NATO rotations?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, we expect to be in the Kandahar area until the end of February 2009. It depends on what the hon. member means when he referred to rotation. If he is talking about internal rotations, every six months the battle groups change, and that will carry on until the end of February 2009.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Within the country?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, as to whether we are going to rotate within Afghanistan, at the moment we are committed to the Kandahar area to the end of February 2009. The government will consider all other options when that time is reached.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Chair, as the chair of the Standing Committee on National Defence, it is a pleasure for me to be involved tonight in this discussion on the 2006-07 estimates for the Department of National Defence.

These estimates reflect many of the important initiatives this government has put forward since it took office a few months ago. Much has been accomplished since that time.

We have introduced a universal child care benefit for every child under six and have helped 1.4 million families make ends meet. Tax cuts and debt payments have helped to keep the economy strong. The introduction of the federal accountability act is part of our effort to clean up our political system. We strengthened crime legislation by tackling gun, gang and drug crime. We have taken concrete steps to advance Canadian interests on the international stage and to rebuild the Canadian Forces.

During the last election, this government promised to rebuild and revitalize the Canadian Forces. In just nine months in office we have already announced a number of important initiatives aimed at doing just that.

One of our big announcements was on recruitment. We plan to expand the regular forces to 75,000 and the reserves to 35,000. But we know that even if we meet 100% of these recruitment goals, our new recruits will not be effective if we do not equip them. So we made some major procurement announcements as well.

In June the Minister of National Defence announced plans to acquire tactical and strategic airlift, joint support ships, medium sized logistics trucks, and medium to heavy lift helicopters. This government recognizes that these are big ticket items, but they are crucial for the Canadian Forces to do their jobs more effectively.

These projects will help the Canadian Forces in their current missions both in Canada and around the world, and will allow the Canadian Forces to meet the challenges they will face in decades to come. Moreover, they will provide positive spinoffs for Canada's defence industry and the Canadian economy.

I would like to now go into these procurement projects in some detail to make it clear why they are necessary. Allow me to begin with the strategic and tactical airlift.

As my hon. colleagues can appreciate, our troops are expected to deploy within Canada, North America and around the world. When they deploy, they often have to move large numbers of troops and heavy equipment. The only Canadian Forces aircraft that can transport large numbers of troops and equipment over long distances is our CC-150 Polaris aircraft. However, this plane's capabilities have proven to be limited. It cannot move heavier vehicles or large cargo; it cannot defend itself against surface to air missiles; and it cannot operate from unpaved airfields. To make up for this capability gap, we have frequently had to charter commercial planes or catch rides with our American ally.

Canada is a sovereign country. It cannot remain dependent upon the goodwill and capacity of others whenever we want to get troops or equipment to theatres of operation. When I say theatres of operation, I do not just mean abroad. Due to the overwhelming size of Canada's territory, the Canadian Forces need a strategic airlift capability to serve our own country.

Business of Supply

To address this crucial need, the Canadian Forces will acquire four C-17 Globemaster aircraft. These new acquisitions will enhance the Canadian Forces' ability to deploy on missions. They will be timely, dependable and they will be ours. But that is not enough. I now want to turn to our decision to invest in new Hercules aircraft.

As many of my colleagues are aware, our fleet of Hercules tactical airlift aircraft is now getting old. I can speak from personal experience. I spent three days on a Hercules on a resupply mission from Trenton to Alert. The plane I was on had been re-winged. It had 40,000 hours on it. It was well past its due date and that was a number of years ago. In fact, our fleet has logged more flying hours than any other military Hercules fleet in the world.

The Hercules are essential as they support our forces involved in combat operations. They provide in-theatre support that is essential for missions such as the current one in Afghanistan. We need to replace the old Hercules now or we could lose our tactical airlift capability by 2010, a short three years away.

● (2030)

I would now like to turn to another key purchase, the purchase of 16 Chinook medium to heavy lift helicopters. Our recent operational experience at home and abroad has also underscored the vital need for such helicopters. In theatres abroad the new helicopter will allow us to support our troops as they operate in increasingly dangerous environments. For example, the ability to move personnel and equipment by air quickly has become a key requirement for us in Afghanistan, as ground transportation, as we have seen, has proven to be very dangerous for our troops.

At home, the new helicopters will allow the Canadian Forces to reach remote and isolated locations. They will provide better support to first responders in disaster situations. They will also help out troops in the field when ground transportation is difficult and access to airfields is impossible.

Aircraft and helicopters do not solve all the equipment needs of the Canadian Forces. They have requirements on the ground too.

Our existing medium size trucks are nearing the end of their service life and are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. We had to move on this project immediately. The government plans to acquire medium sized logistics trucks. They will be used for training and to transport the troops and supplies necessary to conduct operations. Because these trucks will be able to handle pallets that are standard with our allies, they will increase the interoperability of the Canadian Forces.

Finally, the government has announced plans to purchase three joint supply ships. These state of the art vessels will be used to refuel and resupply other ships at sea. They will provide support for ship borne helicopters. They will be able to transport large quantities of equipment and transfer it to shore. The capacity to provide support to forces deployed ashore will improve the operational effectiveness of the Canadian Forces.

These ships will provide the navy with a three-ocean capacity and the global reach necessary for a transformed Canadian Forces.

All of this new equipment will enhance the ability of the Canadian Forces to deliver success in operations in Canada, in North America

and around the world. The forces will be better prepared to face the evolving security environment and to meet the challenges of decades to come. These investments will not only build long term capacity for the Canadian Forces, they will also provide positive spin-offs for the Canadian economy.

Under the industrial and regional benefits policy, contractors are required to invest an amount equal to the value of the contract into the Canadian economy. Canadians can be reassured that each dollar spent on this new equipment will be matched by spending right here in Canada.

Canadians also stand to benefit through in-service support contracts, which will bring jobs and investment to Canadian industry.

The Conservative Party is delivering on its election promise to rebuild the Canadian Forces. The procurement plans I discussed tonight will allow the Canadian Forces to better serve and better defend Canadians.

These are the right acquisitions for the Canadian Forces and for all Canadians. This government is proud of the work done by our men and women in uniform. It is committed to giving them the tools they need to do their job safely and effectively.

The new government is getting things done for taxpayers and families. The government is making sure that Canada is united and secure. It is ensuring that our streets are safe and that those in need get a helping hand. It is ensuring that Canada remains prosperous and secure.

Rebuilding the Canadian Forces is an important part of this effort.

● (2035)

I have a few questions for the parliamentary secretary.

We have heard time and again from a variety of sources about the problems associated with procurement process within the Department of National Defence. Under years of Liberal leadership, the process continued to be complex, lengthy and overly bureaucratic.

The new government will not stand for this. We are committed to giving our troops the equipment they need in a timely manner, while maintaining a fair, open and transparent procurement system.

Over the past five years, the government has produced three large reports that deal with the issue of procurement for military services and equipment. These reports have all suggested that buying equipment for the Canadian military takes too long and costs too much.

One of the biggest problems with the procurement system is the fact that it takes the government over 15 years to get a piece of equipment into service after the government has made the decision to buy it. This means that what the Liberal government did not do in 1991 is hurting the military today.

Business of Supply

It is clear that our current situation is a legacy of previous Liberal governments. After continuous cuts to the defence budget throughout the 1990s, the department could not afford to buy the equipment that was necessary to sustain military operations. Worse than that, they were not capable of making timely decisions when the money was available. After years and years of neglect, the military has been forced to operate aging and technologically irrelevant equipment.

Our men and women in uniform should be commended for performing complex operations throughout the 1990s with equipment that was less than suitable.

The new government will not allow our military to suffer like that. Therefore, the government is committed to protecting the rights of Canadians to have access to fair, open and transparent competition for contracts. It is also committed to respect Canadian obligations under international trade agreements that are vital to the competitiveness of Canadian industry abroad.

How does the parliamentary secretary intend to uphold these commitments while providing our men and women in uniform with the equipment they need to get the job done? Could he update the House and all Canadians on how the Department of National Defence has reformed the procurement process for military equipment and services?

• (2040)

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Chair, we are committed to making the business of military procurement faster and more cost efficient. This will ensure that Canadian taxpayers get the most for their money and that our men and women in uniform get the equipment that they need to do their jobs properly.

We are absolutely committed to implementing a number of significant initiatives to improve and expedite the defence procurement process. For example, we will try to procure tried and tested off-the-shelf equipment as much as possible. A good example of this is Nyala. The Nyala provides high levels of protection for Canadian troops operating in Afghanistan. These new vehicles are effective in providing protection against attacks from a variety of explosives and mines that have proven their worth many times on operations and patrols in Afghanistan.

We are also changing how we define what needs to be purchased. We are working to minimize detailed and lengthy technical specifications and instead define high level performance requirements for industry to satisfy. For example, the statement of interest and qualifications, or SOIQ, for strategic lift was only two pages long. Further, we are improving how projects are contracted. We have initiated a new process that involves bundling multiple requirements into a few contracts in an effort to streamline the process.

We are working with four other ministers to reform the defence procurement process in a way that will improve and expedite the acquisition of new equipment for Canadian Forces. We expect these initiatives to cut the time to award a contract by over 40%. In fact, the government has already announced intent and is proceeding with the negotiations for two major equipment acquisitions.

Mr. Rick Casson: Mr. Chair, the previous government was quite content to let the equipment used by our military men and women in

uniform deteriorate. A perfect example of this is the medium logistics trucks for the army. These trucks were first purchased in 1982. That makes the truck fleet 24 years old.

I see that in the main estimates there was only a meagre \$26 million allocated to the medium logistics trucks. Could the parliamentary secretary tell the House what course of action he has taken with this project and also with the heavy truck fleet?

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Chair, the needs of our men and women in uniform are our first priority when it comes to procurement. The government has a plan to ensure the Canadian Forces have the right mix of vehicles, lightweight vehicles to armoured personnel carriers, to support them in their domestic activities and international operations.

As announced in June, we are investing approximately \$1.1 billion in the 2,300 new medium sized logistics trucks for the Canadian Forces. The new fleet will be the logistics backbone of the army, getting supplies and special capabilities where they are needed in the most efficient way possible.

We are in the process of acquiring these trucks through a competitive process that is still ongoing. We will ensure that Canadian firms have significant involvement over the life of the project.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Chair, I have a few questions for the Minister of National Defence. I will start with specific questions and then ask more general ones.

At CFB Bagotville, CF-18 pilots need to have regular training in order to achieve international standards. It is important for them to do the necessary training manoeuvres. And to do that they have to go to Valcartier for their training.

As far as the Valcartier firing range is concerned, according to an exemption signed by an official, this firing range does not meet National Defence safety standards.

Can the Minister of National Defence tell us about this exemption and its consequences to the government in the event of an accident involving civilians?

• (2045)

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, our CF-18 air crews go to different places in the country to practise weapons use. Valcartier is one of them as is Goose Bay. There are others inside the country. These bases are safe. If there were any safety questions, we would not participate. We would not allow the CF-18s to take part in training.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Mr. Chair, we know that NDHQ was given a mandate to present an option to give eastern Canada a practice target area for CF-18 fighters. There was a choice of three areas: Petawawa, Ontario, Gagetown, New Brunswick, and Bagotville, Quebec. In June 2006, a military representative publicly confirmed that review of the potential sites was underway.

Business of Supply

Can the minister tell us the status of the review and when it will be made public?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, the military authorities have not brought this issue to me. If it is in the department, it would be in the air staff somewhere, but they have not raised this issue with me as of yet.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Mr. Chair, in January of this year, the Prime Minister came to my region, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, and visited the riding of Jonquière—Alma. He committed to adding a 650-troop battalion to the Bagotville military base. We do not yet know when this is supposed to happen, because the Department of National Defence has not told us.

Can the minister tell the people in my riding and my region and the members of this House when they can expect this battalion to arrive? Can the Minister of National Defence confirm that this battalion will really bring in 650 additional troops? At the time, there was talk of a two-year timeline.

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, we have the full intention to meet all the commitments, including the commitment to Bagotville. The master plan, the defence strategy plan, has to be resolved at this time. It has to be completed inside the defence department. It is very close to that position. It has to be approved by cabinet, and at that time decisions will be made upon sequencing, when things start and when things are completed. At this time, we will have to wait until cabinet approves the plan.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Mr. Chair, the army is patting itself on the back because recruitment is going well. They are filling and sometimes even exceeding their quotas. Yet their numbers are still not up. In May 2006, the Auditor General said that in the past four years, the department recruited 20,000 members, but that in reality, only 700 additional troops joined.

Can the minister tell us whether the reason he has not confirmed the Bagotville battalion is that he does not have enough personnel? What are your thoughts on reaching the 5,000-troop target announced by the Liberals? When do you think you will reach your own target of 13,000 additional soldiers? Also, since the minister will be answering these questions, how much will it cost to add the Liberals' 5,000 troops and the Conservative Party's 13,000 troops?

• (2050)

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, that is a number of questions. I will try to answer them all.

First of all, the commitment to Bagotville is part of a master plan. There is a commitment to Comox. There is a commitment to Goose Bay. There is a commitment to Trenton. There are commitments to the north. There are all kinds of commitments. They are all in this plan. They are all integrated in this plan and I have to get the approval of the cabinet for the plan.

Once I get the approval of cabinet, we then have to work out the sequencing of what comes first and what comes second. This is a very complex undertaking because we are restructuring the entire armed forces, regulars and reserves, into the future.

It is going to take 10 or 15 years to implement the entire plan. It is not going to be 10 or 15 years, and I do not want the member opposite to start reacting, until we deal with Bagotville, but I am telling him it is a long term plan. We have to buy ships and airplanes, and it takes a long time.

With respect to recruiting, as I said, recruiting is up. As a rough figure, and I will talk about 1,000 people, 1,000 infantry would be cheaper than buying 1,000 doctors, but as an average figure, it costs about \$150 million a year for 1,000 personnel. That covers all their salaries, benefits and equipment, rifles et cetera, their immediate equipment, but that is an average figure. If we are talking about something like infantry, it would be cheaper. If we are talking about technicians, it would be more expensive, but a rough average is \$150 million per 1,000. All the member has to do is multiply either by five or by 13 and he can get to the number that he is looking at.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Mr. Chair, I would like to go back to my first question, when I said that an official signed an exemption for Valcartier. The fact that an exemption was signed means that the Valcartier firing range no longer meets National Defence's security standards. The minister does not have to answer me tonight, but I would like some information about the exemption sooner or later.

Can the minister tell us what the exemption covers? When an exemption is signed, that means that the facility, the training ground, does not meet all the standards. So if an accident involving civilians ever happened, what would the consequences be?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I am not aware of the member's allegation that Valcartier is not a safe range area for the CF-18s. If it were true, then we would not be employing the CF-18s in that area because safety is number one for us, but I am not aware of that.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Mr. Chair, I want to point out to the minister that a military authority signed a special exemption in 2005 so that the F-18s could train at Valcartier. It is supposed to expire in the fall of 2007, if I remember correctly. My question for the minister concerns this exemption. Since he cannot answer this evening, I assume that he will send me his response.

About a year ago, the press reported on problems with fissures in the tail rotors of 15 Cormorant helicopters. Where are we with this? How much money has been and will be spent to correct the problem?

Business of Supply

• (2055)

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I think the member opposite is referring to the Cormorant helicopter. The Government of Canada, in fact the previous government, acquired Cormorant helicopters for search and rescue. After some use, it was discovered there was a technical problem in the rear rotor.

I do not have in hand a number of what it cost to deal with the problem, but what has happened as a result of this difficulty with one part of the rotor is that we have increased the number of inspections. We inspect the helicopter at a more frequent rate than is called for in the specifications, which of course costs money.

We are one of the leading countries in the world using this helicopter and we have suggested technical solutions to the manufacturer, who is working on it now to create a new hub for the rotor blade.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Mr. Chair, I have had the opportunity over the last two years to visit several Canadian military bases. During these visits, I received a number of complaints that the funds allocated to fixing military infrastructure were not being invested in any priority order. I was also given other information.

I want to be specific about this. On some military bases, hangars have holes in their roofs. In addition, the runways that have been re-surfaced are not used very much.

Can the minister assure us that the safety of our military personnel and their quality of life are more important than his election agenda?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I may have the number wrong but I think DND has about \$21 billion worth of infrastructure. For a long period now DND has not invested enough money in its infrastructure to maintain it at a proper state everywhere. In fact, in our defence plan we have already started to increase the amount of money going to infrastructure.

That being said, on an ongoing basis, we do not allow anyone to be in an unsafe structure, but many repairs have to be done to runways, buildings, pipes, sewers, et cetera, across the whole country.

[Translation]

The Deputy Chair: Has the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord finished?

Mr. Robert Bouchard: I have finished, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start with a speech, followed by a few questions.

Hon. members, I have the pleasure of being with you this evening to take part in debate in a committee of the whole on the 2006-07 estimates for the Department of National Defence.

No one doubts that the present government is determined to rebuild the Canadian Forces. This is an important point to note, when we consider previous budgets, in which the equipment of the Canadian Forces had essentially been allowed to go to rack and ruin.

We made a commitment to do more for our soldiers, our sailors and our airmen and women. Our plan for the Canadian Forces is a guarantee of success both for the forces and for Canadians.

We demand a lot from the members of our military. They are ready to put their lives in danger to protect us, to protect Canada and its people, to secure our sovereignty on land and water and of course in the air, and together with the United States to protect North America. With climate change beginning to occur, this issue has taken on special meaning, particularly in terms of protecting the north. Our military also defends our interests both here and abroad by carrying out humanitarian missions that are the pride and joy of our country and of Canadians, as the blue helmets do.

The present government is making sure that the Canadian Forces get what they need to do their job.

This evening, we have been focusing on what the Canadian Forces do outside Canada, and specifically on their important mission in Afghanistan. In fact, I was at Jean-Lesage International Airport in Quebec City last week to mark the departure of 71 soldiers from Valcartier.

It is important that our troops both here and abroad have the equipment they need. It is also important that we guarantee the security of our own country first. That is why I would now like to address the subject of protecting our territory, the territory of Canada, so that we can secure our sovereignty, and about the role of the Canadian Forces in that regard.

As our Minister of National Defence clearly described earlier in this debate, our government has established three strategic outcomes for national defence. The initiatives that we have taken in the north have a direct impact on those strategic outcomes.

The present government has promised to make Canada's security and sovereignty in the north one of its priorities. This is an important part of what is called the "Canada First" defence strategy. I am happy to say that we are currently working to put that promise into action.

Today, I would like to point out to my colleagues in the House the important measures that we are taking in that regard, measures that go beyond what was provided in the previous government's estimates. I would like to explain why it is important that we give the Arctic our full attention.

Why do we need to guarantee security in the Arctic?

As the member for Lévis—Bellechasse, it is easy for me to answer the question, because in 1906 Captain Bernier took possession of the Arctic archipelago in the name of the Government of Canada. The Arctic covers a vast area. It accounts for 40% of our territory and more than 100,000 Canadians live there, many of them aboriginal people and Inuit.

The Arctic is also a region of growing strategic importance. There are about 1.7 billion barrels of recoverable oil in the Arctic, and 25 trillion cubic feet of gas hydrates—enough energy to supply the needs of North America for nearly 200 years. This shows the full strategic importance of Captain Bernier's discovery and of his act in taking possession of the area 100 years ago.

Business of Supply

In addition, between 1998 and 2002, \$13.8 million carats of diamonds, with a value of \$2.8 billion, were mined in the Northwest Territories, and a great deal more remain underground.

Consequently, in the coming years, we expect these natural resources to lead to increased commercial activity in the north. This will result in an increase in commercial shipping. As well, it is expected that it will be possible to travel the Northwest Passage fairly quickly.

These economic activities in the north will give rise to new risks and challenges to be addressed such as development of gas and oil, diamond and other resources, environmental protection, man-made disasters and illegal transnational navigation.

• (2100)

In addition, the increased activity will lead to increased demand for search and rescue services.

Although other government departments and agencies—such as the Canadian Coast Guard which also has significant needs in terms of equipment, and the RCMP—will continue to be responsible for most of these matters, the Canadian Forces must be able to support them and to provide assistance to other federal departments when called upon.

We also know that security issues have changed and, as a responsible government, we must have better intelligence about the people who enter the country through the north and vessels navigating our coastal waters in that region.

We have come to the point where we must have a presence in the north in order to guarantee our security and our sovereignty, but also to protect our economic interests in this region of the country which, to date, has been underdeveloped.

• (2105)

[*English*]

The reasons to be in the Arctic are clear and that is why we are making a strong commitment to the area. Within Canada Command, the Canadian Forces have joined the Joint Task Force North to serve the Arctic region. I am pleased to note that since this government has taken office, the duration and frequency of Canadian Forces exercises and sovereignty patrols in the north have increased.

For example, this past spring only, 75 Canadian Rangers, organized into five patrols, travelled over 4,500 kilometres across the Arctic to assert our sovereignty. This was the longest ranger patrol to date.

In August this year, we conducted two sovereignty operations, Operation Beaufort in the western Arctic and Operation Lancaster in the eastern Arctic. There is another operation, Exercise Narwhal 07, that is planned for April of next year.

We are there and our Rangers are there, but let me say that these developments, while encouraging, are just the beginning. This government will do more and we need to do more.

[*Translation*]

In the months to come, our department and government will put the finishing touches on our Canada First sovereignty strategy. It will

explain in detail how we intend to increase the forces' ability to assert our sovereignty over the Arctic and ensure our security.

This government will ask Canada Command to regularly carry out operations and exercises all over the Arctic. We are studying a number of options, including the following: open an army training centre in the Arctic so that most of our soldiers are prepared for operations in the north and are experienced at them; build docking and refuelling facilities for the navy in the Arctic so that Canada has its own ability to meet the needs of its military forces throughout the Arctic; increase the number of Canadian rangers and the frequency of their patrols, as we have done; and improve our surveillance capabilities, especially through the integrated use of satellites, airplanes and pilotless aircraft. The government is also trying to find a practical way of detecting traffic in strategic routes and passages.

That is not all. Just a few months ago, this government announced plans to proceed with the following major procurement projects. Among others in the Arctic, our Minister of National Defence announced the acquisition of three joint support ships. The House will certainly agree with me that, in addition to ensuring our sovereignty, these projects will enable our naval industry, which was neglected by the previous government, to make its expertise available to assist our country and help it assert its sovereignty.

The government also hopes to acquire 2,300 medium-size logistics trucks. Gone are the days when people said of our trucks that the oil pans leaked. There will also be 16 medium- to heavy-lift helicopters, four strategic lift aircraft, and 17 tactical lift aircraft. This equipment is needed to enable a great country like ours to assert its sovereignty.

Much of this new equipment will help our forces conduct humanitarian operations and missions all over Canada, including in the Arctic.

We will give our troops the resources and equipment they need, and which the previous government deprived them of, thereby endangering our security. Allow me to pay homage to the 71 soldiers who departed for Afghanistan last week. They left to defend our values.

The Deputy Chair: Questions and comments.

Mr. Steven Blaney: Mr. Chair, Department of National Defence representatives have been, for some time now, affirming the need for greater visibility of the Canadian Forces in the Arctic, given the new transportation corridors, the discovery of large quantities of natural resources and the changing security situation.

However, this transformation does not rest solely on more modern technology and equipment. It will require a fundamental change in the culture of our armed forces in order to guarantee a fully integrated and unified approach in terms of operations.

This evening, we have once again heard about great plans for procurement, put in place by the new Conservative government in an attempt to achieve new air and maritime capabilities that will reinforce our presence in the north.

I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary to explain in greater detail the announcement of three new joint support ships, as well as logistics trucks, helicopters and other strategic aircraft needed for our troops.

How will the three branches of our armed forces be utilized by the new Joint Task Force North?

• (2110)

[*English*]

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Chair, the Arctic region has featured prominently in debates about Canadian sovereignty and there has been a renewed focus on the Arctic due to the effects of climate change in the region, notably the melting of the polar ice caps. At the same time, there are continuing strategic issues relating to potential incursions into Canadian Arctic territory at various levels including the aerospace, surface and subsurface.

The Joint Task Force North is one of five regional commands under the new Canada Command structure. Canada Command was created to address the realities of the new international security environment facing Canada and to place greater emphasis on the defence of Canada and North America.

It is also the cornerstone of the command and control dimension of Canadian Forces transformation. As an integrated and national operational command headquarters, Canada Command allows the Canadian Forces to bring the best available military resources from across Canada to bear on a crisis or threat wherever it occurs nationwide.

The creation of Canada Command means that for the first time a unified and integrated chain of command at the national and regional levels will have the immediate authority to deploy maritime, land and air assets in their regional areas of responsibility in support of domestic operations.

Canada Command is based on a more command-centric approach to command and control. As such, the commander of Canada Command is delegated the authorities necessary to perform the responsibilities assigned and will directly command all Canadian Forces assets and personnel in operations.

The effects of this new approach, a new command structure with the emphasis on being able to bring an integrated military response to a given area for maximum effect, will be significantly improved in the north through a combination of enhanced surveillance, from satellites and unmanned aerial vehicles and radar to a more visible military presence in other improved capabilities including air lift and communications. The Canadian Forces will be better able to respond to the northern contingencies and the government will be able to more strongly assert Canada's interests in this vital region of the country.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member has 45 seconds remaining for his question and the answer.

Mr. Steven Blaney: Mr. Chair, it will be rather difficult to square this circle in so little time.

I would first like to thank the parliamentary secretary for his response.

Business of Supply

My other question concerns an issue that has not yet been raised this evening. It concerns one's pride in speaking French within the Canadian Forces. I would point out that French is the language spoken at Valcartier. Also, the Royal 22nd Regiment, the pride of the Canadian army, speaks French.

I would have liked to know how the department plans to deal with the demands from the previous government. There were significant gaps concerning the use of French. Perhaps I will forward my question in writing to the parliamentary secretary.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and the member for Scarborough Centre.

I would first like to thank the minister for being here this evening. Personally, like all the members from my party and, in my opinion, all the members in this House, I have immense respect for our soldiers. Our hearts are with these women and men, as well as their families, when they are called to take up arms.

We would like the minister to assure us that these people are not going to battle unless they have received the military training we take such great pride in. We recognize that our soldiers receive the best training in the world and that we do not send them into battle or into dangerous places without full training.

I would also ask the minister to assure us that all the soldiers who have gone to Afghanistan received the same training.

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I can assure the member that there will be no cuts in training. We set very high training standards and we will maintain those training standards. I think the proof is what we see in the Kandahar area in Afghanistan. We certainly have the best trained troops in the area and they are respected. We will not lower any standards.

• (2115)

Hon. Robert Thibault: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to hear that.

I know the minister is preparing a defence plan for Canada. CFB Greenwood is in my riding, a very important element within the military. Economically, it is very important to the area as well. The business community and the municipalities are making investments in support of that installation.

Could the minister indicate the future prospects for the Greenwood military base as well as new investments in personnel or services that might be located at CFB Greenwood?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, Greenwood is a very important base for the military and it continues to have a very positive future. The member will have to wait for the outcome of the plan to see how it will affect Greenwood, but it will certainly affect Greenwood in a positive way.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Hon. Robert Thibault: Mr. Chair, in my riding, we have the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, which opened after the Cornwallis military base closed. The centre is headed by Canada's former chief of the Defence staff, Mr. Baril. The centre provides training for soldiers, police officers and non-governmental organizations from nearly every country in the world. It has given training in more than 20 countries, and people also come to be trained on site in Nova Scotia.

We are worried about the centre. We know that the former government had agreed to renew its funding, but we are waiting for a commitment from the current government, especially the Department of National Defence, which partners with CIDA and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Could the minister tell us that we will shortly be receiving the funding needed to maintain this very important centre?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, as the member has noted, the financing of the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre is a shared responsibility and DND will be meeting its share.

Hon. Robert Thibault: Mr. Chair, we understand that the minister and the government is preparing a defence plan and that defence plan will have to consider a lot of investments in tactical and strategic air lift and in navy and army equipment. Could the minister indicate to this House and to Canadians how he could go ahead and invest \$17.5 billion in air lift, especially for the big budget item like the strategic air lift, without having completed a full plan for our military?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, the first five projects we announced were very basic projects in the sense that they were mobility projects: air mobility, land mobility and sea mobility. They are required in any possible scenario and cabinet agreed. They are included in the plan. These projects are inside the final version of the plan because they are basic to the needs of the armed forces.

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Chair, please let me know when my five minutes are up so my colleague can use the last five minutes.

When the minister was a lobbyist, was Airbus one of his clients?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I can answer this question, but I do not think it has anything to do with estimates. I think you should consider, as Chair, that this question has nothing to do with estimates.

• (2120)

The Deputy Chair: In response to the minister, the examination here is of the estimates. If the minister believes that the question is pertinent, he may answer.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, it has nothing to do with the estimates.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Chair, I rise on a point of order. It seems to me that procurement policies have everything to do with

the estimates. Whether the minister is in a position to handle procurement fairly is a fundamental question.

The Deputy Chair: This appears to be a question of debate to which the Chair cannot be involved.

The hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Chair, I hope that the minister's dilatory tactics and the time you took to render a decision will not count as part of my allotted time.

The Deputy Chair: Of course not.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Chair, I have another question for the minister.

Was Airbus one of the companies that submitted a bid as part of the public bidding process for the Department of National Defence's air transporters?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I did not even get a question out of that.

[Translation]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Chair, since that really was a question, I must assume that it was lost in translation.

I would like to ask my question again, and I would like my time to start over when I ask it.

Can the minister tell us whether Airbus submitted a bid as part of the public bidding process for the Department of National Defence's acquisition of strategic and tactical transport?

[English]

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Chair, I rise on a point of order. Matters of procurement, which I believe this is dealing with, fall under the Department of Public Works and, therefore, they are not germane to this particular discussion.

The Deputy Chair: The point of order which was raised by the hon. member is mostly a point of debate, not a point of order. I would like the House to get back to the estimates and not involve the Chair in this issue.

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Chair, I would like the minister to answer the question.

Did Airbus submit a bid as part of the public bidding process for the Department of National Defence's acquisition of strategic and tactical transport, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I do not know if they did or not. I never asked.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Chair, did General Dynamics-Raytheon submit a bid to supply the joint support ships, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, we can go through the entire lists. It matters not to me at all who bids or does not bid. The requirements are set by the military. The funding comes from the military. The funding comes from our department and the procurement system is managed by public works and defence officials. My part in it is to ensure there is a fair process at the beginning and that is what I did.

• (2125)

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Chair, can the minister tell us whether Stewart Stevenson, one of his former clients, submitted a bid for military vehicles, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, again, I have little involvement in these except to ensure the military sets a fair requirement and to provide the funding. It matters not to me who bids for it.

If the member wants to find out who bids for it she should go to public works and find out who did it.

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Chair, perhaps the Minister of National Defence could answer this question with a simple yes or no.

Did General Dynamics and General Atomics join forces to submit a tender to supply unmanned aircraft, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I am not even aware of a project for unmanned aircraft.

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Chair, at one time, all these businesses were clients of the current Minister of National Defence, and they are now at the centre of public contracts with the federal government and the Department of National Defence.

Will the minister not admit that he is in a conflict of interest situation, given his past relationships and his current position? Yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I think I have answered this about 20 times in the House. I followed all the rules in the past, I am following them all today and I will follow them all in the future. If the member has any doubts, she should go see the Ethics Commissioner.

[Translation]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine asked me to give her a warning after five minutes. You have 20 seconds remaining, after which you will likely share the rest of your time with your colleague.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Indeed, Mr. Chair, I would like to share the remainder of my time with my colleague.

The Chief of the Defence Staff publicly stated before a House of Commons committee that he was prepared to use all our military resources to honour Canada's commitment to Afghanistan.

However, the current Minister of National Defence contradicted General Hillier's remarks. Why?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, maybe the translation did not capture the question bit, if it did, the Chief of the Defence Staff and myself are of one mind. As I told the member before, on the recommendation of the military, it recommended the extension to 2009 because it felt it could meet it and that has been confirmed by our evaluations.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to ask the minister why his department, as we understand, is in the process of buying, without any competition I would emphasize, a minimum of 50 trucks at a cost of \$150 million. Could he explain to this House why this requirement of the trucks to have a 16-tonne capacity?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, first, I think the hon. member is talking about the heavy trucks. We are trying to get some heavy trucks that have heavy armoured cabs into Afghanistan, and there is a competition. I do not know who is competing but I am told three or four companies are competing for this.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Chair, our understanding is that there is no competition.

Does the minister not realize that the cost to Canadians, because a lack of competition on almost everything the government purchased for the military, would cost us in excess of anywhere between 20% to 30% beyond? The 13 or so billion dollars will cost Canadians an additional \$2.5 billion to \$3 billion. This is according to Mr. Alan Williams who is currently ADM for acquisition.

Could the minister not open up the process for fair competition?

• (2130)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, the member is alleging that Mr. Williams said that. If he did, that is fine, but there is no proof whatsoever, first, that anything will cost more by one means or another. However, in every process we have followed it has been a competitive process. An ACAN process is a competitive process. An SOIQ is a competitive process. In the heavy trucks, they are in a competitive process. Everyone has followed a competitive process.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Chair, in his opening presentation the minister talked about the Canada first strategy and outlined the strategy for the next 10 years. I do not understand. I want to ask him why he is considering reinventing the wheel. I am glad we have CDS here with us today because I recall in the last mandate this was, in essence, the plan. What is it that will be different over the next 10 years that he could tell us about to start the process all over again? We were led to believe, as a government and as a nation, that we must move forward to support our military.

Business of Supply

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I imagine the first thing is money. The previous Liberal government gutted the armed forces and then, at the last moment, it pumped a bit of money into the armed forces but not enough to do the job and not enough to pay for increases that it announced. There was not enough money in the budget to cover what it promised.

Our plan will be financed properly. We will deliver on what we say we will deliver and we will provide a better military capability than the Liberals planned. We will provide the capability that this country needs, both externally and internally.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Chair, with the CDS here I am quite shocked, because I heard the opposite during his presentation of how satisfied and pleased he was.

During the last Parliament, the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs was addressing the issue of agent orange. I will not take the time to quote what the minister said at that time but he made a commitment that should his party form government, which it now has, that his government would address this issue.

Is the Conservative government prepared to act on it immediately, not in a year and a half or two as the Minister of Veterans Affairs has said in the papers?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, our government is committed to addressing veterans' problem with agent orange but if the member wants the details he will need to ask the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Chair, the government has taken measurable steps forward in a number of priority areas since taking office last winter. Introducing the federal accountability act, stronger crime legislation and tax cuts for all Canadians are just a few of the initiatives we have undertaken.

Supporting the Canadian Forces in their current mission and rebuilding and revitalizing our military for the future have also been high on our agenda. Therefore, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to address the committee of the whole on the 2006-07 estimates for the Department of National Defence. Indeed, I am pleased to have the privilege to reiterate the government's commitment to our Canadian Forces and our Canada first vision for defence.

There can be no question that the government is absolutely committed to ensuring that we have a military that is modern, effective and capable of defending Canada and Canadians.

To begin with, the government has given our Canadian Forces the attention, the resources and the priority required for them to do their job. The additional funds provided to the forces in budget 2006 will provide them with about \$5.3 billion in budgetary funding over five years. It is because these resources are here that they will be able to help ensure that our forces have the ability to assist Canadians, defend Canada and assert our sovereignty.

Look at the equipment purchase decisions the government has made in the last few months. We will be spending \$5 billion for strategic and tactical airlift. Our air force has tremendous distances to cover here in Canada and this airlift will strengthen our independent capacity to defend our national sovereignty and security.

When disaster strikes here at home, we cannot rely on other countries to come to our rescue, providing the airlift that we need. The government's commitment to strategic airlift will provide a new capability for our forces, one that could be useful in responding to the natural disasters our country has faced in previous years. This is one capability that will help the Canadian Forces tackle the challenges posed by the vastness of our country, especially in dire situations when time is at a premium.

The government has also committed a further \$2 billion to purchasing medium to heavy lift helicopters. These helicopters will give our forces the ability to respond quickly and efficiently to disasters and other emergencies. They will let us move soldiers and equipment in and people out faster than we have ever been able to do before, and all this in the worst scenarios, when roads are gone, power is off or people are trapped.

The government will also purchase 2,300 medium sized logistic trucks for about \$1.1 billion. These trucks will provide our forces with the mobility they need, mobility that is being compromised by using the current fleet that is nearly a quarter of a century old.

We have also announced plans to move forward with the joint support ship project. This means we will have these new state of the art, multi-role vessels to help our Navy protect our security on all three of our oceans, the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Arctic.

The government has shown its commitment to fulfilling its election promise to put Canada first. These are the first steps in rebuilding the Canadian Forces, which have been underfunded, undermanned and under-equipped for more than a decade.

Since the end of the cold war, and particularly in the modern age of terrorism, we have called on the Canadian Forces to do more with less at an ever increasing pace. At home in the last decade alone, we called on our military repeatedly during disasters: the Saguenay floods of 1996; the Red River floods of 1997; the ice storm of 1998; the crash of Swiss Air Flight 111; the destruction of Hurricane Juan; and the forest fires in British Columbia. In these and many other disasters we have relied on the Canadian Forces. They have always been there for us. The government is there for the Canadian Forces.

● (2135)

Of course natural disasters are not the only role for our forces at home. Since September 11, 2001, it has been obvious to us that Canada cannot assume that we will never be the target of an attack here. Indeed, al-Qaeda has specifically noted that Canada is one of its targets.

The Canadian Forces patrol our skies. They defend our waters. They guard our land. Search and rescue, sovereignty, supporting other departments and agencies, our forces play many varied role here at home. Giving them the proper equipment is just one aspect of the government's commitment to putting Canada first.

Business of Supply

Our vision also requires a military with the right structure to focus on Canada. Earlier this year our military turned all domestic operations over to Canada Command. Viewing Canada as a single theatre of operations means that all our military resources can be coordinated in response to any crisis here at home.

No matter where in Canada, the military stands ready to respond when called upon. The mission of Canada Command is no fail. In this light, the Canadian Forces are liaising and exercising with civil authorities and other government departments to plan, prepare and be ready for when the Canadian Forces are needed most by Canadians here at home.

We have also committed to initiating the establishment of territorial battalions near major urban centres. The government intends to ensure that our forces are structured and positioned to respond to our number one security priority, the safety and security of Canadians.

An improved structure and new equipment do not fully address the challenges facing Canadian Forces today. Equipment and command structures will not by themselves assure the defence of Canada. We also need sufficient numbers of right people, properly trained and well equipped. The government has committed to increasing the size of our forces. We have provided the resources and the direction to recruit another 13,000 regular forces personnel and another 10,000 reservists.

In the last decade the forces had to respond to ever increasing demands with fewer resources, less money, less personnel, less materiel. The government has provided the most significant investment in the Canadian Forces in recent history. Together the government's investments are a tangible demonstration of our commitment to the men and women in uniform who have dedicated themselves to Canada and to protecting Canadians.

Without more sailors, soldiers, air men and women, our forces will be unable to sustain the growing demands upon them. Budget 2006 provides the resources and the commitment to start growing our forces back to a level that will allow them to get the job done.

The government's Canada first defence strategy is exactly as the title suggests, a strategy that will put Canada first. With new equipment, new structures and more people, our Canadian Forces will be able to defend Canada and Canadians, assert our sovereignty and respond to crises.

The government has met its commitments to the Canadian Forces. Canadians deserve and require a robust military capable of undertaking tasks we ask them to do. Our forces deserve and require stable and sufficient funding so they can achieve success in every operation, whether at home or abroad. Our forces and all Canadians deserve nothing less.

● (2140)

When the Liberal Party formed the government 13 years ago, nobody would have suspected it would do such a mediocre job at supporting our military. I am talking about those who gave their lives for our country, ensuring our security and providing invaluable services to Canadians by protecting our interests here at home and on multilateral operations abroad.

The previous government literally put our military in a corner, making them operate under financial restraints never seen before. Military officers and civilian public servants from National Defence literally had to work magic to ensure the Canadian Forces stayed as relevant as possible in a decade that saw the highest operational tempo since the Korean war.

Apart from cutting budgets, the Liberal government also cancelled contracts that were already signed. Months after its ascension to power, the government decided to cancel the purchase of new Maritime helicopters meant to replace the Sea Kings. These aging Sea Kings are still operating today, but the maintenance costs, with parts and labour, are extremely high compared to their effectiveness.

Moreover, Canadian Forces were so cash-strapped during the Liberal reign that they had to sell their Chinook helicopters to the Dutch, the same ones that are presently in use in Afghanistan. To add insult to injury, we now beg the Dutch to borrow these same helicopters to transport our troops around Kandahar province.

Some could say these were tough times and we had to make sacrifices to address our financial situation. Was it really worth sacrificing such an important aspect as the military forces to make a few bucks?

Let me just highlight a recent example of the insidious behaviour of the Liberals toward our military. No later than last year, while the Liberal Party was still in power, it made a big announcement aimed at strengthening the air capabilities of the Canadian Forces. This air mobility package, as the Liberals called it, was supposed to reinforce our air force. In fact, this package did not include half of what they promised to do in their defence policy statement, leaving the military once again with great promises but nothing to back them up.

In that light, could the minister explain to us what this government, Canada's new government, is doing for our men and women in uniform, particularly with regard to the air capabilities of the Canadian Forces?

● (2145)

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Chair, that is a very complex question and it is going to take a moment to respond.

Our strategic airlift capabilities are presently limited. When we purchase the strategic airlift, we will fulfill the requirements of our Canadian Forces for an independent and reliable transport capacity to support our operations. Acquiring strategic airlift will make for more effective deployments within Canada and significantly contribute to our Canada First defence strategy. It will also help fulfill a top NATO requirement and allow Canada to take a leadership role among its allies.

Business of Supply

We looked at the aircraft available and we are confident that the C-17 is the only aircraft that meets our minimum acceptable requirements. Negotiations are under way with Boeing to acquire four C-17 Globemaster aircraft and Boeing will be required to invest in Canadian industry in an amount equal to the value of the contract.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: That is the wrong answer.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: I would encourage the member for Vancouver South to listen. I am in fact giving the correct answer to the correct question.

The current project received approval from Treasury Board on June 22. We should be able to award the contract in the coming months and could receive the first aircraft as early as next summer.

With respect to tactical aircraft, the C-130 is the workhorse of the Canadian Forces. Variants of this aircraft have served the Canadian Forces since the early 1960s. However, Canada's Hercules aircraft has logged more flying hours in total than any other military Hercules operating in the world.

Renewal of the tactical airlift fleet has long been a military priority and a priority for this government. As announced this summer, the estimated total project cost for the acquisition phase is \$3.2 billion, including the cost to purchase the aircraft. An additional \$1.7 billion has been estimated for 20 years of in-service support.

With respect to medium and heavy lift helicopters, new helicopters are an essential capability for the Canadian Forces. They will help protect Canadians at home by providing a quicker response to emergencies throughout Canada. Operational experience over the last decade, both here at home and in places such as Afghanistan, has taught us that we need medium and heavy lift helicopters capable of carrying equipment and personnel within Canada and in operations overseas.

The government has determined that the Boeing CH-47 Chinook helicopter is the only known western certified aircraft currently in production able to deliver the capabilities required by the Canadian Forces.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to take a few minutes to outline where Canada stands in terms of peacekeeping. Many Canadians, I suspect, would believe that we are still prominent players in peacekeeping, but this is far from the case.

Having previously ranked among the top 10, Canada now ranks 50th among the 95 countries providing military personnel for UN missions. During the same time period, Canada devoted only \$214.2 million, or 3% of spending on international military operations, to UN operations.

There are currently 64,322 military personnel participating in UN missions around the world and only 59 of these military personnel are Canadian. Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Jordan, Nepal, Pakistan and Uruguay now have far greater troop contributions than many NATO countries. Canada is not alone in having virtually abandoned UN peacekeeping. Most western middle power states now contribute very little to UN missions.

I am wondering if we have now given up on peacekeeping. Could the minister state what the government's position is in regard to this decline in Canadian participation in UN peacekeeping missions?

• (2150)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, we in fact have a considerable amount of troops committed to UN missions. The Afghan mission is a UN mission. It is a UN-mandated mission. There has not been any reduction in the amount of forces or the proportion of forces that we are committing to UN mandated missions.

With respect to the classic peacekeeping missions, there are very few of these left in the world today. It seems that countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria are countries that send a lot of troops to these missions, whereas, as the member opposite said, most European countries, the Americans and our country restrict ourselves to more challenging missions.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, I think that would be the first time people have said that UN peacekeeping missions are not challenging. I think they have their own challenges that are quite difficult.

In my previous round of questions, I asked about the Excalibur. The minister said that the Canadian Forces have none, but I have here a document that was tabled in the House. I have given it to the minister. It indicates that the Government of Canada spent \$5.5 million on these munitions.

Perhaps I could explain to the minister why I am being so persistent on this point. As I said earlier, I have had questions on the order paper. I have questioned the minister in committee. He indicated to me that he would give me the figures.

As the Chief of Defence Staff indicated at a defence committee meeting recently, the Excalibur is a very expensive round. I had assumed that when we bought these rounds, we would have bought the first run, the experimental run of the shells. Back when the first line was proposed in 2002, two Democrats on the U.S. house appropriations committee estimated that it would cost about \$222,000 per round. That is a quarter of a million Canadian dollars, so the minister can see why I am being persistent on this point. The rounds could cost less, but the information has not been forthcoming from the minister.

When the Senlis Council came to Ottawa and appeared at our defence committee, its members showed us slides of children living in Kandahar city who were starving and of whole families without food, so now I am asking the minister, is he saying that we do not have these shells, or is he not about to reveal the cost of the shells? Did the government table this information in the House of Commons in error? Is the minister not informed by his own department? What is the cost of each of these shells, please?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I am advised that if we have the shells, and when we had the shells, they would cost about \$150,000 each.

Business of Supply

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, I think that indicates we do have the shells. The information was tabled in the House of Commons and I do have the documents here. We spent \$5.5 million to get them.

During the last round of questions, the minister gave us the incremental costs of the mission to 2009, but I would like to know what the full cost is to DND. It is something that his department does track. It is published in the report on plans and priorities. I wonder if he could give us that information now. I have a sense that the minister or the department are lowballing the figures and using rather selective accounting. How much exactly are we spending?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, before I answer that, I am going to answer the Excalibur question. Apparently we are going to receive three rounds for trial. We have no rounds. That is correct. We have none. We are going to receive three rounds for trial in the next few weeks, and the plan is, in February 2007, to acquire 27 more rounds if these three rounds work out. It is correct at the moment that we have no rounds.

With respect to the cost of the mission, as I said before, the incremental cost of the mission to date is \$2.1 billion for the military. I cannot speak for the other parts of the mission. Every soldier we have sent there and every piece of equipment that we have put there is part of the military inventory. They are to be employed elsewhere. So when the member asks me the cost of mission in Afghanistan, the member gets what it costs us to do the mission in Afghanistan, which is \$2.1 billion to date, since the beginning of the mission back in 2002.

● (2155)

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for his answers.

I have raised the issue of danger pay at the committee level and in the House. That is the pay meant for the military when they are in Afghanistan. The issue is that if they are injured and sent home, they lose that danger pay. When we spoke about this before, I thought we could just call it something else and soldiers would continue to get it. It seems absolutely bizarre that a person is injured in combat in Afghanistan, comes back to recuperate in Canada and loses that amount of money that is danger pay. We should ensure that injured soldiers are not penalized when they return to Canada.

I know the minister has a commitment to change this. He told me last week that he wanted it corrected within a few weeks. I would like to ask what progress has been made on that issue since we raised it at the defence committee.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, as I told the hon. member, the committee and others publicly, we will ensure that our soldiers who are wounded are not in any way deprived of the allowances that they would otherwise get, but what we cannot do is mix up high risk pay or high risk allowances with this other initiative, because we have to stay constant. If they are in a high risk area, they get the risk allowance. If they are not in the high risk area, they do not get the high risk allowance. We have to stay firm with that. Otherwise, it opens up an endless appeal process.

What I had promised to do and what we will do is that we will ensure that every wounded soldier, if wounded before the time that they were normally to return to Canada, will be compensated. We are just trying to determine the best way to do it.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, I know the minister is sincere in what he is saying. I would only urge that the department get on with it. I am sure that it cannot be so difficult to call it something different and ensure they get the money they were meant to get while they were serving in Afghanistan, once they are injured and home.

I would like to ask the minister a further question about support for wounded soldiers who come back to Canada. I know that he wants to provide as much support as possible for those who are wounded. We know that they go through trying circumstances, and I am sure that everyone here in the House wants to provide as much help as possible. Once a soldier who has been wounded is sent out of Kandahar, is the first stop always Germany? What sort of help does the department provide for the family if a soldier is in the hospital in Germany?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, before I answer that question I want to note that today is the 106th anniversary of the battle of Leliefontein. My regiment, in the year 1900 in South Africa, was awarded three Victoria Crosses on this day. I want to note it before the evening passes.

With respect to the question about wounded soldiers, not all wounded soldiers go to the American hospital in Germany. Many of them come home if they are in a condition to come home. Only the most seriously wounded go to Landstuhl to make sure that they are stabilized and are in a good enough condition to return to Canada.

As for when they return to Canada, as I said before, and I gave out statistics earlier today, the great majority of soldiers return to duty after medical treatment, but even those who return with medical treatment may have a disability, so we have two categories: some of them do not return to duty and some do return to duty who may have disabilities. They receive disability pay. They also receive lump sums of money depending upon the extent of their injury or their wound. We also have programs to look after them, to make sure they are cared for and to get them either returned to duty or returned to civil life. We look after them right through the process.

● (2200)

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, when does the government expect to make a decision as to whether it will be extending this mission past 2009? I know that many of us in the House were not happy with the process that was followed last spring for obtaining Parliament's approval. Obviously more consultation would be important in the future.

I want to ask the minister if he will commit tonight to a full review by Parliament before another extension. I know that the planning takes place six to nine months before an extension is planned. I would like to ask him if that consultation would take place well in advance of any extension of the mission.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, there is no ongoing process at this time in the sense of reviewing what we will do at the end of February 2009, not at this moment. That is the decision of the Prime Minister and the cabinet.

Business of Supply

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, are the U.S. pilots who are providing air cover for Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan operating under rules of engagement that meet or exceed the standards required by Canadian pilots under the first additional protocol to the 1949 Geneva Convention?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, off the top of my head I cannot recall what the protocol is, but I can assure the member opposite that all pilots are following the rules of engagement as approved by NATO.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, I wonder if the minister has some concern about Canadian soldiers who are calling on U.S. pilots for air cover and who might in some circumstances inadvertently come into violation of the first additional protocol as a result of the actions of a U.S. pilot, for instance with respect to the selection of targets that may, because of their location or nature, place civilians at excessive risk.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, the member opposite, by implication, is trying to say somehow that American pilots are evil or something like that. American pilots are part of NATO. They follow all the rules of NATO. We have complete confidence in them and in the British pilots, the Dutch pilots and all the other pilots there who follow NATO rules.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, are any anti-personnel landmines that were laid by the Soviet forces in the 1980s still being used as part of the perimeter defence of Kandahar airfield?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, my understanding is that there are no mines whatsoever around Kandahar airfield. The British airfield regiment defends the area, plus there are, at any one time, a thousand or more troops in the area so it tends to keep the Taliban away.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, I wonder if there is any indirect reliance of Canadian soldiers on landmines in Afghanistan, and if there is, is it consistent with the spirit of the 1997 Ottawa landmines convention?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I am not aware of any use of mines on our side. However, as the member knows, the Taliban use Soviet mines to blow up and attack our forces on a regular basis. The only people using mines right now are the Taliban.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Egmont and the member for Oakville.

As our leader said earlier this evening in quoting General Richards around the issue of the locals in Kandahar and the importance of hunger and having support in determining which side of this fight these people will work on, I would like to know in terms of our government policy of three Ds if the minister would tell us in terms of estimates how much is spent in each of the three Ds, defence, diplomacy and development, in the Afghanistan mission.

When our leader was the minister of foreign affairs, he met weekly with the other three D ministers. I would like to know if the minister meets with these ministers and whether they are able to sort out the mission in Afghanistan in that way. If he does, how often?

• (2205)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, the only number I can provide right now is for the defence department. Our incremental

costs for defence are \$2.1 billion. The member opposite would have to approach the Department of Foreign Affairs and CIDA to determine what their amounts are.

I meet these ministers every day. In fact, I meet every minister every day.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Chair, I would suggest that maybe the minister should ask the other two ministers how much their budgets are for Afghanistan and then have a proper rebalancing of this mission instead of this militarized version.

We believe that if the people in Kandahar are hungry, they are tending to fight with the Taliban instead of helping us. I would suggest that at tomorrow's meeting, minister, you actually ask the other two ministers how much their budgets are for Afghanistan and report back.

In terms of supporting our troops, I would also like to further the conversation that you and I had during committee—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I would remind the hon. member for St. Paul's to address her comments through the Chair and not directly to the minister.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Chair, I would like to further the conversation that he and I had in committee on post-traumatic stress disorder. When I visited the Edmonton base a number of years ago, there were tremendous concerns that each soldier was not fully screened for post-traumatic stress on return from theatre.

I am heartened to hear from the minister that he is not wanting to redeploy soldiers who have been there. I would like to know whether he had that point of view when he or his government agreed to extend the mission to 2009.

Can he tell the House that every soldier is screened for post-traumatic stress, the finest kind of screening, upon return to Canada and that every soldier who is redeployed to Afghanistan is screened before leaving?

Can he tell me the divorce rate of soldiers compared to the national average, the suicide rate compared to the national average, the domestic violence rate compared to the national average? Then could he explain why it is that our military families are not treated as families in order to find the details of those troubles early? Why are military families waiting two years in town and not being treated on bases with their spouses?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, before soldiers go overseas they are screened not only physically but psychologically. They are given a test. When they return they are given another psychological test.

While a soldier is in the mission in Afghanistan, he or she gets a chance to come home on a holiday. That breaks the tension. Also, when units are rotating back to Canada, they also have time to lose stress over three or four days. Right now I think they are going into Cyprus, although I am not sure. They go to Cyprus to remove their stress.

Business of Supply

As I said, they are evaluated on their return. They are also observed over time to see what kind of reactions, if any, the soldiers have. The families are involved. I could go into the whole process of how we look after soldiers with stress, but at this moment I will not.

The other part of the question had to do with family health care. As I said in the meeting the other day, the health care of civilians is a provincial responsibility. It is not a federal responsibility. The member can shake her head, but it is a federal—

● (2210)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I apologize to the minister but the allotted time has expired.

The hon. member for Egmont.

Hon. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Chair, just to follow up on the question from the member for St. Paul's, the minister knows that the committee has been to Petawawa. He probably has a report from the members on the government side about what we learned on that very interesting trip to the base.

As the member for St. Paul's stated, the number of personnel to take care of our soldiers when they return from Afghanistan, Bosnia, or wherever they may have been, at this particular base seems to be very inadequate. I believe there are nine mental health people in Petawawa, whereas Valcartier has 35 and Edmonton has 29, and yet most of the returning soldiers are going into Petawawa. Why would those numbers make any sense? Also, the amount of domestic violence, divorce, and so on, the readjustment that our soldiers have to make coming out of a theatre of war and re-entering a domestic situation in this country can be quite traumatic and could take a lot of time. Yet the personnel do not seem to be there.

When we were talking with the padres and the caregivers and so on at the base, they seemed to be overworked, understaffed and really stressed out themselves because of the huge workload that they have in dealing with our returning soldiers.

Why have the resources necessary to take care of our returning soldiers not been provided on that particular base?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I do not want to point out too harshly that the member's party was the government until the end of January this year. I could ask why they did not do something about it.

However, the reality is that we have five operational trauma and stress support centres across the country. One of them is in Ottawa. The Ottawa trauma and stress support centre services Petawawa.

As I pointed out before, not only does this centre look after them—and the member pointed out there are some people up in Petawawa—but it is part of a whole program of decompression on the way home and onward care. We have a program called operational stress injury social support. There is a support program also out there for people with stress. So in fact we do have a program.

Hon. Joe McGuire: Mr. Chair, that view is really not shared by the people on the ground who are actually asked to do the work. They are saying themselves that they are overworked and they do not have enough support to deal with the problems that are coming back from the theatre of war.

On a different question, we know the Afghan national army is in the process of being trained to take over from NATO forces, as are the police forces in that country. We hear very good reports about what the Afghan army is doing alongside our soldiers in the Kandahar region. We have read some emails from our soldiers and they point out that the Afghan contingents are really doing yeoman work in helping us clear out the Taliban. However, on the police side, there appears to be a lot of corruption and a lot of inadequate service by the police. Whether it is because of training or not, I am not sure.

Could the minister give us an update on how long it may take to have the Afghan army and the Afghan police be in a situation where they can take over from us in those particular regions that we, the British and the Dutch are—

● (2215)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of National Defence has about 30 seconds to reply.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, according to the Afghan compact, the goal in Afghanistan is to have the army at 70,000 and the police at 62,000 by 2010-11. That is for the whole country. The conditions are different in different parts of the country.

One of the challenges with the police is that not enough attention was put on them a few years ago. The army is two years ahead of the police right now. There has to be a much more intense effort to get the police trained and supported.

Another thing is that the army is paid centrally. They get paid. The police are paid through the different provinces and somehow, something sometimes happens to the money.

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the so-called competition for the procurement of tactical airlift has published a set of requirements which heavily favours Lockheed Martin's Hercules C-130J over all other competitors.

Can the minister tell us what is the average price of a C-130J?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I do not have that number immediately at my fingertips. I will get it to the member as quickly as possible.

Ms. Bonnie Brown: Mr. Chair, the minister's estimates say that he is asking for \$3.2 billion as the total cost of this tactical purchase for the acquisition of 17 aircraft. Whatever model the minister buys, simple math tells us this gives him a budget of \$188 million per plane. Something does not add up when we know that the Italians bought these planes at \$65 million per plane. Even if the minister added two years of training, support and spare parts or even if he threw in the cost of managing the project, the accounting would still be an insult to Canadian taxpayers at \$188 million per plane instead of \$65 million.

Will the minister promise right now that he will go back to his officials and redo his homework on the cost of this multi-billion dollar project?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, the price that the member opposite is quoting is yes, \$3.2 billion. That also represents 20 years of support. That is 20 years, not 2 years.

Business of Supply

The member asked me about the price of a C-130J. I said I would get it for her. Mixed in that number is 20 years of support.

Ms. Bonnie Brown: Mr. Chair, I have been quite aware of the fact that Canadian youth are not rushing to fill all the spots that the new government wants to have in the armed forces and therefore, it is upping its recruitment tactics, calling it Operation Connection.

Apparently according to the CDS, the number is going from 300 recruiters to 30,000 recruiters and then eventually to 80,000 recruiters, touching every community in Canada. I understand the need for recruitment. I am wondering what the department has budgeted for that operation.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I will have to get the number on recruiting costs. However, what the member is representing is the intention that all members of the armed forces will encourage people to join the armed forces. When they go to their town, when they go to their families, they will encourage people. There are 64,000 regulars and 23,000 reservists, for a total of 87,000. The allusion was to 80,000. It was an idea that the people who are in the armed forces love the life of the armed forces, think it is a great career and would go out and encourage other people to join. They are not formal recruiters.

The recruiters are smaller in number, in the hundreds, but I will get the member the number on recruiting costs.

● (2220)

Ms. Bonnie Brown: I am not sure that the parents in Canada will be completely thrilled with the tactic that has been suggested to all these new recruiters which is, "Telephone your children's schools and ask if you or your unit could go there to recruit".

It seems to me that parents—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I am sorry, but I have to go back to the minister so we can move on to the next speaker. The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, I do not know what the allusion is. I do not know where these comments are coming from.

Our intention is to recruit into the armed forces, to increase the regulars by 13,000 and the reservists by 10,000. We believe it is quite achievable because a military career is a very good career for anybody in this country.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Chair, I can only echo the minister's remarks about the military being a great career. I enjoyed it immensely for 30 years.

I rise today to speak on the 2006-07 main estimates. These estimates reflect many of the important initiatives the government has put forward since it took office a few months ago. Much has been accomplished in that time.

Some 1.4 million families are receiving a universal child care benefit for every child under six. We are also working with partners across the country to find ways to create real, flexible child care spaces. We have also cut the GST by 1%. This has provided real tax relief that is noticeable every time Canadians make a purchase.

The introduction of the federal accountability act was part of our effort to clean up government and politics, so that all Canadians can be proud of their political system. We have increased Canada's

involvement in international affairs and promoted Canada's interests in the world. We have taken concrete steps to protect Canada's sovereignty and rebuild the Canadian Forces. The government has a vision for Canada.

We envision a prosperous and secure Canada that is united at home and respected abroad, a country with safe streets and secure borders, a Canada that is a leader rather than a follower on the international stage. Since taking office, we have been working hard to turn that vision into a reality.

Earlier in the debate my hon. colleagues on this side of the House spoke about various initiatives that support the Canadian Forces in their work. They talked about equipment procurement and recruitment, for example. I will focus on the support we are giving to our mission in Afghanistan. Success in operations is the primary goal that drives all the work of the Canadian Forces and when we speak about supporting our Canadian Forces, it means creating the conditions for achieving that success.

[*Translation*]

This evening, I would like to focus on specific measures adopted by the government to support our mission in Afghanistan. At present, this issue is a priority, and I believe that it is worthwhile taking a closer look.

To successfully carry out their mission, Canadian soldiers and civilians in Afghanistan need more time and more resources. I will talk about two initiatives that we have taken to meet these needs: extending our mission in Afghanistan and reinforcing the Canadian Forces serving in that country.

[*English*]

As my hon. colleagues will recall, on May 17, 2006 this House voted to extend Canada's mission in Afghanistan by 24 months beginning in February 2007. We recognized together that this mission serves the interests of Canada. It ensures that Afghanistan will never again become a haven for international terrorism. In other words, we are there to help protect Canadians from future terrorist threats.

We also acknowledge the value and the importance of contributing to the efforts of our partners and allies. Perhaps most importantly, we are helping the legitimate government of Afghanistan build a secure, stable and prosperous society. Canada is leading NATO and international efforts in Afghanistan and we should all be proud.

We did not extend this mission without an end goal in mind. We have clearly defined what constitutes success in this mission. This two year commitment will help the Afghanistan National Security Forces become operationally effective, so that they can take control of security in their own country. It will facilitate a smooth political transition when the current mandate of Afghanistan's presidency ends in 2009. It will help the government of Afghanistan implement key initiatives set out in the Afghanistan compact in areas such as transitional justice and disarming illegal armed groups.

The reality is that the Canadian Forces operating in that country face considerable dangers. We know that we cannot create a zero risk environment in Afghanistan. The Canadian Forces and their partners from civilian departments and agencies need not only time but also tangible resources to conduct their efforts as safely and effectively as possible.

The government is doing everything it can to minimize risks and to ensure that the Canadian Forces have the resources they need. This requires regular re-evaluation of the conditions on the ground and the tasks at hand.

The Minister of National Defence went to Afghanistan this fall. He talked to the troops, to military commanders, and to Brigadier General David Fraser, then commander of task force Afghanistan. He asked him how we could support them better. Considering the current realities on the ground, Brigadier General Fraser and Lieutenant General Michel Gauthier, Commander of the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command, specifically asked both the Minister of National Defence and General Hillier for additional equipment and more personnel.

In addition to an infantry company, the government has enhanced the Canadian Forces task force with a tank squadron and an anti-mortar capability. The provision of these enhancements will protect all Canadians, not just military personnel operating in Afghanistan. It will better enable Canada to meet its reconstruction and stabilization objectives in Afghanistan. It will help the Canadian Forces contribute to the overall success of the mission. The government is committed to achieving success in Afghanistan.

While today's debate is on defence spending, we must not forget that the government is also supporting the efforts of civilian agencies and departments in Afghanistan. This includes the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Canadian International Development Agency. The Canadian Forces are therefore only one part of our integrated approach to rebuilding Afghanistan.

When he visited Afghanistan, the Minister of National Defence was told that additional equipment and more personnel were required by the military to get the job done. We are ensuring that these needs are met.

The government has pledged to remain in Afghanistan until we achieve our final objectives. This is why we committed to extending our mission until 2009 and to giving our troops in Afghanistan the resources they need. These initiatives show that flexibility and planning for contingencies are part of any operation. What the government is doing will allow us to continue playing a leadership role in NATO in international efforts for years to come.

It is about 42 years ago that I joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. I have lived through a couple of revolutions in military affairs in Canada, either directly or indirectly. The first one I lived through directly. Some people have called it the Hellyer revolution and it was a hell of a revolution, but not in the right direction. The second one I am living through indirectly is the Hillier revolution and I like this one a whole lot better.

Starting on January 24, the day after the election, I started meeting airplanes coming back to Edmonton with wounded or people on normal rotation. I want to tell members about two people I have

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come to know. One I have known since he was a baby and one I have only known since January 24.

• (2225)

On January 24 one of the people on the airbus was a young man named Master Corporal Paul Franklin. He lost both legs above the knee to an explosion in Afghanistan. He was in rough shape on January 24. I have seen him progress over the last eight or nine months. He is now walking on two artificial legs without the aid of a walker. He uses canes. He is shopping for racing legs because he used to run marathons and he intends to run them again. He is an absolute inspiration to anybody in the military and anybody who meets him.

The other young man is Ryan Jurkowski. I have known Ryan since he was a baby. He is the son of a close friend of mine from the air force, retired Brigadier General David Jurkowski. Ryan Jurkowski was with C Company in Afghanistan. It was called Contact C because it was always in contact with the Taliban. He came home with, I do not doubt, some emotional scars. He is an exceptional young man and again represents the very best that Canada has to offer the world, and believe me, the world is grateful for what we have given it.

These are the kind of young men and women that we breed in the Canadian Forces who stand up for Canada around the world.

I want to say something about peacekeeping. We talk about peacekeeping and what Canada used to do, or still does. Every single thing that the Canadian Forces do every single day, in every single mission, and in every single way, is about peace. It is about peacekeeping; it is about peacemaking. It is about whatever word we want to put on the end of peace, but it is about peace and we better not forget that.

I believe this is a historic moment for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces. We have energetic leadership, a solid vision for the future, and a government that is dedicated to rebuilding the Canadian Forces. The government is also committed to giving the Canadian Forces the tools they need to achieve success in Afghanistan, and whatever other mission we give them.

• (2230)

I have a couple of questions and I would like to address my questions to the parliamentary secretary.

The first one deals with an area that is very important to any military and that is knowledge management. The professionalism of the Canadian Forces is, in large part, founded on learning and knowledge. The Canadian Defence Academy, the Military and Staff Colleges and the Royal Military College of Canada, all play a critical role in creating and ensuring knowledge in the defence community.

During a time when expansion, regeneration and transformation are posing substantial challenges to military professional development and education, would the parliamentary secretary describe how he intends to augment the education and training capacity of the Canadian Forces in the coming years?

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Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Chair, the Department of National Defence intends to address the challenges faced in the coming years through means articulated in our publication *Learning Architecture*. This publication discusses the impact of new learning technologies and methodologies, notably distributed learning and important new trends such as knowledge management.

There are three other learning opportunities within the department that I want to highlight at this time.

The first is the articles of clerkship program. This is an articling program that allows students in law to develop skills in the areas of military law, including military justice and administrative law. Each year, up to three articling students carry out a 10 month articling phase as part of their bar admission program. This program is moderated through the Judge Advocate General's senior legal officers, and they act as articling principals and mentors to these students. This arrangement has the added benefit of increasing the JAG's recruiting base, since some of these students may apply for positions as military lawyers within the office of the JAG.

Another opportunity is the organizational learning or lessons learned program. The Department of National Defence has a long history of managing and mobilizing knowledge, primarily in the context of the conduct of operations. The current focus for DND is to harness the success of these organizations and create a corporate-wide DND vision and strategy for knowledge transfer, or lessons learned, that will promote continuous learning and improved performance.

The Department of National Defence will lead the advancement of knowledge transfer and lessons learned practices by creating knowledge and awareness of the practice, by providing governance and guidance within defence, and by offering a link to products and services to assist the organization on its journey.

The third and last opportunity that I want to highlight is called individual learning. In an effort to maintain a professional qualified force, the Canadian Forces continues to strive for a degreed officer corps through individual learning. The aim here is to recruit officers with degrees or assist members who meet policy requirements to attain a degree, but there are also efforts under way to enhance the educational qualifications of non-commissioned members.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Chair, I would like to return to recruitment and retention. Despite numerous recruiting or retention efforts, a number of military occupations remain short of personnel. These include professional occupations, such as doctors and pharmacists, and operating occupations, such as naval electronics, technicians, signal operators, fire control systems technicians, airborne electronics sensor operators, naval weapon technicians and intelligence operators.

Indications are that intake estimates will not be sufficient to recover the above military occupations to the preferred manning level within two years. Recruiting and retention of some of these occupations will remain problematic in the foreseeable future for a variety of reasons, such as elevated academic standards, high medical standards, competition from the private sector and shortages of certain skill sets in Canadian society.

Given that in the fiscal year 2006-07 the Canadian Forces will continue to face challenges in recruiting that may ultimately affect their capacity to meet overall recruiting and forces expansion objectives to grow the regular force by an additional 13,000 and the reserve force by 10,000, would the parliamentary secretary please describe the specific activities currently in progress or planned that would mitigate the recruiting and retention problem?

• (2235)

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Chair, National Defence recognizes the challenges the Canadian Forces will continue to face in recruiting that may ultimately affect their capacity to meet their overall recruiting and force expansion objectives to grow the regular force by an additional 13,000 and the reserve force by 10,000.

Our recruitment and retention strategy is a crucial part of our development, sustained and effective professional defence team initiative. The Canadian Forces are standardizing applicant procedures across Canada and are implementing e-recruiting, which is also expected to further reduce wait times by improving the accuracy of the applicant information.

We are also putting in place numerous subsidized and direct entry plans. Also, National Defence will continue to connect with Canadians through a broad range of coordinated, community based activities to attract and enrol quality recruits.

The aim is to make Canadians aware of the unique opportunities, benefits, challenges and rewards of a Canadian Forces career, and to effectively compete for the best people during a period of force expansion. The Canadian Forces have adopted a robust and cohesive recruiting strategy, a comprehensive national recruiting campaign supported by a national recruiting attraction plan, new advertisements and appropriate advertising federally—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I am sorry I had to cut you off but we need to move on to the next speaker. The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chair, I had the pleasure of speaking this evening during the first period allocated to the Bloc Québécois. However, as member for Saint-Jean and the National Defence critic, I asked my party to allow me to speak also in the last part because I thought I should listen to the entire discussion this evening in order to stress some points that I believe are important. It should also be understood that an MP represents not only his riding but also a large region.

I would like to return to the issue of aircraft and the aerospace industry because 60% of that industry is concentrated in Quebec. I mentioned it earlier and I am reiterating this fact. Consequently, when military contracts involve the aerospace industry it is important, to me as an MP and representative of the part of the region at issue, that the maximum economic benefits be generated.

When I say that Quebec represents 60%, I am talking about some pretty large companies such as Bombardier, L3, CAE, Bell Helicopter and Pratt and Whitney. There are at least 35,000 jobs in the aerospace industry.

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When the government decides to invest billions of dollars, it is the duty of the member from this corner of the country to claim his region's share. Some \$13 billion are being invested in aeronautics. That is why I am emphasizing this.

I want to come back to the first contract negotiated with Boeing. Earlier, the Minister of National Defence told me he was not the Minister of Industry. I know that, but he is nonetheless a minister of the Crown and since he attends all cabinet discussions, he is in a position to answer these questions and not wash his hands of it.

And he is the one who establishes the specifications. In other words, the minute they say a plane has to have such and such a radius of action, a range of so many nautical kilometres and a load of so many thousands of kilograms, we know full well that there is only one company for the job and that is Boeing. The government wants to do business with Boeing; and that is its right. I am not saying it is not, but the government also has a duty to obtain the most economic spinoffs possible.

I have nothing against Boeing. It is currently a major multinational company in the world and it has a game to play. It has corporate interests to defend. It is playing its role and the minister has to play his, just like all the other ministers have to play theirs.

Accordingly, we already know that Boeing will get the contracts for the C-17s and the Chinooks. Unfortunately, I find that the government gave in to Boeing too easily. Let me explain.

There is a concept in the United States called ITAR, or International Traffic in Arms Regulations. The Americans are saying they are not prepared to give the intellectual property to anyone. There are other conditions to ITAR. We will therefore not get the intellectual property of what we buy.

There are other factors linked to ITAR. Recently we heard on the news that they will not allow people with dual citizenship to work on these planes. I am not talking about general maintenance, because full maintenance of the equipment will not be done in Canada. Not only will we pay big bucks for the equipment, but we will not be able to do the maintenance. The maintenance contract will go to the United States, except of course for basic maintenance such as fuelling the planes or changing the oil or whatever. This is insignificant compared to what will be done in the United States.

We have to wonder whether our people's preaward notice is the best way to proceed.

• (2240)

For some time now, the minister has been saying that it was a competitive process. However, the outcome does not reflect a competitive price or any major benefits for Quebec.

Does the minister agree that we will be giving many billions of dollars to Boeing and that, as of right now, there will be next to no benefits for the aerospace industry because of ITAR, and next to no spin-offs for maintenance because everyone knows it will get done in the United States. I want to know if the minister agrees with these facts.

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, surprisingly, I do not agree with the member opposite.

From the point of view of the Department of National Defence, the military sets the requirement. It says that it has a certain need and it describes the need and its essential characteristics. We also calculate the cost of this equipment, in the case of aircraft, and the support for 20 years. We then need to get the approval of cabinet to proceed with it. It is then basically handed over to the public works and industry departments.

The understanding in any procurement that we are making at these scales is that we will get 100% benefits back in Canada. Every dollar spent will come back to Canada.

I can assure the member opposite that Quebec industries will benefit, Ontario industries will benefit, western industries will benefit and Atlantic industries will benefit. Everybody in the country will benefit from these contracts.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chair, I recently met with the managers of Boeing at the Ritz-Carlton in Montreal. To them, it is clear that only 60% of the benefits have to come to Canada's aerospace industry.

Certainly, when we talk about 100% benefits in Canada, that includes the remaining 40%. It is not easy to know where the economic benefits will go. Earlier, I gave the example of Pacific salmon and northern spruce. That is not where the importance of research and development or the importance of the modern issue of intellectual property control lies. It does not lie in either forestry or fisheries. It often lies in aviation, aeronautics and aerospace. If that accounts for only 60% of the economic benefits and 40% goes elsewhere, we are losing a large segment of the benefits.

The Canadian aerospace industry is asking that 100% of the economic benefits be in aeronautics and aerospace. It is not asking for benefits in other sectors. These contracts are important to my part of the country, where most of the Canadian aerospace industry is located.

Now, I want to raise the issue of tactical aircraft, because we have not talked about them much this evening. Earlier, the minister told the member for Oakville that \$1.4 billion of the \$3.2 billion is earmarked for maintenance. However, these are not the real figures. The real figures are \$4.6 billion for the total contract for tactical aircraft and \$1.4 billion for maintenance. That means that the cost of purchasing the aircraft is \$3.2 billion, and the government wants to buy 17 of them. According to my figures, Italy recently purchased aircraft at \$65 million apiece, while Canada will be paying \$188 million apiece.

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I await the minister's reply, who will likely tell me this also includes the cost of projects, training, the translation of manuals, the size of the operations manuals, and so on. Alright, let us add 20% to \$65 million, which is what the Italians paid. That comes to approximately \$80 million. Now, \$188 million is more than double \$80 million. That is the risk we run, when we proceed in this manner, telling the Americans we will purchase their planes without first setting out the conditions. It is the Americans who are now determining the conditions and Canadian taxpayers who are left to foot the bill.

In my opinion, it is not too late. The Minister of National Defence must instruct the Minister of Industry and the Minister of International Trade to be very careful, both with respect to Boeing and to the tactical aircraft. I believe the minister owes it to Canadian taxpayers to intervene now and to ensure, before the official contract is signed, that we achieve the best economic spinoffs possible.

Nine NATO countries have decided to procure the Airbus A400M, which means that the Lockheed Martin is becoming outdated. The American army is even ending production. Why would we pay such a high price for planes that are at the end of their production, while other options may exist and it is Canadian taxpayers who are left to foot the final bill?

● (2245)

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, first, I said that 100% of the money would be invested back into the country. I think the member alluded to the 60%. It is the 60% requirement that any contractor has to identify immediately to get a contract. They then subsequently have to develop the other 40%. One hundred per cent of every dollar spent on these projects comes back to Canada.

Second, the member referred to the C-130J, as did hon. members from the other party. No decision has been made. No tactical aircraft has been selected at this moment. We had the requirements and the funding. We have the SOIQ regime to sort out who can win. It is involved in testing and everything else. No company has been chosen.

I promised one of the member's opposite to get them the price of a C-130J, which I will do, but we have not acquired any.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chair, I have only one question for the minister. He just stated that the company must commit immediately to 60% in economic benefits. He says that the other 40% will come later. Will this 40% represent benefits to the aerospace industry alone, or will there be benefits for other sectors? I think I have clearly made my point. We want this 40% to go to the aerospace

industry. Can the minister tell us, from his position, if that will be the case?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, that is a question for the industry minister. He could tell the member where all the benefits are going.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chair, next time we might have to consider getting both the Minister of Industry and the Minister of National Defence together. I repeat that the Minister of National Defence is a minister of the Crown. He and his colleague, the Minister of Industry, are cabinet members. It is easy for them to say that they only make decisions about specifications and terms, that is, needs. We need more than that. I think the minister is well aware that if anyone is to benefit, it had better be Canada.

I am disappointed to hear that he does not want to say anything about the last 40%. He says this will benefit Canada, but he does not want to answer the question about the last 40%. We want to say officially that that 40% must generate benefits for the aviation industry.

● (2250)

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, as I said before, this is a matter for the industry minister. If the member opposite wants the answer to that question, he should approach the industry minister.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I believe the minister is onside with me on northern sovereignty. However, why has the Conservative Party, along with all the other cuts that have shocked the country, cut \$13.9 million for the high frequency service radar project, which could be very instrumental in northern sovereignty?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Chair, we ceased the project because there was a technical problem. The radars interfered with communications in Europe and we were told to desist. We will look at other solutions, other frequencies, to solve the problem.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: It being 10:51 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) all votes are deemed reported. The committee will rise and I will now leave the chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 10:53 p.m.)

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