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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, April 22, 2009

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 22, 2009

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

● (1400)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

MALARIA

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, April 25 marks World Malaria Day. I rise today in the House to encourage my colleagues to focus their attention on eradicating this disease.

Members should consider these statistics: Every 30 seconds a child dies of malaria in Africa. Malaria kills more than one million and infects between 350 million and 500 million lives a year. Adding to this human devastation and loss caused by malaria, the economic cost of this disease to Africa is estimated at a staggering \$12 billion. This is totally unacceptable. Malaria is entirely preventable and treatable so action must be taken.

Sleeping under a simple bed net is the most efficient way to fight the spread of this disease. One bed net can protect up to five sleeping children for up to five years. In countries such as Ethiopia, long-lasting nets are credited with reducing deaths and infections from malaria by 50%.

We are rapidly approaching World Malaria Day. I would encourage every member of Parliament to think about those suffering with, and exposed to, malaria.

In Barrie we will be having a town hall on Saturday.

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MALARIA

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Saturday will be the second anniversary of World Malaria Day.

Malaria is a treatable and preventable illness that still affects half a billion of the world's population and kills nearly a million people each year. This disease is hardest felt by young children in Africa where 86% of cases occur.

Every 30 seconds a child dies of malaria, and each of those deaths is avoidable. Malaria is not expensive to treat and is even cheaper to prevent, yet the places that suffer the most at the hands of this disease cannot afford the treatment.

I believe it is our duty as citizens of the world to speak up, raise awareness and most important, provide the tools to combat this scourge of humanity.

One of the best ways of preventing malaria is through treated mosquito nets. I urge all Canadians to log on to buyanet.ca and donate to this vital cause. Already, 50,000 nets have been donated.

Together we can eradicate malaria forever.

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● (1405)

[Translation]

CHARLES AZNAVOUR

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Monday Charles Aznavour was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Université de Montréal for his exceptional contribution to world francophone culture.

Now 85, this prolific artist has composed 1,000 songs, including the famous *Je m'voyais déjà*, *For me, formidable*, *Emmenez-moi* and *Je voyage*, as well as appearing in about sixty films.

Born to Armenian parents on May 22, 1924, he and his family lived through the economic hardships of the thirties, but this did not stop him from learning to sing and act. In the late 1930s he wrote lyrics for Edith Piaf, the Compagnons de la Chanson and Jacques Hélian, and then branched out into a solo career. By 1954 he had had over 30 hits, with many more to follow. In 1963 he went on a world tour, starting in New York City. He is currently on tour in Quebec.

My colleagues in the Bloc Québécois and myself are proud to take this opportunity to tell the House about this honour paid to Charles Aznavour, and extend our heartiest congratulations.

Statements by Members

[English]

MALARIA

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too want to talk about World Malaria Day, a day to raise awareness and support for the prevention of a disease that kills one million people a year, mostly in Africa and mostly children under five. Pregnant women are especially vulnerable because of their reduced natural immunity, and through them, their newborns. We can prevent this through antenatal treatment and the use of insecticide nets.

Groups like Buy-A-Net, the Red Cross, the Canadian Nurses Association, and CFNU, with donations from Canadians, are making a difference. With CIDA's backing, hundreds of thousands of lifesaving nets are being distributed every year.

Support for the Global Fund, with its focus on malaria, TB and HIV-AIDS, is also key with 70 million nets and 74 million drug treatments to its credit.

Much more needs to be done. We need to increase our support, especially now when vital financial contributions may decline.

Today we call on the Government of Canada to recognize World Malaria Day and to increase Canada's financial support for the battle against this deadly disease and threat to women's health.

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MALARIA

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, malaria kills up to 1.3 million people each year worldwide, including one child every 30 seconds. It can be prevented with a \$6 insecticide-treated bed net.

April 25 is World Malaria Day. To help draw attention to the need for bed nets, Heather Haynes, an artist from the Gananoque area in my riding of Leeds—Grenville, will display in Kingston a travelling exhibit called "Worlds Collide". Ms. Haynes travelled to Africa with her 11-year-old son, Whitney Montgomery, who raised \$1,400 to buy nets.

The Buy-A-Net charity was started by Debra Lefebvre of Kingston, who was recently honoured as citizen of the year in that city.

A donation of \$6 will purchase a long-lasting bed net. For a donation of \$350, an entire village can be protected.

For more information, visit www.buyanet.ca

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LOCAL FARMERS ON THE HILL

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I extend a warm welcome to members of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Union des producteurs agricoles, who will be holding their annual Local Farmers on the Hill event tomorrow, from 11 to 4, in Room 256-S.

The OFA represents over 38,000 farm members, while the UPA represents all of Quebec's 44,000 farm producers. This event is an

opportunity to recognize the tireless efforts of Canadian farmers to produce safe, quality food for Canadian families.

While food safety has become a prominent issue, it is imperative that an understanding of the food system include the entire process of food production from farm to table. I encourage members to gain a first-hand perspective of the issues of the farm and of possible solutions for the future. In doing so, let us recognize the hard work of Canadian farmers and the integral role they play in sustaining our food system.

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● (1410)

BENTLEY GENERALS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bentley, Alberta is more than just a small town. It is home to the 2009 Allan Cup champions.

Since 1908, Canadian senior men's AAA hockey players have competed for Canada's oldest amateur hockey championship, the Allan Cup. For the third consecutive year, the Bentley Generals qualified to play in the Allan Cup tournament. They earned a berth in the national championship in a hard-fought battle over the Fort St. John Flyers in the McKenzie Cup series.

With two goals from Ryan Maniwich, the Generals trailed Manitoba's South East Prairie Thunder three to two until 8:03 of the third period, when Captain Kent Beagle scored a short-handed goal to set up the exciting finale. Both teams battled through double overtime until Diarmuid Kelly scored and secured the title for the Generals.

Along with the legions of enthusiastic fans from across central Alberta who came out in droves to cheer on the Generals, I know everyone in the House will join me in congratulating Coach Brian Sutter and the members of the 2008-09 Bentley Generals for clinching this victory and bringing the Allan Cup home to Bentley.

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[Translation]

EARTH DAY

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today the world is celebrating Earth Day, and 500 million people in 184 countries will be marking it in some way.

Among the programs organized for the occasion, there is a biennial theme encouraging every municipality in Quebec to launch a sustainable development project.

According to the Yale and Columbia environmental performance index, Canada's performance worsened between 2006 and 2008. It is important to draw attention to the monumental job being done by dedicated organizations and volunteers working to inform and educate the public and save the planet.

It saddens us to see how little interest the Conservatives have in the environment, sustainable development, water pollution, the list is endless. By refusing to implement Canada's Kyoto commitment, this government is showing us how indifferent it is about the future of our Earth.

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[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Earth Day, a day meant to raise environmental awareness of the planet. The Government of Canada is committed to preserving and enhancing the environment for current and future generations.

Canada and the rest of the world face challenges and opportunities for the environment. Especially during this period of economic uncertainty, we need to balance the need to protect our environment while working to build and encourage a strong economy.

We recently announced that we are going to be working with President Obama and our U.S. partners to reduce air pollution from our coastal areas due to shipping activity. We also announced that we are going to introduce tough new measures to limit greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles. Our government will also be investing \$2.5 million over five years to support the United Nation's GEMS/Water program, an international science program aimed at understanding inland water quality issues around the world.

When it comes to the environment, we are getting the job done.

I encourage all Canadians to embrace the spirit of Earth Day and to continue to make environmentally friendly and sustainable choices.

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MALARIA

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April 25 is World Malaria Day, a day of unified commemoration of the global effort to provide effective malaria control around the world.

[Translation]

Malaria kills millions of people each year. Every 30 seconds, the virus kills a child. These deaths are preventable.

[English]

Now it is Canada's turn. We must join with the international community to meet the 2010 targets of delivering effective and affordable protection and treatment to all people at risk of malaria.

[Translation]

The international community is on the cusp of winning the global fight against malaria. The countdown is on.

[English]

I hope hon. members will come to the reception with the Speaker this afternoon, and join me in donating a mosquito net for the Buy-A-Net, Save-a-Life campaign. It is time we did our part.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

THE BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc has betrayed Quebec. Despite everything that party says, we have reason to wonder whether it really wants to fight gun crime in Quebec.

On Monday, the Bloc made another attempt to weaken Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (organized crime and protection of justice system participants), by suggesting that mandatory minimum sentences that could apply to drive-by shootings, among other things, be removed from the bill.

However, in a Bloc press release dated February 15, 2007, the member for Hochelaga said that the Criminal Code should be amended to give police forces the tools they need to fight street gangs. That is exactly what we are proposing with the mandatory minimum sentences in this bill.

While the Bloc spends its time telling Quebeckers anything it pleases, our government is putting honest citizens, justice and victims first in its governance bill.

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●(1415)

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a high speed rail service to Canada's largest airport in Toronto from the downtown union station is long overdue, but the provincial and federal governments must not ignore the real concerns of the city of Toronto and the residents in my riding.

The trains should be electric and not diesel, so they are clean and green. Local residents, store owners in the Liberty Village, the Niagara neighbourhood, Queen and King Street West should not see their neighbourhood wrecked by an eight metre high bridge over the rail corridor.

There is no reason to sacrifice Toronto's vibrant, creative and historic communities since the city of Toronto has a plan that would accommodate the new rail lines and blend well with the existing landscape.

We have seen what happened with the Gardiner Expressway. Let us not make the same mistake. I urge the federal Minister of Transport to direct Metrolinx to work with the community and the city of Toronto to resolve this conflict.

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TAXATION

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, are there any more new policies the Liberal Party would like to announce during this global recession?

Oral Questions

We know that the Liberals want to increase the GST. We know that they want to impose a job-killing carbon tax and last week, the Liberal leader said, “We will have to raise taxes”.

If there was any doubt that the Liberals were out of touch with Canadians before this announcement, their new policy has surely confirmed it.

Canadians deserve to know, which taxes would the Liberals raise? By how much would they raise these taxes and who would be forced to pay these high taxes?

My constituents have made it very clear. They work very hard for their money. They appreciate the investments our government has made, which has left more money in their pockets, more money so that they can invest in their future and in the future of their families. They do not want another tax and spend Liberal lecturing them on how they should use their hard-earned money.

Cutting taxes, investing in Canadians, tackling crime, supporting farmers, and working with our provincial and municipal partners is our agenda and it is the agenda of Canadians.

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[Translation]

MALARIA

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, more than 750,000 children die from malaria every year in Africa and more than 500 million people are infected worldwide. Considering these worrisome statistics, it is important to do everything we can to save these at risk populations. That is why April 25 is World Malaria Day.

Insecticide-treated bed nets are the most effective and economical way to prevent death from malaria. That is why I would like to acknowledge the “spread the net” campaign, led by 14 college and university UNICEF clubs in Quebec. The funds raised will allow UNICEF to purchase bed nets, distribute them free of charge to families in Rwanda and Liberia, and educate recipients on their usage.

For just a few dollars, it is possible to save lives for a family. I would like to congratulate everyone who believes in and invests in this noble cause to fight malaria.

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[English]

EARTH DAY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April 22 marks the anniversary of the first Earth Day in 1970, a milestone in the environmental movement and born from the frustration that our basic, life-sustaining and critical needs, such as clean air and water, biodiversity of plant and animal species, the health of our oceans, and freedom from exposure to toxic substances, were being ignored.

Today's challenges are greater still as people annually consume more than the world can renew. In the near term, we are faced with the global economic crisis, but it remains urgent to make progress

now on our long-term environmental challenges, especially the climate change crisis.

Therefore, let Earth Day 2009 be a clarion call for a climate-change solution that is scientifically credible, economically viable and equitable.

Let us heed the wisdom of 12-year-old Severn Suzuki at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, who was fighting for her future and who challenged us to fight for the future of all generations.

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TAXATION

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all the top economists in the world agree that raising taxes during these economic times is absolutely the worst thing to do to help our economy. Yet, that is exactly what the Liberal Party is proposing.

As revealed just last week, the Liberal leader said, and I quote, “We will have to raise taxes”. The Liberal plan is to raise taxes on Canadian families.

While the Canadian government has a strong economic action plan that will reduce taxes by a further \$20 billion, the Liberals are now threatening to raise taxes. Yet, in typical Liberal fashion, they are refusing to divulge details in their tax plan.

The Liberal Party needs to come clean. It needs to be up front and honest with Canadians, and tell us what taxes it is going to hike. Liberals need to tell Canadians how much they are going to raise our taxes and they need to tell us who is going to pay these taxes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Governor of the Bank of Canada told Canadians that the recession would be deeper and longer than anticipated. Today the International Monetary Fund predicts the most severe recession since 1945. These predictions come as no surprise to the 300,000 Canadians who have lost their jobs since January of this year.

What additional measures, what hope, can the Prime Minister offer to the people who may be watching this on television because they do not have jobs to go to?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition will know, this government brought in a much larger fiscal stimulus package than the International Monetary Fund was actually calling for. Obviously, there are important measures there, particularly as they affect those who are unemployed and those who will be seeking new jobs. We are going to make sure we do whatever is necessary to help those people.

Let me just point out what the IMF said today about the record of Canada and a couple of other countries. It said:

Oral Questions

Fortunately, conservative monetary and fiscal policy management [in these economies] now leave policymakers better placed than those in other countries to mitigate further declines in demand.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Canada made it very clear that the economic crisis has worsened since January.

Does the Prime Minister understand that the assumptions of his January budget no longer hold? Will he revise his own projections in respect of revenue and deficits? Will he bring forward additional measures to help the vulnerable and working Canadians?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will constantly analyze the situation and take whatever measures are necessary. As the IMF and others have said, we are taking the appropriate course of action.

Now I know about the leader of the Liberal Party and the kinds of additional measures he wants are increases in taxes. That is not what we are going to do.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the Prime Minister who spent us into the red in good times. It is the Prime Minister who slapped a 31.5% tax on income trusts. This is the Prime Minister who is going to leave us with the biggest deficit in Canadian history, and he is giving me a lecture on economics?

I ask the Prime Minister, in fact, how can he explain this record of incompetence to the Canadian people?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is this, virtually every country in the world is running a deficit. The reason we are running a deficit is to take money that the private sector is not using and to make sure it is employed for the benefit of people who are losing their jobs.

That is why we have surpluses in good times, so that we can act when times are tough. And none of that, there is no excuse for an agenda to raise taxes.

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• (1425)

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have seen three ministers in three years, and three plans to combat climate change have been abandoned.

We have intensity targets, but no absolute reductions. There are no regulations concerning greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions are increasing. Canada does not have a carbon exchange. There are no costs associated with carbon.

After three years of negligence, what are the Conservatives waiting for, a “made in Washington” plan? Are they waiting for a carbon tariff that penalizes Canadian exports? Or are they waiting for both of those things?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and President Obama have had very good meetings on the clean energy dialogue, as has the minister. That clean energy dialogue includes

expanding clean energy research and development, technology, and an efficient electricity grid based on renewable and clean energy.

We are getting it done, and I want to thank the member for supporting our plan.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, global investments in environmental technologies reached \$155 billion in 2008. Now economists tell us the global carbon market will reach \$400 billion in 2012 and exceed \$1 trillion by 2020. The U.S. is outpacing Canadian sixfold in green research and development.

Why are the Conservatives not positioning Canada to succeed in this global market and create the tens of thousands of green jobs we desperately need? What do they have against working Canadians?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that economic action plan included \$1 billion for green infrastructure, \$300 million for eco-energy retrofit and \$1 billion for carbon capture and storage. We are world leaders with the toughest target in Canadian history, and that is an absolute reduction of 20% by 2020.

I thank the member for supporting our action plan.

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[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the governor of the Bank of Canada has been forced to admit that the recession will be deeper and longer than anticipated. For his part, the Prime Minister is in denial and is refusing to modify his recovery plan, saying that it is the perfect way to deal with the crisis. But his plan is woefully inadequate, because the economic crisis is far more serious than predicted. That is why we voted against his plan.

At a time when unemployment is rising steadily and the forestry industry is going through an unprecedented crisis, how can the Prime Minister cheerfully tell us that his recovery plan meets people's needs?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is constantly monitoring the situation. We will make changes as necessary. But our fiscal stimulus package was much broader and much larger than the International Monetary Fund called for. Today, the IMF had this to say about the government's policies: “Fortunately conservative monetary and fiscal policy management in these economies now leave policymakers better placed than those in other economies to mitigate further declines in demand.” This government is on the right track, at a very difficult time.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister just read means that Canada is better placed to do more, not to do less.

Oral Questions

The fact is that the recovery plan was designed purely to win votes. The government has agreed to help the automotive industry and the oil companies, which are concentrated in Ontario and Alberta respectively, but it is refusing to give loan guarantees to the forestry industry, which is concentrated in Quebec.

Will the Prime Minister change his approach and finally help the unemployed and the forestry industry, which desperately need help?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, this government has provided a great deal of money to help the forestry sector across the country. For example, we have helped finance more than 500 companies in this sector through Export Development Canada. And we did so without jeopardizing the free trade agreement with the United States.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while a number of countries are spending large amounts of money in order to reduce their dependence on oil and develop green technologies, Canada is headed in the opposite direction. Even China, which was asked to do more to reduce greenhouse gases by the Prime Minister, will invest, proportionally, four times as much as Canada in environmental initiatives, according to HSBC Bank.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge, on this Earth Day, that his recovery plan is inadequate not just for employment and businesses but also for the environment and the economy of the future?

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. This government has acted quickly and it acted years ago with respect to energy efficiency and carbon capture and storage and, most important, in terms of renewable energy. We have committed over \$3.7 billion in renewable energy efforts since 2007. We will be adding 200,000 more homes with energy efficiency.

Canadians understand that these things are important and they are things that we are delivering to Canadians so we may deliver a cleaner brighter future.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that Canada invests one sixth as much per capita as the United States. That is the economic reality.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of the Environment say they want to work with the United States. President Obama and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency maintain that absolute targets for greenhouse gases must be imposed quickly.

What is the Minister of the Environment waiting for to abandon his intensity targets and adopt absolute targets, the only approach that gives real results?

[English]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our targets are absolute reductions of 20% by 2020. By 2020, we are also committed to

ensuring that 90% of Canada's electricity needs will be provided by clean non-emitting energies. Also our clean energy dialogue with the United States includes harmonizing fuel efficiency standards. The big question before the House is why that member opposes this good plan.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): The economic crisis is causing severe hardship for citizens. They are finding it difficult to make ends meet every month. The unemployment rate has reached 8% but only 40% of those who have lost their jobs qualify for employment insurance.

Since the election, 100 people have lost their jobs every hour. The Prime Minister says he is monitoring the situation and will take action if necessary. However, workers who are losing their jobs today need help today.

When will action be taken to help the unemployed?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is taking action with the biggest stimulus plan in the history of Canada. This plan includes significant measures for the unemployed, including those who need training for new jobs. That is important and I encourage the New Democratic Party to join us in helping them by not voting against benefits for the unemployed.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the evidence is in. The stimulus proposed by the Conservative government is not working. The Bank of Canada says that the recession is going to be deeper and longer than it originally projected.

With 100 Canadians being thrown out of work every hour since the Prime Minister was elected, I would think he would start getting the message. When is he going to recognize the need for additional stimulus methods and investments? We need a second stimulus package and we need it to be brought before the House. Is he willing to do it, yes or no?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, this government has brought in the largest stimulus package in Canadian history. We are pushing those programs out the door right now, including important assistance for the unemployed and for workers.

I think the parties opposite, before they demand additional stimulus, should at least get on board and vote for the things that are being done for the workers of our country.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what we see is failure, a failure to implement the changes to EI already adopted by the House.

Oral Questions

If we want to look at failure, take a look at the UN's report on climate change. It shows that Canada's emissions are up 34% from 1990 and have gone up millions of tonnes under the watch of the Prime Minister.

Why not kick-start the economic recovery with a whole new approach by really investing in renewable energy, in a massive program of retrofit of homes and in a green car strategy to get the car sector going again, instead of the minuscule initiatives that we have seen?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the leader of the New Democratic Party had decided to read our economic plan before voting against it, he would have found that there were important measures in there to help the unemployed, which the unemployed wanted. There is an important program to vastly expand the retrofit programs in the country. There are programs to address every thing the leader of the NDP has raised.

It is time he read these things. It is time he gets on board with them and help the people of Canada.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, respected scientists and environmental NGOs from around the world have criticized the government for its failure to deliver anything for the environment. Because the government has been unable to treat this issue with the seriousness it deserves, Canada has been embarrassed internationally.

When international communities are questioning Canada's position on the environment, how can Canadians trust the government to take real action?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is for far too many years certain political parties have played lip service to climate change and the fight against it. Now the Liberal leader plans on hiking taxes and imposing a job-killing carbon tax on all Canadians.

Our environmental policy is tough and real. It strikes the right balance between protecting the environment while ensuring that Canadian families can have food on their tables.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a Liberal government signed Kyoto. For two years, the only environmental policy the Conservative government had was to systematically dismantle the programs already in place for Canada to reach its targets. Climate change is our most pressing problem facing humanity.

On Earth Day, how can the government continuously shame Canada on the world stage when its plan has no hope of reaching its target?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is for 13 years the Liberals did absolutely nothing on the environment. The leader of the Liberal Party said, "I think our party got into a mess on the environment". He went on to say, "Canadians are ready for tough measures, including the controversial carbon tax". That is what the Liberal leader said.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2006 I introduced a motion calling for a national water strategy.

The motion passed. In the 2007 budget the government paid lip service to the idea, but then did nothing, zero. In the 2007 throne speech the government again paid lip service to a national water strategy, still doing nothing.

We are now in 2009. Yesterday, the environment commissioner said that the government had made no measurable progress in developing a national water strategy. In this case, like in so many others, why is the government having so much trouble making it happen?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not true. The commissioner said that what we did was a model of how to get things done on the environment.

Our government has a strong, comprehensive plan to ensure clean drinking water for all Canadians. Our plan includes investments on monitoring, science and cleanup of the problem areas left by the Liberals, building up partnerships to protect our fresh waters and investments in projects to restore our lakes and rivers after the mess left by the Liberals.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Dr. David Schindler has said that it is crucial to improve monitoring of Canada's watercourses in order to balance water supply and demand in the long term. Another Canadian expert, James Bruce, reports that there are only 2,800 water monitoring sites left in Canada, where there used to be 4,500. Yesterday, international researchers reported that the flow of the world's great rivers has decreased as a result, in large part, of global warming.

The government is doing nothing about climate change. Can it at least ensure that we monitor the effects of climate change on this, our most precious resource?

• (1440)

[English]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member does not want to talk about water any more or about the environmental messes. He wants to talk about climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.

Under the Liberals, as the Liberal leader said, they created an environmental mess. What was that mess? With Kyoto, the targets went up 35% above target. Under this government, we have the toughest targets in Canadian history and one of the toughest in the world.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday during the debate in this House on the Bloc Québécois motion on the firearms registry, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services stated that, by extending the amnesty period for another year, “we eliminated the tedious requirement for experienced owners to take the Canadian firearm safety course to obtain a possession and acquisition licence.”

Can the minister explain exactly what he meant about eliminating the firearm safety course?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows very well what I mean. The registration process is a burdensome one and discourages people from renewing their possession and acquisition licences. This is a real safety monitoring process and one that allows us to know who is likely to have guns and who is not.

That said, however, we must address the real target: the criminals. For this reason I encourage the hon. member to support our program, which is focused on criminals and not on hunters, farmers and the first nations.

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my constituents are well aware of what I do to focus on organized crime, and of how effective my actions are.

This is the same government which will in future require a person wanting to operate a boat with an electric motor on a lake to pass an exam in order to obtain a licence, and we agree with that. But the minister told us yesterday in the House that it will no longer be necessary to have a certificate to have a rifle.

Why is what is right and necessary to operate a boat not required to possess a gun? Can he explain this to us?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is simply nonsensical. Let us keep in mind—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The honourable Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Speaker, to finish my sentence, what my colleague is saying is simply nonsensical. Let us look at what happened in committee. There is a bill aimed at crimes committed by street gangs, such as drive-by shootings. They want to reduce minimum sentences for drive-by shootings and punish criminals less, while punishing hunters, farmers and first nations more.

That is the Bloc's wishy-washy approach, and one our government does not endorse.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during an IRB hearing on April 9, the Border Services Agency once again submitted new evidence in English only. When the opposing side

insisted on receiving a French version, the agency decided to withdraw the evidence rather than have it translated.

Can the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism explain why the Border Services Agency was so hostile, why it chose to risk losing a case rather than “lower” itself to using French in Quebec?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is becoming all too clear that the Bloc Québécois member does not respect the IRB's independence. The IRB is a quasi-judicial tribunal that makes decisions according to the rules. Moreover, the IRB members who were handling the case made a number of decisions about procedure.

It is up to them, as members of a quasi-judicial tribunal, to make such decisions. It is not the government's job to interfere in IRB decisions.

* * *

● (1445)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner of Official Languages has doubts about whether the media consortium responsible for broadcasting the Olympic games can guarantee full coverage of the games in French across Canada. The commissioner also fears that not enough money is being budgeted for simultaneous interpretation

Can the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages tell us what steps he plans to take in order to allay the commissioner's fears and ensure that French is given its rightful place at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be a tremendous victory for Canada and for Canada's official languages. Record investments have been made in our broadcasters and, on the ground, in the Olympic torch relay and the opening ceremonies. It will be a tremendous success and both of Canada's official languages will be fully respected in 2010.

* * *

[English]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, U.S. Homeland Secretary Napolitano said that to the extent that terrorists have come into the U.S. they have come from Canada.

She has also called for a “real border” between our nations saying that we have become too informal and that our border and Mexico's must be treated the same.

While this aggressive policy threatens thousands of Canadian jobs and billions in trade, the public safety minister is in denial saying that there is no “effort to change things”.

What are the Conservatives waiting for, a security fence along the 49th parallel? Why do they refuse to stand up for Canada's interests?

Oral Questions

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are standing up for Canada's interests every day on the border and around the world. We are advancing our interests on issues of trade and security all across the front.

On the issue of the 9/11 terrorists, it is quite clear that none of them came from Canada. None of them crossed the Canadian border into the United States. The 9/11 commission said exactly the same thing. I do note that the Secretary of Homeland Security has also acknowledged that and we accept her acknowledgement.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister should pick up the phone and talk to the homeland secretary about all the other mistakes that she is making because the government has refused to act. First, there was no deficit, then there was no recession and now there is no problem with the border.

This is not storytime. This is question period and it is time for that party to get its act together, stand up for Canadian interests and ensure those in the United States know what the real goods are.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those are comments from a party that was asleep at the switch when the Americans instituted the western hemisphere travel initiative, the toughest measure to thicken our border and make it difficult for Canadians to travel to the United States and difficult for trade. What did the Liberals do? They did absolutely nothing.

We, on the other hand, have been very active. We obtained a number of extensions. We are developing effective ways of ensuring that it can proceed in a fashion that facilitates trade while ensuring we have security.

We have been defending Canadian interests every step of the way. The Liberals were asleep at the switch all the time.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a report by Statistics Canada on Tuesday indicates that crime had been declining for a decade before the Conservatives took office. It is unfortunate they cannot take credit for that.

Since 2006, we have seen an increase in gun crime and the Conservative's refusal to accept the advice of the brave men and women who serve in uniform as police officers. Why the phony rhetoric on crime? Do the Conservatives not trust the police?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members of the Liberal Party have finally figured out in the last three weeks that there is a problem with crime in this country. I thank them for this, but we have been trying to get that into their heads for the last three years.

We have bills before Parliament right now on drugs, gangs, identity theft, auto theft and credit for time served. Why do they not help us now to clean up the mess they ignored for 13 years?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister likes to take photos with police officers but he does not actually listen to their advice. Maybe that is why the Canadian Police Association says that the Conservatives have "betrayed" police officers.

Where is the long term, sustainable funding that the Conservatives promised to increase the number of front line police officers? The Canadian Police Association says that Vancouver and British Columbia have not seen a single penny.

• (1450)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we assumed office, we reflected in our policies some of the things Canadians have been telling us. They were concerned about crime, they wanted to see more support for the police and they wanted to see laws toughened on criminals, all things that had been neglected for 13 years.

Among the things we did was institute a police officer recruitment fund. Over \$400 million were delivered to the provinces to hire new police officers. We committed to 1,000 new RCMP and we have delivered over 1,500. We are doing the job that the Liberal Party never did because it was not really concerned about crime because, as he said, it did not think it was a problem.

* * *

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians across the country continue to show their appreciation for the dedication, courage and hard work that our men and women in uniform perform on a daily basis. Whether it is wearing red on Fridays or attending red rallies, Canadians want our military and veterans to know we support them.

Last summer, VIA Rail showed appreciation for Canadian Forces members and veterans through free travel. Could the minister tell us whether our veterans and men and women in uniform will have access to a similar service this summer?

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question from my hon. colleague from Medicine Hat gives me the opportunity to explain to the House what happened earlier today.

The Minister of National Defence, Minister of Veterans Affairs, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and I had the privilege of meeting with VIA Rail. I am happy to announce that it will extend this offer to our veterans again this July, as well as allowing five of the veterans' immediate family members to travel for half price.

This is not about VIA Rail. This is about the brave young men and women who protect our country. Their mission, service, dedication and love of the country are greatly appreciated.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, members of the Canadian Police Association are feeling betrayed by the Conservative government. Why? It is because the Conservatives have failed to live up to their three-year-old promise to put 2,500 more police officers into Canada's communities.

The government created an ineffective program with no mechanism to ensure that funding actually ends up hiring new officers. Provinces and territories are free to use federal funds as they see fit while police squads go understaffed.

When will the government fix this problem and live up to its election promise to put more police officers on our streets?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government keeps its commitments. One of the commitments we kept was our commitment to combat crime and that included delivering police officers to make our streets and communities safer. That is why we delivered \$400 million to the provinces for local policing. That money was delivered and the provinces are providing it. If the member has a concern with how they are doing it, he can raise that with the provinces.

On our side, we have delivered. We have delivered to the provinces and we have delivered over 1,500 new RCMP because we believe that police officers are the front line to combat crime.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): No, Mr. Speaker, it is the minister's job to ensure that money gets in their hands.

Vancouver has the lowest ratio of police to population and Vancouverites are living in fear of gang violence. Because of the government's negligence, cities like Vancouver have yet to see \$1 to recruit and deploy more front line officers in our communities. To tackle the gang, drug and gun problems, the government must get more police officers on the street. Canadians are tired of broken promises.

When will the Conservatives give our communities the resources they need to fight crime and help our police get the job done?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the funds made available by this government, just recently the provincial government was able to announce new officers to combat organized crime. That is what we are doing.

What is the NDP doing? It is opposing or trying to gut our legislation that would deliver mandatory prison sentences for organized crime. That is the NDP approach on organized crime.

We will fight, even if we have to fight the NDP, to combat the criminals.

* * *

• (1455)

[Translation]

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this week, the Department of Canadian Heritage is spending \$2 million on B.C. Scene, an event designed to convince international performing arts producers to hire artists from British Columbia to perform abroad. With the cancellation of the PromArt

and Trade Routes programs, artists are wondering how they could honour potential contracts.

Does the minister understand that it is a very poor investment to promote an export product and at the same time cut funding for foreign tours?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a truly ridiculous question with no basis in fact. We are spending \$22 million this year to help our artists on the international scene. This is an unprecedented amount, and the member voted against it. We are investing \$13 million in the Canada Council to help our artists tour. As well, the Government of Quebec has created a new \$3 million program to help artists tour. The Parti Québécois and its cousin, the Bloc Québécois, voted against these initiatives. We are investing in artists, and the Bloc Québécois is voting against that.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister can brag that the Canada Council and the Department of Canadian Heritage are spending money to export cultural products, but the fact is that there is no program to support foreign tours by performing arts organizations.

What does he have to offer Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, which has to honour contracts in June in the Middle East? Nothing.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, this is completely false. Every time we make investments to help our artists, the Bloc votes against that. The Parti Québécois votes against it in the National Assembly, and the Bloc Québécois votes against it here in the House.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. James Moore: They can yell all they want, but it is the Conservative Party, the Conservative government, that is making unprecedented investments to help our artists here in Canada and on the international scene.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year, the government was slow and reluctant to approve an extension to the EI benefits for fishers in Newfoundland and Labrador. They were unable to go fishing due to ice conditions. Ice is now again posing severe problems for fishers in the area. EI claims have now ended and fishers are without an income.

Oral Questions

Is the minister aware of this critical situation? Is she now in a position to announce an extension to EI benefits for fishermen affected by ice conditions or does she feel that this would be too lucrative?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously the fishers do have special circumstances both within their employment and under the EI rules. That is why we are working with the Department of Fisheries to make sure that we are looking after these individuals, and we will be addressing that situation very soon.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' neglect of unemployed workers is a farce.

An accountant, whose husband just underwent heart surgery, told me that she was laid off over a month ago and has not received any severance pay. She was told that her employment record was lost. This woman is still waiting for her first employment insurance cheque.

When will this government put some order in the employment insurance system?

[*English*]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we inherited a system from the previous government. We are working on that. In fact, that is why we have added an additional five weeks of benefits, and in these challenging times, where unfortunately too many people are losing their jobs, we have hired hundreds more people to help process claims so that situations like this do not happen.

We will be hiring hundreds of additional people to make sure that Canadians in need get the benefits to which they are entitled. If the hon. member has a specific problem, I invite her to bring it up with me after question period.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is Earth Day. To celebrate, Ontario is following Quebec's lead and banning the use of pesticides that can cause cancer and neurological problems and affect the reproductive system, especially in women and children.

Dow Chemical is threatening to take legal action, citing the potential loss of profits under chapter 11 of NAFTA. Why is this government meeting with Dow Chemical to discuss this matter? Is it choosing the company over protecting people's health?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is completely committed to the chemicals management plan. We recently announced the release of the draft assessment and risk management scopes of 18 chemical substances included in Batch 4 of the 200 high priorities for action under the chemicals management plan.

We are cleaning up the Canadian environment.

● (1500)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the environment, for this government it is simply delay, denial and dithering. That is all it does on the environment.

Today is Earth Day. We have, essentially, Ontario following Quebec's lead by adopting a ban on 250 chemical products, not bowing to pressure by the pesticide companies. We need a federal government that will defend the ban on lawn pesticides and ensure Canadians' health is not compromised by profit-driven demands from Dow Chemical.

The question again is very simple: Why is the government meeting with Dow Chemical behind closed doors instead of standing up to protect the health of Canadians?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when this became an issue some weeks ago, we were very clear. It became an issue related to Quebec and a view that they were taking on pesticides. We said, and we made it clear and we will continue to do this, that under NAFTA, provinces and in fact municipalities have the ability to protect, related to their concerns on issues such as pesticides, issues related to health, and we will support them in doing that.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, residents of Manitoba have come together this year to fight one of the most serious floods in recent history. Our government has been working very closely with the provincial and municipal governments to ensure that everything we can do to assist is being done.

Could the President of the Treasury Board, the minister responsible for Manitoba, tell us what other actions our government is taking to help Manitobans at this tough time?

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question and for being there on the ground personally helping Manitobans protect their properties from flooding.

Our government understands that Manitobans are concerned about protecting their homes and families right now. That is why we have taken action to reduce that hardship for Manitobans.

Last Friday, the Minister of National Revenue announced an extension of the personal income tax filing deadline to June 1, 2009, for Manitobans affected by flooding. On behalf of Manitobans, I would like to thank the minister for taking that action.

*Oral Questions***FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian merchants are struggling to survive in the most painful downturn in generations. Employers are forced to lay off workers just to stay afloat. Credit is limited, but there seems to be no limit to the fees that merchants are charged for credit card service.

The Retail Council of Canada, representing more than 200,000 businesses, states that Canadian merchants pay some of the highest rates in the world. Many governments have taken action to limit interchange fees, while the Conservative government ignores our merchants.

When is the government going to stand up for merchants and business, and stop sticking it to them?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member knows there is a regulatory power contained in the economic action plan. Regulations will be forthcoming for public consultation.

At the same time, he should know the Competition Bureau is looking into this matter as part of its responsibility to ensure adequate competition with respect to the provision of credit, credit cards, and the protection of merchants and customers.

In Canada, the issue is also being examined by committees both of this House and in the Senate, and we are monitoring these developments closely.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are determined to move ahead with the unrealistic limit of 98% in order for a product to be labelled “Product of Canada”, despite the concerns of the agri-food industry, which fears that this rule will have irreversible repercussions, particularly loss of market share. The Minister of State (Agriculture) says he has held consultations, but no one agrees with this rule, not the producers, not the consumers, not the processors. In my opinion, consultations were limited to his caucus.

Does the Minister of State (Agriculture) realize that his decision is doing considerable harm to the entire agri-food industry in Quebec?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the various stakeholders in the processing field were consulted. We also wanted to protect consumers by ensuring that they are able to know whether a product is a Canadian product or a product processed in Canada. For example, if a product has a Canadian content of under 98%, a company can indicate that it is made with Quebec blueberries and was processed here. Moreover, we are listening to the processors and if we perceive along the way that the intended goal has not been achieved, it will always be possible—

• (1505)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

[English]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there was a time when unreported extravagant ministerial travel would make a Conservative's head spin, but no more. We know that the former minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec spent over \$65,000 on 13 trips on privately contracted planes in the first half of 2008 without disclosing that spending. It is not the first time the minister has failed to follow the rules.

Will the President of the Treasury Board explain why his colleague gets to break the rules yet again?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always surprising to hear that kind of question from a member. What is the department's name? Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec. This means that the minister's responsibility is to travel to the regions of Quebec. A person cannot travel in a single day to Gaspé, the Magdalen Islands, Havre-Saint-Pierre and Sept-Îles without taking charter flights, which are always in small aircraft.

People in the regions are entitled to see the minister. They are entitled to talk to him and they are also entitled to know the great things that are being announced for their region.

* * *

[English]

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, we pay tribute to our fellow Canadians who take the time to make a difference in the world through volunteerism. Both at home and abroad, this government is making a difference every day through its many volunteer programs. Canadian volunteers are Canada's ambassadors, often living in remote villages and rural communities. They live and work side by side with the people they have gone to assist.

Would the Minister of International Cooperation tell Canadians what the government is doing to support these remarkable Canadians?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have always volunteered to work with those living in poverty around the world. This reflects the best of our Canadian values.

I am pleased to tell the House that I have renewed CIDA's volunteer co-operation program for five years so more Canadians can volunteer and make a difference.

During International Volunteer Week, our government recognizes the work of caring, brave Canadians working in their field in many challenging circumstances. I look forward to continuing to work with Canadian volunteers and Canadian organizations.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION — GUN CONTROL

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Order.

It being 3:07 p.m., pursuant to order made Tuesday, April 21, 2009, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

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

(*Division No. 48*)

YEAS

Members

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

Business of Supply

Mendes	Minna
Mourani	Mulcair
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Neville	Oliphant
Ouellet	Pacetti
Paillé	Paquette
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Proulx	Ratansi
Regan	Rodriguez
Rota	Roy
Russell	Savage
Savoie	Scarpaleggia
Sgro	Siksay
Silva	Simson
St-Cyr	Szabo
Thi Lac	Thibeault
Tonks	Trudeau
Valeriote	Vincent
Volpe	Wasylycia-Leis
Wilfert	Wrzesnewskij
Zarac — 143	

NAYS

Members

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

Private Members' Business

Shory
Stanton
Strahl
Thompson
Trost
Uppal
Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wong
Yelich

Smith
Storseth
Sweet
Toews
Tweed
Van Loan
Verner
Warawa
Watson
Woodworth
Young— 136

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1515)

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from April 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-268, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (minimum sentence for offences involving trafficking of persons under the age of eighteen years), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, April 21, 2009, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-268 under private members' business.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 49*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Angus
Ashfield
Atamanenko
Bains
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brisson
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Cadman
Calkins
Cannis
Carrie
Casson
Chong
Christopherson
Clement
Coderre

Aglukkaq
Allen (Welland)
Allison
Anders
Andrews
Arthur
Ashton
Bagnell
Bennett
Bernier
Bevington
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Byrne
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casey
Charlton
Chow
Clarke
Coady
Comartin

Crombie
Cummins
D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Del Mastro
Dewar
Dhalla
Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Eayking
Fast
Flaherty
Folco
Galipeau
Gameau
Godin
Goodyear
Grewal
Guergis
Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Hyer
Jennings
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis
Kennedy
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Layton
LeBlanc
Lemieux
Lobb
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malhi
Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
McCallum
McGuinity
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Mourani
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murray
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Pacetti
Payne
Preston
Rajotte
Rathgeber
Reid
Richardson
Ritz
Rota
Savage
Saxton
Scheer
Sgro
Shiple
Siksay
Simson
Stanton
Strahl
Szabo
Thompson
Tonks
Trudeau
Uppal
Van Loan
Verner
Wallace

Crowder
Cuzner
Davidson
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dechert
Devolin
Dhalival
Dion
Dryden
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra
Eyking
Finley
Fletcher
Fry
Gallant
Glover
Goodale
Gourde
Guarnieri
Hall Findlay
Harris (St. John's East)
Hawn
Hill
Hoepfner
Holland
Jean
Julian
Kania
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lebel
Lee
Leslie
Lukiwski
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Maloway
Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Mayes
McColeman
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Mendes
Merrifield
Minna
Mulcair
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Neville
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Oliphant
Paradis
Petit
Raitt
Ratansi
Regan
Richards
Rickford
Rodriguez
Russell
Savoie
Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Silva
Smith
Storseth
Sweet
Thibeault
Toews
Trost
Tweed
Valeriotte
Vellacott
Volpe
Warawa

Private Members' Business

Warkentin
Watson
Sky Country
Weston (Saint John)
Wong
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

Wasylycia-Leis
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilfert
Woodworth
Yelich
Zarac — 232

Bains
Bélangier
Bevilacqua
Bigras
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Byrne
Cardin
Casey
Chong
Christopherson
Coderre
Crête
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Dewar
Dhalla
Dorion
Duceppe
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Faille
Freeman
Gagnon
Gaudet
Guay
Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Hall Findlay
Harris (St. John's East)
Julian
Karygiannis
Laforest
Lalonde
Layton
Lee
Leslie
Lévesque
Malhi
Maloway
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Minna
Mulcair
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau
Oliphant
Pacetti
Paquette
Pomerleau
Rodriguez
Roy
Savage
Sgro
Silva
St-Cyr
Thi Lac
Tonks
Valerioté
Volpe
Wilfert
Zarac — 137

Beaudin
Bellavance
Bevington
Blais
Bouchard
Brunelle
Cannis
Carrier
Charlton
Chow
Coady
Comartin
Crombie
D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers
Desnoyers
Dhaliwal
Dion
Dryden
Dufour
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Eyking
Folco
Fry
Gameau
Godin
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les

André
Beaudin
Bellavance
Blais
Bouchard
Brunelle
Carrier
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Dorion
Dufour
Freeman
Gaudet
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Laforest
Lalonde
Lemay
Lévesque
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Nadeau
Paillé
Pomerleau
St-Cyr
Vincent — 47

NAYS

Members

Bachand
Bélangier
Bigras
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Cardin
Crête
Demers
Desnoyers
Duceppe
Faille
Gagnon
Guay
Laframboise
Lavallée
Lessard
Malo
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Ouellet
Paquette
Roy
Thi Lac

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee.)

* * *

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY OF MINING, OIL AND GAS CORPORATIONS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ACT

The House resumed from April 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-300, An Act respecting Corporate Accountability for the Activities of Mining, Oil or Gas in Developing Countries, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, April 21, 2009, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-300 under private members' business.

• (1535)

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

(*Division No. 50*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Arthur
Asselin
Bachand

André
Ashton
Atamanenko
Bagnell

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Andrews
Benoit
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)

Aglukqaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Bernier
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge

Private Members' Business

Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casson	Clarke
Clement	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Dei Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Glover	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mark	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Oda
Paradis	Payne
Petit	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thompson
Toews	Trost
Tweed	Uppal
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young — 133	

PAIRED

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee.)

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

The House resumed from April 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-291, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (coming into force of sections 110, 111 and 171), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Pursuant to order made Tuesday, April 21, 2009, the House will now proceed to the

taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-291 under private members' business.

● (1545)

[English]

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

(Division No. 51)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Beaudin	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bevilacqua
Bevington	Bigras
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brisson	Brunelle
Byrne	Cannis
Cardin	Carrier
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Coady
Comartin	Crête
Crombie	Crowder
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Dorion	Dryden
Duceppe	Dufour
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter	Eyking
Faille	Folco
Freeman	Fry
Gagnon	Garneau
Gaudet	Godin
Goodale	Guarnieri
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (St. John's East)	Hyer
Jennings	Julian
Kania	Karygiannis
Kennedy	Laforest
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lavallée	Layton
LeBlanc	Lemay
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	MacAulay
Malhi	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mendes	Minna
Mourani	Mulcair
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Neville	Oliphant
Ouellet	Pacetti
Pailé	Paquette
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Proulx	Ratansi
Regan	Rodriguez
Rota	Roy
Russell	Savage
Scarpaleggia	Siksay
Silva	Simson
St-Cyr	Szabo

Point of Order

Thi Lac
Tonks
Valerioté
Wasylycia-Leis
Wrzesnewskyj

Thibeault
Trudeau
Vincent
Wilfert
Zarac — 140

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Arthur
Benoit
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Cadman
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casson
Clarke
Cummins
Day
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Finley
Fletcher
Gallant
Goodyear
Grewal
Harper
Hawn
Hill
Hoepfner
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Lobb
Lunn
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Payne
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richardson
Ritz
Scheer
Shea
Shory
Stanton
Strahl
Thompson
Trost
Uppal
Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wong
Yelich

Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Bernier
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Flaherty
Galipeau
Glover
Gourde
Guergis
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lemieux
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mark
McColeman
Menzies
Miller
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Paradis
Petit
Raitt
Rathgeber
Richards
Rickford
Saxton
Schellenberger
Shiple
Smith
Storseth
Sweet
Toews
Tweed
Van Loan
Verner
Warawa
Watson
Woodworth
Young — 134

PAIRED

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

GUN CONTROL VOTE

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House that, during the first vote, the one on the Bloc Québécois' opposition motion concerning the gun registry, the Conservative member for Essex made an inappropriate gesture, and I would like to ask you to take action. When the member for Essex stood to vote against the Bloc Québécois motion—as is his right—he made an inappropriate gesture: he imitated a handgun, a revolver, using his thumb and index finger. Many Bloc Québécois members saw him quite clearly. Consequently, I would ask the member for Essex to apologize for making that inappropriate gesture. Given that the vote was on the subject of whether to maintain the firearms registry, it was totally unacceptable.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The Chair did not observe the gesture. I will give the member for Essex an opportunity to comment, or we can wait and review the video recording for this session.

[*English*]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, for the benefit of the House, I was horsing around a bit with a colleague. It was certainly not intended at any member across the House or anyone else. There was no disrespect intended. It was not intended at hon. members across the House. In that sense, this is my explanation on that.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Madam Speaker, when you look at the recording, you will see that he was pointing right at the leader of the Bloc Québécois, the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie. It was perfectly clear to those of us on this side of the House. We eagerly await your decision.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would like to inform the hon. member that I will take his comments under advisement and, this afternoon, I will comment on what can be heard and seen on the tape.

[*English*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today on a personal question of privilege regarding the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Routine Proceedings

I put Question No. 78 on the order paper and received a response back from the minister. The minister is misleading a member of the House of Commons. The Conservatives may find it acceptable to mislead the public, but to mislead a member of the House is something that should not be done. Therefore, I ask the Speaker to take this under advisement.

The minister gave an answer to the question that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans had no knowledge of a statement that was made. However, with a bit of research, we can see on the website, Marketwire, a statement by Fabian Manning. The heading was changed to the Conservative Party of Canada. However, if we go to the French version of the same statement, it is from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, which is totally contrary to what the minister put in her response to my question. I will table this today.

If you find there is a prima facie case of privilege, Madam Speaker, I would be prepared to move an appropriate motion at that time, and I will table the documents.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): After listening to the hon. member, it seems to me that this is more of a point of order. I will certainly review it and come back to the hon. member, but it does seem to be a question of debate as well.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I believe you would find consent for the following travel motion. I move:

That, in relation to its study on the federal contribution to reducing poverty in Canada, six members of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities be authorized to travel to Halifax, Nova Scotia, Moncton, New Brunswick and Montreal, Quebec, from May 10 to 14, 2009 and that the necessary staff accompany the committee;

That, in relation to its study on the federal contribution to reducing poverty in Canada, six members of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities be authorized to travel to Calgary, Alberta, to attend the Canadian Social Forum Conference, from May 20 to May 22, 2009 and that the necessary staff accompany the committee;

That, in relation to its study on the federal contribution to reducing poverty in Canada, six members of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities be authorized to travel to Toronto, Ontario, from June 1 to June 2, 2009 and that the necessary staff accompany the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Does the hon. minister have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): 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)

* * *

• (1555)

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36.8 I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 15 petitions.

* * *

[Translation]

ABORIGINAL HEALING FOUNDATION

Mr. John Duncan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I am pleased to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2008 Annual Report of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation .

* * *

[English]

YUKON LAND CLAIMS AND SELF-GOVERNMENT AGREEMENTS

Mr. John Duncan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Madam Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2003-04 annual report of the Yukon Land Claims and Self-Government Agreements.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have two reports to table today.

First, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the visit to Afghanistan by committee officers, held in Afghanistan, October 23 to 26, 2008.

Second, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the visit by the defence and security committee, held in Australia, September 22 to 26, 2008.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have two reports to table today.

First, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, OSCE, regarding the 17th annual session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, held in Astana, Kazakhstan, June 29 to July 3, 2008.

Second, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, OSCE, regarding the fall meetings of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, held in Toronto, Canada, September 18 to 21, 2008.

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, two reports of the Canadian Delegation of the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group respecting its participation in two conferences: first, the Pacific Northwest Economic Region Economic Leadership Forum, held in Whistler, British Columbia, November 20 and 21, 2008; and second, the Blueprint for Canada-U.S. Engagement under a new Administration conference, held in Ottawa on December 8, 2008.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

SCRUTINY OF REGULATIONS

Mr. Andrew Kania (Brampton West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Joint Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations in relation to the exercise of bylaw-making powers by Indian bands pursuant to the Indian Act.

* * *

• (1600)

EXCISE TAX ACT

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-364, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (no GST on bicycles, adult tricycles and related goods and services).

She said: Madam Speaker, I rise today, on Earth Day, to reintroduce a bill, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (no GST on bicycles, adult tricycles and related goods and services).

A powerful way to encourage a shift in behaviour is to provide incentive. By removing the GST on bicycles and bicycle-related goods, accessories and services, cycling will become more affordable. This encourages biking as one of the most environmentally sound, healthy and affordable forms of transportation and recreation.

Earth Day is a day to reflect on the challenges that face our planet and our society. Promoting healthy and environmentally sound choices for Canadians through financial incentives is a small but important step. The climate change crisis requires government leadership, but also personal action. We must each implement our own measures to address climate change.

As someone who has personally experienced the many benefits of bicycling to work regularly, I am proud to introduce this bill. I hope my hon. colleagues will join me in supporting it.

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

* * *

CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL TRADE TRIBUNAL ACT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-365, An Act to amend the Canadian

Routine Proceedings

International Trade Tribunal Act (appointment of permanent members).

He said: Madam Speaker, I thank my seconder, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, who has a proud history of standing up for ordinary Canadians.

The trade strategy of the government is a massive, overwhelming failure. One of the reasons is that the institutions that we have are institutions that do not provide for ordinary workers' representatives. The Canadian International Trade Tribunal essentially only represents business in that only business can start the actions that lead to anti-dumping findings and defend Canadian jobs here at home. My bill would put into place a representative from labour who would be, in a very real sense, the eyes and ears of ordinary working Canadians, the labour movement, so that the decisions of the Canadian International Trade Tribunal would be more in Canada's interests and more in the interests of ordinary working people.

I certainly hope that this adjustment to the trade tribunal will receive the support from all four corners of this House.

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

* * *

[Translation]

BREAST IMPLANT REGISTRY ACT

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-366, An Act to establish and maintain a national Breast Implant Registry.

She said: Madam Speaker, first I would like to thank my colleague, the member for London—Fanshawe, for seconding this bill.

I am pleased to introduce this bill to establish a national breast implant registry and safeguard women's health.

[English]

I have tried before to introduce this bill. I am reintroducing it, but I am also hoping that the government might act on it on its own, since in fact it was back in 2005 that the Health Canada expert panel actually recommended establishing a national implant registry.

What we are trying to do is establish a way to ensure that the health and well-being of women are protected. We are doing this out of the concern of the safety, health and well-being of women in Canada today. It fills a critical gap in women's health protection by collecting currently unavailable data about implant procedures and data that is needed as a base for informed health-based decisions by women and physicians.

The bill will protect individual privacy while providing an effective means of notifying women of threats to their health. I look forward to the support of all members in this House.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

• (1605)

NATIONAL CAPITAL AND GATINEAU PARK ACT

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-367, An Act to amend the National Capital Act (Gatineau Park).

He said: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from British Columbia for supporting me on this bill as a seconder.

This bill in essence would do what should have been done many years ago, and that is to make our national jewel just across the river, Gatineau Park, a protected national park. In fact many people are surprised when they hear that Gatineau Park today is not protected legislatively. This bill would provide protection for what is a crown jewel but is without protection.

I rise today to join with others who have asked for this bill to be adopted, such as Sierra Club Canada and the Friends of Gatineau Park, among others. On this day, Earth Day, they would like to see us make advancements in the protection of green space. We could do that by adopting this bill.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

CHILD TRAFFICKING

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to present petitions with over 5,000 names from all across Canada calling for Parliament to support Bill C-268, regarding mandatory minimums for people who traffic children 18 years of age and under.

Also, two boxes of petitions came to my office this morning by FedEx. I will be presenting those petitions in the weeks ahead.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present multiple petitions from my riding on religious persecution in Kandhamal district in the state of Orissa in India.

In August 2008 fundamentalists burned, looted and destroyed 179 Christian churches and over 15,000 homes of Christians in the area. A nun was gang raped.

Over 40,000 Christians had to seek protection in refugee camps and many are still there to this day. All these people are suffering from persecution only for being Christians.

The petitioners request that we condemn the persecutions of religious minorities around the world and in particular, the persecution of Christians in Kandhamal district in the state of Orissa in India.

SRI LANKA

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have three petitions today. The first petition is from the

Tamil community of London, Ontario who petition the Parliament of Canada as residents of Canada.

The Government of Canada must recognize the humanitarian crisis arising from the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, facilitate emergency visas for family members, and lead the international community in initiating a peace process. These community members have asked their government as Canadians to stand with them to end this humanitarian crisis.

• (1610)

UNBORN VICTIMS OF CRIME

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, the second petition is in regard to any planned or proposed unborn victims of crime act because this conflicts with the Criminal Code and because it grants fetuses the recognition as a type of legal person, fetuses being non-persons under the law. Giving any legal recognition to fetuses would necessarily compromise women's established rights.

Violence against pregnant women is part of a larger societal problem of violence against women. Fetal homicide laws elsewhere have done nothing to reduce this because they do not address the root causes of this violence, that being inequality.

The best way to protect a fetus is to provide pregnant women with the support and resources they need for a good pregnancy outcome, including protection from domestic violence.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Finally, Madam Speaker, I have a petition asking the Parliament of Canada to ensure that the GST on feminine hygiene products is eliminated because it clearly only affects women and is absolutely an unfair disadvantage to women financially. Because of their reproductive role, women have no choice but to utilize these products. A proper gender-based analysis of the GST would have ensured this discriminatory aspect of the tax would never have been implemented.

The petitioners ask that Parliament support Bill C-275, introduced by the NDP in the 39th Parliament, to drop the GST from feminine hygiene products. My constituents from London—Fanshawe ask that women be treated fairly by passing legislation to drop the GST from feminine hygiene products.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of many Brampton families that have been affected by the economic crisis. In particular, the members of CAW Brampton chapter Local 1285 have come together because they have been impacted by the substantial number of layoffs, foreclosures and companies that have closed. Over 380,000 people have lost their jobs over the last six months. These are not just statistics on paper, but actual individuals.

Members of CAW Brampton chapter Local 1285 and their families have come together to request that the Conservative government immediately provide reform to the employment insurance system. In particular, they are requesting that Parliament provide a better, fairer employment insurance system and that there be the following legislative reforms: to have 360 hours to qualify for entry-level EI benefits so that there is an equalization of accessibility for EI across the country; to have benefits set at 60% of normal earnings based on a worker's 12 best weeks with no allocation of severance pay; and to increase the maximum benefit duration to at least 50 weeks.

They are requesting that the government immediately provide improved benefits for EI so that those who are struggling with the loss of their job can actually get the resources, tools and support they need.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE MEDAL

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Madam Speaker, I present a petition in which the petitioners, who are residents of British Columbia. They point out that there is a Canadian Volunteer Service Medal for those who served their country from 1939 to March 1947, and there is also a Canadian Volunteer Service Medal for Korea for those who served from 1950-54.

The petitioners call upon the government to recognize, by means of the issuance of a new Canadian volunteer service medal to be designated the "Governor General's Volunteer Service Medal", for volunteer service by Canadians in the regular and reserve military forces and cadet corps support staff who are not eligible for the other medals and who have completed 365 days of uninterrupted duty in the service of their country since March 1947.

NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am presenting a petition signed by many Canadians, some from the great riding of Eglinton—Lawrence.

The petitioners are urging NATO to review its nuclear policy for the following reasons: first, the continued existence of some 25,000 nuclear weapons risks their accidental or intentional use, posing a constant threat to all life and our climate; second, Canada has already signed and ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in which article 6 commits each of the parties to the treaty to work for the elimination of nuclear weapons; third, the International Court of Justice ruled as long ago as July 18, 1996 that the aforementioned treaty commits a legal obligation under international law and for all practical purposes the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is illegal; and finally, NATO's stated position

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that nuclear weapons are essential runs counter to that treaty's goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.

As a result, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to press publicly for an urgent review of NATO's nuclear weapons policy to ensure that all NATO states fulfill their international obligations and to negotiate and conclude an agreement for the elimination of nuclear weapons, and to eliminate reliance on nuclear weapons with NATO's strategic concept. The petitioners thank the House for its attention.

• (1615)

GATINEAU PARK

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I stand today to present a petition from constituents of Ottawa Centre and from other ridings including from the province of Quebec. They are petitioning Parliament and the government to adopt a private member's bill that I just introduced to protect Gatineau Park. These petitioners want Gatineau Park to have federal protections.

CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present today in the House petitions from hundreds of Canadians from Conservative ridings, including Kelowna, Vernon, Okanagan North, North Shore Vancouver, Coquitlam; in Alberta, in various non-NDP, at least for now, ridings in Edmonton; in areas of Saskatchewan; in Brampton, Ontario; and right across the country. All these Conservative constituents ask the Conservative government to stop the process around the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

As members know, we have had thousands upon thousands of Canadians write to this Parliament saying with regard to signing a trade agreement with Colombia, which is the worse place in the world to be a trade unionist, where there are ongoing massacres, killings, disappearances of peasants and people who are involved as human rights advocates and trade union leaders, that the government should take a step back from pushing ahead with the deal.

It is interesting to note the constituents in Conservative-held ridings agree with the NDP. The Canada-Colombia free trade agreement should be rejected.

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Madam Speaker, I also would like to table a petition dealing with the Canada-Colombia trade deal. This petition actually has been signed by a number of Canadians from various parts of the country, including Whitehorse, Yukon; Halifax, Nova Scotia; Newfoundland; and other places.

These Canadians are very concerned about the impact of the Canada-Colombia trade deal on working families and on creating circumstances that would be detrimental to working people. In fact, they point out that this is not built on the principle of fair trade and it ought to be.

Government Orders

The petitioners call on Parliament to reject the Canada-Colombia trade deal until an independent human rights impact assessment is carried out, and that the agreement be renegotiated along the principles of fair trade, which would take environmental and social impacts fully into account while genuinely respecting labour rights and the rights of all affected parties.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 82 and 83.

[Text]

Question No. 82—**Mr. Claude Gravelle:**

With respect to the new infrastructure funding announced in the budget, will any of this new funding be administered through FedNor and, if so, what is the application process of obtaining infrastructure funding through FedNor?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, budget 2009 announced increased funding for infrastructure. At this time Industry Canada is unable to comment on the plans for delivery of any initiatives in budget 2009 that have not, to date, been announced.

The building Canada fund, BCF, supports public infrastructure owned by provincial, territorial and municipal governments, as well as by private industry and the non-profit sector. Funding is allocated for projects in each province and territory based on their respective population.

Infrastructure Canada administers this program nationally. However, Industry Canada delivers it in Ontario on their behalf. FedNor is not involved in delivery of this program.

In Ontario, the first intake for the communities component of the BCF was completed in February 2009 with 290 projects being supported as a result of that process. This translates into \$1 billion in funding from all sources for infrastructure projects from this initial intake.

More information on the building Canada fund in Ontario can be found at: <http://www.bcfontario.ca/english/index.html>

Question No. 83—**Mr. Claude Gravelle:**

With respect to the creation of a Southern Ontario Economic Development Agency: (a) will any staff currently employed by FedNor be laid off or transferred as a result of this new agency; and (b) will this agency be a fully-funded regional economic development agency similar to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the economic action plan provides more than \$1 billion over five years for a Southern Ontario development agency which will support economic and community development.

The government is developing options to ensure a successful and timely launch of the new agency and to determine the nature of programming that will address southern Ontario's specific needs.

We are consulting with all existing regional development agencies, including FedNor, to gain from their experience and work

with relevant stakeholders in order to build on Ontario's tremendous strengths.

[English]

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I wish to inform the House that because of today's deferred division, the time provided for government orders shall be extended by 38 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1620)

[English]

**CANADA-PERU FREE TRADE AGREEMENT
IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

The House resumed from April 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Peru, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Peru and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Peru, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on this bill, this additional ribbon-cutting opportunity for the government and for the Minister of International Trade.

I would like to state right at the outset, as my colleague from Thunder Bay—Rainy River stated in the House on Monday, the NDP is voting no on this agreement. I will summarize my comments before I go into the context around why this is a bad bill, not in the interest of Canada at all and certainly not in the interest of Canadian workers or ordinary Peruvians.

To get into the context, I will first mention some of the most egregious aspects of the bill. This bill does not provide for any real opportunity and growth in Canadian jobs. I will come back to the sad history of this, both from the Conservative government and the former Liberal government, in a moment.

Government Orders

Second, this bill replicates the chapter 11 provisions that have been so difficult for municipalities and provinces in cases where they are putting any type of legislation or action in place to improve the quality of life of their people. Whether we are talking about cities or provinces, in all cases chapter 11 has had a push-back effect, most recently with Dow Chemical challenging the pesticide ban in Quebec and threatening to challenge the pesticide ban in Ontario that was announced today. That is an example of why chapter 11 is very bad.

I will come back to that in a moment or two, but this is what the Conservative government has chosen to replicate in the Peruvian agreement. There is no job gain. The chapter 11 provisions will hurt people in both countries who are trying to improve their quality of life. Multinationals and chief executives basically have the opportunity to override or to get compensation in the event that anything impugns upon the profit of those companies.

Just to summarize arguments before I go into more detail, there is a clause in this agreement that is essentially a carbon copy of the "kill a trade unionist, pay a fine" provisions of the Canada-Colombia trade deal. Let us imagine this for a moment. The Conservative government, despite the fact that it has completely muffed the possibility of putting more police officers on the ground in Canada and has treated police officers, quite frankly, with profound disrespect in refusing to implement the public safety officer compensation fund that was passed by Parliament, has systematically refused everything that police officers asked them to do, pretends to want to do something about crime, but what we have is a trade agreement that essentially legitimizes the killing of human rights activists and trade unionists.

That is less of a problem in Peru than it is in Colombia, but the provisions are outrageous just the same. If there are continued killings of trade unionists, essentially the governments either of Colombia or of Peru would pay a fine to themselves. Let us think about this for a moment. Does this correspond in any way with Canadian values?

If the Minister of Public Safety got up in the House and said he was going to do away with criminal sentences and if people killed somebody they would have to pay a fine, he would be laughed out of the House. Canadians would not accept that. Yet the government is proposing to do exactly that to deal with the ongoing abuse of labour rights, especially in Colombia, but to a certain extent as well, because there have been concerns raised about the context of Peruvian trade union law, it also impacts on Peru.

For those three reasons, the NDP quite legitimately is saying no to this bill.

Let us look at the broader context. We have a government that has followed along the lines of the old failed Liberal approach on economic policy. In a very real sense, Liberals and Conservatives are co-dependent. They keep doing something that is bad and inappropriate and they just cannot stop themselves.

So what we have had over the past 20 years is a complete absence of any sort of industrial strategy to create value-added products and a complete absence of an export strategy, which I will come back to in a moment. Instead, there has been a heavy reliance on ribbon-cutting

ceremonies and signature of trade agreements, even when they undermine our own domestic industries and jobs.

• (1625)

Most recently with the government we saw it with the softwood sellout, which to date has cost 20,000 jobs. Not only that, not only is there the job loss that it has caused across the country because of the self-imposed penalties that any Canadian softwood exporter faces at the border, but in addition, these Conservative members are asking taxpayers to pick up the tab for their failure to put in place an agreement that was actually to Canada's advantage.

We had an arbitration two weeks ago. Now it is going to cost Canadian taxpayers, and each and every Conservative member is supporting this idea, \$58 million, going south, because the anti-circumvention clause of the softwood sellout is so vast that the American lumber lobby can take us to court on anything. So we lost \$58 million. The Canadian taxpayer is now having to pick up the tab.

But wait, we have two more arbitrations coming forward. One will be for a similar amount, probably around \$60 million that these Conservative members are going to ask Canadian taxpayers to pick up for their own incompetence. And wait for it, the biggest arbitration could potentially be in the order of \$400 million. That is for British Columbia and Alberta softwood producers. Either the entire industry shuts down or all the softwood workers have to take second and third jobs flipping burgers to get that paid off, or the Canadian taxpayers pick it up.

There is not a single Conservative MP, whether from northern Ontario or from British Columbia, who has stood up and said that the Conservatives made a huge mistake, that this arbitration provision and the handcuffs that are the anti-circumvention clause are a horribly bad idea because it costs jobs in Canada and it costs the Canadian taxpayers literally tens of millions of dollars, and potentially, in the coming weeks, hundreds of millions of dollars. Not a single Conservative MP has said, "We made a mistake", not a single one.

So the softwood sellout very clearly has ignited real opposition right across the country, and I think the Conservatives will be paying the price in the next election.

It was not just that. They went from the softwood sellout to the shipbuilding sellout and brought forward an EFTA agreement that, to all intents and purposes, shuts down our shipbuilding industry. That is not me speaking, that is the actual representatives of the shipbuilding industry, from both coasts, from Atlantic Canada and from Pacific Canada, when they came and testified before the committee. They asked, "Why are you doing this? Why are you bringing in a bill that essentially forces the collapse of our shipbuilding industry, without taking any other measures?"

In this House, the NDP read letter after letter from shipyard workers from British Columbia and from Nova Scotia. We had opposition from Quebec and from Newfoundland shipyard workers. In fact, there was not a single representative either of business or of labour in the shipbuilding industry who supported that agreement.

Government Orders

Again, the Conservatives pushed it through with the support of their co-dependents in the Liberal Party. We had a second sellout, essentially a sellout of our shipbuilding jobs.

One might think, okay, we are selling out these industries but maybe we are gaining overall. Unfortunately, and this is the tragedy, we do not have a single Conservative member who is willing to do his or her homework and actually look at what the economic ramifications have been for the kinds of policies the government has put in place.

To be fair to the Conservatives, the Liberals largely put many of these into place and the whole approach on trade, and now we have the Conservatives following up on the same approach. We would think that, at some point, some member, whether from the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party, would actually have done his or her homework and looked at the economic results.

The NDP did. StatsCan tells us that over the last 20 years, with these ill-disguised attempts at ideology rather than an attempt at building a real economic policy that is export driven, most Canadian families are actually earning less. Some Conservatives will laugh at this because they have not actually looked at the figures, but if we ask most Canadians, they will tell us that they are earning less now than they were 5 or 10 years ago, and that they are working harder and harder.

● (1630)

Productivity has skyrocketed for ordinary Canadian working families. We know that Canadians work very hard and are dedicated. They love their country and are willing to contribute to their communities and their country but they have had a government that has simply pushed them aside. During this time, the poorest of Canadians have lost the equivalent of about a month and a half of income for each and every year over the last 20 years. In other words, it is like they are working on 52-week years but only getting paid for 46 weeks. A month and a half of income has simply evaporated, which is why we now have hundreds of thousands of homeless people across this country sleeping in parks and on main streets. We have seen a complete erosion of income for the poorest of Canadians.

That has continued for the middle class as well. Any middle class family could tell us that in the second and third income categories, which are the lower and upper middle classes, they have seen a loss as well of a week to two weeks of income on average. Their real income is much lower now than it was 20 years ago.

We have an overall problem when 80% of Canadian families are earning less now than they were 20 years ago. One would think that some Conservatives would realize that maybe they were making a mistake with all the sellouts. Maybe they think that if a corporate CEO is doing well, somehow that money will trickle down to the small businesses that actually pay the salaries of the Conservative members. One would think that one of them would have done his or her homework but none of them have, which is why communities are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. During this same time, the top 20% of Canadian income earners, the corporate lawyers and the corporate CEOs, have seen their incomes skyrocket. Now they take over half of all income in Canada.

When there is a complete lack of policies and the Conservatives put in place free trade agreements that essentially hand over more power to a very few at the expense of the many, what is wrong with this picture?

Most Canadian families are earning less, even though they are working harder than ever. Overtime in the same period has gone up by over a third. The average Canadian is working longer and longer weeks and often needs to work two or three part time jobs because the family sustaining jobs have been given away by the Conservatives, as they were by the Liberals before them.

The small businesses also suffer from this. When the Conservatives hand over money to the banking sector, it goes down to the Caribbean, and when they hand over money, as we know, to corporate executives in the energy sector, that money goes down to Houston, Texas, which does not benefit ordinary Canadians. The fundamental problem is that the government lacks any sort of industrial strategy.

We also have the sellouts, whether it is the softwood sellout or the shipbuilding sellout. Canadians are getting poorer and poorer under the Conservative government, as they were under the previous Liberal government. They are codependent with the same failed approach.

What does the government do? It signs these agreements. What happens with these bilateral trade agreements? In virtually every case, our exports actually went down. One would think that somebody in the Conservative or Liberal caucus would look at that and see that as a worrisome trend. When we sign bilateral Canada-Costa Rica and Canada-Chile agreements and our exports actually go down, someone must realize there is a fundamental problem and that maybe our approach is not working.

Not a single Conservative or Liberal MP actually bothered to look at the export figures. After we signed these failed agreements and gave away these things, not one member actually checked to see whether or not exports went up. Exports declined. We already talked about the fall of real income. When we are signing bilateral agreements, we are actually talking about falling exports. It is not rocket science. If our exports fall and real income falls, maybe our approach or our strategy is not working.

The NDP will continue to do its work in the House, which is why we keep growing and are now overflowing to two sides of the House. The reason we keep growing is because of the type of arrogance we see from the Conservative government.

Government Orders

•(1635)

What are other countries doing that works? One very good example is the amount of money that other countries are putting in to promote their product exports. Australia spends \$500 million in product promotion support for Australian value added products. We have a situation where the Australian economy is export oriented but valued added export oriented. It is not exporting the raw logs that the Conservatives love to ship across the border with Canadian logs to create American jobs. Australia is actually promoting value added products and it is doing it with real muscle and real support.

I have another example. As we on the international trade committee know, the European Union, on its wine sector exports alone, spends \$125 million in product promotion support. We have Australia on the one hand and the European Union on the other hand. We also have the United States putting real muscle behind its export industry.

What is Canada doing? What are the Conservatives doing? We found out just a couple of weeks ago how much they invest for the entire United States market, which is where over 80% of our exports go. It takes the lion's share of the support for exports that the government puts into place. Was it \$500 million for Canada, a larger economy than Australia, for 80% of our exports? No, it was not. Was it \$400 million, which would be certainly less but certainly in keeping with the idea of a strong approach? No, it was not. Not one Conservative would be able to answer that question even though, hopefully, some of them at the trade committee were actually listening. It was not \$300 million, nor was it \$200 million or \$125 million like the European Union puts into product promotion support just for one industry. It was not even \$100 million.

People listening to CPAC and the deliberations in the House of Commons because they have lost their jobs because of the foolishness and irresponsibility of the Conservative government would wonder whether it was \$90 million. No, it was not. It was not even \$80 million, \$75 million, \$60 million or \$50 million. How low can we go? Was it \$40 million, \$30 million, \$20 million, \$10 million, \$5 million or even \$4 million? No, it was not. Incredibly, the Conservative government, which says that it wants to reinforce our export industries for the entire American market where over 80% of our exports go, spends \$3.4 million in product promotion support.

What is wrong with this picture? We have falling incomes, falling exports and the largest trade deficit in well over 30 years, and the Conservative government hands out billions of dollars to the banks without even blinking. It just shovels money off the back of a truck. Any time a banker asks for a handout, the Conservatives just hand out money to the banks. The banks can set interest rates as high as they want on credit cards because it does not matter to the Conservatives.

For the entire American market, we spent \$3.4 million. This is the absurdity of it. When we look at Canada-Peru, this is the absurdity of the approach of the government. It is interested in the ribbon-cutting and in signing an agreement that would, under chapter 11 provisions, handcuff local and regional governments from making good environmental decisions. There is no protection for labour and no export plan.

For all those reasons, that is why we in the NDP are saying that this is a completely failed approach. Canadians are becoming more and more aware of just how the government has failed.

•(1640)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I tried to listen to the member across the way but it was difficult to handle. Let us face it, the New Democrats will not support any free trade agreement with anyone.

I want to give the member an example of why free trade agreements are important for his home province of British Columbia. He used the example of Australia.

I will give the member an example. We in this country are producers of recreational boats. Australia has free trade agreements with a number of countries, including the United States, that have no tariffs and no barriers to pleasure craft entering their country from those other countries. Canadian manufacturers, however, must pay 5% on every boat that is delivered to Australia. It is making us uncompetitive and unable to sell our Canadian manufactured products to Australia, which is why the government is in favour of free trade agreements around the world and will continue to work on free trade agreements. They are important because they create jobs and opportunities for Canadians, which is why the NDP does not get it.

Mr. Peter Julian: Sadly, Madam Speaker, I get it and I get it because in my riding of Burnaby—New Westminster alone three softwood mills had to shut down because of the foolishness and irresponsibility of the Conservative government. That was 2,000 jobs the Conservatives lost and every Conservative MP is responsible for that completely irresponsible approach on trade.

Australia has it right. It put in place fair trade agreements. It supports its export industries and the Conservative government does not: \$3.4 million for all Canadian products in the U.S. market. All Conservative members should be hanging their heads in shame. They are costing Canadian jobs. They have killed the softwood industry, the shipbuilding industry and the steel industry. They are killing sector after sector because they have as a Prime Minister somebody who never had to meet a payroll or balance the books. He got his economics from a textbook.

We can see the failure of the government. It is not economic theory. It is knowing how to put in place a strategy that works, and the government has not.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member give these anti-free trade rants now for years. In fact, I chaired the trade committee for about a year and a half when he was on the committee and he is against all free trade agreements.

Government Orders

The member has to answer to his constituents. When he is standing in his constituency with two friends, the three of them standing there, if he cancels out on these free trade agreements, one of those people will lose his or her job. He will need to make the decision on which one of the three of them will lose their job if we cancel out on these free trade agreements. That is the absolute reality and the truth of the situation. Thirty per cent of all of our jobs in Canada result from NAFTA, the free trade agreement with the United States alone. These other agreements add more jobs.

The hon. member claims to be speaking on behalf of workers from time to time. I know that may not be true but he claims to be. How will he explain to those workers why one in three should lose their job because of his anti-free trade stand? He has to explain that to his constituents, and good luck to him in doing so.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, what that member has to explain to his constituents in Alberta, for example, is why farmer seats in Alberta are lower than anywhere else in the country. Why have Alberta farmers been punished by the failed policies of the government?

I hope the member actually meets with farmers because the farmers in Alberta are suffering tremendously, which is why they are starting to vote NDP after—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): You would think we were in kindergarten.

[*English*]

I would ask my colleagues on both sides of the House to be respectful to each other in this debate. This is a dialogue between different ideals. It is not a shouting match.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, rather than shouting over the heckling of the Conservatives, I will be able to speak in a more conversational tone.

The NDP has always been for fair trade, not for chapter 11 provisions that allow pesticide bans to be overridden by chemical companies that are producing products that they know are toxic and not for people to override the kind of collective bargaining process that takes place in any sort of healthy society where workers can get together and negotiate a better wage together. The NDP has always favoured fair trade agreements.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives have not put in place and have not proposed to the House a fair trade agreement. They are proposing the same kind of failed policies that did not work under the Liberals.

When we have a hemorrhaging of jobs in the softwood industry, in the steel sector and in shipyards across the country, we would expect the government to take its responsibilities and to be very thoughtful in what it presents to the House, but that is clearly not the

case. The softwood sellout that has killed about one-third of the jobs in my area in the softwood industry is just one example of that.

The member who references the one in three is absolutely right. His government brought in policies that killed, in my area, one out of every three jobs in that sector, and it has been like that right across British Columbia. It was a failed policy and the government never should have signed that agreement.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, the free trade agreement was first signed in 1988, so we have had 20 years to measure some of the effects of that. I remember the debate distinctly at that time. One of the promises made about free trade was that it would bring prosperity and an elevated standard of living for everybody.

I wonder if my friend could comment on what has happened to the distribution of wealth in this country since 1988, specifically on the health of our nation's children and poverty rates, and whether in fact the wealth that was created in that time has really been directed in those areas. I would like him to elucidate a bit more about the present state of health of the forestry sector in British Columbia. Could he tell us how free trade has helped that industry?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I cited earlier the fact that the real income of most Canadian families has actually gone down over the last 20 years not up. They are actually earning less now than they were over two decades ago.

That same phenomenon has actually taken place in the United States as well. That is why changing NAFTA and bringing in tougher social and environmental standards was part of the Barrack Obama campaign. Between 2001 and 2005 about 96% of Americans actually saw their real income fall. We have seen the same dynamic right across North America.

The member is right to raise the issue of income inequality. All of that money is being channelled to corporate CEOs, corporate lawyers. Essentially, we have a massive movement of wealth which means the wealthiest Canadians now take most of Canada's income. That is completely unfair. That undermines the kind of community business environment that we need to see here.

Speaking as a former business award winner, I can tell the House that prosperous small businesses in a community benefit everybody. That is why I am a member of the Burnaby Board of Trade and a member of the New Westminster Chamber of Commerce.

British Columbia has the highest rate of child poverty in the country as the member well knows. It is a tragedy throughout B.C. Many British Columbians will be voting on the basis of the shame that they feel because of what the Gordon Campbell government has done to facilitate growing poverty in British Columbia. It is a tragedy and part of it is a result of the meltdown of the softwood industry that we saw after the softwood sell-out was signed.

Government Orders

●(1650)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): 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 St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency; the hon. member for Québec, Contaminated Water in Shannon; the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, The Environment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on the Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Peru, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Peru and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Peru.

I would like to begin by saying that the Bloc Québécois will oppose this implementation act because it fails to meet a number of objectives or reflect lessons we learned from previous free trade agreements. It is important to point out that the Bloc Québécois is open to international trade, just as the Quebec nation is. Like Canada, we too are a trading nation. Because of the limited size of the Quebec market, like that of the Canadian market, we promote open markets, but obviously not with just any conditions. This is especially true when Quebecers' quality of life is at stake or when a free trade agreement between a developed country like Canada and a developing country like Peru could give rise to exploitation.

In the interests of national solidarity in the case of Quebec, Canadian solidarity in the case of Canada and also international solidarity, we have a responsibility to condemn agreements that violate workers' rights, environmental rights, future rights and the sovereignty of our respective countries. As you know, our goal is for Quebec to become a sovereign country and carve out a place for itself on the international scene. Every time the Bloc Québécois takes part in debates such as this one, we try to determine what Quebec's interests would be as a nation, as a country. That is what we are doing in the current debate here in the House of Commons.

It is very clear to us that, unlike other agreements, this one does not meet our objectives. It is dangerous as an international trade strategy, but also in terms of the ability of states to maintain their sovereignty, the rights of workers and the environment. That is particularly true in Peru, but it is probably also true in Quebec and Canada. Given the greater vulnerability of Peru's economy, that country is the one more likely to suffer from the absence of a number of agreements in the accord, or from the presence of certain provisions.

First, we do not support this strategy as a whole, which seeks to ensure that Canada has bilateral agreements with developing countries such as Peru. That is also true for Colombia. However, in the case of Colombia, the reasons are even more obvious. There are blatant violations of human rights and union rights in that country. If Canada were to sign such an agreement, and if the House were to pass the implementation act, we would be nothing less than accomplices in a situation involving the violation of fundamental rights. Therefore, in the case of Colombia, things are very clear.

●(1655)

In the case of Peru, the rights situation is obviously not quite the same, but there are some serious problems, particularly in the mining sector. A number of Canadian and foreign companies are often accused, sometimes wrongly perhaps but often rightly, of displaying an extremely authoritative attitude towards the communities in which they settle, and towards the workers that they hire. In that sense, we feel that this agreement does not at all serve the best interests of the two sides and would not have been in the best interests of a sovereign Quebec.

We should focus more on a multilateral approach. In fact, that is what we have always advocated, and that is what Canada has done for a while. After World War II, the GATT agreement was put in place, and it later became the WTO-GATT.

A number of trade initiatives were taken in the best interests of all the parties to the GATT agreement, which became the GATT-WTO in 1994. That is evidenced by the fact that the number of signatories to the agreement has always increased, and by the fact that major progress was achieved in terms of opening markets. The rules were well known.

Overall, one can say that, despite the adjustments that opening up borders of necessity brings to local, regional or national economies, the bottom line is that, until 1994, all participants in the WTO-GATT agreement were able to benefit from this opening up of markets.

A number of agreements were concluded, including the North American Free Trade Agreement; that changed things completely. It is noteworthy, moreover, that in the case of the free trade agreement with the United States certain provisions were lacking, those concerning investments in particular. I imagine that the Canadian and American governments felt that it was a matter of dealing with states where the rule of law was recognized, and so there was no need for any particularly innovative provisions, on protecting investments for example. All trade agreements, bilateral and multilateral, have included provisions on protecting investments. This is all very normal, but those agreements included a dispute resolution mechanism involving the states as representatives of the companies involved, as is the case with the WTO.

To give an example: the trade dispute between Bombardier and Embraer. Bombardier is a Quebec company that is still being defended by the Canadian government for as long as we continue to be part of this political entity. Embraer has the Brazilian government behind it. Each of these states makes representations before the WTO arbitration tribunal. Rulings are made. However, there is no way that Bombardier or Embraer could bring one or the other of the countries before a WTO tribunal because it is displeased with the ruling or the policy adopted or with certain measures taken in the aerospace sector.

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That was the rule. The Canada-U.S. Free Trade agreement used the same approach. When Mexico was added in around 1994—negotiations having started after 1989—we saw a chapter 11 provision on investments added, and this allowed private enterprises which felt they had been prejudiced by a state to bring proceedings directly against the state they deemed to be at fault, before specially constituted arbitration tribunals. We have seen proceedings by American companies against the Canadian government. We have seen this in connection with the environment. We have seen this in connection with public services. We have seen U.S. multinationals institute proceedings before the courts, sometimes even successfully. This was the case in Mexico with Metalclad's challenge of regional governments.

NAFTA broke new ground and completely changed the overall economy and how agreements worked. It has to be said that these provisions were introduced by the United States, but with Canada's cooperation, because it was felt that the rule of law in Mexico was not totally solid, totally present, we would say. A specific provision was created to make sure that any company that was nationalized in Mexico would receive compensation comparable to the company's actual value. In the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, there was a rather strong tendency to nationalize companies.

When the agreement was negotiated, we should have first made sure that the rule of law in Mexico had reached a point where it was respected not only in connection with foreign investment, but in Mexican society as a whole.

● (1700)

However a little loophole was created, one that shelters multinational corporations from the weakness of the rule of law in Mexico. Mexico has evolved considerably since 1994, but the provision concerning chapter 11 and the protection of foreign investment remains.

Worse still, in the early 1990s, around the same time that NAFTA was being negotiated, there were also talks about the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, or the MAI, at the OECD. It was an agreement to apply chapter 11 throughout the OECD. Clearly, it was a way for industrialized countries to impose this vision in the context of the WTO and GATT, in order to ensure the protection for foreign investments, similar to that in NAFTA, in the next phase of negotiations.

Unfortunately for that strategy, France foresaw the dangers involved in that approach to protecting foreign investments. The French government therefore refused to agree to that MAI. It saw the dangers involved in having the equivalent of NAFTA's chapter 11 within the OECD. So, for other European countries, as well as other countries, it was stonewalled.

The existing investment protection measures have been part of the OECD for some time. They even appear in the free trade agreement between Canada and the United States and in the agreement we discussed just a few weeks ago here in the House, the free trade agreement between Canada and the European Free Trade Association, which includes the Scandinavian countries and a few other countries from the European continent. Although it was not our preferred strategy, the Bloc Québécois believed that that agreement, which does not include chapter 11 provisions, could be beneficial for

both parties, that is, good for Canada and Quebec on the one hand, and good for the European Free Trade Association on the other.

There is a special type of investment protection provisions for developed countries, where the rule of law is believed to be strong enough to ensure that disputes are settled equitably through procedures that comply with the rules of justice. But in countries like Peru, Colombia, Costa Rica, Korea or Chile, that is not so sure, hence the introduction of a special clause copied from chapter 11.

That is unacceptable. If the rule of law is good for foreign investors, it should also be good for the companies that receive these investments. We cannot accept this double standard, where multinational corporations not only enjoy privileges denied to the people who welcome them, but are also allowed to bring proceedings directly against the national government of these companies.

That is our second reason for rejecting this free trade agreement with Peru. The first one has to do with the bilateral approach in the Canada-Peru, Canada-Chile, Canada-Colombia, Canada-Costa Rica and Canada-Israel agreements. The agreement with Israel, in fact, was the second free trade agreement signed by Canada, which makes more sense politically than financially.

● (1705)

The point I am making is that a bilateral approach replaced the multilateral one when the Free Trade Area of the Americas initiative was stonewalled by several South American countries. That initiative was based on principles which are now described as neo- or ultra-liberal because they confer advantages on capital rather than on the receiving companies, states and people.

I clearly recall the debates held in this House at the time of the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City. At that time, the Liberals were in power, not the Conservatives. Anyway you cut it, it boils down to pretty much the same thing, and in either case, the result is unpalatable.

● (1710)

We have had debates in this House and the government has promoted a free trade zone with which we agreed in principle but which was also based on the principles of NAFTA and on what we had attempted to accomplish at the OECD with MAI.

I can certainly understand why Mercosur, the South American free trade zone, and a number of other countries refused the proposal put forward by North America—not just North America because Mexico is included—but basically that of the United States and Canada. Thus, it was a failure.

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In view of this failure and that of the WTO, the United States and a number of industrialized countries—I am thinking of Australia, Great Britain and Canada, for example—attempted to impose this model. However, once again, there was opposition. At the Seattle summit, southern countries said they were in favour of a strategy to open up markets, but not on the basis proposed, that of ultraliberalism and neoliberalism, which has led to the financial crisis we are currently experiencing. It is a good thing that these people spoke out.

I have to acknowledge that they were not the only ones. In fact, in every industrialized society, a good part of the population also spoke out against this model for opening up markets, to the point that the term “free trade” now has a very negative connotation for many. The previous speaker provided us with an example of that. We no longer dare use this word even though, in the end, we all agree that, with a few exceptions, it is in the interest of nations to open their doors to mutual exchanges of trade and capital.

But because such a pall was cast over the concept from the early 1990s to the mid-2000s, the world has now retreated from it. Peoples throughout the world are resisting any opening up of markets. I no longer use the term “liberalization” because I am certain that it is proposed no longer part of the vocabulary acceptable to a good portion of the population.

I have one more example. The Prime Minister of Canada did not get it, but the President of the U.S. and a number of leaders of European states did. Now those countries are talking about reworking capitalism. At the Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago, the Prime Minister acted as if nothing had changed and there had been no financial crisis. He proposed a free trade zone. I think he did not really understand where he stood and did not understand how Brazil has developed. He did not understand that Venezuela has one resource that is the same as Canada: oil. Whether or not one likes the direction of this development, these countries, with the support of India and China, now have a say in the bases of negotiation.

Canada has therefore closed in on itself as the U.S. did under President Bush. Not in resignation, but in order to try to multiply the number of bilateral agreements, taking a page from the book of Mao Zedong's strategy of using the villages to surround and take the cities.

Once a series of free trade agreements has been concluded with small, vulnerable countries, they will try to impose this method on the southern countries that are the target markets for the developing countries. We cannot sanction this, out of both international solidarity and national interest, and by national, I mean Quebec.

As I have said, in the agreement that would suit us best, investment protection would not give any more rights to multinationals than to regular citizens and national companies. The latter protect the right of countries to work for the good of their population. To satisfy us, an agreement would contain—and this is extremely important—true agreements on respect for union rights, labour rights and environmental rights. We do not want to see parallel agreements such as we find at the moment in the agreements with Peru, Chile or Costa Rica.

For all these reasons, this agreement is unfortunately not acceptable in the eyes of the Bloc Québécois. I believe it is unacceptable for the people of Quebec and of Canada, and even less acceptable for the people of Peru. Voting against this implementation act will be doing them a service.

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are all facing a time of hardship in Canada. Peru puts a 4% to 12% tariff on the cereal, pulp, paper, technical instruments, machinery, plastics and rubber industries. Thirty-eight percent of our exports to Peru are wheat and there is a 17% tariff now.

The United States has just signed an agreement. This could put us at quite a disadvantage. The Canadian Wheat Board and the Canadian Mining Association support the agreement because it would help the workers in those industries. Does the member think workers in those industries would have increased access to jobs because of the reduction of tariffs on their projects in Peru?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Madam Speaker, let us not fool ourselves. Trade between Canada, Quebec and Peru is relatively slim. We are talking about a few hundred thousand dollars, except in one sector: mining. It was primarily to protect Canadian interests in the mining sector that the federal government, the Conservative government, promoted and sought out this agreement. We also have a problem with that. Had the government's response to the roundtables on corporate social responsibility in the mining sector come up to the expectations and recommendations, we could tell ourselves that, in the mining sector, Canadian companies in Peru will be operating in a socially responsible way that is acceptable both in Peru and internationally. Unfortunately, the response from the Minister of International Trade was to establish some kind of representative responsible for receiving complaints, basically an empty shell. I have no illusions in that regard. This agreement was not signed with the paper, lumber or forestry industry in mind, but for the Canadian mining sector, to give it a free hand with something similar to chapter 11 and with the federal government refusing to take its responsibilities, as requested by the roundtables.

I will conclude by saying that, thankfully—and I thank our Liberal colleagues for it—with Bill C-300, we will have the opportunity to discuss at committee this issue of corporate responsibility of Canadian companies abroad. Perhaps that extra element will ensure that the free trade agreement with Peru can eventually be made better. This would also be true of agreements with other countries which are currently smaller trading partners of Canada and Quebec.

[*English*]

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's presentation and found it interesting. I would like to ask the hon. member a couple of questions.

First, I think the hon. member is opposing this agreement mostly because of a concern over corporate responsibility. Does the member not agree that Canadian corporations, as a group, are the most responsible corporations in the world when it comes to how they care for their investments and operations in other countries?

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Second, the member seemed to dismiss the issue of an increase in export in farm commodities, particularly in grains, as a result of this agreement. The increase may be a small amount, but with ever-increasing protectionism in the United States, Canada is finding it more and more difficult to move farm commodities in particular to the United States. Any other market we can get is important.

I have a 3,000 acre farm. I rent it out on a crop share basis, but I have my share of the crop from those acres to sell. Even if it is only a relatively small amount of extra market we may gain from this agreement, to me that is important. If that is my grain, a portion of my grain or my neighbour's grain, it is important. How can the member so easily dismiss this increase in market that we would see as a result of this agreement?

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Madam Speaker, the member is right. Most Canadian mining companies, like all Canadian companies operating throughout the world, are generally businesses that are eager to obey local laws and to assume a number of responsibilities they have. The problem is that, whenever a rule, a standard or a convention is put in place, it is not for the majority of companies that already do what they should be doing, but for those that do not. When there are no specific rules, it is easy for a company to say that it has not broken any rules since there are none.

Right now, in Ecuador, a Canadian company is being sued for a number of wrongful acts, but it is being done within a legal framework that leaves something to be desired. If foreign investment protection is important for both Peru and Canada, how come there are no mechanisms in place to protect the rights of unions and workers as well as the environment? These mechanisms should be just as important as investment protection, if not more. I do not think the Conservative government is looking to enter into an agreement with Peru to increase trade in general with that country. I think it just wants to protect the interests of the Canadian mining sector, which is totally legitimate, as long as it is done on a reciprocal basis and with respect for the rights of all concerned.

It is also a strategy aimed at increasing the number of agreements to force countries in the southern hemisphere to accept the rules of those in the northern hemisphere. In this regard, President Obama has understood that this would lead nowhere. There are signs that he will probably revisit this strategy. Again, as the Prime Minister did in Trinidad and Tobago, he will be the only one thinking he is on planet Bush when everyone else will have understood that we are now on planet Obama.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, in listening to the members from the Bloc debate this bill, one thing that becomes very clear is that they have not taken the time to read it. They have stated, as the members in the NDP have stated, that there is nothing in this agreement for Canada. That is ridiculous. Let us take just a couple of them, such as wheat and barley. Right now the U.S. enjoys a free trade situation with Peru in wheat and barley. That same situation is going to be extended to Canada under this agreement.

As the member for Vegreville—Wainwright stated earlier, where there are tariffs attached to lentils and peas, Canadian lentils and peas will be exported to Peru on a free trade basis. Farmers have expressed an interest in establishing this trade. Perhaps the NDP and the Bloc have not heard the farmers but we in the Conservative Party have our ears close to the ground with growers in Canada.

It goes on. U.S. farm imports, equipment, machinery, pork, beef, corn, fruits, vegetables, processed products, everything that the U.S. trades with Peru will be available to Canadian producers. Why are the folks opposite opposing this bill when they have not, obviously, even read it?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Madam Speaker, I cannot answer that question. I could quote Galbraith who said that Democrats read only Democrats, but Republicans do not read at all. I have the impression that the members of the opposition parties tend to read what suits them, but they do read. With the Conservatives it is just pure ignorance. It is obvious that this is an outdated trade strategy. We now have to move towards multilateralism and not bilateralism, as this government is currently doing.

• (1720)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): 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 (Ms. Denise Savoie): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Call in the members.

[*English*]

The vote will be deferred until tomorrow after question period.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe that if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion regarding statutory reviews and their reference to committees. I move:

That the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities be the committee for the purposes of Section 44(1) of the Employment Equity Act;

the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security be the committee for the purposes of Section 21.1(1) of the Sex Offender Information Registration Act;

the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology be the committee for the purposes of the Statutes of Canada, 2001, Chapter 14, Section 136; and the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security be the committee for the purposes of Section 13 of the DNA Identification Act.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Does the hon. minister have the unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

HUMAN PATHOGENS AND TOXINS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-11, An Act to promote safety and security with respect to human pathogens and toxins, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): There are two motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-11. Motions Nos. 1 and 2 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern at the table.

• (1725)

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Hon. Gerry Ritz (for the Minister of Health) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-11, in Clause 66.1, be amended by

(a) replacing lines 17 to 24 on page 31 with the following:

“regulation before each House of Parliament.

(2) A proposed regulation that is laid before Parliament shall be referred to the appropriate committee of each House, as determined by the rules of that House, and

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the committee may review the proposed regulation and report its findings to that House.

(2.1) The committee of the House of Commons referred to in subsection (2) shall be the Standing Committee on Health or, in the event that there is not a Standing Committee on Health, the appropriate committee of the House.”

(b) replacing lines 28 to 32 on page 31 with the following:

“tion is laid before Parliament,

(b) 160 calendar days after the proposed regulation is laid before Parliament, and

(c) the day after each appropriate committee”

(c) replacing lines 36 to 39 on page 31 with the following:

“report of the committee of either House. If a regulation does not incorporate a recommendation of the committee of either House, the Minister shall lay before that House a statement of the reasons for not”

(d) replacing, in the English version, line 2 on page 32 with the following:

“before Parliament need not again”.

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-11, in Clause 66.2, be amended by

(a) replacing line 6 on page 32 with the following:

“being laid before either House of Parliament if”

(b) replacing lines 16 and 17 on page 32 with the following:

“before Parliament, the Minister shall lay before each House of Parliament a statement of the”.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today at report stage of Bill C-11, An Act to promote safety and security with respect to human pathogens and toxins, to speak to the government amendments to clauses 66.1 and 66.2, which are now before us.

We heard at second reading that there is strong support in this House for strengthening safety and security with regard to human pathogens and toxins right here in Canada. We are committed to moving forward with this legislation to address the serious safety and security gaps that we have identified in order to safeguard Canadians from the threats posed by human pathogens and toxins.

Members of the Standing Committee on Health had an extensive opportunity to review all elements of Bill C-11. All told, the committee heard from five government witnesses, in some cases more than once, and from 13 other witnesses over a period of a month. In total there were seven separate sessions devoted almost entirely to review and discussion of Bill C-11. In these sessions, all voices were heard and all opinions were closely considered. The result of the committee's hard work is an amended bill that we think well reflects the underlying policy intent of the bill, as well as other key aspects of concern to some witnesses.

There were 12 amendments to the bill, of which eight were put forth by the government and four were put forth by the opposition. These amendments include a government amendment to clarify technical aspects of the bill, such as the fact that there will be no requirement to report to the minister of health when there is a simple spill in the laboratory, but only when there is a release of a human pathogen or toxin from the facility itself.

As well, two opposition amendments were put forward to require the establishment of scientific advisory committees to advise the minister of health regarding the schedules to the bill. These amendments, which the government supports, go a long way in ensuring there is an evidence base for decision-making on how to treat dangerous, and less dangerous, pathogens.

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Two other government amendments responded to input that the committee received from the office of the Privacy Commissioner, which we believe resulted in better privacy protection in this bill.

The bill was also amended to clearly articulate that there will be no security screening of persons accessing risk group 2 human pathogens and to signal that the regulations should be drafted taking into account the varying degrees of risk between risk groups of human pathogens and between toxins. As well, the penalty clauses in Bill C-11 were amended to lower the penalties related to contraventions of the act and regulations related to risk group 2 human pathogens.

These amendments were made to respond to what we heard from numerous witnesses at committee who strongly emphasized that risk group 2 human pathogens, although clearly capable of causing serious disease and death, posed lesser risks. Therefore they warranted less stringent treatment both in the bill and in the regulations.

We heard what these witnesses had to say and the government was comfortable proposing these numerous amendments which were all agreed to at committee.

In addition to the successful amendments put forward at committee, two amendments are related to a requirement for the tabling of regulations made under Bill C-11 before both Houses of Parliament. These amendments were put forward by the opposition and became the new clauses 66.1 and 66.2. They were agreed to by the committee, including the government members, subject to one qualification.

The government responded to these proposed amendments by requesting that the words "and the Senate" be added where the words "House of Commons" appeared in the amendments, to ensure that the regulations would also be tabled there.

After some discussion, the committee agreed to the suggestion, which was considered a friendly amendment, with agreement that the changed amendments would be worded in a way similar to what is now found in the Assisted Human Reproduction Act.

Unfortunately, upon review of the bill as reported from the Standing Committee on Health, it became obvious that this last specific requirement relating to the tabling of regulations in both Houses of Parliament was not included in the amended bill, as was requested by the committee.

Many of the needed references to the Senate, and particularly the fact that the regulations must be referred to a committee of that House, were simply left out. The government has put forward amendments at report stage to address this omission.

More specifically, the government has proposed an amendment to clause 66.1 to require that the regulations be tabled before each House of Parliament and that a proposed regulation that is laid before Parliament shall be referred to the appropriate committee of each House, as determined by the rules.

• (1730)

The new clause 66.2 allows for some specific exemptions from the requirement to table regulations in both houses of Parliament. The

proposed government amendment now before us specifies that should the Minister of Health make a regulation without first laying it before either house of Parliament, she must lay before each house a statement of reasons for doing so.

These proposed government amendments to clauses 66.1 and 66.2 are completely in line with the wordings of section 66 and 67 of the Assisted Human Reproduction Act as requested and agreed to by the Standing Committee on Health.

The bill, with these new amendments, reflects the hard work and co-operative approach that was taken at committee, reflecting the need to work together to safeguard the health and safety of Canadians. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the committee for a job well done.

I request that the House agree to these amendments, which simply reflect what the committee had previously agreed was the right way to proceed, in the same spirit of co-operation and concern for the health and safety of Canadians that was apparent in all of the discussions around Bill C-11 that occurred in committee.

As I noted, we believe that the amended Bill C-11, which was reported to the House from committee, is a stronger piece of legislation that well reflects the policy intent of the legislation and concerns expressed by some witnesses at committee. These government amendments to clauses 66.1 and 66.2 will essentially complete the good work of the committee by ensuring that the amended Bill C-11 reflects what was actually agreed to by committee in consideration of the input of many witnesses over a period a month.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I compliment the member for bringing this forward. I have a question about the exemption in the minister having to bring regulations before Parliament if she gives a written reason. If some time in the future we were to get a minister who might use that clause indiscriminately, Parliament might never see the changes in regulations. Is there any qualification on that clause?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, we tried to make the amendments and the language very consistent, which was already passed in the House with the human reproduction act. Therefore, the answer to the member's question is that the minister will act appropriately when she brings these things forward.

• (1735)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think it is worth noting for the record and for all members that these amendments were put forward by the NDP.

I am not here to take credit. I am here to suggest that we worked very hard at trying to improve a bill around which many flaws were identified. Because we did not have the time or the wherewithal to actually amend the bill as we would have seen fit, my proposed amendment was in fact to ensure that all regulations would be brought back to the House. When that was discussed at committee, it was felt that it should also go back to the Senate for which I had no concerns. Unfortunately the minutes of our committee did not reflect that hard work.

Government Orders

The Liberal member who spoke before me suggested we ought to compliment the government. I will compliment the government, not for initiating this idea but for accepting something that was brought forward in good faith by the NDP opposition.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the NDP for her statement, but I would like to take this opportunity to compliment all members of the health committee.

This very important legislation is much overdue. There are over 4,000 laboratories in Canada that right now work with human pathogens. We need to ensure that we know where these pathogens and toxins are.

We had some excellent witnesses. We had great government witnesses and very good private witnesses. Each member of the health committee worked very hard to get proper input, not only the NDP but the Liberals, the Bloc Québécois and the Conservative Party.

I take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues on the health committee for being so helpful in getting this very important legislation put through.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was just wondering if you wanted to give the floor to my Liberal colleague before me. However, if you ask me to rise at this time, I will do so.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Her name was not on the list, but if the House agrees and there is no problem, I am glad to give her the floor.

The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

[*English*]

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to make comments on Bill C-11, having been part of the committee and the process of reviewing the bill, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of it and taking action, as my Liberal colleagues and other committee members did, in what was, in the end, a very co-operative process.

Everyone in the committee was in accord about the importance of ensuring that the handling of pathogens and toxins in laboratory work and transportation of these goods protect the individual safety and public safety.

We did ascertain that there were risks with some of those products, greater risks with some than with others, and that the public good was best served by laws addressing that. Therefore, there was a common view that this was the right thing and a good thing to do.

My experience as a legislator tells me that the public good is sometimes served by laws addressing a problem, but government always needs to be very aware that there are risks arising from possible unintended consequences of the legislation being proposed.

Pretty classic risks of unintended consequences include things as: stepping into the jurisdiction of another level of government; duplicating existing work and licensing and processes already in place to protect the public; placing a regulatory burden that would be onerous given the benefits; the impacts on the delivery of a public

good that we are trying to promote may reduce the delivery of that public good; stepping into information privacy terrain and risking the disclosure of personal and private information that is inappropriate or against the law; or even using, in effect, a sledgehammer to crush a flea by having very onerous provisions and penalties in situations where they are simply not warranted.

Those are classic potential downsides or pitfalls to making laws. I think all legislators would agree that we need to be mindful that we are not over-regulating and we are not creating more problems than we are solving just for the pure joy of addressing problems and making laws.

When the bill was first presented to the committee, there were very severe concerns and, in fact, those concerns fit into that whole range of unintended negative consequences, which I outlined as theoretical ones. They were in fact present in Bill C-11.

Why was a bill, which had so many problems, being pushed through for fast approval at committee? What was clear was the consultation the government should have done with respect to writing the bill to address the risks around the handling of toxins and pathogens had been completely inadequate. Although the committee members were assured that there had been extensive and adequate consultation, when the list of those activities was reviewed, it was clear that there was minimal consultation with the decision-makers in the province of British Columbia. I know some of the other provincial health officers had the same concerns.

A letter from the minister of healthy living and sport in British Columbia, for example, had very strong language of concern about Bill C-11 as it was first presented to the committee, words such as, “The schedules are over-reaching”, “The administrative burden of regulation is felt to be onerous”, and “it is our strong preference that a new bill be considered which is collaboratively developed through consultations with the provinces and territories”.

● (1740)

This is a strong indication that adequate consultation did not occur. The absolute foundation of good legislation, legislation that previews and corrects unintended consequences, is to talk to the very organizations and individuals affected by it. This has been consistent problem with the Conservative government.

I was very involved when Bill C-51 on natural products was brought forward last year. It infuriated organizations because they had been completely left out of the consultation process. Had they been involved, they would have made very constructive representations as to how to improve the bill. The bill was killed when the House, when the Conservative government called an election last September. We will see whether the necessary improvements have been made.

With Bill C-11, several provincial governments felt it was completely inappropriate to step into their jurisdiction, clearly duplicating activities that were already taking place in many of the provincially regulated laboratories, which are already under a very constructive and thorough system of regulation and licensing.

Government Orders

On the regulatory burden, the committee heard from some of the university labs and others. They said that this regulatory burden would be very costly and that there were no provisions to assist with those costs. In fact, we heard that similar legislation in the United States had caused research to stop at some university research facilities. This is an unintended consequence that we do not want in Canada. We know how important primary basic research is. We know the important research these laboratories do on pathogens and toxins. Shutting down a source of research is definitely counter-productive to the goals of the bill.

Concerns were expressed by information and privacy commissioners. There were major concerns with the penalties and the criminalization of what could be an inadvertent misstep on the part of a laboratory staff person, resulting in an action that under that bill could have called for criminal penalties. There were serious concerns about the bill. Opposition members argued very vigorously that the government should take the bill back and redo it, make the necessary amendments and bring it back to the committee with the key concerns solved. At first we were being asked to accept a “trust us” message, that these things would be corrected in committee later in the process. We were not willing to do that, notwithstanding the importance of the issues and the risk that the bill was attempting to address.

After having given that context to the situation, I am pleased to say the committee members from all parties worked very constructively together. The government and the agency that was the author of the bill had the wisdom to make amendments to address some of the grave concerns raised, and those amendments were outlined in some detail by the previous speaker.

The bill that came back to the committee addressed some of those concerns, but not all of them. That is why further amendments were proposed to ensure the regulations would go to Parliament and that an advisory committee would be brought into the process of regulation making. Those were absolutely necessary amendments. I am pleased to say they are part of the bill as it goes forward. This was an occasion where the unintended consequences were serious, but they were addressed. The committee did its work. I want to congratulate all the committee members for the work on this occasion. I look forward to seeing the bill in its next iteration.

• (1745)

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we think the bill is well-intentioned, but there are some ways to improve it.

I want to talk about the plan to provide enhanced inspection powers to help ensure compliance. We know that when it comes to inspectors the Conservative government has a habit of cutting them when it is convenient and then it ends up having to apologize for those mistakes later on. In this case it is to ensure compliance with laboratory biosafety guidelines, which is a pretty important part of the bill.

I want to ask my colleague if she has any concerns in that regard, whether that has been completely taken care of and what has to be done going forward. We obviously want to support the bill. I would like her to address the enhanced inspection powers.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, this was a different situation from the ones that have been in the media where, unfortunately, the absence of proper inspection and the deregulation and the pulling back of inspection caused Canadian fatalities. The Conservative government needs to take responsibility for those errors. This was the other situation where there was a duplication and an over-abundance of regulation and inspection in facilities, many of which were being adequately regulated already not only by the institution, perhaps a university, but also by the province whose laws governed those institutions already.

We were attempting to make sure there was no duplication of the inspection and compliance as opposed to what was happening in the listeria situation where the government fell down on the job.

• (1750)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is such a joy to have a new member of caucus, a former minister of the environment, who can bring such depth to the analysis of a lot of bills. It is very helpful for our party.

I want to ask the member the same question that I asked the parliamentary secretary. In his good comprehensive speech, he outlined the fact that regulations would be brought before both houses of Parliament. That is a refreshing change. I compliment all members on the health committee for doing that, because sometimes we do not see regulations at all.

There is an exemption for the minister. I am wondering if there is any written reason to exempt bringing those to Parliament. When that part of the bill was being designed I am wondering if any caveat was included to stop a minister from using that every time.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, I have concerns about exemptions for the minister.

One of the premises that was put to committee was that the bill itself is not very detailed. The lowest level of toxic products, pathogens that may be found in soil, in a laundry basket, or even normally found on the human body, would not be subject to some of the very onerous and necessary restrictions and governance procedures for the highly toxic. That is the kind of thing that was really not addressed properly in the bill. We were assured it would be addressed in the regulations.

As the bill goes forward, we will be looking closely at any exemptions because creating a bill with improper consultation and inadequate attention to some of the matters that I raised earlier means that we really need to have parliamentary scrutiny as it goes forward to the regulations.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Madam Speaker, I too, am pleased to have this opportunity to comment at the report stage of Bill C-11, An Act to promote safety and security with respect to human pathogens and toxins.

Government Orders

I would like to begin by commenting on something the member for Yukon said. After the government moved Motion No. 1, which we will be voting on later, my colleague from Yukon seemed very pleased that the bill now includes a requirement for the government to table the regulatory framework in both houses of Parliament.

I would just like to say that that is the very least we could have agreed to, and that is why I proposed just such an amendment in committee. Allow me to review the beginnings of this bill so that I can explain all of the work that we had to do to improve this bill—even slightly—although I still find it unsatisfactory.

At second reading, after briefings from public servants who told us that they had done an excellent job of consulting all of the stakeholders affected by the bill, that everything had been done according to standard practice and that consultations had been held, we called on a certain number of stakeholders. What we heard from them was an entirely different story, and it did not sound as though they had been consulted properly. Many of them had major misgivings about how Bill C-11 was to be applied to their labs.

I did talk about that during my speech at second reading here in the House. At the time, the parliamentary secretary thought it would be a good idea to hear from these groups in committee, but I think he took it for granted that the debate in committee would go relatively quickly and that the committee would fast-track Bill C-11.

However, that was not the case. We heard witnesses, people who work daily with micro-organisms that fall primarily in risk group 2, which is a category that does not pose a serious risk to public health. We know that a number of standards are being followed in these laboratories regarding handling procedures, because in many cases the provinces have set operating rules.

So, we heard from these groups at committee stage. I will even go so far as to say that, just before the clause by clause study, these stakeholders still had serious and legitimate doubts about the negative impact that Bill C-11 might have on their activities.

At no time did we sense, on the part of the department or of the government, a will to reassure these researchers, and the students who work with them, on the negative consequences that the bill could have on their work.

Therefore, it was necessary to see that this regulatory framework would at least include all the flexibility required to ensure that these people would not be adversely affected.

● (1755)

However, we would have liked to go further in our committee report and to remove from the bill the provisions on laboratories that use pathogens that fall into risk group 2. A number of people felt that the risks posed by these pathogens are already controlled. Therefore, they should not be subjected to very strict standards that could—as I mentioned in my speech at second reading—generate significant costs. Such costs could jeopardize a number of important studies on the development of state-of-the-art technologies. The result would be that studies done by our researchers and by the postgraduate students they supervise would not be conducted, due to a lack of adequate funding caused by the costs generated by the implementation of Bill C-11. At no time were officials or the government able to reassure

these people as to who would foot the bill for the improvements that would have to be made to these laboratories.

Another important thing that I would have liked to see included in the bill is the exclusion of activities conducted in any facility that is regulated, operated or funded by a province. Indeed, in many cases, the provinces have already put control structures in place. Therefore, we do not need the federal government to create more paperwork and to add another level of monitoring, particularly for those facilities that come directly under a provincial government, namely hospitals and universities. This is evidence again that the government claims, on the one hand, to want to respect provincial jurisdictions, but, on the other hand—and through its actions—deprives Quebec and the provinces of their ability to fully exercise their authority. Yet, they have already put structures in place to monitor this research.

The second point is that at committee stage we heard experts who told us that, given the way this bill is drafted, it could be deemed unconstitutional. Why move forward with legislation that has not been thoroughly examined by the government before introducing it, and even less so in committee, where we felt that the government was turning a deaf ear, instead of listening to those who did not agree with its bill? Why is it that before introducing a bill and adopting it here, the government does not make sure that it respects every constitutional requirement? We did not get an adequate answer from the government on this.

Clearly, we must ensure that the minimal amendments presented by the government are adopted, so that if Parliament has to deal with Bill C-11, it will see the regulatory framework before the legislation is passed. However, this Parliament could go much further in terms of the assurances that we could give to our researchers. They have told us that and we know it. For the past while, they have been very concerned about whether they can continue to conduct their activities adequately.

● (1800)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Winnipeg-North.

Before the hon. member begins, I should advise her that we will be ending at about 6:08 p.m., so she has about four minutes. We will continue her intervention afterwards.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague in the Bloc Québécois for his excellent speech and his analysis of this bill. Moreover, I agree with a number of aspects in his analysis.

*Private Members' Business**[English]*

I want to indicate that we in the NDP also have grave concerns with this bill and with the government's whole approach to what were supposed to have been routine proceedings. In fact, we found out shortly after about the ruse created by the government that full dialogue had taken place with all players. That was not true. There was enormous concern all over this country, with provincial health officers, universities and researchers feeling that they had not been consulted and that this bill would create serious problems in terms of their research capacity by setting out all aspects dealing with level 2 toxins as coming under this rubric of criminal activity and being subsumed under this broad, heavy-handed approach.

I find it offensive that the government stands up today pretending that it brought forward amendments to improve the bill by making all regulations in the future come before Parliament. I want to put clearly on the record that in fact it was the New Democratic Party that proposed the amendments because of our deep concerns about this bill, amendments that were also initiated by the members of the Bloc and I thank them for their contribution.

I think we are dealing with a complete charade by the Conservatives on this front, because the amendment passed by the committee on March 31 said, with a friendly amendment, that the regulations should be put before both houses of Parliament. It was clearly established in our committee hearings that it was the agreed-upon amendment by all sides, yet we find the government coming forward today with an amendment that varies that wording slightly and pretends it is its own amendment.

The government does not acknowledge the fact that there were serious problems with this bill and that in the process it had to accept certain recommendations by the opposition. We remain concerned by the government's approach today. We are not satisfied that the government has treated all the concerns of the committee seriously. While we have said that we might be prepared to support the bill in final reading, I am certainly getting concerned day by day with the arrogance of the government and its attitude of pretending and creating a mythology that it has no lessons to learn, knows everything, and will not admit to any errors.

From beginning to end, the government blew this bill, to the point where the Minister of Health was almost faced with the embarrassment of having to pull the bill right off the agenda because it was so flawed. Given the almost unanimous concerns we heard from witnesses, it was clear to me that without work by all committee members in a cooperative fashion and without the government actually accepting some of the opposition amendments, that would have been the case. The minister would have been faced with pulling her very first bill, in terms of legislation, as Minister of Health for the Government of Canada.

Let it be clear that we are going to continue to monitor this process and ask questions about the government's intentions. We had proposed an amendment to delete all level 2 pathogens from this bill, because that was the expressed wish of researchers and scientists across this country. That would have been the appropriate way to go. There would be no reason to believe that research in this country could be curtailed because of the criminal sanctions being imposed

on anyone handling pathogens and toxins in this area. The government refused to accept that amendment.

The Bloc makes a very good point about outstanding concerns. I certainly share those concerns, and I want the government members to know we will be further analyzing the bill and determining why the government is playing games with the amendment process. By that I mean denying the work of the committee, pretending there was a flaw in the wording and coming to the House with an amendment that has already been adopted by the House as a result of the work of the NDP and the Bloc.

We have much more to do to try to make the government realize that it is accountable to Parliament and Canadians. It cannot run as though it has no responsibility to Canadians for its actions or to members of Parliament. We believe that the government has shown disregard for the parliamentary process. It ought to learn from the mistakes of this bill. It ought to recognize that proper accountability, transparency and dialogue is needed at every step of the way. I hope the government has learned some lessons from this sorry chapter in the history of its short term in government.

● (1805)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North will have four minutes left to finish her remarks the next time this bill is before the House.

It being 6:08, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

The House resumed from February 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-241, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (removal of waiting period), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader on February 26, 2009, concerning the requirement for a royal recommendation for Bill C-241, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (removal of waiting period), standing in the name of the member for Brome—Missisquoi. I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary, as well as the member for Joliette, for having brought this issue to the attention of the chair.

Bill C-241 seeks to amend the Employment Insurance Act by removing the waiting period that precedes the commencement of benefits after an interruption of earnings, and repeals provisions that refer to that waiting period.

At issue is whether the removal of the waiting period during the benefit period would require additional funds being disbursed from the consolidated revenue fund, or as a result of legislative changes flowing from the 2008 budget, from a separate account administered by the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board.

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This question is of critical importance, since matters related to the appropriation of moneys outside the consolidated revenue fund do not infringe on the financial initiative of the Crown and therefore do not require a royal recommendation.

In his intervention, the parliamentary secretary argued that the bill should be accompanied by a royal recommendation since it would require the expenditure of funds in a manner not authorized under the Employment Insurance Act. He further pointed out that the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development estimated that the removal of the two-week waiting period could cost as much as \$1 billion per year.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

The member for Joliette for his part, felt that the bill did not need to be accompanied by a royal recommendation since it does not have to do with monies within the control of the Crown but instead with monies in the account administered by the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board. His position was based in particular on a ruling made on October 3, 2005 concerning C-363, which had to do with the use of the surplus in the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation reserve fund. The Speaker ruled at the time, on page 8294 of the Debates, that:

The transfer of monies from the CMHC reserve fund to the Consolidated Revenue Fund—or in this case to the provinces—is not a matter relating to the appropriation of monies from the Crown. Therefore, Bill C-363 does not infringe on the financial initiative of the Crown.

[*English*]

The Chair has carefully examined Bill C-241, as well as the arguments put forward by the parliamentary secretary and the member for Joliette. It should be noted at the outset that subsection 77(1) of the Employment Insurance Act makes it clear that EI benefits are disbursed from the consolidated revenue fund. It states:

There shall be paid out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund and charged to the Employment Insurance Account

(a) all amounts paid as or on account of benefits under this Act;

[*Translation*]

As the member for Joliette mentioned in his point of order, it is true that the Budget Implementation Act, 2008 made certain amendments to the Employment Insurance Act in addition to creating the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board.

The object of the Board was, in particular, to set the premium rate under section 66 of the Employment Insurance Act and to maintain a reserve in accordance with that section. The specific purpose of the separate account in question is to make it possible to reduce premiums. There is no provision for using the account to pay for additional outlays that could result from eliminating the waiting period for the payment of benefits. The amendments to the Employment Insurance Act specified, among other things, the conditions for any interim payment to or by the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board. It is important to note that these amendments did not remove the EI Account from the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

[*English*]

Therefore, it is clear that despite the creation of a new Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board, the payment of benefits to eligible workers continues to be made from the consolidated revenue fund through the EI account. Consequently, the chair is of the opinion that the provisions of Bill C-241 would authorize a new and distinct charge on the public treasury. Since such spending is not covered by the terms of any existing appropriation, I will therefore decline to put the question on third reading of this bill in its present form, unless a royal recommendation is received.

Today, however, the debate is on the motion for second reading, and this motion shall be put to a vote at the close of the second reading debate.

On debate, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Wanuskewin.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have this opportunity to speak today on the bill which proposes to remove the two week waiting period required presently by the employment insurance program.

The EI program is a key element of Canada's social safety net. It enables Canadian workers to better adjust to labour market challenges and changes, and it acts as an economic stabilizer for our country. That being the case, we need to give some fairly careful and deliberate thought to any changes to the program so that we do not rush into it. We want to avoid rash moves that we might later regret.

One of the best ways of doing this is by basing changes to the EI program on hard empirical evidence and by conducting a pretty sound analysis of that evidence which takes into account the likely labour market impacts and the costs of the measures under consideration. It is only then that we can be sure that the changes will improve the program, not harm it or make it less efficient or less helpful than other alternatives. Such a disciplined, fact based approach is especially important during the current economic downturn where it is essential to avoid those kinds of missteps that might lead to a bad situation and make things worse.

I mentioned the matter of cost. The bill does have a significant cost associated with it, over \$1 billion per year in fact. Mr. Speaker, you just made a ruling with respect to the issue of the \$1 billion. During the first hour of debate, even the Bloc member for Gatineau agreed that implementing this legislation would cost huge sums of money.

Given that we are talking about substantial sums of money, it is critical that we ensure that any future changes to the employment insurance program are properly costed and assessed versus other options or possibilities.

That being said, I believe that this proposal before us today is not where we should be focusing our efforts. This government has in fact been very busy from the very first day in office helping Canadians and working to improve the EI program and its ability to help Canadians.

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For example, we increased eligibility for EI compassionate care benefits by expanding the definition of "family member" to include a wider range of individuals. I had a number of calls from constituents asking for that in advance of making that change, and affirming and commending us for having so done after that change was made.

We are improving the management and the governance of the EI account through the establishment of the Canada employment insurance financing board, a federal crown corporation that will report to Parliament through the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and be responsible for EI financing.

We are testing new approaches along the way through a number of ongoing pilot projects which seek new and better ways to help Canadians and respond to the changing economic conditions.

We are also doing many things to ensure that Canadians are getting their EI benefits as soon as possible. We have allocated an additional \$60 million for faster EI processing which includes hiring additional staff.

Beyond this we have taken many steps to meet the increased demand and serve Canadians better. These steps include hiring or recalling additional employees and retirees across the country, redistributing the workload to increase speed and efficiency and to help maintain consistent service levels all across the regions of Canada, increasing overtime, increasing the level of automation of claims processing, and opening EI call centres on Saturdays.

Through these measures the department has processed significantly more claims nationally this year than over the same period of time last year. We continue to take action to meet the increasing demand. All of this brings me to the bill before us today.

To begin with, this is just one of a number of private members' bills relating to the EI program currently on the order paper, each with its own different recommendations for changing this or that feature of the program, most without any reference to the larger labour market issues or the other proposals put forward by opposition members. Such an ad hoc approach is not an efficient way of addressing such a large and complex program as the EI program is. It is not wise to consider many different recommendations separately without looking at the combined impact on workers and employers who pay the EI premiums and rely on the program.

That is why the government is pursuing a broader based approach aimed at doing three things: creating jobs, preserving jobs and helping those who have been unfortunate enough to lose their jobs and are trying to re-enter the workforce. That broader based three-pronged approach involves several components, including helping Canadians participate in the labour market by investing in skills upgrading and injecting a significant stimulus into our economy.

• (1815)

That approach is outlined in the very good document, our economic action plan, which seeks to protect Canadians during the global recession and invest in Canada's long-term growth through the investment of an unprecedented \$8.3 billion in the Canada skills and transition strategy, aimed at supporting workers and their families. It increases funding for training delivered through the employment insurance program by \$1 billion over two years under the existing labour market development agreement so that provinces

and territories can train an additional 100,000 EI eligible individuals, and to help workers while they are looking for work, we are providing nationally the advantages of an extra five weeks of benefits currently offered as part of a pilot project that until now have only been provided in specific regions with high unemployment.

The maximum duration of benefits available under the EI program has been increased by five weeks, from 45 to 50 weeks, which is significant. It is estimated that this extension alone will benefit 400,000 Canadians in the first year alone. In my opinion, this is money very well spent.

To my mind, we should be investing in those who need it the most, namely, those Canadians who have been out of work for an extended period of time who are coming up against the end of their benefits. An extra five weeks will go a long way to help Canadians who otherwise would be facing further uncertainty.

Requiring a two week waiting period is prudent, and it keeps resources focused on those in greater need of support.

On this point, Mr. David Dodge, the former governor of the Bank of Canada, had some interesting comments. On December 18, Mr. Dodge appeared on the CTV Newsnet program, *Mike Duffy Live*. When asked whether eliminating the two-week waiting period for EI was an expenditure worth making, Mr. Dodge responded forcefully. He said, "The answer is no. That would probably be the worst waste of money we could make...because there's a lot of churn in the labour market". Mr. Dodge also said, "That two weeks is there for a very good reason...the real issue is that some of these people are going to be off work for a rather long period of time".

We agree with the comments of the former governor of the Bank of Canada. The fact is that during these somewhat uncertain times, many people will be off work for longer periods of time. That is where our EI needs to be targeted, and that is where we have targeted it.

Our government shares the concern of the member for Brome—Missisquoi for the challenges facing unemployed Canadians. However, in our efforts to make a real difference in the lives of Canadians, we need to ensure that the policy decisions we make are well thought through and are in the best interests of those we are trying to help.

Just as an aside more than anything, I should comment on the remarks made by the Liberal member for Cape Breton—Canso in respect of Mr. Dodge's statements. The member said that it was something that Mr. Dodge probably has not had to experience, at least not for some time.

I am not certain that we should be dismissing the judgments of wise people like that, with great amounts of experience with our economy, highly respected voices, simply because they have not recently experienced the precise matter under discussion. I would venture to guess a lot of members around this House have not had to experience directly some of the things that we discuss in this House and their contributions are no less important for that particular reason.

The approaches we take must be guided by hard facts and sound analysis. As a responsible government, that is what we are doing.

In closing, we all know that in the challenges that Canadians face in these uncertain economic times, particularly as unemployment rises, our government has already taken unprecedented steps to help Canadians by extending EI by an extra five weeks, by increasing the maximum benefit period to 50 weeks, and by expanding the work sharing program, for example. I could mention other things as well. That said, we will continue to monitor the current EI system to ensure that the program is working and responding effectively to our ever-changing economic circumstances.

• (1820)

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the bill. I congratulate my colleague from Brome—Missisquoi, who has brought this bill forward.

I had the chance to get to know the member a little bit a couple of years ago when I travelled with him. He is a very civilized and decent person who obviously has a very keen social conscience. We had a chance to talk about social housing and some of those investments we need to make, and his concern extends beyond that in a lot of areas. Obviously EI is one area.

He reminds me a little of his party's official critic, the member for Chambly—Borduas, who is also a very decent and civilized passionate advocate for the unemployed. We may not agree at all times on all issues, but he is sincerely concerned about the people who need help, and those are the unemployed in this country.

I would be remiss if I did not say that the member for Brome—Missisquoi has a wonderful partner as well. My wife likes her very much. I pass on my regards to her, should she be monitoring what he is doing tonight.

The member for Saskatoon—Wanuskewin referred to the comments made by the member for Cape Breton—Canso about Mr. Dodge. I have a huge regard for David Dodge, but I think my colleague from Cape Breton—Canso was entirely right. What he actually said was, "I bet it has been quite some time since Mr. Dodge had to walk in the back door, look at his wife who is trying to feed four kids and wonder where the next quart of milk is coming from". It is not an insult to Mr. Dodge; it is just a simple fact of life. It is our job as parliamentarians not to reflect just our own views, but the views of the people we represent. A lot of those people are hurting. They have been hurting for some time, but they are really hurting right now.

This country's social infrastructure is the only thing that is saving a lot of people from an even worse time. It is our job in this place and in committee to make sure that we bring forward legislation that

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reflects that. Therefore, I support my colleague from Brome—Missisquoi on this bill. I am not suggesting that this is the answer to the employment insurance system. There is a whole host of ways that we can make the EI system more robust, but we have got to send a message to the government that more needs to be done.

Our EI system has been changed in the last number of years. I am not here to defend those changes, nor am I here to say that those changes were not necessary. They were a reflection of the times we went through. Now we are into a recession that is very, very different and a lot of people are hurting.

The history of the EI system was such that it really was borne out of the Great Depression, by Mr. Bennett, first of all, in 1935 and then it was brought back in 1940. It started off mainly for blue collar workers. It was expanded in the 1970s and the 1980s. At one point in time over 80% of people in this country who were unemployed had access to employment insurance. There were changes made starting in 1990. Also in 1990 the federal government stopped making contributions. It no longer contributed to EI. It was now contributed to by employers and employees. The system has gone through some changes. In 1995 there were further changes made to the EI system.

We cannot compare 1995-96 to 2008-09. In 1995-96, we were coming out of a Conservative recession; now we are heading into a Conservative recession. The recession is similar, but the perspective is different. Back in 1995-96, we were looking at increasing job opportunities for Canadians. The issue then was not stimulus. I did not hear anybody in 1997 say we needed more stimulus. What I heard was that our deficit and debt are out of control.

Canada was a laughing stock. The *Economist* referred to Canada as a third world economy. We had to do something. Changes were made. Even though the employment situation was not too bad in the 1990s, there were areas of seasonal and high unemployment. When that became obvious, pilot projects were put in place to account for that in the EI system. We also brought in maternal parental benefits.

There is no question that we are now entering a recession for which this country is ill-equipped. We have to do something. We are talking about stimulating the economy.

Infrastructure is important, but when we look at infrastructure projects, we have to look at physical infrastructure and we have to look at social infrastructure. There are lots of economists, I would dare say most, who would say that the best stimulus for an economy is to invest in people, people who actually need the money. The people who get EI, who have lost their jobs, will spend that money. They have no choice. Learned economists, such as Ian Lee from the Sprott School of Business, say that this is the best way to get money into the economy. It is good for the individual. It is good for the economy. So, what do we do?

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● (1825)

The government sent great signals in January that there were going to be big changes to EI. We now have five extra weeks and some money for training. Five extra weeks are important. That was part of many private members' bills in the House, but it is only one piece out of many. There is the whole issue of access and there are large parts of this country where people do not have access to employment insurance. There is the two week waiting period that my colleague has brought forward in the bill today. We can increase the rate of benefits or increase the maximum insurable earnings. We could use the divisor rule, use the best 12 or 14 weeks to determine how people qualify for EI.

We could look at the issue of increasing further the rate that people could actually earn while on EI without getting their benefits clawed back. We could also look specifically at the length of benefits, the duration. However, whatever we do needs to be a complex and sincere attempt to say that we have to address the needs of Canadians who through no fault of their own are losing their jobs in this economy.

The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development has referred to EI in ways that I think are insulting to people who have to draw employment insurance. When asked why she was not doing more to improve EI, she said she did not want to make it too lucrative and she did not want to pay people not to work. That hearkens back to a previous day, to the Reform Party of the 1990s and its views of how employment insurance should be. That is alarming.

We also have the issue of delays in processing EI. If people are out of work, they do not know if they qualify for EI. They assume they do because they have paid into it, but in some cases they do not even find out for weeks. The standard had been 28 days that 80% of claims would be processed.

On November 27 last year in the House I raised the issue of delays in processing of EI. On December 19 I sent a letter to the minister asking for her attention to this very important issue. On February 27 I received a response. I raised the issue in 2008 and received a response in 2009. The opening line in the letter from the minister to me is, "I'm writing in response to your letter of December 19, concerning the processing time of employment insurance claims. Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying".

I sent a letter to the minister saying there are delays and she sent me a letter three months later saying she is sorry there were delays. She does not have to apologize to me, but she should be apologizing to the people in this country who are not getting the response that they need to a circumstance that is clearly not of their own making, which is that they are unemployed.

Last year the Prime Minister of the country said "no problem". Instead of dealing with the worsening economy, he called an election. In the fall, instead of dealing with the worsening economy, he brought in an economic update when everyone in the country knew that we needed economic stimulus and political stability. He had it reversed. He gave us political stimulus with that economic update. Then in January, instead of fully solving the problem, Conservatives came in with five weeks and some money for training.

Who thought that was not enough? Obviously, the labour unions who advocated for their people said that is not enough. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives who advocated for enhanced, more robust EI, said it was not enough. Even the C.D. Howe Institute said it was surprised that more was not done to enhance access to EI. So, it is everyone in the country except for about 150 seats on the other side. Everyone else knows there is a problem. We have to do something to address this and get serious about helping Canadians who are out of work through no fault of their own.

I stand here in support of my colleague from Brome—Missisquoi and I will be supporting the bill when it comes to a vote to send a message to the government that it has to get serious about employment insurance, specifically for people who deserve better than they are getting from the government.

● (1830)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the member for Brome—Missisquoi for his bill dealing with employment insurance and the waiting period. It is not the first time that we have debated this issue in the House. Personally, I have brought this issue forward on several occasions. We are talking about the two-week waiting period. A lot of people do not understand what it really means. In my area, they know what it means. It is not a two-week period during which an unemployed person is waiting for a cheque, but a two-week period for which such a person is not entitled to EI benefits.

I cannot believe some of the things I am hearing here. The member for Saskatoon—Wanuskewin says that we must respect the former governor of the Bank of Canada, Mr. Dodge, that he is an honourable man. Indeed he is an honourable Canadian, like everyone else. However, he missed the boat when he made that comment. I also want to echo the comments made by the member for Cape Breton—Canso when he said that it seems that Mr. Dodge never missed a paycheque. He would have people believe that they have to wait two weeks before receiving EI benefits, but this is not what it means at all. We are talking here about a two-week period for which people will receive no benefits. It is a penalty.

The Conservatives are saying that it is better to give five weeks at the end. Let us set the record straight. The Conservatives think that if they add five weeks at the end, by then people will have found a job and they will never benefit from these additional five weeks. This means there will be no cost to the government. It is all nice and dandy to speak on behalf of workers, but we should ask the CLC, which represents them, or construction workers, whether it is better to have five additional weeks or to remove the two-week waiting period, or penalty.

Just think about those who work for minimum wage, or for very low wages, and who are laid off, as is the case back home with workers in fish plants, who are going to get 55% of their salary. This is already a financial burden for their families, and the government then deprives them of two weeks of benefits. That is where the problem is, at the beginning of the period. This affects seasonal workers in the forestry or tourism industry, who are laid off every year. After August 15, there is not much tourism in Acadia. When we are finished celebrating, after August 15, parents get ready to send their kids back to school, and some people lose their job.

I hope Mr. Dodge is listening, or that he will hear about it. I do not agree with him. With all due respect, I do not agree with him. Companies are also facing the problems generated by the economic crisis. According to the Conservatives, we have to determine how we can help large companies that were not properly managed. We can see what is happening now. The government is bending over backwards to help them. It does not impose a two-week waiting period on them. It does not punish them. Rather, it gives them money immediately to save their skin. But when it comes to workers, if we gave them money immediately, it would, according to the Conservatives, encourage them to rely on employment insurance benefits. It is not the first time that I have heard this comment.

The worst case of hypocrisy concerns the Liberal members who spoke this evening. They say it is insulting to hear the Conservatives tell the workers that the reason they cannot give them money right away is because that would encourage them to say home. I have been sitting in this House since 1997. The Liberals used the same line when they were in power. We can check the record and read the speeches they made in this place. The Liberals used the same line. In fact, that is the line we get from senior EI officials. I heard the same thing said when the Liberals were in power. Now I am hearing it from the Conservatives. They are playing the same tape, saying the same thing.

The Liberals are telling us that what they did back in 1996 was right because there was a deficit, which is different from a recession. Families affected by job losses suffer a terrible deficit. The Liberals attacked the workers in 1996 by making cuts to the EI program.

• (1835)

To eliminate the country's deficit, they stole from the workers, those who lost their jobs and the needy families. The Liberals did pay down the debt and achieve zero deficit, but they did so on the backs of the workers. Now, they have the hypocrisy to stand here and blame the Conservatives, but for different reasons. That makes no difference when, at the end of the day, workers lose their jobs. What matters is those families. The Liberals say that there was no economic crisis in those days. I am sorry, but we in Atlantic Canada had an economic crisis a while back. In 1992, all our fish shops and plants closed. We lost the cod fishery and the redfish fishery.

No economic crisis in my part of the country? We had our own crisis in the Maritimes and at the time, they said we were a bunch of lazy slackers and that we did not want to work. That is why the Liberals made cuts to employment insurance. That is why the Conservatives supported that decision. They have always treated us like a bunch of lazy slackers. People from our part of the country are leaving and going to work in northern Ontario, in Oshawa and

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Hamilton; they are going to work in Alberta, in Fort McMurray. People like Doug Young treated us like slackers. Those people said they were going to deal with people who abused employment insurance. Those people were Liberals.

The Conservatives are no better today. In the midst of this economic crisis, they are telling us that adding five weeks of EI benefits will satisfy workers. It is shameful and unacceptable. We are talking about people who are losing their houses, families who have nothing left to eat in the refrigerator. There is not a single member here who will lose his or her pay at the end of the week. Mr. Dodge has never lost his pay. Consider a husband and wife who both lose their jobs at GM and will have no income for two weeks, and on the third week, will receive 55% of \$750. How dare anyone say they are not in trouble.

Consider the people in Quebec and the Gaspé. How dare anyone say they do not have problems. They are definitely not slackers and not lazy. All Canadians and Quebecers are proud people. It is shameful to think that the reason the Conservatives do not want to pay them for the two week waiting period is because they are afraid that these people will actually receive benefits. It is time for this attitude to change. It is time we think about these people and not only about GM, Ford and Chrysler. We must think about the people involved.

When election time comes, the Liberals and the Conservatives are happy to get their votes, but the day after the election, they forget about the human beings who voted for them. Now they must think about the families who are losing their houses and the families who are heavily in debt to the banks. Instead of offering them loans that they would be able to pay back, the banks give them credit cards with 19% interest rates. The Liberals and the Conservatives must think about these people and start doing something to help ordinary Canadians. It is not an abuse of the system.

The member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour forgot to mention in his speech that the Liberals did the same thing to ordinary people who were in need. The Liberals did not care at all. In addition, changes were made in 1996, but the government had stopped contributing since 1992. At least, had the government been contributing, it would have had a reason to want to cut the program, but it was not even its money. The money did not belong to the government, and it does not belong to the Conservatives who will boast about balancing the budget and achieving zero deficit with money that belonged to others. Come on, that is highway robbery.

I was surprised by the Supreme Court's decision when it ruled that the government could do as it pleases with the workers' money. I realize that we have a legal system and that decisions are handed down by the courts, but we can nonetheless express the opinion that the judges made the wrong decision. I think they were wrong in this case. I am saying it in this place, I will say the same thing outside this place and I will tell them as well. They were wrong. That money belonged to the workers. On the books, there is a \$57 billion surplus, but that is stolen money. That is the biggest robbery in Canadian history.

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● (1840)

No one will ever admit that. Yet, attacks continue on workers who have lost their jobs and have no money to defend themselves, on the poor, on social assistance recipients, on anyone who cannot defend themselves.

We hope that the House will pass this bill which is good for the workers.

● (1845)

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to address the House; it is just a shame that it has to be on this subject. We should have wrapped up discussions on this issue long before now given the awful situation in which the employment insurance system has placed unemployed workers.

Before getting to the heart of the matter, I would like to thank my colleague from Brome—Missisquoi and congratulate him on introducing this bill. I also want to point out that the best gift we could give him would be for everyone joining today's debate in the House to tell him that they intend to support his bill. Why? Because today is his birthday. He has not only reached a venerable age, but sometimes we tease him by saying that he is now the patriarch of the House. However, to see him, one would have no trouble believing that he has lost none of his youthful vigour. Once again, I would like to wish him the best of birthdays, as well as good health and happiness, of course. One of his birthday wishes, something very important to him, is for the House to pass this bill.

This bill covers only one of the changes that should be made to the system. The good thing about this bill is that it will tell us just how sincere the members are when they say that they care about the people who lose their jobs and society's least fortunate. They say that the employment insurance system must be reformed, but when it is time to vote or to take a stand on a bill like this one, the Conservative members do not walk the walk.

This bill will cost very little because it would eliminate the two-week waiting period. These weeks would not be added to the number of weeks of benefits. People would receive benefits for the same number of weeks, but with this measure, they would begin to receive them from the very beginning. What is the advantage of that? When people lose their jobs, they suddenly have no income. In many cases, before anyone gets laid off, the company has already experienced some turmoil. Added to the tragedy of job loss is the fact that people have to wait for benefits. As we all know, the waiting period is unjustified and people collect nothing for the first two weeks.

This is a most relevant bill, especially in these difficult economic times. According to the OECD, Canada's unemployment rate will exceed 10% in 2010. It presently stands at 8%. In addition, last year, thus over the course of one year, 350,000 jobs have disappeared in Canada. The OECD estimates that 822,000 jobs will be lost by 2010, which means that there will be more than 2 million unemployed people in Canada. In the forestry industry alone, there are 122 communities in Quebec and 300 in Canada that have been affected by plant closures and layoffs.

The impact is rather dramatic and is felt quickly. In my own riding, working couples, sometimes with children, had the usual

financial obligations and their entire income was already committed. After losing their jobs, it was not long before the two partners turned to the food bank.

● (1850)

Two successive governments have relied on this type of independent social safety net to fill the void left by legislation and the Canadian government. We rely on it. Take, for example, the food banks that are currently overtaxed and can no longer meet needs. More and more of these people, even the middle class, though quite embarrassed, are turning to food banks because they have no other option and must obtain food for their children and themselves.

Yesterday, the leader of my party and I met with the Canadian Teachers' Federation, who confirmed what we have observed and stated the following. The first ones to be affected by such a crisis are the children, and that is obvious at school. It is difficult to motivate the children to learn, some experience cognitive delays, receive lower marks, participate less in extra-curricular activities, even have lower career expectations, have gaps in attendance, and have a greater risk of being illiterate because, as I was saying earlier, lower attendance rates result in higher drop-out rates. Thus, children are especially vulnerable in these times.

When they talk about the crisis or the problems experienced by people who lose their jobs, nearly all the members of this House inevitably talk about poverty. There is a consensus that we must take action against poverty. Poverty has nothing to do with providence. There are conditions and factors that contribute to poverty, and an employment insurance system that does not meet its obligations adds to poverty.

One of my predecessors in this House made the point that this system became dysfunctional because of the way the employment insurance fund was used through the years. The role and purpose of the fund were radically altered. Of course, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favour of the government, but on a technicality, saying that the government has the authority to legislate to levy taxes. Any deduction from Canadians' income is considered a tax. The fact that the government made the employment insurance fund part of the consolidated revenue fund also contributed to that conclusion.

But just because the Supreme Court of Canada says that what the Liberal and Conservative governments did was legal, that does not make it legitimate. What they did was illegitimate and deplorable, because they deprived people of benefits they had paid for during their employment, when money from the employment insurance fund would have let them provide for their families and pay their bills.

There was a reason why the previous government changed the name of the unemployment insurance fund to the employment insurance fund. The government deliberately renamed the fund in order to use it differently. This is deplorable, and it is a serious economic crime against people who have lost their jobs, against their families, against the regions concerned and against the provinces and Quebec.

In conclusion, the provinces have to shoulder the burden that should fall to the fund, and—

• (1855)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Huron—Bruce.
[*English*]

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to address the issue of EI with respect to Bill C-241.

Meeting the needs of Canadians in these increasingly uncertain economic times is a priority for our government. To determine these needs, our government engaged in the most extensive prebudget consultations in Canada's history. We listened closely to the concerns of Canadians, especially with regard to employment insurance. We listened and are taking action.

Through Canada's economic plan, we are taking unprecedented steps to create jobs, preserve jobs and to provide support to those who have lost their jobs and are now looking for work.

Our government understands that Canadians are worried about putting food on the table and finding work to keep their homes and provide for their families. That is why we have taken the unprecedented steps to support the unemployed, preserve jobs and retrain workers for the jobs of the future.

With respect to employment insurance benefits, we have extended, nationally, the advantage of an extra five weeks of benefits currently offered as part of a pilot project that, until now, was only provided in specific regions with high unemployment. In addition, the maximum duration of benefits available under the employment insurance program has increased by five weeks, from 45 to 50 weeks. It is estimated that this extension will benefit 400,000 Canadians in the first year alone.

We believe that this measure is a better option than removing the two week waiting period because it would help those most in need of additional benefits. While removing the two week waiting period would result in an additional payment of two weeks for claimants who do not use their full entitlement, it would not provide assistance to workers who exhaust their employment insurance benefits. Eliminating the two week waiting period simply means that their benefits would start two weeks earlier but would also end two weeks earlier.

Our additional weeks of employment insurance benefits would provide regular employment insurance clients with the assurance that, should they require it, they will have the financial support for a longer period of time while they pursue their job searches.

Exhaustion of EI benefits is a tough prospect to face. Providing additional support to unemployed Canadians who would otherwise have exhausted their benefits helps those who need it the most.

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I would point out, too, that this proposed measure would be in addition to the automatic adjustments in the employment insurance program that respond quickly to changes in economic conditions. Through the variable entrance requirement, the current EI program has built-in flexibility specifically designed to respond automatically to changes in local labour markets.

The entrance requirements ease and the duration of benefits increase as the rates rise. These requirements are adjusted on a monthly basis to reflect the latest regional unemployment rates. This system ensures that the amount of assistance provided increases as the unemployment rate rises. Support flows to regions and communities that need it the most.

In fact, since October 2008, EI claimants in 32 of the 58 regions across the country can now access EI benefits with fewer hours of work while benefiting from the EI benefits for a longer period of time. For example, since October 2008, EI claimants in the region of Kitchener, not too far from my hometown, can now access an additional 13 weeks of benefits while working 4 weeks less to access these benefits.

We have also made significant efforts and investments to process the increasing number of EI claims so that employment insurance claimants can receive the benefits they need as quickly as possible. In this regard, we have allocated \$60 million toward hiring additional staff and increasing capacity. We are redistributing workloads across the country and recalling recent retirees. We are also increasing overtime, opening employment insurance call centres on Saturdays and increasing automation of the claims process.

All of those actions are helping to ensure that unemployed Canadians and their families get the support they need in the fastest possible manner.

• (1900)

I also remind the House that we have not hesitated to test new approaches to make EI changes when they are proven to be warranted. I will give some of my own experiences in life to further explain how the five weeks are really impacting those Canadians we are trying to reach.

I heard my colleagues across the floor comment about certain parts of our employment insurance enhancements. I worked for an auto parts manufacturer, Westcast Industries in Southwestern Ontario, for many years. Like many other companies in the auto sector, it has felt the tougher times. When I started there in 2000, there were 353 employees. At the end of this month, that facility will be mothballed.

While I was in my riding over the past two weeks, I went out to various events and worked hard in the community. I ran into a number of my former colleagues, who unfortunately have been unable to find jobs. The first thing I did was thank our government for extending those five weeks. They were not sure what lay ahead in the future, but they certainly appreciated the five weeks we added to the back end of their employment insurance.

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Another fantastic example of what is working is the retraining. I have a number of former colleagues who fortunately look at the world as a cup that is half full, as do I. They have been able to get retraining. Some friends of mine who I used to work with are going through to be millwrights. They are exploring all sorts of different career options. It is a new chapter in their lives. This government has responded in many different manners. One of them is the \$60 million recently announced to help process the claims as fast as possible.

I would also like to recognize our Service Canada workers and the great job they do. Our regional office is in Kitchener. The director, Ross Tayler, has his staff working around the clock, doing the very best job they can. I think it is important that we recognize those workers. They are taking time away from their families to ensure those dollars begin to flow in a timely manner to those who have just lost their jobs.

I was fortunate to be able to move on to a new position and a new career before the large number of layoffs occurred at the company for which I worked, but the weight and burden of the unknown of whether people's jobs will be there tomorrow is an extremely tough thing on their family and their psyche. The one piece out of this, which is so important, is the extra five weeks at the end of their employment insurance. They know they have an extra month and week, just in case they are unable to get that job. They are able to get out and continue to search for a job.

We have invested over \$1 billion in training, which is excellent. This will allow those who have recently lost their jobs or who are currently in the workforce and are looking for a change in career to look to the new economies: a green economy, our information technology and our new high tech and skilled positions. Believe it or not, there are a number of positions in my riding in the aeronautical industry. Currently 50 positions are available in that area.

The programs we have put in place for retraining will allow people who have lost their jobs in a riding such as Huron—Bruce to get retrained and get those skills so they can gain new employment in new industries and sectors. That is why I am so proud of this government. I am so proud of the minister and her staff for how hard they have worked and for the consultation they have done with Canadians.

It is no coincidence that we have added five weeks to the end of the employment insurance process. It is no mistake that when I go out into my community, the additional five weeks of employment insurance is the first thing mentioned to me. They thank our government. It shows that our government is listening to Canadians and reacting in a timely matter. Good government is all about that.

• (1905)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi now has a five minute right of reply.

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think I should have the support of the members across the floor, including, for example, the hon. member for Huron—Bruce, who just spoke, and the hon. member for Essex, both from ridings where many workers are losing their jobs at this time. It is incomprehensible. These members are going to be criticized by the workers in their respective ridings and will lose their seats in the next election.

Our bill to eliminate the two week waiting period is a crucial bill, since those two weeks are a crucial time for workers who have just lost their jobs.

When people have jobs, they are earning money, a salary, but probably not enough to be able to save money. That is what my colleague does not understand, because he is in a position to save money.

What happens to people who receive a salary that allows them to support their families and pay for their housing, but then suddenly lose their jobs? What happens is that those people have no money and do not receive any help from anyone to get through the first two weeks. Those are the worst weeks, because that is when they are going through the shock of having lost their job, although they must continue to feed their family and pay their rent or their mortgage.

The first two weeks are crucial. We are not against adding 5, 10 or 15 weeks of benefits, but that does not replace the first two weeks lost. That will never replace them. The Conservatives are saying they oppose this bill because it will cost \$900 million. That is what the minister said. Now they are talking about \$1 billion. That is completely false, because the bill would only move the benefit period forward, to when the recipients have just lost their jobs.

It is rather incredible that, just a week ago, we saw the Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture) rise in this House on a question he had been asked specifically about the two week waiting period, to say that it was like cars. Unemployed workers are like cars. Frankly, that comparison is disdainful. That is a terrible thing to say, because it is not the same at all. Of course there is a deductible for a car, but it is an object. A car accident is not the same thing. If we do not have the money to have our car repaired, we simply do not do it right away. But unemployed workers need their money and there are more unemployed people right now, precisely because of the crisis.

We are calling for this because, during a crisis, it is important for people to have the time to get back on their feet and to be able to live properly during that time, to survive I might even say. They ought not to have to descend into poverty and have to ask for help from food banks. It is already hard on morale to lose one's job but if, on top of that, there is no help forthcoming in the first two weeks, that hits a family hard.

In closing—since I know I have only five minutes—this bill is a just one link in a chain. It does not reform employment insurance as a whole, because it reforms only one aspect. Obviously, there is plenty left to reform, but we have to start somewhere, and this first step is absolutely necessary.

It is said that Mr. Dodge was not in favour and that he was speaking for management. But the newspaper clippings—from Sherbrooke in particular—are interesting and refer to an unspeakable scandal. The only thing they keep referring to in the article is the two week waiting period. This is indeed an unspeakable scandal and that, in my opinion, is stronger than anything that Mr. Dodge could have said.

I am therefore calling upon all hon. members to be responsible and sensitive to the situation of the working men and women who have fallen victim to the global capitalist crisis. I am asking the members of this House to remedy this injustice and to vote in favour of this bill.

• (1910)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 7:12 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired. The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 29, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Centre for Fisheries Innovation is facing imminent closure due to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency's decision to not renew funding to the centre. This centre has been a catalyst for research and innovation in the fisheries and aquaculture sector for nearly 20 years and has been responsible for many of the successful innovations that have occurred in this industry over that time period.

The ACOA minister stated in the House of Commons that the centre was no longer necessary and that industry had outgrown it. However, in recent weeks there has been an outcry against ACOA's decision to not renew this funding. These voices come from industry groups throughout Atlantic Canada, including harvesters, processors and aquaculture interests, from the academic research community and Liberal, Conservative and NDP members of Parliament alike.

Of particular note is the fact that the four Atlantic premiers have endorsed the need for the continuation of the centre. How is it that the ACOA minister can say that CCFI is no longer necessary when organizations so largely and widely support this group?

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The 20-year success of this centre speaks for itself. CCFI has emerged as a centre for excellence for fisheries and aquaculture research and development and has brought tremendous value to the industry and the academic community throughout the region.

In the last six years alone, CCFI has managed more than 280 projects throughout Atlantic Canada at a total value of approximately \$30 million. During this time, CCFI has achieved a leverage rate of approximately 1:5. Therefore, for every \$1 the centre commits to a project, it leverages approximately \$5 from other sources. This is a tremendous return on investment.

It is also important to note that nearly 50% of the centre's current leverage support comes directly from industry, which is a testament to the relevance of the organization. These projects have resulted in significant economic benefit throughout the entire Atlantic region, from resource development initiatives to improvements in energy efficiency, to new safety technologies in the harvesting sector, as well as advancements in the aquaculture sector.

There is no doubt that without the funding and facilitative support of CCFI to jump-start these projects, much of this highly valued research would not be completed. Let there be no doubt that cessation of the centre's mandate will leave a major void in fisheries and aquaculture innovation throughout Atlantic Canada.

For the ACOA minister to suggest that this void can be filled through the Atlantic innovation fund is highly misleading. AIF funding may provide support to a few large scale fisheries and aquaculture research projects each year but many will only benefit a couple of companies.

It is important to stress here that industry largely does not have the time nor the resources to pursue these large scale, high risk commercialization projects. By comparison, CCFI will take \$1 million a year to fund 50 to 60 to 70 projects, leveraging \$5 million to \$6 million and providing real benefits to the entire Atlantic region. This is the kind of support that industry requires in this current economic climate: industry-driven industrial research and development that solves existing industry problems and leads to new commercialization activities and opportunities.

I would ask the minister responsible for ACOA why research in the fishing and aquaculture industry, which is the economic backbone of much of Atlantic Canada, being cut by the government now when it is needed most?

• (1915)

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl for giving me the opportunity to expand upon this debate of just two days ago.

As I have made clear, CCFI conducts no actual research whatsoever. It has acted exclusively as a coordinator and match-maker between the fishing industry and the research community. That matchmaking role is no longer necessary.

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The industry is a different place than it was 20 years ago. Over the past 20 years, the attitude of the fishing industry toward research and development has evolved and matured to the point where the industry and academia now routinely partner in research opportunities, including many projects directly supported by ACOA and other funding entities. In fact, since 2002, through its Atlantic innovation fund, ACOA has directly invested \$60 million in fisheries research partnerships between industry and the academic community.

Even as recently as March 2 of this year, ACOA, DFO, the provincial government and Memorial University announced an \$8.5 million cod farming demonstration project to advance cod aquaculture research in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is wrong to suggest a cessation of funding for the Canadian Centre for Fisheries Innovation will impact the pace or quality of fisheries and aquaculture research in Atlantic Canada.

Research capacity in Atlantic Canada is not dependent on CCFI. The research capability of Memorial University and its Marine Institute and other academic institutions throughout Atlantic Canada will continue to be available to the fisheries sector.

Moreover, when ACOA provided its last contribution to CCFI in March 2008, it was on the understanding that CCFI would develop a sustainability plan that would no longer depend on ongoing support from ACOA.

The Marine Institute has acknowledged in writing its understanding of this fact and that a new go forward strategy was required for the centre. CCFI did not provide such a plan. Instead, it submitted a strategy that would require a minimum of \$1 million per year from ACOA indefinitely.

It is fair to say that CCFI has done good work for the fishing industry. After 20 years of working with research institutions, the fishing industry understands its capabilities well and no longer needs a separate centre to match industry needs with research capabilities.

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Mr. Speaker, I believe a number of people would disagree with the hon. member on whether or not CCFI is necessary and required in these economic times, especially when a centre facilitates, coordinates and assists small scale projects, 60 to 70 projects, and can leverage \$5 for every \$1 of investment.

I want to read some letters from a couple of supporters. George Joyce, the executive director of the Association of Seafood Producers of Newfoundland and Labrador, said:

CCFI is a leader in the business of solving problems for us and creating opportunities for the fishery. Why cut the funding when the centre is adding value?

Derek Butler of the Association of Seafood Producers said:

It would represent a loss to industry if they were not there, and we want to add our voice to that of others who are in support of renewed funding for them.

I would like to add the voice of another but, unfortunately, I am out of time.

Hon. Keith Ashfield: Mr. Speaker, let me restate the facts. CCFI acted exclusively as a matchmaker organization between the fishing industry and the research community. It did no research on its own.

It is obvious, from the success of the fisheries sector in securing AIF support and other program funding, that the need to fund a separate entity such as CCFI to link the industry to research capabilities is no longer necessary.

I will recite some facts as well. On a VOXM call-in show in Newfoundland the question was asked: Should the federal government provide dollars to keep CCFI open? Out of 6,003 votes received, 34% said yes and 61% said no.

•(1920)

[*Translation*]

CONTAMINATED WATER IN SHANNON

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part today in this adjournment debate on contaminated water in Shannon, as this issue interests me a great deal.

This is the third time I have spoken on this issue, because the responses this government has given through members from the Quebec City area—whether it is the minister responsible for the Quebec City area, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent or the member for Beauport—Limoilou—have been completely irresponsible. Since I have been asking questions here in this House, the government has been trying to mislead the people. The members say that the government is concerned about the health of the people in the Quebec City area, that it has corrected the problem, worked hard and put in place viable solutions and that the Mayor of Shannon is satisfied. They wonder why the Bloc is not.

It is extremely simplistic and insensitive to say that. We know what it means to have contaminated water in Shannon. We know that the incidence of cancer is much higher than in the general population. There are 12 cases of cancer for every 100 people, whereas you would expect to find only a single case in the general population. In addition, Dr. Juneau, the attending physician who monitored the population from 1960 to 1997, was alarmed at the number of cancer cases in some parts of Shannon, where wells were contaminated. Often, people in these areas developed one, two or three cancers.

This is an important evening, therefore. We have changed interlocutors to another member representing a South Shore riding. I would like to see him show a little sensitivity in this matter and to see him also reach out a helping hand to the Shannon citizens' coalition. Those people have not been met with. We are well aware that funding was given to reconnect the Shannon water system to a safe water supply. The former government had settled things so that the matter could not be reopened. But as it happened, no uncontaminated and accessible source could be found. The investigational work cost a great deal. So more demands were made to the government. Had it not been for the Radio-Canada program *Enquête*, this government would never have budged. The minister for the Quebec regions' answer was that the people had instituted a class action and this was before the courts. The local people are taking steps toward a class action, but it is not before the courts. That is just a phoney excuse for not moving on this.

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What needs to be done is to say that people will be compensated and that, finally, the government's responsibility will be acknowledged. In actual fact, it was National Defence that contaminated the water sources in 1950 by releasing TCE into permeable soil. The water table problems are now affecting others. We know that the problem is spreading as far as Val-Bélair, where one microgram of TCE per litre has been found in the soil. Moreover, the mayor of Quebec City has approached National Defence and told it that this is not his city's problem, but a DND problem. People would like to see this government acknowledge its responsibility.

There is a petition circulating at the present time, and people will be surprised how many everywhere in Quebec are now aware of this problematical situation.

I would therefore like to see a helping hand reached out to the Shannon citizens' coalition, and I would like to see the government tell the coalition that it is going to acknowledge its responsibility. We are now able to make the connection between the development of cancers and TCE.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the member opposite is concerned about this issue, and so are we. This government is working effectively to protect the citizens of Shannon. The health and safety of the people of Shannon, Quebec and all of Canada are of the utmost importance to our government. As we have indicated on February 25 and March 4, 2009, we have been fully transparent and our government reacted quickly by announcing an investment of \$13.3 million to help modernize the water supply system in Shannon. The Bloc Québécois member expressed satisfaction at the time with the amount granted by our government.

It is important to add that the mayor of Shannon publicly acknowledged our great work and our government's efforts. If the mayor is satisfied and the member is satisfied, why bring up again a matter that is currently before the courts?

I should point out that the people of Quebec are expecting their elected representatives to act. That is precisely what we are doing, and we will continue to do so. If I may, I might add that our government has striven steadfastly to defend the interests of the people of Shannon. We have put forward a viable solution. The people of Shannon are now reaping the benefits of our government's efforts and the attention the Conservatives pay to Quebec.

The Bloc Québécois has accused our government of not caring about the people, the human factor, in this matter. It should be ashamed to speak such nonsense, because our government said it was sensitive to and concerned about the situation affecting the citizens of Shannon. We appreciate their concerns.

Besides, the Bloc Québécois is only concerned about an hypothetical judicial settlement that has not completely gone through the court process. They should let the judges and lawyers do their jobs. Is it suggesting that we ignore the judiciary and what the courts say?

This matter is among our priorities, and our government is staying abreast of the development of the situation. The Bloc Québécois should show empathy and decency, and sincerely care about what

the citizens of Shannon are going through, instead of trying to play petty politics with this whole issue. The courts are doing their job, and the Bloc Québécois should do the same.

• (1925)

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, once again, I am getting the same answer I got two weeks ago about the issue of contaminated water in Shannon. I save my empathy for the people in Shannon who are living with cancer. I work with the Shannon citizens' coalition, and I know what people there are thinking. In Val-Bélair, when they found out there was one microgram of TCE per litre in their well, they made some noise and said they would rather have zero micrograms of TCE per litre.

We need to compensate the people and tell them that we bear some responsibility. I do not have time to go into detail, but I know this has been done in the United States. The merchant marine went beyond what this government is doing. It tried to do the research itself. It did not leave it up to people who had drunk contaminated water to find soldiers who had worked on the base—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I find it necessary once again to remind the Bloc Québécois member that our government took action by putting forward a viable solution that corresponds perfectly to the expectations and needs of the mayor and citizens of Shannon. Our government took action to defend the interests of the population.

The Bloc members' unfounded comments do not at all serve the interests of the municipality's citizens. Our government is extremely sensitive to and concerned by the situation in Shannon. That is why we are working very hard to speed up payment of the \$13.3 million.

I would like to add that we understand the concerns of the citizens of Shannon. However, the member for Québec needs to be reminded that it would be ill-advised for us to comment directly on a case that is before the courts. The Bloc Québécois must wait for the judges and the lawyers to do their work. I therefore invite the member to do the same rather than meddling in—

• (1930)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley has the floor.

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I rose back in February and then again later on regarding an issue that is of great concern to the people in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick around the Bay of Fundy, and that is the rising sea levels as an effect of global warming.

Right off the bat, I want to thank the Minister of the Environment for his prompt response, both in trying to understand the problem and bringing the people that needed to understand it, and then also the actions he took to start the process to assess the potential damage. It is exactly what should have been done and I appreciate his actions very much.

Adjournment Proceedings

This all came from a study done by the United Nations panel on climate change, which identified the Bay of Fundy as one of the two regions in Canada, and in fact all of North America, which would be most vulnerable in the case of rising sea levels, which is accepted now as something that will happen. There are different versions of how bad it will be and exactly when it will happen, but it is very consistent. All of the studies by academics, the Government of Canada, and the United Nations panel on climate change predict that sea levels will rise. It is just a matter of how much and when.

It does not matter how much it rises in the Bay of Fundy, it is going to cause damage. Communities, like Advocate, which are actually below sea level at high tide and are only protected by a dike system will be flooded if the sea levels rise any amount at all.

I do believe that the Bay of Fundy will be affected more than any other region because everything is exaggerated in the Bay of Fundy. A tide which is six or seven feet high outside of the Bay of Fundy can be 30, 40, or even as high as 50 feet in the Bay of Fundy, so any rise in sea level will have an exaggerated effect at the head of the Bay of Fundy. Many communities in Nova Scotia, such as Truro and Advocate, Parrsboro, and many in New Brunswick, such as Moncton, Dorchester, Memramcook and Sackville, will be very vulnerable to extensive damage.

I asked at the time if the minister and his officials would start a process to do a review. They have now, I understand, developed a process where they are going to map the present dike lands between Amherst and Sackville, which is the right thing to do. They are going to do a projection of sea level rise. They are going to do coastal erosion rates. They are going to build a model to reflect the sea level rise and they are going to identify the dikes, infrastructure, buildings and communities that are going to be at risk.

Again, I believe that this is exactly the right thing to do and the right steps to take in the right order, so I do not have many pointed questions for the distinguished parliamentary secretary, but I would like to ask him if he has any more information on this study.

My understanding is that there has been \$800,000 set aside to do this study on the area in the Bay of Fundy between Amherst and Sackville, which is generally agreed will be the most vulnerable because it is at a very low sea level there. I wonder if he has any information that he could share with the House, and if he does not, could he agree to provide it at a later date.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague across the way for his good question. Our government will continue to partner with the Atlantic provinces to address the threat of coastal erosion in the region.

As the hon. member pointed out, the intergovernmental panel on climate change provided strong evidence in its most recent report in 2007 that a key concern in many regions of the world is the threat of increasing coastal erosion.

Also in 2007, our government released a report published by Natural Resources Canada titled "From Impacts to Adaptation: Canada in a Changing Climate 2007". The Atlantic chapter of this report included the following statements:

Atlantic Canada will experience more storm events, increasing storm intensity, rising sea level, storm surges, coastal erosion and flooding.

Over the past century, sea level in the Atlantic region has risen approximately 30 cm. Areas such as the coast of southeastern New Brunswick could experience sea-level rise on the order of 50 to 70 cm during the current century 2000–2100. Continued sea-level rise will amplify storm surges and flooding in the Atlantic region.

The Bay of Fundy is not uniquely sensitive to this. Many other parts of Atlantic Canada are also highly sensitive coastlines. Two significant reports on the impacts of sea level rise in New Brunswick and P.E.I. have already been undertaken and further work within individual communities is under way to develop a program on adapting to sea level rise and other coastline stresses related to climate change.

It is essential that our response to climate change encompass both adaptation and mitigation: adaptation so that we are better prepared to deal with the coming impacts of climate change, and mitigation to reduce the rate and scale of those changes in the future. Reducing the vulnerability of our coastlines to sea level rise and storm surges is an important component of our adaptation response.

In such efforts we should not focus on a single coastline, but must look comprehensively at the vulnerabilities of all regions along our coastlines. Building protective structures or barriers is but one option among many. I am encouraged by the recently established regional adaptation collaboratives, a program being led by the climate change impacts and adaptation program of Natural Resources Canada, and anticipate that much of the necessary planning to reduce the vulnerability of the Atlantic coastline will continue with this initiative.

● (1935)

Mr. Bill Casey: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his answer, but that is quite a list of potential, frightening damage that we have to look forward to.

He is right, it is not only the Bay of Fundy, it is the entire coastline on the Atlantic and Pacific, but there are numerous studies that identify that the Atlantic Canadian coastline will suffer higher sea level rises than anywhere else because of changes in currents as well as and in combination with the rising sea level.

The potential damage that the parliamentary secretary just outlined confirms what we have been saying and what our concerns are, and I appreciate him doing that, but he also said that there are other coastlines that are vulnerable. The Government of Canada study that he referred to is really frightening in the extent of the damage.

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Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is well aware of the impacts of climate change. That is why we are committed to taking action. By establishing the regional adaptation collaboratives, we can more effectively take coordinated and sustained action to reduce our vulnerability to climate change by advancing adaptation planning and decision making.

Working with President Obama to establish a clean energy dialogue, we will also be working closely with provincial and

territorial governments and stakeholders to develop a coherent national climate change and energy security strategy.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:38 p.m.)

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