



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 144 • NUMBER 086 • 2nd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, September 29, 2009

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, September 29, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-445, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (security certificates and special advocates).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a private member's bill that would repeal all sections of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act dealing with security certificates. I would like to thank the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River for seconding this bill.

This legislation is consistent with the long-standing commitment by the New Democratic Party on this issue. Security certificates have turned into one of the worst violations of civil liberties in Canada. Detaining individuals without charge, without trial and without conviction for seven and eight years should not be possible in a country that has confidence in its justice system and that values fairness and due process.

Security certificates were never intended to make it possible to imprison someone indefinitely. They were intended to be a mechanism for expedited deportation from Canada. Today that is not how they are being used, and that is why I believe this legislation must be repealed.

Security certificates should never have been allowed to replace basic police and intelligence work and the full engagement of our justice system, which should have resulted, if warranted, in charges under the Criminal Code, a fair trial and a decision by a judge or jury given the facts of the case.

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

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved that the second report of the Standing Committee on International Trade, presented on Wednesday, April 1, 2009 be concurred in.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased on behalf of the New Democratic Party to move concurrence in the second report of the Standing Committee on International Trade today in the House.

As the House knows, we have been discussing trade policy for the last few months, and we have seen some of the more egregious aspects of the current government's trade policy.

I am happy to say that despite some disagreements we have had in the past on certain aspects of trade policy, the Standing Committee on International Trade was able to actually have discussion on the report last March. This report deals with the provisions of chapter 11 and investor-state provisions that exist in the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The second report states very simply this:

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the Committee on Tuesday, March 31, 2009, your Committee recommends: that the Government vigorously defend Quebec's Pesticides Management Code in the case opposing Dow Agroscience and the Government of Canada in order to safeguard Quebec's right to enact legislation and make regulations in the public interest.

That report was a report that essentially demanded of our national government that it vigorously defend the right of Quebec to make regulations in the public interest, in this case the banning of a chemical that very clearly has negative environmental impacts and negative health impacts and that is 2,4-D.

However, there are much broader implications for this particular report and this particular provision of NAFTA. The broader implications are the implications that it has, through the chapter 11 provisions, on any government. Whether we are talking about the Quebec government or the Government of British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, any province, any territory or any municipality in Canada, it is essentially impacted by the provisions of chapter 11.

This is an important discussion we need to have and an important report that we hope Parliament will endorse. It comes out of the Standing Committee on International Trade in light of the concerns about Dow Chemical Company's attack on Quebec's right to make this regulation in the public interest. It could be Quebec today and it could well be British Columbia tomorrow.

Routine Proceedings

As democratic representatives in the House of Commons, we have to very clearly take the stand that when powerful international companies attack democratic entities and attack the rights of those entities to make safety regulations, health regulations and environmental regulations in the public interest, Parliament has to clearly take a stand.

I am pleased to say at the outset that this report stemmed from hearings the NDP was able to obtain at the Standing Committee on International Trade on 2,4-D pesticides and on the attack by Dow AgroSciences against Quebec's right to make this legislation in the public interest.

We pushed for that at the beginning of March. I am pleased to say that we had the support of the majority of members of the Standing Committee on International Trade. We had those hearings, and subsequent to those hearings we brought forward the report with the support of the Bloc Québécois and the Liberal Party as well. We brought forward the report, it was adopted and it has now been brought forward to Parliament for discussion.

[*Translation*]

The information sessions and witness testimony that the NDP was able to bring before the Standing Committee on International Trade were what was most important. I will talk about some of the statements we heard in committee about this attack by Dow AgroSciences on the Government of Quebec.

• (1010)

Once again, Quebec is not the only one affected by the provisions of chapter 11 of NAFTA, which the NDP has long opposed. All the provinces, all the territories, all the municipalities in Canada could be affected by the provisions of chapter 11.

A number of witnesses appeared before the committee. Their testimonies were very helpful in the report we are discussing today. We first heard from Steven Shrybman, the legal counsel for the Council of Canadians. This is the largest citizens' organization in Canada, with more than 100,000 members nation wide. Mr. Shrybman said:

Under chapter 11 of NAFTA, private parties—investors and companies—from the other NAFTA jurisdictions, namely the United States and Mexico, can make a claim for damages arising from an alleged breach. We're going to take the case of a claim against Canada—a Canadian government, be it a federal government, provincial government, or municipal government—because of something the government has done that the private investor or the U.S. company, for example, argues is in breach of the broadly worded and ill-defined constraints of chapter 11.

That is the problem. These private investors, such as Dow AgroSciences, have the right to attack regulations made in the public interest, and that is why the Committee on International Trade decided to strongly urge the government to protect the interests of Quebec and all of the other provinces from the use of chapter 11 to attack these regulations.

Hugo Séguin, public affairs coordinator with Équiterre, a well-known Quebec organization, had this to say about the dispute with Dow AgroSciences, or rather, Dow AgroSciences' attack on Quebec's right to pass legislation in the best interest of Quebecers in areas under its jurisdiction:

The Quebec Pesticide Management Code has been in effect since 2003. The ban on 20 active ingredients in pesticides has been in effect since 2006. For example, the Pesticide Management Code applies to turf areas, including areas used frequently

by children. Public health studies seem to show that children are exposed to even greater health risks when they play in parks, schoolyards or day care yards.

Mr. Séguin went on to say that Quebec has justified its actions on the grounds of the risk to public health. He added that Quebec is not the only jurisdiction in the world to ban 2,4-D or other pesticides. This is also the case in Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Ontario, where some pesticides, including 2,4-D, have been banned.

That is the problem. Quebec took responsibility. The Government of Quebec decided that it had to protect children by prohibiting the use of 2,4-D. Quebec is not the only jurisdiction in the world to prohibit 2,4-D. Several other jurisdictions are doing so, including Ontario. Even though Ontario is behind Quebec on this issue, it is heading in the same direction as Quebec. So Dow AgroSciences could choose to attack the Government of Ontario for its decisions, just as it has attacked the Government of Quebec's decisions. However, countries like Norway, Denmark and Sweden have also decided to prohibit the use of 2,4-D.

• (1015)

These countries are not governed by the chapter 11 provisions. So companies do not have the same grounds for attacking decisions made in the public interest by democratically elected governments.

That is the problem, and that is why there is a motion to concur in this report today. This affects municipalities, Quebec, Ontario and other provinces that want to bring in legislation to prohibit products like 2,4-D.

[*English*]

That is the fundamental problem. Essentially, there are chapter 11 provisions that can be used by any company to attack any democratic decision that is taken by a democratic government in the interests of the people it represents.

It is important to note that when the discussions were held around NAFTA, the provisions of chapter 11 that provide this super *chèque en blanc*, as is said in French, this blank cheque to the corporate sector to challenge government initiatives were something which, immediately upon signing NAFTA, the United States immediately retreated away from.

There was a very clear unease in the United States and other jurisdictions about the provisions of investor state and what it could mean in the long term. It is interesting to note, and this comes down to a fundamental question, that the chapter 11 provisions have not been reproduced by the United States in any other trade agreement it has signed since NAFTA. The provisions of chapter 11, the blank cheque given to the corporate sector to challenge the health and safety regulations put in place in the public interest, are something the United States, since that time, has moderated in all its trade agreements. There is no longer a blank cheque in any other American trade agreement.

Routine Proceedings

The United States took that step back from the brink. It said that these provisions are far too widespread, that they give too much power and control to the corporate sector. In place of them, the United States, in any provisions around investor state, has made it very clear that environmental regulations, health and safety regulations, decisions that are made by democratic bodies in the public interest cannot be challenged under chapter 11 or investor state provisions. The United States retreated immediately from that.

Canada is the only country in the world where every single comprehensive trade agreement that we have signed since NAFTA has included these blank cheque investor state provisions. I will repeat that because this is of fundamental importance. Whereas other countries have retreated from the brink, we have gone right over. Agreements that have been brought to this House have all included the chapter 11 provisions that give a blank cheque to corporate CEOs to challenge decisions made in the public interest.

Only one party in the House of Commons has defended the public's right to make regulations in the public interest through its democratically elected representatives. Only one party consistently has said that these investor state provisions, rejected by the United States since NAFTA and by every other country on the planet, are a negative, unsustainable and irresponsible provision of trade agreements that Canada has signed.

That is why New Democrats have stood in the House consistently over the past two decades, since the signing of NAFTA and the putting into place of the Canada-U.S. trade agreement, and opposed those chapter 11 provisions. We have done that for one very simple reason, that when we give investor state provisions, when we allow this blank cheque to the corporate sector, it is understandable there is going to be a very clear attack on some democratically elected government's right to put in place that legislation.

What is more important is the effect it has on legislation even before it is brought forward. We have heard in discussions at the municipal and provincial levels on the possible implications of chapter 11, that sometimes governments step back from taking action in the public domain because they are concerned about whether or not investor state provisions could be applied by companies that feel that their right to make a profit may be infringed upon.

That brings me back to the issue of 2,4-D, an issue that, I will repeat, was supported, that we must vigorously defend Quebec's right to put forward this legislation in the public interest to protect children. As I have mentioned, witnesses were very clear on this. As a trade committee, and I am hoping to get the approval of Parliament, we are saying that the Canadian government has to vigorously defend the right of provincial legislatures, the right of the national assembly, the right of municipalities, the right of democratically elected bodies to put in place legislation in the public interest.

● (1020)

It is important to mention some of the chapter 11 cases that have been brought forward, because these indicate the impact of chapter 11 and why the NDP believes, like Barack Obama, that NAFTA needs to be renegotiated. The chapter 11 provisions need to be strongly curtailed because they simply were not appropriate at the

time, are not appropriate today and are not a mechanism that allows for the kind of public policy Canadians want to see.

As soon as NAFTA was put into place, Ethyl Corporation, a U.S. chemical company, challenged a Canadian ban on the gasoline additive MMT. MMT is a neurotoxin. No one objects to the very clear health impacts of that ingredient, but the fact that the government moved to ban MMT led to the use of chapter 11 provisions. Canadian taxpayers across the country from coast to coast had to cough up \$13 million for an out-of-court settlement. This was for a product that is a known neurotoxin. It was banned by the Canadian government in a responsible way to ensure that the product could not have the negative health impacts, but because of the chapter 11 provisions, Canadian taxpayers had to compensate the company for producing a product that has known health impacts.

What is wrong with that picture? Embedded in NAFTA are provisions that force taxpayers to compensate bad companies for producing a product that is a health risk. What is wrong with this? It is rewarding bad behaviour. It is like saying to somebody who has murdered somebody, "We are going to give you compensation because we are going to have to put you in jail". This is absolutely absurd.

That is why the NDP has been saying consistently over the last number of years when these investor state provisions come forward that NAFTA has to be renegotiated and that we have to fundamentally rejig our approach on trade policy, including removing the chapter 11 provisions from the trade policy template that is put forward for all of our comprehensive trade agreements.

That is a fundamental problem. It is a problem in Quebec when it tries to legislate and ban a toxic product, 2,4-D, and it is challenged by the company. It is a problem for other provincial governments that may choose to do the same thing. It is a challenge for our federal government.

The NAFTA chapter 11 provisions have a negative impact on public policy. The NDP believes that NAFTA must be renegotiated. We will agree with Barack Obama on this. We believe that investor state needs to be removed from the provisions of NAFTA.

● (1025)

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my friends on the other side of the House that just because they say it, it does not necessarily make it so. It has been my experience, in listening to the NDP, that it has never seen a trade agreement it could ever support regardless of what is in the agreement.

I want to set the record straight. I sit on the international trade committee as well, and we have made these comments in the trade committee. I also want to state for the record today three points on which we on this side of the House want to be very clear.

Routine Proceedings

Certainly, as the Government of Canada, we are currently assessing the claim and we are consulting with the government of Quebec. The fact that a notice of arbitration has been filed does not establish the merits of the challenge. Once again I remind my colleague across the way that just because he says something, it does not necessarily make it so.

The second point I want to make is that should this claim proceed, the Government of Canada will continue to work with the government of Quebec to vigorously defend our interests, including the pesticide management code.

The third point I would like to leave with the House is that NAFTA preserves a state's ability to regulate in the public interest, including issues concerning the environment and conservation.

I will end with those comments.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague must admit that the Standing Committee on International Trade disagreed with the government's stand that somehow it was standing up for the interests of Quebec and the public. As he well knows, the reason this report is before the House is that a majority of the members on the Standing Committee on International Trade said that the government was not vigorously defending. That is the fundamental problem.

The other issue is very clear. The member is essentially saying that chapter 11 provisions are not a problem. Well, most honest taxpayers would disagree with him on that. The idea that we need to reward a company for bad behaviour and pay compensation when it produces a toxic product and that somehow it gets money out of it because of the perverse provisions of chapter 11, I think most Canadian taxpayers would fundamentally disagree with that.

I know the member and his riding well. I know that if he went door to door and asked if people would be willing to contribute \$13 million for this toxic product because of chapter 11, most people in his riding would say "you must be kidding, you need to stand up for Canadians". That is what we are saying the government should do.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a precedence and a pattern within the government and the previous Liberal government's negotiations, particularly with the United States, but on all trade agreements. The pattern suggests that policy and legislation made within Canada's own jurisdiction, whether it is at the federal level or the provincial level, is always subject to someone else's interests ultimately, which is a confounding notion to Canadians who go to the polls, elect people to speak on their behalf, come to a place like this to negotiate and debate, come to some resolution over what the policy should be in Canada's own interest, and then have those very same governments, our own governments, subject to a foreign interest, whether it be a commercial or foreign government's interests. I am thinking of the softwood lumber dispute that we went through recently where we are witnessing Canadian lumber policy being made by a foreign national government. The federal Government of Canada does not even have that power and yet the federal Government of the United States somehow was given that power in a trade agreement that Canada signed onto.

Now we have a case with pesticide management where Quebec seeks to protect its own interests, the interests of its citizens, and somehow finds that subject to a foreign company's interests.

Does this have any sort of a chilling effect on Canadian legislators and policy-makers when we are setting up our own regulations knowing there is this 800 pound gorilla out there that can actually subvert and destroy Canada's own actions, whether at the federal or provincial level?

● (1030)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I admire the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley because he is one of the most knowledgeable members in the House on environmental issues. He comes from one of the most beautiful parts of the country. He is absolutely right. This is not only an attack on existing legislation, such as the Quebec ban on 2,4-D, but the chill effect on any other legislation that comes forward for health and safety and the environmental health of Canadians.

We are often criticized in the House by the Liberals and Conservative for having opposed the softwood sellout and the shipbuilding sellout, but for simple reasons. We actually read the agreements and we knew the impacts so we were able to oppose knowing what the impacts of those trade deals would be.

The member referenced the softwood sellout. Tens of thousands of jobs were lost across this country and dozens of mills closed. There is no doubt that it was one of the most irresponsible bits of public policy ever brought forward by the government. Supported by the Liberals, the Conservatives brought in the softwood sellout and softwood communities across the country continue to pay the price.

We are very proud that we stood up in the House. Our responsibility is to read through and understand the impacts, to do our due diligence, to do our homework, as we always do, and to push back when bad policy is being introduced. In this case, we have the support of the majority on the Standing Committee on International Trade and we hope to have the support of a majority of the House of Commons on this.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, 18 months ago, there was a case in which Canadian pesticide regulation on the fruits and vegetables that were produced and sold to Canadians in-house were achieving a certain level of stringency so that fewer and fewer pesticides were being used and fewer chemicals were coming into the Canadian food system and yet we received a challenge from the U.S.

The U.S. was saying that it wanted higher levels and, in some cases, it was 10 times the rate that Canadians were experiencing. What was Canada's reaction? It might be somewhat in connection to these trade policies but Canada relented and then allowed our chemical levels that were permitted on fruits and vegetables to be increased and, in some cases, tenfold.

It is perverse and bizarre. Folks back home assume that the power to set health and safety regulations and standards must rest with either the provincial or federal government. Therefore, when the government imposed this on fruits and vegetables saying that it would like there to be fewer chemicals because it knew from the studies this was harmful to Canadians, particularly to vulnerable populations such as seniors and young children, Canada did not have that power anymore.

Routine Proceedings

How could we have possibly eroded such a fundamental principle in our democratic system?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has put his finger on the exact problem of not only our existing trade policy but our policy in general over the past few years under the previous government and under the current government.

What we are seeing is the public interest being undermined. We need to ask to what end. The idea to increase the pesticide residue in Canadian food is absolutely ridiculous when people sense, as I do and as most of us across the country should, that Canadians actually want a higher standard of food safety. They want a better, cleaner food product available and better water quality. Canadians want higher standards not lower standards but what we are seeing, which is a perverse result of the investor state provisions, is the exact opposite.

If I had more time I could have read into the record pages and pages of the chapter 11 challenges against legislation that has been introduced in Canada at various levels opposed by some corporate CEOs using the chapter 11 provisions. It is not just the Ethyl Corporation, the \$13 million Canadians have to pay out, or the 2,4-D ban in Quebec being attacked by Dow AgroSciences. It is a myriad of challenges and that is a fundamental problem.

When public policy is being challenged, not on the basis of whether it is good for the public or good for a certain corporate executive, then the public interest is being neglected.

● (1035)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to this motion. We did have a debate at the trade committee on the issue of chapter 11. We heard from some witnesses on the issue of chapter 11 and some of the potential chapter 11 cases involving Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec.

A provincial government has taken a position on a regulatory matter in terms of pesticides within its jurisdiction. We stand, and I believe and I certainly hope the government stands, in support of that provincial government on this issue.

We had a fairly short session at committee on chapter 11 but we need a longer study. I remember that day I spoke at committee urging it to at some point have a longer study of chapter 11.

The principle behind chapter 11 is that of national treatment, which is a reasonable principle. In fact, it is core to trade agreements. It is essential that we have some level of protection of national treatment to ensure that Canadian companies, which are investing abroad in other countries with which we have trade agreements, are not discriminated against by those governments. That could be in areas of procurement in some cases or it could be in areas of regulations in other cases.

We know now and we see what is going on in the U.S. around buy American and some of these other provisions what a pernicious impact protectionist measures can have on Canada and on Canadian companies. We clearly need provisions to protect Canadian companies, workers, investors and pensioners whose retirement savings and income depend on their investments being protected for Canadian companies doing business abroad.

I think most Canadians and most members of the House would agree that national treatment is a reasonable principle. We need to ensure that Canadian investors, companies and workers' interests are protected in the countries with which we enter trade agreements.

At the same time, for us to protect our workers, our companies and our investors in those countries, we need to ensure we provide equal levels of protection to their companies doing business in Canada. So there is a compromise there and a trade-off but it is a principle that we believe in.

The question about chapter 11 and the investor state provisions specifically within chapter 11 are important questions. Whether or not chapter 11 in its design is working in Canada's interests is also an important one. What are the other approaches to national treatment that other countries in their trade agreements are pursuing? Those are important questions that we need to study.

I have talked to some of the people involved in the negotiation of NAFTA, people who believe very strongly in NAFTA and strongly believe in the principles of free trade but who also believe that there are issues around chapter 11.

How do we deal with those in NAFTA? How do we reopen a discussion on chapter 11 and should we reopen NAFTA at a time of deepening and strengthening American protectionism? Those are important questions for us to ask in the House. Even with whatever flaws that may exist in chapter 11, I think most Canadians would agree that the NAFTA and the FTA have, by and large, benefited Canadians, have created jobs for Canadians and have increased competitiveness for Canadians.

● (1040)

The question is how we deal with investor state provisions, with the principle of national treatment and with chapter 11 of NAFTA.

It is an important study, not just in terms of our current agreements, our North American Free Trade Agreement, but in terms of future trade agreements and how we deal with the principle of national treatment. It is distinct from whether or not we open up chapter 11, potentially opening up NAFTA at a time when we see heightened American protectionism. It is quite possible that there are areas for future trade agreements where we may consider a different approach to national treatment and that there are ways to better protect Canadian interests and strengthen our capacity to defend the right of Canadian sub-national or national governments to put in place policies, environmental or otherwise, to protect our citizens and at the same time enter into and expand our trade relationships. I think those are important discussions.

Routine Proceedings

We have not had, in my opinion, as much success as we should have had on some of these challenges. Is that because of flaws within chapter 11, or is that because the federal government has not provided enough resources or support to the challengers? Are we not providing enough support for chapter 11 challenges from within Canada? I have heard the case made by trade experts that the Department of Justice is not provided with enough resources, that it does not provide enough support to sub-national governments when they issue a challenge under chapter 11. That is important. It is one of the reasons we are seeing these disproportionate failures. We are not doing a good job at the federal level to help sub-national governments defend their interests and their capacity to protect their citizens.

In some cases legislation has been crafted that has not been chapter 11 compliant, that has been sloppy in its design. It was designed for a pre-NAFTA era, but then it failed when exposed to post-NAFTA rigour under chapter 11. We need to make sure that when we draft legislation, both at the federal and the sub-national government level, whether municipal or provincial, that the federal Department of Justice and the department of international trade work with other departments on the federal side that may be issuing a challenge, and/or they work with sub-national governments to ensure they are in fact compliant with NAFTA and chapter 11, and that it is tenable under NAFTA.

The whole approach of how we deal with this has to be looked at from the beginning. If a provincial or municipal level government intends to introduce a piece of legislation, say on the environment, we should make certain that those governments have access to federal expertise in the Department of Justice and the department of international trade to ensure they design the legislation in such a way that it can withstand NAFTA or chapter 11 challenges. The design of these initiatives is critically important.

Second, if the legislation has in fact been implemented in a way that ought to be chapter 11 resilient, then we should offer the provincial or municipal governments full support from the federal lawyers in the Department of Justice and the department of international trade.

Number one, are we doing our utmost at the federal level to support other levels of government in ensuring that they design legislation and regulations that are consistent with and tenable under chapter 11? Second, are we helping them enough, when there is a challenge, to succeed in fighting those challenges?

● (1045)

I would say that on both counts the federal government is not doing enough. We need to reach out. This is a federal government that has simply not engaged provincial governments effectively on some of these matters. For instance, with respect to the whole buy American issue, after seven months of buy American provisions, attacking Canadian jobs and exports at a time when we are seeing unprecedented job losses in Canada, the only leadership we have seen has come from provincial level governments in Canada.

I commend the provincial governments for filling the vacuum, rising to the occasion and taking leadership on that file. However, the fact is that it takes federal leadership and cooperation. I am certain that many of my colleagues opposite would agree that the

Conservative Prime Minister has not built strong relations with provincial premiers and governments.

Frankly, at a time of global financial crisis and rising American and international protectionism, it has never been more important that we have a prime minister and a government that reaches out, strategizes, cooperates and collaborates with provincial and municipal governments. I think part of the issue is that the federal Conservative government does not understand the importance of close collaboration with provincial governments on these issues.

I alluded to the second issue earlier. We have to ask how we deal with the current chapter 11 provisions in NAFTA. I believe that the international trade committee should study chapter 11 thoroughly. I think we should put a significant amount of time into the study of chapter 11 so that we understand it.

The question that comes after is that when we have a more granular understanding of what we might do differently if we were negotiating a NAFTA again, would it then be in Canada's national interest to open up the NAFTA during protectionist times? I would assert that the bar had better be pretty high in terms of the gains to us if we were to propose to open up NAFTA during these times, because otherwise the risk would be very significant.

The third question is how we can better inform ourselves and our negotiators for future trade agreements. Clearly, national treatment is central to any trade agreement. We simply have to ensure that our companies are protected against discriminatory practices by foreign governments. That is important for Canadian workers, investors and union members whose retirements savings depend on Canadian equities that are invested in companies around the world.

We have to make sure that Canadian investments are protected. The only way to ensure that is to provide reciprocal protection to those investments. I do not think that anybody who understands the importance of trade would disagree with the principal of national treatment. The question is what the best vehicle and the best approaches are.

I would propose that when we have this study at committee that we bring in some of the people who were involved in the NAFTA discussions. We should bring in people like Gordon Ritchie, who was involved in the NAFTA discussions and who may have some views as to what could be done differently in terms of investor protection, investor state provisions and national treatment for other trade agreements going forward.

I think we should have a discussion at the trade committee about other issues as well, not just about investor state provisions. We should have a good discussion on the whole issue of chapter treatment versus side agreements on issues like the environment and labour.

● (1050)

It is not accurate to say that side agreements are meaningless, because they are not. In fact they can be very substantive and may have certain advantages over full chapter treatment, depending on what is written in the full chapter agreement and what is written in the labour and side agreements.

Routine Proceedings

However, the point is whether we should be looking at what some other countries are doing. Some other countries are moving toward a full chapter treatment approach to some of those issues. Is that more substantive than side agreements with teeth and meaningful provisions to ensure enforcement?

Some trade experts I have talked with have argued that it depends on the specific agreement; it depends on the side agreements and the full chapter treatment. These are the kinds of issues we should have at committee. However, it is only possible if we are able to put our ideological weapons down.

When asked, there are people who simply say that they are pro free trade, because they are from the ideological right. And there are people who say that they are against free trade, because they are on the ideological left.

I think that the 20th century belonged to rigid ideologues and that in the 21st century the issues are far more complex, the challenges and opportunities facing Canada are greater, more frightening in some ways but more exciting in some ways, and it really takes an important debate that is less ideological than some of the ones we have had in this place in the past. That means we have to be prepared to look at these issues, not in terms of being a New Democrat and thus opposed to free trade agreements or being a Conservative and thus in favour of free trade agreements, but in a more mature sophisticated way, to actually study these issues and ensure we believe in trade.

But how can we strengthen our trade agreements to ensure we build a better global governance around issues of human rights? How can we strengthen our trade agreements so that we build stronger global and multilateral governance on issues of the environment? How can we ensure national treatment and protection of our Canadian companies as they invest and diversify their interests geographically outside the U.S.? How can we ensure they are protected and at the same time protect the rights of Canadian governments, national and sub-national, to implement legislation to protect its citizens?

Those are all important questions, and they are the types of questions that I hope the trade committee and this House could discuss and debate in a more open-minded, constructive way and less ideological and divisive way, because these are important issues for the future of the country.

Canada has the first trade deficit it has had in 30 years. As a small, open economy that depends on external trade for our standard of living and quality of life, we are now buying more than we are selling. That is ominous.

These trade agreements are important. There is a need to diversify our trade relationships outside of the U.S., outside of North America. There is a need to deepen our trade relationships with the EU, with India and China. China is growing by over 8% this year, and it is projected to grow by 8.5% next year, with massive investments in infrastructure, high-speed rail, clean technology, environmental sciences, clean energy and commodities, all of which are areas where Canada can lead and excel. We need to deepen our relationships with China.

The current Prime Minister has shown contempt for China and neglect for India.

We, the Liberal Party, believe in deepening our trade relationships with places like China and India, diversifying our trade relationships and building on multiculturalism, not just as a social policy, but as a successful economic strategy to build natural bridges in the fastest growing economies in the world.

These are important debates. We are committed, in the Liberal Party, to dealing with these constructively, to defend Canadian jobs and interests right here and to extend our influence on the world.

● (1055)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciated the remarks made by the hon. member for Kings—Hants, especially when he talked about a longer study of chapter 11. I would definitely be willing to support a longer study of those provisions in committee, if he were to propose it. I think this is an important aspect.

Of course, we have not always agreed, especially when it comes to the trade agreement with Colombia, which is still being debated in this House. We think it would be completely irresponsible to sign this special agreement with that regime, which has had so many problems in the area of human rights and has ties to paramilitary groups. That said, we do agree on some points at least, and a longer study of chapter 11 is one of them.

This government's lack of coherence and its lax attitude when it comes to defending Quebec's right to legislate on the introduction of 2,4-D is another aspect that must be noted.

Would my colleague agree that the government's actions in this file have been deficient so far?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member. The government must do more to defend our international interests. It must support provincial and municipal governments, and their efforts to preserve the legislation and bills meant to protect their citizens.

As I have already said, working with provincial and municipal governments has always been a Liberal priority, for we see the importance of defending their environmental efforts, for example.

[*English*]

At the same time, the government can do more, but in terms of the current cases, it would be very simple to have the Department of Justice and the Department of International Trade, and I would posit that we should have ministers, before committee. We should have the Minister of Justice and we should have the Minister of International Trade to actually discuss whether or not the resources are being provided adequately. We have to have the resources there.

There will be discussion on Bill C-23 and I look forward to having that discussion. I hope that it will be a truthful discussion in which the member presents the facts and not his hallucinations about the situation in Colombia.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Dow AgroSciences LLC case against the government, and this came up I believe on August 25, 2008, I had a look at one of the articles by Meg Sears, who is an investigator for the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. I thought it would be interesting to have the member's comment on her conclusion with regard to the matter now before the House in this report. She says:

The Dow challenge to the regulation of 2,4-D by Quebec directly challenges Canadians' ability to take precautionary measures to protect health and the environment. Trade agreement should bring signatories to higher levels of protection, not the opposite—

She goes on, but I think we can get the gist of her concern here. She concludes by saying:

I urge the Government of Canada to defend the rights of all levels of government to enact precautionary measures to protect health and the environment, and to ensure that NAFTA puts Canadians' health before multinational corporate profits.

For the layperson, I think that really capsulizes the issues now before us, and it does not surprise me that the majority of the Standing Committee on International Trade wants to defend the rights of Quebec in this matter.

What does concern me, however, is that the government does not support protecting the health rights before corporate profit. This is very disturbing to me. I am sure it is very disturbing to Canadians and I would hope that the member could maybe try to explain why the government has taken a position contrary to the majority of the committee.

• (1100)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I know Premier Charest. I know him very well as a premier, as somebody who is very rigorous in his approach. Let us be clear. Premier Charest is a free trader. Premier Charest believes very strongly in trade. He is also somebody who has a strong history of environmental policy and strength. He was a former federal minister of the environment who earned a great reputation internationally as a minister of the environment.

Therefore, I believe that the Government of Quebec under Premier Charest's leadership would have subjected this legislation to great rigour prior to its implementation with the full understanding that it could be challenged through chapter 11.

I have every expectation that the legislation was designed rigorously and merits the support of the federal government. We have the Premier of Quebec, the Government of Quebec, take a strong position to ban a particular pesticide to protect its citizens and the federal government does not do anything. No wonder we are losing these cases, if the federal government does not do anything to help sub-national governments win them.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the past, in the member's different incarnations in one party and then another, there has been a consistency of support for these types of trade agreements.

My question is around the notion of anticipation. An international agreement contract is a signature of some sort of hope or desire for the future, no different than any other business contract, marriage agreement or international trade. It is the same thing. It is the coming together to agree on a more hopeful future.

Yet, did the member not, in endorsing this, campaigning for it and praising its glories to the Canadian people, anticipate that written into this agreement in chapter 11 was an element that would subject Canadian legislators to some sort of punitive action from foreign companies?

It is as black and white as can be and this was one of the concerns raised with the NAFTA at the time of its creation and its negotiation, that Canada would be subjected to this, in negotiating this piece in particular, aside from the ideological support of trade agreements, whatever it may be, by some in the House, and regardless of the conditions and terms that exist within the trade agreements. That is insane.

Did he and the folks that he worked with, on whatever side of the House he was working on at the time, not anticipate this very result? Provincial and federal governments would be subjected to foreign interests and affect the very laws that we hope to create, the very regulations we hope to promote, such as the pesticide one that we are talking about today, softwood lumber and others that have gone on, and Canadian interests would be, in fact, be hurt by agreements that he endorsed at the time and continues to endorse today.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, the fact that I have said I want to see this studied at committee is to ensure that the principle of national treatment, which I support and believe in, is defended effectively on a go forward basis when we sign these agreements.

I actually said earlier today in the House and at committee that I believe, and I have spoken with some of the people who were involved in the negotiations of NAFTA, that there may be better ways than the current approach with chapter 11 to defend national treatment and at the same time protect Canadian interests.

I have actually said that which shows the capacity, when presented with facts, to change an opinion. Whereas the NDP has been against free trade agreements consistently when they have created a tremendous amount of wealth, prosperity, improved standard of living and quality of life for Canadians. In fact, I am willing to embrace change and willing to look at the facts on an ongoing basis. That is our job as legislators.

I am not ideologically blinded like the NDP which is against every free trade agreement despite the overwhelming burden of evidence that free trade is good for Canada.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, an American company, Dow AgroSciences, sued under chapter 11 of NAFTA for \$2 million in compensation, claiming that Quebec's pesticide management code violated its right to sell 2,4-D in Quebec.

Quebec's pesticide management code, which was adopted in 2003, is the only one of its kind in Canada. It sets standards governing the use and sale of pesticides in Quebec. The code prohibits the sale of the herbicide 2,4-D for public health reasons. Quebec chose to ban this product because it considers 2,4-D harmful to human health and the environment. In case of doubt, the precautionary principle must apply.

Routine Proceedings

Members will also recall that the Bloc Québécois member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie questioned the Minister of the Environment to make sure the government was committed to defending Quebec's pesticide management code. The government is talking out of both sides of its mouth, however. While the Minister of International Trade is saying he wants to defend Quebec's position on this issue, the Minister of the Environment is telling the United States that Canada must harmonize its policies with the American government's. According to my Bloc colleague, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, the actions by the Minister of the Environment, in addition to undermining my efforts as the Bloc's international trade critic in this House at the time, were watering down environmental requirements and favouring the Dow Chemical Company at Quebec's expense.

We know that Équiterre, Ecojustice and the David Suzuki Foundation, along with other environmental groups, prepared an online petition that concerned citizens could sign to express their support for the code. Clearly, the response was in favour of protecting the code.

Moreover, this was the purpose of the motion the Standing Committee on International Trade adopted on March 31, 2009, a motion I had put forward. This motion said that the committee:

...recommends: that the Government vigorously defend Quebec's Pesticides Management Code in the case opposing Dow Agroscience and the Government of Canada in order to safeguard Quebec's right to enact legislation and make regulations in the public interest.

Two key elements stand out in all of this. First, there is chapter 11 of NAFTA and second, there is the right to protect public health and the environment. These two elements are obviously at loggerheads. This brings to mind the many, often heated discussions held on what was known as the SPP, the security and prosperity partnership of North America. The purpose of all these discussions was essentially to lower the bar for regulations in just about every governmental sphere of activity so that they would be comparable to those of the United States. There have been a number of examples or attempts in that sense.

As for chapter 11 of NAFTA, it was drafted and agreed to by Canada's negotiators. It is well known that Canada's negotiators have a very good reputation. I am not blaming them for all this. However, it is the government that tells them what it wants and thus they give direction to the negotiations.

We will always wonder why chapter 11 was included in NAFTA at the time if not primarily to protect corporate investments.

• (1110)

In the case of the United States, it was to protect the investments of their companies in Canada. In the case of Canada, it was to protect its investments in the United States. And look what happened. We began to see an increase in challenges, based essentially on the definition or interpretation of expropriation. We know it is not necessarily easy to draw a clear line in every case.

In Quebec and in Canada, in the wake of regulatory changes, a Canadian company does not have the same power to sue that a foreign company operating in Canada does. It is quite something to give foreign companies additional rights or the freedom to impose their views and to interfere in how Quebec or Canada operates. We

know that the Government of Quebec has banned the use of this pesticide because it was being used in more domestic settings and was more likely to pose a threat to the public. When such a pesticide is used on big fields with close to zero population density, it is not the same. However, when the Government of Quebec legislated on this, it was to protect the environment and public health.

We can talk at length about chapter 11 on investments. I will come back to that. The real goal of the United States is to lower standards that restrict their trade. They are then free to sue Canada and in this instance Quebec.

We know this. It is all fine and well to talk about free trade, but the freedom to trade, as the lawyers say, goes something like this: when laws are passed, the freedom of some ends where the freedom of others begins. The freedom to trade, therefore, should also end where the freedom to health and a safe environment begin. Where is the balance? There are people who want to make money, who are prepared to sell all sorts of things. By all accounts, they do not think that way.

In this case, I believe, I am convinced, that the Government of Quebec is correct, and has the right to legislate and impose higher standards. I think that people in general feel that standards must be respected from one country to the next. For example, we heard from representatives of the European Union at the Committee on International Trade. They told us that the European Union had banned certain laundry detergent products. Naturally, the other countries made threats and even wanted to take legal action. The European Union stood its ground. When a sovereign country decides to establish quality standards based on its values and interests—I am talking about the health of its people and its environment—nothing should interfere with that decision. I said sovereign, and that makes me think that if Quebec were a sovereign country, it would likely establish standards and would demand that they be respected in its free trade agreements. That is one of the items discussed while the countries are negotiating.

• (1115)

The negotiating style of many countries makes it clear from the very beginning that some issues are non-negotiable. When a population respects its own priorities—which Quebec would do if it were sovereign—some issues are simply non-negotiable. Of course I support free trade, but not at just any price. We need limits and standards.

Routine Proceedings

With respect to chapter 11, we know that Canada often signs bad agreements. Such agreements are part of a negative trend. They enable multinationals to sue governments directly over the policies they adopt. These companies believe that any measure—social, environmental or whatever—that cuts into their profits constitutes expropriation and requires compensation. These agreements also enable companies to sue for such astronomical amounts that they can prevent the government from working for the common good.

The Conservative government, which wants to give foreign investors complete freedom and does not want to regulate them, is involved in all kinds of bilateral negotiations to sign bad agreements modelled on chapter 11 of NAFTA and the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, the MAI, which everyone deplors.

Investment protection agreements do not have to be that bad. Of all the countries in the world, only Canada and the United States sign these kinds of agreements. The Bloc Québécois believes that Quebec would not copy the Canada-U.S. model, so we are asking the government to change its policy. Multinational corporations, like any other citizen, must submit to the authority of the state.

There can be no doubt that we support investment protection. It makes sense. A company looking to do business in a foreign country must be assured of a minimum level of respect and protection before dedicating assets, money and often human resources to set up shop in that country. However, that must not be at the expense of the country itself, its people or its environment.

Of course, in some countries, laws and regulations are too weak to protect people and the environment. That often happens with Canadian mining companies that are actually foreign-owned. They set up shop in Canada because they can take advantage of the Canadian government's unlimited protection for what they plan to do in foreign countries. These companies take action against labour rights and even the environment, but they are not punished for actions that would be unacceptable in Canada and Quebec.

We are in favour of foreign investment protection. We are in favour of protecting our companies' investments, and by the same token, we are in favour of investment protection in general, because a company can be expropriated for any reason.

For me, the word expropriation has a much broader meaning than to simply say that the company can no longer hope to bring in the same amount of profit as it had hoped when it was first established. As we know, things change. The expropriation we often see in municipalities, both in terms of property as well as measures taken by a municipal government, involves telling someone that he or she must physically change locations for some reason. Of course compensation is given, but not the same level of compensation that foreign companies think they should get, companies that come and set up in a country and then claim they have been divested, not of the assets they actually have and can exploit, but rather of their future, probable and expected profits.

• (1120)

Even the companies in each country cannot do it this way. There are three things wrong with NAFTA's chapter 11.

First of all, the definition of expropriation is so vague that any government measure, except for a general tax measure, can be

challenged by foreign investors if it diminishes the profits generated by their investments. Indeed, a Kyoto implementation plan, which would have large polluters such as oil companies pay dearly, could be challenged under chapter 11 and result in government compensation. American companies hold majority interests in Alberta oil companies. Chapter 11 opens the door to the most abusive challenges.

Second, the definition of investor is so broad that it includes any shareholder.

And third, we have the definition of investment, which I will not explain, since I was just told that I do not have much time left.

What is important to take away from this is that any self-respecting nation, like Quebec if it were sovereign, would have high standards to protect its population and its environment, and those standards would be non-negotiable in a free trade agreement that is intelligently prepared and concluded.

I am convinced that protecting public health must be at the top of our priorities because the health of individuals is at stake. Usage must be legislated by those governments closest to their citizens, the municipalities, among others, supported in this case by Quebec.

Investment protection should be adjusted to a greater extent in the agreements the government enters into in the future and in those currently being negotiated, because Canada's existing agreements are bad agreements. We believe that there should be some protection for investments but not to the detriment of public health and the environment.

To conclude, in this agreement, unfortunately, we see the influence of what was once highly touted by the principal negotiators for Canada and the United States, this partnership for security and prosperity. We had to lower our standards to adjust to those of the United States in order to achieve prosperity. But they have been hard hit and that is not what we want in Quebec. We want to protect the health of the public and of the environment. When there is doubt, the precautionary principle must apply. That is what all environmental groups are saying. It is up to us to decide what is good for us and what we should defend in spite of chapter 11, which allows for bad agreements.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was very interested in what the member for Sherbrooke had to say. He is one of the most knowledgeable members of the House when it comes to international trade. We agree that the Conservatives have proposed a number of harmful measures in this area.

Routine Proceedings

I have two questions for the hon. member. We are debating the agreement between Canada and Colombia. I know that the Bloc shares the NDP's view that it is completely irresponsible to sign such an agreement. We agree on this, but we would like to make a proposal: the Standing Committee on International Trade could look more closely at all the issues around chapter 11 and its impact on democratic governments like the Government of Quebec, which is under attack because of the provisions of chapter 11.

Does the member agree that NAFTA must be renegotiated in order to eliminate this aspect of chapter 11, which is so harmful to democratic governments?

• (1125)

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster is reversing our roles: it is the NDP that is supporting the Bloc Québécois against the agreement with Colombia.

Clearly, when a country has a bad agreement, it must work on it and add clarification, such as the member for Kings—Hants described earlier. It all comes down to the negotiations and how to negotiate, but this chapter must be re-evaluated to avoid outrageous situations like what is happening with the Dow Chemical Company.

Agreements must be clear. Some things are acceptable, and others are non-negotiable. Health and the environment should never be negotiable.

I suggest that countries that want to trade with each other are mature enough to include major social measures in trade agreements, even at the WTO. These measures can pertain to labour rights or the environment. There have to be minimum standards so that countries like Canada do not hurry to sign bilateral free trade agreements just to exploit countries like Colombia.

At present, we are exploiting the anti-democratic policies that exist there when it comes to protecting people, health and the environment. There is exploitation, so there have to be standards. We have to move toward multilateralism.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I looked at some of the briefing notes, one area caught my attention, and maybe the member could enlighten the House.

It says when the proposed ban was announced by Quebec, Quebec's own internal documents actually indicated the absence of a scientific basis for the ban. That is a pretty strong assessment for why there should not be a ban.

The province stated that the ban was based on a precautionary approach, which I had indicated earlier in a question, pending the outcome of reassessments on the safety of 2,4-D. The assessments were conducted, and they found that 2,4-D did not pose a significant health risk.

Most people would say that if there is no evidence and the assessment shows no particular health risk, then carrying on simply because we believe doing so is precautionary does raise some interesting questions.

Almost none of the NAFTA chapter 11 disputes have been successful. Now I understand that other Canadian cities like Toronto and Halifax have implemented pesticide bans on 2,4-D.

First of all, if there is no health assessment that says there is a posed risk, why has no chapter 11 case been filed against the bans that have been made in other cities? There is something wrong here. I do not understand.

Maybe the member could enlighten the House as to the basis for the conclusion of the committee's majority report.

Second, why has a chapter 11 case not been launched against Toronto and Halifax?

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, of course there is scientific evidence. For example, we know very well that there are some countries that have banned specific products on the basis of certain studies and analyses whereas others accept them on the basis of other studies. We find ourselves in a system where the assessment of certain products many not necessarily be identical. It is often a function of peoples' concern for health. "When in doubt, don't" is an often used saying.

However, some organizations have clearly stated that there is a risk to health and that it increases with the proximity of the product to the individual. In fact, you could spend a whole day beside a sealed container of 2,4-D with no problem at all. The application of 2,4-D on fields by farmers who respect the recommended standards, where people are not nearby, is altogether different than its cosmetic use on lawns, parks and gardens, where people use the product and remain in the parks and gardens.

Therefore, in this matter, the precautionary principle does apply because, I will reiterate, when in doubt, don't. Nevertheless, other scientists also say that there is a danger to health.

[*English*]

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is really a follow-up to the previous questions asked of the member for Sherbrooke.

If there are shortcomings with respect to both bilateral and multilateral applications of chapter 11 along the lines that the member is concerned about with respect to opening the door to pollution and the kinds of pesticides that have been cited and so on, what would he suggest we do in terms of applications of international rule of law?

Also, if that cannot be found and that is a problem, is he suggesting that there should be no free trade agreements, that we should have a moratorium in a global economy and not take any initiatives with respect to trying to find these kinds of fiscally balanced relationships that will add value to both national economies and international economies?

Routine Proceedings

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, I believe that in my speech earlier I said that the Bloc Québécois is fundamentally in favour of free trade. Indeed, we have to trade with other countries. Indeed, we can invest in other countries, just as other countries can invest here. Nonetheless, certain situations show that poor negotiations result in bad agreements.

We have known that for years. During the first few years after this agreement was signed with the United States, things were dead calm; there were no lawsuits. Consider chapter 11 for a moment. There are always experts who see certain opportunities and we know that the United States of America is renowned for its litigious nature. Even the American public likes to sue. If you were a weather forecaster and you promised good weather tomorrow and the weather ended up being lousy, you could get sued for that. They are well versed in lawsuits.

As soon as this flaw in chapter 11 was noticed, an immediate attempt should have been made to correct it. And why was this flaw repeated in all the bilateral agreements signed by the government? Investment agreements have been copied from chapter 11 and open the door to foreign companies to sue Canada and Quebec.

We should adjust our standards, as other countries have done, and our agreements should be signed based on standards that we respect.

● (1135)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first item on today's projected order of business was Bill C-23, which is the Colombia free trade agreement. I know it is of significant interest to the House and to many Canadians, particularly those who are concerned about human rights abuses in Colombia and the propriety of getting into a trade deal.

For those who may have tuned in to try to understand what is going on here, I thought I should briefly explain that the members of standing committees do report to the House. In its second report, the Standing Committee on International Trade reported with regard to a pesticide dispute under chapter 11 of NAFTA. Their majority recommendation was that the government vigorously defend Quebec's pesticides management code in the case opposing Dow AgroSciences and the Government of Canada in order to safeguard Quebec's right to enact legislation and make regulations in the public interest.

That is the recommendation to the House. It is a recommendation to the government to express the view of the majority of the committee. I repeat that it is a majority, because the government members of the committee did not support this report. The opposition parties were the ones who made this recommendation. It probably hearkens back to the history of talking about NAFTA issues here. I know it has come up a couple of times in debate with regard to the softwood lumber dispute and in the debates that went on in this place for a substantial period of time.

The debate during that period really demonstrated to Canadians how rigorous this process of dispute-settlement resolution can be, how nasty it can get, how there are different pieces that can take place, how the moneys were going back and forth, and how the

arguments were very nuanced and difficult. Again, it was a situation where the majority of the House opposed the deal, but the government was supportive of the resolution.

There is certainly a pattern here that raises some concern. In any case, we are debating this report, which is a recommendation of the standing committee. This debate will go on until no members rise or until three hours have passed and there is a vote on the motion. It is always nice to make reports to the House, the government and the minister, but if we do not want to have the response of the government and we just want make our point and throw it out into all of the reports that are tabled in this place, there is no onus on the government to respond to this recommendation formally.

The government members at committee made their positions known, and unless one reads the transcripts of those committees and looks at the questions in all of the details, most members will not know. This is very complicated material and the issues are very important. When we see these reports, it is interesting to know that if members do not ask for a government response within 120 days it means that they do not want a response. That means that we are just going to throw this into the pool, and whenever members come up to routine proceedings on motions, people can just say, "I would like to move concurrence on that report. Let us talk about that report".

That is where we are right now. I wish that there had been a request for a government response on this thing, because it was the government members who opposed the majority position of the committee. We are going to be debating this. We will get on to Colombia. There are some excellent speakers on Colombia free trade who are going to be speaking on that bill, so hopefully we will get back to it quickly.

● (1140)

I want to share with members some of the aspects we have been talking about. There has been a lot of talk about chapter 11 and about expropriation and so on. How does all of this tie together? The best thing for me to do is to refer to an assessment on this matter done by a researcher, Meg Sears. She has a Ph.D. and is the adjunct investigator for the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. She wrote a very interesting paper which frames the issue that is before the House and which the committee considered. She is a scientist and a medical writer and she wanted to assist the committee in its study. She has examined Canada's pesticide assessment process by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, the PMRA as other members have referred to it, and the assessment of the herbicide 2,4-D which is the pesticide which Quebec has banned.

There has been a challenge by Dow. She concluded that Dow's notice of challenge of Quebec's restrictions on the use of 2,4-D shows how Canada's sovereignty to protect citizens from toxic exposures is compromised by NAFTA chapter 11. That is a very significant statement. Our sovereignty to protect Canadians is challenged by NAFTA chapter 11. There is substantial information which I would be happy to provide to members if they are interested, but I would like to go immediately to her conclusion in regard to this matter. She said:

Routine Proceedings

The Dow challenge to the regulation of 2,4-D by Québec directly challenges Canadians' ability to take precautionary measures to protect health and the environment. Trade agreements should bring signatories to higher levels of protection, not the opposite, compelling governments to expose their citizens unwillingly to toxic chemicals in their homes and neighbourhoods. Although it is beyond the scope of the present committee, one must also wonder about the extent of PMRA complicity, as 2,4-D was re-registered with incomplete, sub-standard data and misinterpretation of important information.

I urge the Government of Canada to defend the rights of all levels of government to enact precautionary measures to protect health and the environment, and to ensure that NAFTA puts Canadians' health before multinational corporate profits.

That is very, very significant. I commend the assessment done by Meg Sears. It shows the importance of this matter and the fact that it was just a report from a committee should not be taken lightly and we should protect Quebec's rights to do this.

I mentioned earlier when asking a couple of questions that there have been similar bans in Toronto and Halifax, but they have not been challenged. If there is an existing challenge under NAFTA chapter 11 with respect to Quebec's ban, we have to ask why that challenge would not automatically be extended. Maybe the mechanics of it is that if one can be won, maybe subsequent challenges could be fast-tracked to bans in other jurisdictions.

I also want to comment on NAFTA chapter 11. We in this place will probably have NAFTA on our agenda as long as there is a free trade deal with the United States. Members have already mentioned their concerns about protectionist measures in the U.S. precipitated by the global economic climate.

• (1145)

We can understand that countries want to do whatever they can to recover in their own economic sphere, but they also understand that we are inextricably linked with our trade relationships and we have existing deals. When there is this aggressiveness that we want to protect and enhance domestic trade, we put pressure on areas such as bilateral trade that occur in some of the aspects that fall under the purview of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The purpose of chapter 11 is to facilitate the flow of investment within North America. That is what it really gets down to. This is very complicated. It does so by establishing a framework of rules and disciplines that provide investors from NAFTA countries with a predictable rules-based investment climate. These are the kinds of things that happen generically.

When I looked at the rest of the briefing notes, I realized that this is a complex maze of push-pulls and it takes full-time work to really understand. I commend committee members for being able to wrap their minds and their attention around such an important matter when it is fluid and constantly evolving. Like most laws and even our Constitution it is almost like a living document. Every time there is another challenge, another precedent is set. These are the kinds of things that affect the decisions that are taken by Canada and by the provinces.

Chapter 11 also establishes a mechanism for the settlement of disputes that might arise from potential discriminatory charges. In this way chapter 11 effectively prevents governments from taking measures that amount to discriminatory nationalization or expropriation of a foreign investment without paying compensation to the

investor. That is the essence of what we are talking about in terms of the current challenge with regard to 2,4-D.

People should know a little bit about the elements of chapter 11 which come up in debate. Chapter 11 is broken down into two sections, sections A and B. Section A has the main provisions.

Article 1102 refers to national treatment and it states that each NAFTA party will treat investors and investments from other NAFTA parties no less favourably than it treats its own investors and investments, in like circumstances, with respect to such matters as the establishment, acquisition, operation and sale of investments.

Article 1103 will come up. It deals with most favoured nation treatment. It states that a NAFTA party may not treat an investor or investment from a non-NAFTA country more favourably than an investor or investment from a NAFTA country.

There is also the minimum standard of treatment in article 1105 which assures a minimum absolute standard of treatment of investments of NAFTA investors based on long-standing principles of customary international law.

Article 1110 has to do with expropriation and is specifically related to the matter before the House in this report. Article 1110 states that a NAFTA party cannot directly or indirectly nationalize or expropriate an investment of an investor of another NAFTA party except one, for a public purpose, two, on a non-discriminatory basis, three, in accordance with due process of law, and four, on payment of compensation equivalent to fair market value.

Most committee members probably had to spend a fair bit of time to understand the meaning of the provisions. I think that is why we have had such hot debates in this place with regard to NAFTA challenges and particularly matters where dispute settlement resolution has not seemed to work.

The key issue in article 1110 is the meaning of the term "tantamount to expropriation". This is where it gets down to the subtleties. It is well established in international law that the term "expropriation" need not refer to the transfer of title of property. A country can be considered to have expropriated property if its actions have the effect of significantly diminishing the owner's right to extract economic benefit, including profits from that property.

• (1150)

Members will understand that when we are talking about the expropriation issues here, we are not talking about taking away anything. In fact, it is affecting the rights that flow from this matter, to the extent that if Quebec bans the use of a particular pesticide, another NAFTA country is going to be impacted by not being able to either export to Canada products that use that pesticide or something similar to that. That is the subtlety and that is why the term "expropriation" is being used, but not maybe in the traditional sense that members would understand.

Routine Proceedings

Section B of chapter 11 outlines the dispute settlement provisions. These provisions allow the investors of one NAFTA party to directly make claims against the government of another NAFTA party through the arbitration process. NAFTA outlines certain general procedures regarding the arbitration but stipulates that such arbitration must be conducted in accordance with the Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes between States and Nationals of Other States, referred to as the ICSID convention, and facility rules of the ICSID or the arbitration rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law.

The mechanism of chapter 11 dispute settlement is not without controversy, as we know. The process has been criticized for its lack of legitimacy and transparency. It also has a limited form of review and no recourse of appeal. That is a challenge. It means that we need to be very careful how we address these matters because when one is in that situation, without recourse for appeal, decisions are final and it does get a bit sloppy.

It is also important to note that NAFTA stipulates that no chapter 11 tribunal decision can be used as a precedent in subsequent chapter 11 cases. I referred to the Halifax and Toronto bans on this pesticide, and although there may not be the applicability of a precedent on the disposition of the Quebec issue on the same matter, certainly the arguments and the evidence would be available, although the decision may not be binding. In other words, no body of jurisprudence can be built up over time. Each case is considered to be a unique event.

I thank the members who brought this particular debate to the House for doing the work to take a position. It does raise the question though of why the government does not support the majority decision of the committee. That is very troubling to me and it should be troubling to all members. That is why I am a little disappointed the committee did not ask for a formal government response. The government must be accountable to the House. It must respond. We have missed that opportunity. Maybe the members are satisfied that they heard substantively the government arguments at committee and I hope that they are going to share them on some specific basis.

I had also raised the fact that when Quebec made the ban, it did not have a scientific basis for the ban, but as I indicated earlier and I will conclude with this, the report of Meg Sears states that the Government of Canada should defend the rights of all levels of government to enact precautionary measures to protect the health and the environment of its citizens.

That is the essence of the argument and why the committee took this position. I hope that the government will now respond to the committee report.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as usual my colleague has provided a pretty exhaustive overview with respect to the principles of application of a chapter 11. He has argued that the precautionary principle should be incorporated into a chapter 11 framework, such that it provides for, within the rule of law and the principles of chapter 11 and NAFTA, protection as well as the opportunity for a national interest to be protected.

The member has indicated that committee did not have the opportunity or did not seek further opportunity to pursue that line of

thought, and I am sure the House would be interested in this. What would the member suggest would be the next step? I do not think he has suggested that the free trade agreement with Colombia, or any free trade agreement, should not go forward. However, what would he suggest would be the process for the House to develop the protection through the precautionary principle but would not violate the essence of a chapter 11 application that the WTO obviously applies? There have been successful and unsuccessful hearings. What is the process that the House can initiate and continue and where would the member see that would take us with respect to protecting national interests?

• (1155)

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his kind words.

First, on Colombia, I have already spoken on the bill and I am on the record as saying that I understand the benefits of trade. However, I have also heard from my constituents and many people from across the country who are concerned about the human rights issue in Colombia and would like to have an independent assessment done. Unfortunately, I understand that even Amnesty International has refused to participate in an independent assessment, so that is much more complicated.

Getting back to the substance of the member's question, I found in all the things we have done that there is very little black and white in trade agreements. There seems to be an ability to shape arguments and to use certain things, even to the extent that every case on a matter is dealt with as a unique case where there is no precedents. If we were to be an efficient dispute settlement resolution system, we would think that all of the work one had done in the past on same or similar matters would be relevant to the decision. We certainly understand that no two disputes may be identical in all regards, but certainly the core and the essence of the dispute and the evidence that is there must be relevant and must be used.

I have great difficulty with the mechanics. There has always been this issue of dispute settlement recognition, which never seems to have worked in Canada's favour. We always seem to be one step behind and the outcomes have not been very favourable to us.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to chapter 11 and to NAFTA in a more generalized way.

It always amazes me how the proponents of free trade continually talk about its merits, how those who work in the economy and work across the country are the net beneficiaries of free trade and that their living conditions, their economic situation and their social well-being has been enhanced by free trade.

That mantra is bandied about from this side of the House. I heard the member for Kings—Hants say that this morning and I hear the government continually suggest that this is the case. However, no one ever suggests that they look at the statistics. Why on earth would we ever look at statistics to find out if it is true? It is much easier just to say it. It sounds good. It sounds marvellous. It makes people feel good. Then again, if we read the Statistics Canada reports for the most recent period from 1989 to 2005, we find that the opposite is true. Most Canadians did not prosper under free trade and NAFTA. They regressed economically.

Routine Proceedings

Why would we tell Canadians that? Because that flies in the face of negotiating another free trade agreement. We have to tell folks the mythology that this is good for them. It is somewhat akin to telling a child, when his or her first tooth falls out, that the tooth fairy will come. Of course the tooth fairy does come, but usually in the form of a parent, in the night, because there is not a tooth fairy. In the free trade debate, the tooth fairy needs to be put to rest. Clearly what has happened is the average wealth of Canadians has declined and the average wealth of a very small percentage of Canadians has increased.

Let me read into the record the Statistics Canada reports on the four quintile of income levels across the country and what happened to them.

The percentage growth between 1989 and 2005 for those at the bottom of the income scale declined by 14%. This meant they were worse off in 2005 than they were in 1989. Yet we were told by the Liberal government, and now the Conservative government, that free trade would help folks. The numbers do not support it. I do not make up these numbers. I am not the tooth fairy. These are Statistics Canada reports, which are available to all members.

If we look at the second quintile, the second group of folks whose income is relatively low, how did they fare? They fared marginally better than the bottom quintile, but their incomes still declined by 12%. They were 12% worse off in 2005 than in 1989, yet we keep hearing the mantra from Liberals and Conservatives that free trade will be good for them, that they are better off, yet the numbers prove otherwise.

If we look to the third quintile, these folks are moving into the middle income bracket. How did they fare? They did somewhat better than the second quintile in that they only lost 6% of their earnings.

It would be pretty hard for me to convince some of my neighbours to sign on to an agreement where in 16 years they will have less than they have now. That is exactly what we have done to Canadians. Sixteen years after the fact, we have the bottom quintile at minus 14%, the second quintile at minus 12% and the third quintile at minus 6%.

Finally, when we move to the upper middle income bracket, toward the top end, their incomes grew by a paltry 2% in 16 years.

Therefore, who actually benefited from these free trade agreements, the net beneficiaries of them? Lo and behold, when we look at those at the very top of the income range, those who did not really need to improve their incomes all that much from 1989 to 2005 because they were already rich, their incomes went up plus 17%.

We can see what these free trade agreements are about. It is really about certain groups doing really well at the top and everyone else sinking to the bottom.

● (1200)

My colleagues across the way do not like the stats. Why on earth would we suggest to Canadians that they are better off when they are not? Why would we tell them the truth? How can we sell free trade to them if we tell them to sign up and they will be worse off, that we

think it is good for the economy, but it will not be good for them personally as workers in this economy.

Is it because workers were not working? The report shows that, on average, Canadian workers whose income was sliding backwards were working more hours. While they were losing in the economy, they were working harder, working more hours and were separated from their families and sliding backwards. In an effort to try to compensate for the fact that they knew they were sliding backwards they wanted to work more and it did not help.

What do we see with their debt load? Unfortunately, as their incomes slid back, we would have expected to see their debt ratio to their household income increase, and that is exactly what happened. In preceding years of the 1980s until about 1986 the average debt load in the household declined. However, starting in 1988-89, we saw an absolute upward trend that has not stopped and continues to this day. The debt load is just shy of 130% of household income or their true assets.

When one looks at that, one has to ask were workers better off because of free trade? I would suggest that statistics are telling us that the tooth fairy really did not come to Canadian workers at all. In fact, the grim reaper came. What they have seen is a decline in their income year after year to the point where all they have done is driven themselves into debt. They have worked an excessive number of hours to try to help support their families, but have slipped behind.

We continue to hear that free trade is good for us and that chapter 11 is a necessary piece, the very piece that takes things away from workers, their rights and their abilities to do things. It allows it to be in the hands of investors at the expense of those folks, which continues to happen.

It befuddles me and really suggests to all of us, I think, that we are not speaking for the right folks. We are speaking on behalf of an investor group at the top end of the income scale that has not slipped behind. It has continually done well. We either have forgot or have never recognized that all of those whom we represent are not doing well at all. We ought to remember them when we develop free trade agreements.

When we look at chapter 11, what does it actually talk to? It talks to the sense of it is going to develop rules. Earlier hon. colleague talked about the dispute resolution. It said that it was going to establish rules for investment in North America. By having rules and discipline with countries that are predictable, there would be a rules-based investment climate. That way the investors would be protected. Note that the investor would be protected. It does not talk about labour. It does not talk about the environment. It does not talk about Canadian workers being protected.

It talks about foreign investors will be assured that they will be treated no differently from domestic investors. I think that was probably the case in the majority of investments made in our country prior to NAFTA.

Routine Proceedings

I learned as a child in school that we needed to get away from the branch plant mentality in our country and build our own Canadian firms because of all the foreign investment here and because this was a good place to come. It probably still is based on the fact that we have an abundant wealth of natural resources and skills and an absolutely world-class workforce that is ready to do its work. However, we still have this leaning toward one class of individuals called the investors.

● (1205)

The other thing that stands out and absolutely amazes me is that if we do something in the House which investors say will hurt their profits, they can decide to take it to the tribunal. It is not just about their actual losses. It says “expected profits”. I always expected that maybe I could be six feet two inches but it did not work out. Who do I sue? Should I sue my parents because I did not grow to six feet two inches?

In NAFTA, we have a provision under chapter 11 where companies can stand and say that we have created a new rule, an environmental protection for the benefit of our country, which is all well and good for us, but that it has hurt them as far as what they expect to make three, four, five years down the road. How do we know those companies will even be in a business three, four, five years down the road, never mind how much money they will make? However, under this ridiculous article, they can actually sue the Canadian government because they lost what they thought they might make. This does not discount the fact that those who run the corporations may have made bad decisions in that intervening period. They just believe they should be able to sue because they might have made a lot of money.

How would one quantify that? How do we quantify what we think we might lose? No one ever wants to lose anything in life but no one can quantify next week, next year or the year after. None of us know what will happen in the next five minutes. That is part of what we call life. It is the great unexpected.

To suggest that somehow there is a rule that allows people to decide they should receive payment for expectations is like relying on the tooth fairy. It seems to me that chapter 11 has more sense about it. It is like a myth. It is like the Aesop's fables one tells to one's children than it does about rules-based adjudication, because that is what it said it was about. In its rules it says that people can go to the tribunal and get a decision but if they lose, too bad. What if the arbitration panel has made a fundamental mistake? Too bad. There is no opportunity to say that there has been an error, a misinterpretation or actually a misreading of what it was about. There is no sense of appeal. That is supposed to be rules based.

All of the rules-based procedures that I and my colleagues in the legal profession are very familiar with understand that a decision made at one level has an appeals process to it because mistakes get made. It gives the party, which the decision went against, the opportunity in a rules-based system to ask someone at a higher level to actually take it into consideration. This one does not. It does not actually penalize those who might bring frivolous claims against us, regardless of what we think is the sense of what we will do.

My friends in the Liberal Party talked earlier about this prosperity. I want to relate what happened to the workers at John Deere in

Welland under NAFTA. The corporation got up and left. Now, did the workers get to sue the corporation for leaving? No. Did the corporation close? No. Did the work it was performing in Welland cease to exist? No. It simply went away because NAFTA let it go. There was no payment to the workers or to the community. It had no sense of being sorry and made no apology. It simply left, went to Mexico and some work went to the United States. The company left those workers because the rules said it could.

Why, in this Parliament, would we write rules that do not talk about workers, our citizens, the people who live here and the people we represent? I did not get elected by major multinational corporations because they do not vote. They simply are entities. It is real life people who send us here to work for them, not the other way around. However, when we come here we seem to be working on behalf, when it comes to these trade agreements, of something other than the people.

● (1210)

The statistics that I quoted earlier from Statistics Canada clearly show that we are in decline when it comes to the ability of ordinary, hard-working Canadians to make a living and keep up. They are slipping behind.

The big issue being raised now by both the government and the Liberals around the buy America act is the recent pronouncements made last week. The buy America act has been in force for the best part of 40-odd years, perhaps even longer. Those of us who live close to the border knew what was transpiring because the Americans were not covered under chapter 11 and they used it exclusively to ensure they were the net beneficiaries. They continue to do it to this day.

Over the years, I have spoken with some local politicians who are friends of mine. I would defy any member in the House to ask their constituents this question: “When I collect your tax dollars, would you like me to spend it on, (a) you and your neighbours; (b) on those who live in Florida; (c) on those who live in Germany; or (d) on those who live in Colombia?” I am absolutely certain that 99.9% of those constituents will choose (a) because it is their money.

We have collected their money and I am sure they would tell us that when all things are equal, we should spend it on them because that is really why we collected it in the first place. It was collected for the net benefit of all who live in this land and to make this country a better place.

All we have heard with NAFTA is a big sucking sound of the wealth of the majority of Canadians being drained out of the country. Some of it has gone to the upper end but a lot of it has simply left. One need not look any further than Ontario to see the de-industrialization of southwestern Ontario under NAFTA in the last 18 years as it has slowly evaporated. The rush lately has been even larger.

Routine Proceedings

I appreciate that my friends talked about rules and the hon. member talked about the precautionary principle, which in science is actually a rule. We like rules and a science-based approach to things. The precautionary principle is actually used by scientists to suggest that what we ought not to do is wait until folks become ill and perhaps die. If we have a sense that something is wrong, we should take action, and that is what the precautionary principle is about.

In the case of Quebec and 2,4-D, the precautionary principle was exercised at the provincial level. We see what happened on the American side with the buy America act and sub-national governments. State and local government have clearly said that NAFTA does not apply to them and here we have a company telling Quebec that it applies to Quebec.

We can see there is a bit of a shift in dynamics where one country that is a signatory to NAFTA has said that sub-national governments are not included and yet the Canadian government has not banned it yet. The Canadian government is working on it through Health Canada and the pesticide management groups, but it is cities like Toronto and others across this country and the province of Quebec that are really sub-national governments. I find it odd that multinationals think it is okay to sue Canada when it comes to sub-national governments but not necessarily sue sub-national governments when it comes to the Americans.

It is peculiar that happens but we can look at lots of other instances. I know the members from British Columbia are much more in tune with the softwood sellout than I am and I will leave that for them to discuss because it really pertains to them.

I find it disheartening when we see the claims against Canada by outside multinationals pertaining to substances that we consider dangerous. One of them was the exportation of PCBs. When I look at the total number of claims, six were environmental protection challenges, five about our natural resources and one about our cultural industry out of eighteen challenges. Clearly, 14 of the challenges are about things that really belong to us, not someone else and yet the challenges are about those. We need to change chapter 11 to ensure we have fair trade, not free trade.

• (1215)

Mr. Jim Maloway: Madam Speaker, earlier I listened to the speech from the Liberal member for Kings—Hants who has been around the House for a number of years. He was talking about how chapter 11 should probably be revisited and that President Obama is interested in revisiting it as far as NAFTA is concerned. I found it kind of curious that he is having second thoughts as a Liberal member on the provisions of chapter 11 and yet he and his party are supporting the Colombia free trade agreement, which we will be debating very shortly, and did support the Canada-Peru free trade agreement, both of which have the chapter 11 provisions in them.

Is that not a contradiction? I would ask the member who just spoke whether he too sees that contradiction in the speech this morning by the member for Kings—Hants.

• (1220)

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Madam Speaker, indeed, I do. In fact, I have the great privilege of sitting as a deputy critic with my colleague from British Columbia on that committee and I

watched that member discuss Peru and Colombia. He is in favour of it.

When my colleague was raising the issue of chapter 11 and increasing labour and putting environmental protections into the body of the agreement, it was that member from the Liberal Party who opposed it. He wanted it as a piece at the back and never once raised the issue of removing or changing chapter 11.

It is one thing to come to the House and say that we need to change it, but the reality is that when the Liberals are faced with the opportunity to do something, they vote in favour. That is unfortunate because this is a place where we can have reflection and debate. I am gratified to hear that my colleagues in the Liberal Party who sit on international trade are talking about our need to do that.

When the opportunity arises in committee, we will be expecting the them to pull chapter 11 out of those agreements, start to rework them and start to do the things that we as New Democrats understand are important when it comes to free trade. It is always about fair trade agreements that protect and represent workers and the environment, that talk about us as Canadians and that respect those other countries that we are trading with.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I do think it is important to underline that New Westminster was the first capital of British Columbia before Victoria became the capital city.

The member for Welland is an extremely effective member of the trade committee and has brought a healthy dose of realism and main street reality to the discussions around trade.

I think most Conservatives and Liberals, not having done their homework on the issue, do not seem to understand this fundamental economic fact that since the free trade regime started back with the Canada U.S. free trade agreement, the real incomes for the vast majority of Canadian families have actually declined. That is a fundamental reality that no one on the Conservative or Liberal benches has even bothered to look into. They have this pap about free trade bringing prosperity but the reality has been fundamentally different. Statistics Canada tells every one of them that they are wrong. Real incomes have actually declined.

The member very effectively represents a riding that used to be represented by another member of the trade committee, a Liberal who always said that free trade was great, who never referenced the riding of Welland and who never went back to his constituents to find out what was going on on the ground. We know that region has been hit hard by many of the provisions of these bad trade agreements.

Routine Proceedings

I would like to ask the member what it takes for Liberals and Conservatives to understand, to do their homework and to find out what is happening to real incomes in Canada. Does it take the defeat of all of the Liberals in northern Ontario after they supported the softwood sellout to get the message across, or does he think that Canadians just need to keep telling them that they are wrong on this issue?

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Madam Speaker, there is no question about what we have seen in the riding of Welland from north to south because it is five communities. I talked about Statistics Canada, but the income level in my own riding is now one of the poorest in the province of Ontario. It used to be the highest. Before NAFTA, it had the highest per capita income in the province of Ontario as a manufacturing centre. It is now at the bottom, with increases in child poverty, family poverty and family breakup, and all of the social ills that come with that. It was because of this blind sense that somehow free trade is good for people. The government will feed it to us, so we should just eat it because it is good for us. My old gran used to say, "Just have this cod liver oil; it is good for you". There was no proof that it was good for us; we just had to take it. Preceding that, my whole sense with the Liberals was that they wanted us to just do it because we would be better off at the end of the day.

My riding of Welland is living testimony to the failure of not only chapter 11 but NAFTA. It is quintessentially the place, ground zero, for what NAFTA has wreaked upon the Canadian economy. We have seen, as I said, the income level from the highest in the province not less than 20 years ago to one of the lowest in the province, in a matter of less than one generation. It is tantamount to the absence of any sense of leadership from either the previous Liberal government and certainly from the Conservative government about what it takes for folks to actually prosper in the economy.

Those parties have no sense of it. They talked about their management. They talked about how they were able to do things, but when it comes to helping Canadians, to help manage their economy for them, Canadians got left behind. Shame on both parties when they were in government for allowing that to happen because my constituents are saying that someone needs to help. That is why they are looking at us as parliamentarians and saying, "It is time for you to step up. It is time for you to enact trade deals that are good for us, not for multinationals". It is about us, our neighbours, our friends, our colleagues across our constituencies, our children and our grandchildren when they come. It is ultimately about helping them. That is why I thought all of us came to this place.

The stats clearly show that what the Liberal government and the Conservative government have done to Canadians is absolutely dishonourable. We have let them slide behind because of what we have done. They did not do this. We as parliamentarians, the Liberal government, the Conservative government, did this to them. They did not ask for it. They sent folks here honestly who simply said what the member for Kings—Hants said this morning, "You are better off". The truth is, they are not. Saying it will not make it so. To stand in the House and say they are better off is patently false. It is just false. Not only is it false, it is unfair to those out there who are listening to us say it and hoping it is true, even though their reality and their life is, "I know it is not true", but they are hoping maybe their neighbours are experiencing something that they are not. If truth be told, their neighbours are experiencing exactly the same

thing, which is that they are all sinking. We have allowed them to sink and not even bothered to give them a life vest. That is absolutely wrong.

• (1225)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to participate in this debate which I consider to be critical in terms of the sovereignty of our nation and the future for many public policies that are in the interests of all Canadians. I want to thank my colleague, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, who has worked very hard to ensure that this matter not only was addressed by the committee, of which he is a member and serving there as the trade critic for the New Democratic Party, but also ensured, with today's motion for concurrence, that this very important matter is addressed by all of us.

I think it was a Liberal member speaking earlier who asked what was the purpose of this debate, what are we going to achieve? This allows for an issue, often dealt with behind the scenes away from public exposure and away from parliamentary debate, to be brought out into the open, to be discussed by parliamentarians, and to serve as a way of informing Canadians across the country about a critical issue. It gives us a chance to try to convince the government of the day to take action on an important public policy issue, not to hide behind the rhetoric of free trade, because that is fundamental, but to actually take a moment and assess the implications and consequences of a policy that has been at work since 1994.

The opportunity for this debate comes in the most serious form imaginable. It is a question regarding the right of a government in this country, the province of Quebec, to legislate in terms of what it deems to be in the best interests of its citizens, to ban pesticides in terms of cosmetic use. That is a fundamental health and safety issue. It affects all of us because we know that there are governments in this country which allow for the use of 2,4-D in cosmetic spraying of lawns, knowing that there are serious health consequences, knowing that there is an impact on children's health, the health of pregnant women and many other citizens. It is fundamental that we address this issue because of health but also in terms of the right of a government to legislate what it deems to be in the best interests of its citizens.

Routine Proceedings

We are dealing with this issue because we have a trade agreement that allows for a foreign company to challenge a government of this land about policies which it makes on the basis of what is in the best interests of the public and based on science. Those in the House who stand and say this is about a government making a decision willy-nilly, without cause for concern, without reflecting on the science, I say to them that they are wrong. In fact, the precautionary principle, which is at the heart of this matter, comes out of science. It says that when there is science that shows a particular product, chemical or substance has an impact based on preliminary research studies on individual health and well-being, then that is enough of a cause for concern to say that this matter should be put on hold, it should not be allowed to go forward until we have the complete science, the complete understanding.

It is the simple precautionary principle to do no harm. It is the role of government to ensure that the food we eat, the drugs we take, the water we drink, and the air we breathe is safe beyond a reasonable doubt. If something is developed and becomes known to us that it may have a detrimental effect on health and well-being, then it is the job of government to assess and to put on hold in order to stop the spread of that dangerous substance until such time as the producers of that chemical or that substance can prove that it is safe beyond a reasonable doubt. That is what is at the heart of this matter.

● (1230)

We have a trade agreement that allows for a company like Dow AgroSciences to actually challenge a government in this country because of a policy that it has adopted in the best interests of its citizens.

That is from an aspect of NAFTA, chapter 11, which allows foreign investors to challenge governments, whether it is the province of Quebec or the Government of Canada. It allows a company to challenge our right to make decisions based on what is in the best interests of every citizen of this land regardless of where they live and how much money they make.

Chapter 11 is one of those egregious aspects of NAFTA which must be revisited. If there is anything that comes out of this debate, there must at least be agreement to do that. Maybe we could convince the Conservatives, before this debate is done, that we need to rethink chapter 11.

My colleague from Welland raised the full range of issues under NAFTA. He made a very good point when he said that NAFTA as a whole may not have served this country the way others in this chamber suggest it has, and that it has not been of the great benefit to workers and to ordinary families that Liberals and Conservatives have touted for years.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that my colleague may be on the right path when he says that we should actually look at NAFTA from the point of view of fair trade and whether or not it has actually accomplished what Canadians had hoped it would.

Numerous studies have been done suggesting that there are problems with NAFTA. We should not hide those problems under a bushel just because it has suddenly become not kosher to talk about the problems with NAFTA. We should let them out in the open and talk about them to see if there is legitimacy to those concerns and

whether or not we need to reconsider our approach to trade in this context.

The work of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives is exemplary in this regard. I do not think anyone in the House would doubt the work of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives when it puts out studies authored by the likes of Carlo Salas, who holds a Ph.D. in economics and currently is a professor of regional development at El Colegio Tlaxcala and who is also a member of the board of directors at the Instituto de Estudios del Trabajo in Mexico City.

I do not think we would question the credentials of Bruce Campbell, who is the executive director of the Centre for Policy Alternatives. I do not think we would question the work of Robert Scott, who holds a Ph.D. in economics and is the director of international programs at the Economic Policy Institute.

These three individuals did an extensive study a few years back just assessing what the impact of NAFTA has been on workers. They concluded that workers have suffered more than they have gained as a result of being governed by this trade agreement.

I will not go into all the details, but I will reference what my colleague from Welland has put out in real terms as he sees and experiences these problems in his own constituency where workers have lost their jobs, have been at the whim of the marketplace, and feel little benefit from NAFTA.

The study that I have just referenced by the Centre for Policy Alternatives says the following:

NAFTA promised Canada increased economic growth, income, and employment across all sectors, regions, and income groups; closure of the longstanding productivity gap with the United States; the creation of a more diversified, efficient, and more knowledge-based economy; and, an economy that would maintain and strengthen the generous Canadian social model.

However, the authors of the study found that those promises, that golden age that would come as a result of NAFTA, have really not materialized. We have seen the whole nature of the workforce change to become one where employment is precarious, where people have to resort to many jobs in order to make a living, and where the very labour unions that try to protect the jobs and the working conditions of those workers are threatened under NAFTA.

● (1235)

However, enough said about NAFTA, in general, because in fact what we are really talking about today is chapter 11, the provision in NAFTA that allows for foreign companies, foreign investors, to challenge governments.

Routine Proceedings

I am not saying as my Liberal colleague, the member for Kings—Hants, has suggested, that we should ignore the issue of national treatment. I do not dispute that for one moment. In fact, I think we need a mechanism that would allow us to return to the days when it was a question of government-to-government dialogue and deliberation, in terms of the issue of national treatment. I do not think there is a credible author in this country, in terms of economic and trade policy, who would suggest that having a mechanism that allows for foreign companies to challenge governments is in the best interests of any one of us, or that it in fact does anything but challenge our very ability to operate as a sovereign nation. The experts have all pointed out the problems. The research branch in the Library of Parliament has made it clear that under the national treatment provisions it must be proven that the alleged measure is less favourable to the foreign investor and that the foreign investor and domestic investor are in like circumstances.

Frances Russell, who has written about this extensively in the *Winnipeg Free Press* and who has incredible in-depth expertise in this area, has said very clearly in an article that she wrote on March 5, 2008:

Before NAFTA, private investors' grievances were adjudicated on a government-to-government basis. But NAFTA allows foreign capital to sue government directly.

And sue they have—for tens of millions of dollars—challenging the public's right to regulate the environment, culture, agriculture, natural resources, jobs and health and safety. As of Jan. 1, 2008, there have been 49 investor-state claims under NAFTA: 18 against Canada, 17 against Mexico and 14 against the U.S. So far, Canada has paid \$27 million in damages and Mexico, \$18.7 million. To date, investor claims against the U.S. have been dismissed.

That is just a sample of the expertise and the research out there, in terms of the effect of chapter 11 on this country and our ability to make decisions that are in the best interests of the greater good or the public as a whole.

Nowhere is that more apparent than when it comes to health care. And this is what I want to insert into this debate. If we allow Dow Agro to proceed with its claim for damages in the province of Quebec, and if the Government of Canada sits back, does nothing and ends up paying damages, we create an open door for similar corporate interests. This is not just about a ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides. It in fact has implications for the entire health care system.

Let us just stop for a minute, in terms of pesticides. I think the question was raised earlier, what about all those other jurisdictions, the City of Toronto and other municipalities, that have moved to ban the use of 2,4-D for cosmetic care of one's lawn? The question was, why was Quebec picked on and not the rest?

I think the answer is clear. The industry picked the most advanced state to make its case with the hope that once it wins, it will then have the wherewithal to pursue similar actions against other municipalities. So, the door is in fact open to the challenge of wise decisions made by local governments in the best interests of the citizens they serve.

Now, if we look at the broader issue of health care, I think it is probably fair to say that if NAFTA had been in place 25 years ago and if chapter 11 had been around when medicare was formed, I do not think we would have seen medicare reach fruition.

● (1240)

That is not just my opinion. That is the opinion of many experts in this country. I want to read from a chapter of a book entitled *Medicare: Facts, Myths, Problems, Promise*, edited by Bruce Campbell and Greg Marchildon from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

This particular chapter is by Scott Sinclair and is entitled "Protecting Medicare from Foreign Commercial Interests". He says the following:

Underlining this concern, Jon Johnson, one of Canada's leading trade lawyers, bluntly informed the Romanow Commission that, if the NAFTA expropriation provisions "and the accompanying investor-state dispute settlement mechanism procedures had existed in the 1960s, the public health system in its present form would never have come into existence".

He goes on to say:

This sobering reflection stands as a warning that the power of modern trade treaties—whose scope has expanded well beyond traditional trade matters to interfere with the ability of governments to limit and regulate commercial interests—must be contained in order to safeguard the future of...medicare.

The experts in the field say that if chapter 11 had existed back in the 1960s when Tommy Douglas and others with him struggled to bring us medicare, we probably would not have been able to achieve it.

Let us just go back 25 years, since this is the anniversary of the Canada Health Act, and consider the fact that we may never have actually accomplished such innovative legislation if such a trade treaty, with chapter 11 provisions, had been in existence.

Scott Sinclair goes on to say:

The principles that underlie Canada's medicare system are at odds with the thrust of modern trade treaties. By establishing a public-sector health insurance monopoly, and by regulating who can provide health care services and on what terms, the Canada Health Act and the medicare system cut against the grain of trade and investment liberalization treaties.

We can see that on a regular basis. I do not know how many people in this place will remember the very vigorous debate we had in this place about six or seven years ago when the Alberta government threatened to bring forward a private hospital, under what was known as Bill 11. We stood in this House every chance we could get to try to convince the Liberal government at the time that in fact the acquiescence to the development of a private hospital in Alberta would open up the doors to private investors right across the board, in the same way that they have stood in the House today and agreed with us that in fact these provisions threaten the right of a government in this land to ban the use of 2,4-D for health reasons.

If only we could have gotten the Liberals back then to understand this, we might not be in such bad shape today, but the fact of the matter is that it is not too late. We still have what some would consider to be one of the best health care systems in the world, which is largely publicly administered on a not-for-profit basis. There is some encroaching privatization, that is true, but it is the opening of that door in any significant way that in fact hampers our ability to maintain a public, not-for-profit system.

Routine Proceedings

As living proof of this, and just to bring us to a current attack on our system as a result of chapter 11, I want to refer to a situation in British Columbia where an Arizona health care entrepreneur is challenging the Canadian government because he believes his plans to build a private surgical centre in British Columbia are being thwarted, and he is seeking \$155 million in redress from the Canadian government.

I have just begun with the tip of the iceberg. There is so much more to be said in terms of chapter 11 and its impact upon health care, upon our model of medicare system. We have to be vigilant every step of the way.

I want to conclude by saying that every government should have the right to make decisions that are in the best interests of citizens, and when foreign investors, for reasons of profit, interfere with that right and suggest that we are impeding their right to make profits, and we thereby in the process put the public interest at risk, we are doing no one any favours.

We must stand firm against chapter 11 and we must find a way to ensure that this current situation in Quebec is dealt with immediately.

• (1245)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened attentively to the speech being delivered by my good friend from Winnipeg. I have a great deal of respect for her.

However, on this subject we will disagree, and I will rebut her closing statements by saying that this House and Canadians should stand firmly in favour of chapter 11, should stand firmly in favour of NAFTA for simple reasons.

First, I was disappointed that she kept bridging back to using the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives as her source of data. That is a rather shaky foundation given that everything the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives does and everything they write has already been written before they have begun. All of their suppositions are cemented in. There is no imagination. There is absolutely nothing that the centre does.

That is the counterpoint. If I stood up and used them as the only source, I think some members would have the same point of view.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives is not a serious organization to be basing serious public policy on.

That said, chapter 11 of NAFTA extends an existing Canadian principle to our trading partners. The idea of national treatment existed before NAFTA. There would be no difference in the way that Canadian law would treat foreign companies doing business in Canada if chapter 11 were not in place. National treatment existed before NAFTA.

What NAFTA and chapter 11 do is extend to our trading partners the legal protection and the legal requirement that businesses cannot be discriminated against because of where they are from. It changes nothing in Canada. It changes everything for our trading partners.

Chapter 11 protects Canadian companies so that when they are doing business in the United States or Mexico, they cannot be discriminated against because they happen to be Canadian-owned or

Canadian-based. Chapter 11 protects Canadians. It extends a Canadian principle. This is an important value.

The member is saying that we need to get rid of chapter 11. It is the very essence of NAFTA. It is the very essence of equal treatment. To say that somehow Canadian businesses are being discriminated against because of chapter 11 is mind-blowing to me, because to say that gets it exactly backwards.

National treatment for foreign companies operating in Canada existed before chapter 11. Chapter 11 protects Canadian companies so that the principle on which we treat foreign companies operating in Canada is extended to Canadian companies operating in the United States and Mexico. To get rid of chapter 11 would handicap Canadian companies and allow them to be discriminated against when operating in the United States and Mexico.

My question is, does the member not understand that?

• (1250)

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis: Madam Speaker, first of all I think the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages should explain why Canadians are getting their pants sued off by private investors who are challenging decisions made by governments in the best interests of Canadians. That is number one.

Number two, as minister he should understand more than anyone just how free trade, so-called fair trade, is actually discouraging Canadian artists and indigenous cultural industries in this country. I would say to him that culture is just as alive in terms of the ramifications of chapter 11 as health care is. The minister is probably going to stand up in this House and say "Oh, don't worry, health care is protected."

Why are we faced with the prospect of paying millions of dollars in damages to foreign companies that want a piece of this \$90 billion golden egg that is our health care system?

I want to say to the member that I was the minister of culture back in 1986 in Manitoba. One of the reasons that I got involved in federal politics was that I saw the free trade agreement and the consequences it had for culture in our work in Manitoba, as we were trying to build a Canadian, a Manitoba-based arts and cultural community that we could all be proud of. We are still paying for the decisions made by the likes of that member and the Liberals before them about the free trade agreement and NAFTA.

I want to answer the question about the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. In fact he should understand that it is that organization that predicted the budget surpluses that he said were a shock and a crying shame when he was in opposition, and he agreed that in fact the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' predictions were absolutely accurate and therefore were the basis for acting and setting up the Parliamentary Budget Office.

I do not think the member can have it both ways, one minute suggesting that CCPA does not know what they are doing and then in the next minute accepting the fact that they are the only organization of economists in this country that got it right.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, as much as I hesitate to cut into the questioning by my friend from across the way, because I know it will be insightful, if not inflammatory, for my colleague from Winnipeg, the fundamental question we are dealing with today is the effect of chapter 11 on Canadian policy and policy-makers.

It seems to me that when a principle is broken whereby a foreign firm can challenge a sovereign provincial and federal government in their enactment of a health policy, which is to suggest that Canadians should be exposed to less commercial use of cosmetic pesticides than they were, a foreign firm, not even a foreign government, at this moment can sue a provincial government within Canada or the federal government and thereby expose Canadians to a known carcinogen and health risk. We saw this on the export of fruit and vegetables from the U.S., in which Canada relented on its own standards.

Therefore, I would ask my colleague, who deals with the consequences of health and health effects, what chilling, crippling effect it has when a foreign firm with no interest in Canadian health whatsoever can insert itself into the policy debate and break the sacred bond between voters and those they elect to protect them and their families.

• (1255)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for the question and for showing that he gets it. That is something the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages does not get, which is that under chapter 11 Canadian programs and policies that protect and that are done in the best interests of its citizens are under threat, including health care.

The member will yell across the way that health care is exempted from chapter 11. Well, the safeguards he talks about, and that others have talked about, do not fully exclude the Canadian health care system. In fact he should know of the challenge in B.C. by an investor who is seeking something like \$155 million in damages from his government to get a foothold into the B.C. health care system to then begin to broaden and expand private health care clinics. That is just one example.

Let us also consider the fact that under NAFTA, the minute our Canadian government might decide to embrace an expansion of our health care system—I am wishing and praying that this will happen, but I do not see it under the Conservatives—to expand the medicare concept to include pharmacare, home care and dental care, it is possible that our entire health care system can be challenged under chapter 11 of NAFTA, because it opens the door in a new area for which foreign investors can claim they want fair advantage and national treatment.

That is the danger. If we are serious about protecting medicare and growing it so that it meets the needs of all Canadians, then chapter 11 has to be reconsidered.

Hon. James Moore: Madam Speaker, first of all, culture is not included in NAFTA, so the fearmongering of the member is exactly the opposite.

Again, I will underline it, and maybe it will penetrate this time. What the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley said is exactly wrong. Chapter 11 extends the protection and the rights of Canadian companies to sue American and Mexican companies who discriminate against Canadians. The rights of foreign companies to sue and to take legal action in Canada existed before chapter 11.

It is amazing that somebody can stand up in the House and for over 20 minutes speak so passionately and forcefully on a subject she clearly knows nothing about.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Madam Speaker, I do not know why Conservatives feel that in order to make their point they have to insult other members and diminish the wisdom of others involved in this debate.

I have heard this for many years. The Conservatives, and the Liberals before them, said, “Don't worry. Culture is not affected. Health care is not affected. We're okay.”

Here we are dealing with a health care issue in the province of Quebec about pesticides. That is living proof, first of all, that we have a problem. Second, I want to conclude by saying that under NAFTA there are provisions where expropriation without consequences applies with full force on the health care sector. The government measures affecting private health insurance also fall under the financial rules of GATT, where safeguards apply to existing health services. Increasing the commercial and competitive element in the financing or delivery of that service narrows the scope of the safeguards and it consequently increases the exposure of the health service to trade law restrictions. That should say it all.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate. I would just like to inform the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie that he has only four minutes.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Madam Speaker, four minutes is not a lot of time for such a substantial issue.

I would first like to thank my colleague from Sherbrooke, who introduced this motion in committee. It gives us the opportunity to have this debate in the House of Commons today and its aim is to protect Quebec's pesticide management code against certain multinationals that would like to challenge it under chapter 11 of NAFTA.

We on this side of the House are here to defend Quebec's prerogatives and Quebec's regulations. The motion introduced by my colleague bears witness to the fact that the Bloc is here to defend Quebec's laws, while those on the other side of the House are still wondering whether we should be protecting laws passed by the provinces when there are potential challenges to those laws under chapter 11.

This is important for Quebec. The pesticide management code stands as an example in Canada, and to date it has been used as a model by Ontario. When it was adopted in Quebec in 2003, it regulated and banned a number of pesticides based on the precautionary principle. That is the principle Quebec applied in banning 2,4-D, for example, a pesticide that is currently marketed and sold by Dow AgroSciences. That pesticide can have consequences for human health. For that reason, Quebec decided to ban it. Unfortunately, certain multinationals are using the provisions of chapter 11 to challenge Quebec's regulations, when those regulations have been approved and adopted by the National Assembly of Quebec.

What do we expect of this government? We expect the Minister of International Trade to stand up on the international scene, to defend Quebec's prerogatives and to defend public health in Quebec by protecting this law, on which there was consensus in the National Assembly of Quebec. The consensus in the National Assembly of Quebec, echoed by environmental groups in Quebec and Canada, could create a precedent if the government continues on the path of declining to defend Quebec's legislation.

The government has to stand up on the international scene and defend Quebec's prerogatives. Unfortunately, we have questioned the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of International Trade several times, and they have refused to tell us anything more.

There are facts that show that this pesticide can have health consequences. In fact, this is inconsistent for a government that several years ago tabled a bill about pesticides. Our government says it wants to protect public health, but at the same time it is trying to stick a spoke in the wheels of Quebec, for example, which has adopted this code.

To conclude, and this is what the motion introduced by the member for Sherbrooke means, we expect that the Minister of International Trade will stand up and defend Quebec's legislation against multinationals that refuse to apply the precautionary principle.

● (1300)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith all questions necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

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.

Routine Proceedings

And five or more members having risen:

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

And the bells having rung:

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): A recorded division on the proposed motion stands deferred until after government orders today.

* * *

● (1305)

PETITIONS

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions today, signed by, I dare say, thousands of constituents in my riding.

The first one deals with employment insurance. It calls on the government to confirm its commitment to the social safety net and to help regular Canadians through these tough times; to bring forward reform to employment insurance; to expand the eligibility and improve benefits, including eliminating the two-week waiting period; reducing the qualifying period; allowing self-employed workers to participate; raising the rate of benefits to 60% and basing benefits on the best 12 weeks in a qualifying period; and to encourage training and retraining.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would like to mention to the hon. member that the petition should not be read textually, but a summary of the petition should be given.

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): I will certainly do that, Madam Speaker.

The second petition is a forestry petition, again signed by thousands of constituents in my riding, calling on the government to ensure that it convenes a national forestry summit.

PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS COMPENSATION FUND

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions today. The first one is on public safety officers. These petitioners from my riding of Mississauga South would like to bring to the attention of the House that police officers and firefighters are required to place their lives at risk in the execution of their duties on a daily basis. They also want to point out that when this occurs the employee benefit plan often does not provide sufficient compensation for the family. Also, the public mourns the loss when one of our police officers or firefighters loses their life in the line of duty.

The petitioners therefore call upon Parliament to establish a public safety officers compensation fund for the benefit of families of public safety officers who are killed in the line of duty.

INCOME TRUSTS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the second petition is on the income trust broken promise.

An hon. member: Oh my God, are you kidding me?

Government Orders

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, the hon. Conservative member really likes this one, so I am going to do it for him again.

These petitioners, many from my riding, would like to draw to the attention of the House that the Prime Minister once boasted about his apparent commitment to accountability when he said that greatest fraud is a promise not kept. He also promised never to tax income trusts. He broke that promise and imposed a 31.5% punitive tax which permanently wiped out \$25 billion of the hard-earned savings of about two millions Canadians, particularly seniors.

The petitioners call on the Conservative minority government, first, to admit that the decision to tax income trusts was based on flawed methodology and incorrect assumptions, as was clearly demonstrated at the finance committee when hearings were held; second, to apologize to those who were unfairly harmed by the broken promise; and finally, to repeal the 31.5% tax on income trusts.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a petition signed by several dozen residents of cities in British Columbia: Langley, Abbotsford, New Westminster, Nelson and Vernon. These residents are very supportive of my private member's bill, Bill C-413, which would essentially ensure employment insurance benefits for adoptive parents equal to those given to biological parents. Adoptive parents put in as many hours raising their adoptive children as biological parents do in raising theirs. There has been discrimination against adoptive parents that must be addressed.

The government is certainly aware of my bill, and I hope it moves to adopt it. The residents of communities in British Columbia are saying that we should end the discrimination against adoptive parents and provide full support for them through the employment insurance system.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my petition is a call to stop the wage rollbacks and to support pay equity for public service workers. The Budget Implementation Act empowers the government to roll back negotiated wages and awards retroactively as well as radically change the rules governing pay equity in the federal public sector.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to support a motion by the member for Burnaby—New Westminster and rescind the provisions of Bill C-10 that violate workers' rights to collective bargaining, including arbitration awards and equal pay for work of equal value.

* * *

• (1310)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Madam Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT
IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed from September 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Colombia and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, be read the second time and referred to a committee, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas has five minutes left in debate.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Speaker, who will we be dealing with when we sign the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement? The government of Colombian President Uribe has been accused by international rights organizations of a long list of corruption, electoral fraud, complicity in extrajudicial killings by the army, links to paramilitary and right-wing death squads and using security forces to spy on the supreme court of Colombia, the opposition parties, government politicians and journalists. In fact, many government members, including ministers and members of Uribe's own family, have been forced to resign or been arrested.

It is also worth noting the statistics on violence directed against trade unionists. They show that 2,690 trade unionists were murdered in Colombia since 1986. In 2008 the number was up 18% over the previous year, so the situation is not getting any better. So far this year, 27 trade unionists have been murdered. Over the last 10 years, 60% of all the trade unionists murdered around the world have been murdered in Colombia. It is a horrific record.

Nearly four million people in Colombia are internally displaced persons, with 60% of them coming from areas of economic importance, regions where mining and agriculture are the key activities of that area. Private companies and their government and paramilitary supporters have forced these people from their homes. There is a huge conspiracy against the working people of Colombia, especially in the areas of great economic development.

The links between multinational corporate activity in Colombia and paramilitary terror have been well documented. Multinational corporations pay off paramilitaries to allow them access to resources and land. In fact, 43 companies have been accused of having ties with paramilitary groups and the forced displacement of communities and assassinations of trade unionists.

Clearly, this is not a record that anyone in the House could be proud of, yet we are negotiating a deal with the people who allow this to happen in their own country.

What is the attitude of other countries toward Colombia? It is important to note that the United Kingdom has ended military aid to Colombia because of the systemic crimes committed against the Colombian people. In the United States, which on the opposite side of the House there often seems to be some indication to take a cue from there, the American Congress put on hold a U.S. Colombia free trade agreement last year. President Obama has said that he will not pursue the agreement because of the human rights abuses in Colombia. It is very significant that we look to two important allies of our countries and their stance around Colombia.

In 2008 the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade recommended that no agreement be signed with Colombia until the human rights situation there showed improvement. I would think that is at a minimum. It also recommended that a human rights impact assessment be undertaken to determine the real impact of this trade agreement. The committee recommended that this be “an impartial human rights assessment carried out by a competent body which is subject to independent levels of scrutiny and validation”. This recommendation and the committee's report have been ignored by the government.

Over 50 prominent Canadians have signed a letter to the Leader of the Opposition, urging the Liberal Party to ensure that the concerns around human rights in Colombia are addressed before this agreement is endorsed and finalized. They also point out the work of the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade in this regard. It is clear that human rights need to be taken into consideration.

There is nothing in the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement that will improve the situation in Colombia. There is nothing in the agreement that will lead to the end of violence against trade unionists. There is nothing that will improve the lives of ordinary Colombians. There is nothing that will agree adherence to environmental standards. This is not an agreement about fair trade.

The Canadian Labour Congress has opposed this agreement. It said:

We oppose the creation of any situation where Canadian investors, exporters, and importers stand to benefit from the lack of freedom experienced by the most vulnerable populations in Colombia....

The Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement was not written to protect labour and human rights. It is more than a “trade” agreement. It is a trade and investment agreement underpinned by tacit Canadian support for a security agenda that defends the extractive industries, the drug cartels, and the internal security forces of Colombia.

We have to say “no” to this agreement.

• (1315)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-23, the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

There has been a considerable amount of debate in the House, with arguments from all sides and, in fairness, reasonable arguments from those in support and also from those opposed. Debate has certainly been held in this place and that debate is on the record.

The official opposition believes that the time has come to move this debate and this discussion to committee so citizens can have their say and express their opinions and concerns directly. Those

Government Orders

who have concerns, whether they are over human rights or trade issues, and those who strongly favour the trade agreement, as those in the farm sector do, would be able to express directly what they see as opportunities.

Let me be very clear. Bill C-23 should be moved to committee and it should hold hearings across the country and hear from people. The committee should do one of two things in terms of the Colombia argument: first, either travel to Colombia and hear from people directly on what they see as opportunities and what they see as concerns; or, at the very least, invite some Colombian people to come here as witnesses so they can express either concerns or what they see as opportunities in a vivid way. This trade agreement affects both of our economies and should be examined closely at committee level.

There are concerns about human rights in Colombia. The best way to understand the extent and impact of those concerns would be for committee to visit Colombia or invite Colombian witnesses to appear in this country.

There are two approaches that one could take on the conflict of human rights versus trade.

The first approach would be as we have done in China, and various governments have taken this approach. We could foster trade and encourage human rights as a result of the trading relationship. The other approach would be to oppose trade altogether until the human rights concerns have been addressed. Those are the kinds of parameters of the debate on the human rights argument.

Let me emphasize the fact that the best way for Parliament to find the balance and establish a direction and come to a conclusion is to aggressively now pursue hearings in the country and possibly in Colombia or bring Colombian witnesses here.

I can assure the House that farmers will want to be heard. They have sent letters to most of us in the House directly, suggesting how important the Colombian market is for their exports so they can achieve some economic opportunities in our country.

With committee hearings, the people of Canada, the people of Colombia and industries in both countries could be given a direct voice and direct input.

On the Colombian side, I will admit that I am very concerned, after hearing that the president has indicated he may change the constitution so he can stay in office beyond the two term time limit. That is worrisome. Has the Prime Minister raised this issue with the president? Has he said to the president that to violate the constitution in order to extend his term could have an impact in this country as to whether we would pass the Colombia free trade agreement in the House?

Government Orders

●(1320)

I will admit I have serious concerns about agreements once they are signed and the government's ability, or courage or lack thereof, to stand up for Canadians who have established rights under those agreements. The best example is that the Conservative government certainly has failed to stand up for Canadian trade rights under the trade agreement with the United States.

The U.S. is our closest trading partner. Everybody knows how the Conservative government sold out on softwood lumber, but let me explain the latest dispute. The government has failed Canada's livestock industry, beef and hog and other livestock producers, with the trade agreement that is in place with the United States. I have said in the House many times that Canada is losing the hog industry in part due to the United States' protectionist policy and the Conservative government's failure to utilize the authorities under trade law to protect Canadian producers' interests. Here are the facts.

Dr. Milton Boyd, in an editorial in the *Calgary Sun*, said this about the situation of country of origin labelling in the United States. He opened the article by saying:

Struggling US livestock producers—hit hard by the recent economic downturn and the drop in demand for meat in the United States—have spurred recent trade protectionism measures—

We know what the Americans are doing is illegal. We know the Conservative government should be standing up for Canadian producers. But what are the consequences of the government not challenging the United States and standing up for Canadian producers? Here is what Dr. Boyd had to say:

[Country of origin labelling] COOL has resulted in a tightened, protectionist border. Canadian hog exports to the U.S. for market pigs have dropped...60% [from last year]...

...this loss is around...\$163 million over a full year... Also, slaughter-cattle exports are down 20% and feeder-cattle exports are down by 50%.

That is an extremely serious issue. We are losing an industry. The government has the authority under trade law to stand up and fight for Canadian producers, but the minister sits on his hands. When the Prime Minister had the opportunity to apply more pressure when he was in the United States, what did he do? He got in his Challenger jet and flew home at a cost of about \$60,000 to have a coffee at Tim Hortons.

An hon. member: A double-double.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, I do not know whether it was a double-double or not, but it may have been. He had the opportunity to challenge directly the President of the United States and, from what I can gather, did not do so.

Canadian producers are standing by watching their asset base decline and tumble while the government sits on its hands. To have a trade agreement is one thing, but when one has a trade agreement one has to have a government that has the courage to stand up for the people in our country who are operating under that trade agreement, not just cave in to it. That is what the government has consistently done. Whether it is open market, trade agreement, whatever, it is failing Canadian producers.

With respect to this bill, what really needs to happen from the official opposition's perspective is to move the bill to committee

where the voices of Canadians and Colombians can be heard and hearings can be held to establish the direction in which we want to go. The committee and the House can vote on it after all the evidence has been put forward.

●(1325)

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am a little disappointed that the hon. member may not appreciate the great news about Tim Hortons being back in Canada and the need for our Prime Minister to represent that. That is a bit disappointing.

Mr. Scott Simms: Throw me a Timbit. Throw me a Timbit.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Madam Speaker, we are hearing about Timbits from timbits.

Could the hon. member highlight some specific things that would make this agreement with Colombia advantageous for both Canada and Colombia? Perhaps he could make reference not just to the economic opportunities but the importance of a relationship with Colombia to help lead it in important areas like human rights, debate health and some of the things that have been discussed in the debate previously.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, let me answer the question quite directly. Of course, I see many benefits in this agreement, especially for the farm sector, such as livestock exports. Certainly the Canadian Wheat Board, a great marketing institution in this country which the current government continues to try to undermine, is saying very clearly that the trade agreement with Colombia is important to move grains and oilseeds into Colombia. There are opportunities. There will be other opportunities down the road as well. However, we need to have that debate and let those producers come before committee.

The member raised the issue of the Prime Minister coming back to Tim Hortons and I must make a couple of comments. It was just another re-announcement of a previous announcement. That is what the Prime Minister is so good at. In Prince Edward Island, I announced the new public building in Charlottetown in 2003 and my colleague, the member for Charlottetown, saw that it got off the ground and got built. That was about four years ago. What did the Government of Canada do two weeks ago? It put up a sign in front of the new federal building in Charlottetown, trying to leave the impression that it is part of its economic stimulus package. It is no such thing. That is the kind of mis-messaging the Conservative government does all the time. The government is trying to confuse Canadians that it is providing stimulus when it is not doing anything of the sort. That stimulus was provided by a previous government that believed in building Canada for Canadians.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Madam Speaker, I find it quite interesting that the member mentioned that the government is rehashing old announcements. I guess that it has learned from the previous Liberal government which did that on a number of occasions.

Regarding Bill C-23, in May the steelworkers were on the Hill lobbying Liberal MPs, asking them to honour the commitment they made in June 2008, demanding that there be an independent, impartial and comprehensive human rights impact assessment before Canada would consider entering into a free trade agreement with Colombia.

Government Orders

It is noteworthy to indicate that in the last 10 years, 60% of trade unionists who were murdered in the world were murdered in Colombia.

I ask the member, is it correct to think that this free trade agreement would prevent murders from happening, that trade unionists would not be murdered? I spoke on this last week and I received an email from a constituent who had just been to Colombia and had some concerns with regard to that as well.

• (1330)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, I made it quite clear in my remarks that we, too, are concerned about the human rights issue in Colombia. We are also concerned about the fact that the president may be thinking of changing the constitution to go another term.

However, we also know that the NDP is opposed to any kind of free trade agreement, no matter what. The NDP members are philosophically opposed.

There has been this debate in the House. It should go to committee where some of the issues the hon. member raised could be addressed directly. The trade unionists could come before the committee so that we could hear them, either on the ground in Colombia or on the ground here, in order to make a balanced decision based on the actual facts rather than the rhetoric of the NDP.

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure today to speak to Bill C-23, the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement bill, as I believe it is one of many elements that have advocated prosperity in our country.

Canada is taking action during these difficult economic times by reaching out to other trading partners and reducing barriers to trade. This is certainly a mechanism to create jobs. This agreement provides Canadian companies with a competitive edge in many sectors, including wheat, paper products, mining, oil and gas, engineering and information technology. This is another example of the government's efforts to deepen Canada's presence in Latin America.

Labour and environmental standards are addressed within the free trade agreement. The side agreement with Colombia on labour and the environment will help ensure that this FTA advances the cause of human rights and environmental protection in both countries.

The labour provisions commit all parties to respect and enforce standards such as the freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively and the elimination of child labour. Environmental provisions will help protect and conserve the environment in those sectors where our companies are active. I believe this will encourage prosperity in both countries. That certainly has been the essence of our government's work in Canada since our election in January 2006.

Since we are talking about means to enhance prosperity, let me touch upon Canada's economic action plan and Canada's economic stimulus measures.

We all know a great deal about Canada's economic action plan, the \$61 billion shot in the arm for the Canadian economy. More recently, we have heard about the incredible progress of Canada's economic stimulus. Yesterday we heard the Prime Minister in Atlantic Canada

talk about the success of the \$7.6 billion economic stimulus program.

We learned that there are 7,500 infrastructure and housing projects. More than 4,000 have begun. Of the 7,500, there are over 4,700 provincial, territorial and municipal infrastructure projects. There are 1,150 projects to repair and renovate federal buildings across the country; 447 projects to improve infrastructure at colleges and universities; about 300 social housing projects; 600 projects to help communities hardest hit through the community adjustment fund; and almost 100 projects to promote culture and tourism. These are all things that are going to be major benefits to Canada and are going to stimulate communities across our country.

Sometimes when we hear those giant numbers we wonder what it means in our communities. I thought today I would mention some of the successes of the economic stimulus program in Barrie, the riding that I have the tremendous honour of representing. There has been \$54 million in economic stimulus over the last year in our region of Simcoe County and I am going to talk about a few of the projects today.

There is the downtown community theatre, an investment of \$2.5 million with the federal government to build and construct a theatre in our downtown, something that had been advocated for a long time by Joe Anderson and William Moore, who came to Ottawa and made a presentation last February. I know they were shocked to see how quickly this government got engaged in this project that is going to create jobs and stimulate our downtown.

I think of the Lake Simcoe cleanup fund, where there has been \$5.3 million in investment, dealing with the reduction of phosphorus levels in Lake Simcoe through fighting urban waste runoff in areas where it can be cleaned up.

I look at the Allandale GO Train station. This is a \$1.5 million federal investment that was announced last February. For a long time Barrie was without GO Train services. Unfortunately, in the early 1990s the NDP premier at the time cut the GO Train, despite its popularity in our region. To have GO Train services back, as was announced in 2007, was a tremendous boom to our community, but now to have a second station in the downtown dovetails so well with the downtown community theatre that I mentioned.

These are two major projects in our downtown. I certainly must credit the local councillor, Jerry Moore, who was very active in advocating the station, and also Jack Garner, who had sat on the GO Train board when it was taken away and remained active in the diligent fight to bring it back for over 12 years.

• (1335)

I think of the Barrie fire station. There was a desperate need for a new fire station in our downtown and the federal government invested \$4.2 million into this economic stimulus project that was announced in June. Shovels are just beginning to work on this property on Dunlop Street in Barrie.

Government Orders

This was something that the city did not have the funds to do. If it were not for these stimulus investments, this is the type of project that would never have happened. Dozens of jobs are being created through this building of a new fire station. I had a chance to sit down with Len Mitchell and Kevin White from the fire force and they were so ecstatic to hear that this investment was made.

To give another example of infrastructure investment, there were five different projects announced in June in the city of Barrie. These too will create prosperity. Whether talking about the Colombia free trade bill or about infrastructure investments, this is all part of a larger picture of investment and prosperity that this government has certainly been engaged in.

Of these five road projects that I was mentioning, one was for \$506,000. Another was for \$992,000. Another was for \$1.7 million. Another was for \$1.6 million and another for \$3 million. These road projects are all beginning this year. They are going to be finished within a year and a half. These are all projects that are going to have to hire construction workers. These construction workers are going to spend in our community. We are leaving a lasting legacy for our community and country.

I would be remiss not to mention the expansion of Lake Simcoe Regional Airport, the federal component of which was \$4.5 million. The municipalities and province are getting involved. This is another project that is embarking momentarily and will be completed within a one-and-a-half year timeframe. This expansion is going to make our region more competitive economically, but it is also something that is going to create immediate construction jobs.

I note that there are also RInC projects in our riding. There are two of them including the tennis club and Eastview Arena. These projects are also of significant stature. They are in the million-dollar range and are desperately needed. When I sat on council in Barrie nine years ago, we were talking about upgrades to Eastview Arena.

It is one of those things that is talked about every year at budget and there is never enough money around the table to do it. This federal investment in recreation enables the city to complete this long-desired investment in recreation. At Eastview Arena, the kids had to split into two dressing rooms to change because it was so small. This change has been—

• (1340)

Mr. Jim Maloway: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I thought we were debating Bill C-23, the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement. All I have been hearing are stories about infrastructure. I am just wondering when the member is going to be dealing with the issue at hand.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would ask the hon. member for Barrie to return to the subject of the matter at hand, which is Bill C-23.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, whether it is prosperity created through the Colombia free trade agreement or whether it is prosperity through infrastructure, it is important to look at the larger picture. The big picture is that this government is advocating prosperity in every sense.

Whether we create a job through the Colombia free trade agreement and have a business with a new trading avenue, or

whether it is through an infrastructure project like the Eastview Arena that I mentioned, the prosperity-enhancing measures that this government has been engaged in are going to have real benefits for Canadians.

Consider an individual who has a new job in Barrie. What is the cycle of that new job? That individual is likely going to frequent a local restaurant. They are going to shop at a local business. That is more business for a business or restaurant that may have been struggling to keep their balance sheets. It keeps them alive. It maintains jobs.

I am so proud of our government for doing this. Our government is not only advocating prosperity but maintaining it. It is protecting jobs and certainly looking out for the best interests of Canadians.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, recently the Prime Minister attended the world summit at the United Nations and my understanding is that the President of Colombia was present at that summit as well. Considering the amount of time we are debating this very important free trade agreement with Colombia here and the very serious issues being raised including human rights issues, did the Prime Minister have the opportunity to sit down and discuss some of these issues with the president of Colombia at that summit?

We know that the Prime Minister's time unfortunately was limited at the UN because he rushed back at a cost of \$60,000 to taxpayers to take the Challenger jet back to Oakville to attend Tim Hortons. Tim Hortons has opened up a location in New York. He could have done it just around the corner from the UN and saved taxpayers \$60,000.

However, did he have an opportunity to meet with the president of Colombia to discuss some of these issues. If he did not meet, was it perhaps because his time was so limited because he rushed back on this taxpayer funded \$60,000 Challenger trip to Tim Hortons for a double-double?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Madam Speaker, it is always amusing to hear the Liberals talk about trade liberalization and trade because their positions really change quite rapidly.

I think of the Liberals when they were in opposition prior to the election of Prime Minister Chrétien. They were rabid anti-free traders and in office they advocated for trade.

Therefore, it is tough to take seriously anything they say today whether they are for it or against it because they tend to change their minds once elected on trade liberalization.

It is always interesting to hear the comments, but I recognize they may not have any bearing on what would happen if they were ever unfortunately to return to office.

In terms of the Canada-Colombia free trade bill, I think it is important to reference that in February 2008 a report from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation in Colombia stated:

Government Orders

It must be recognized that Colombia has made progress in restoring security throughout the country in recent years, and the visibility given to human rights in the public agenda is a solid achievement.

Hopefully, Canada like other countries has helped raised that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. Question and comments, the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskas-ing.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskas-ing, NDP): Madam Speaker, I certainly was a little confused for a minute. I thought perhaps the member had the wrong notes in front of him because he talked more about stimulus than with regard to Bill C-23. The Canada-Colombia free trade agreement is of great concern to not only the NDP but as well to many people within Canada and abroad.

The Canada-Colombia agreement is strongly opposed by parliamentarians in Canada and Colombia, by civil society groups, indigenous people, trade unions, environmental groups and citizens from both nations.

There was a letter that was sent by over 50 prominent Canadians including activists, professors, labour groups, civil society, Stephen Lewis, Ed Broadbent and Naomi Klein to the Leader of the Liberal Party, Michael Ignatieff, during the party's leadership convention—

• (1345)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. I would ask the hon. member to refrain mentioning the name of a sitting member of Parliament, but in any event I must give the member for Barrie the time to respond to that question.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Madam Speaker, in terms of her question about the topic, sometimes the NDP members forget to appreciate this. We have to look at prosperity in all its elements. Certainly, I can appreciate why they may not view it that way but job creation is certainly related to trade liberalization as it is to infrastructure projects. We have to look at the larger picture of how to create jobs, not just criticize or debate in Parliament. It is important to look at tangible job creation mechanisms.

Trade liberalization is one of them, infrastructure investments are another. They are all linked to the larger picture of prosperity.

In terms of Colombia, Colombia will make no progress if we isolate that country. We believe that political engagement, development assistance and free trade are all key elements for success in Colombia.

Over the last six years the personal situation of a vast majority of Colombians has improved. Illegal armed groups have been weakened. The progress has been acknowledged by the global community and international organizations that are present in Colombia.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-23, the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act.

I must point out right away that the Bloc will oppose this bill, and not because it opposes free trade or the opening of borders. Everyone knows that, in the past, Quebecers supported the philosophy that

resulted in the establishment of the North American Free Trade Agreement, despite its imperfections. It was interesting to see that, for the first time, a free trade agreement included not only our neighbour the United States, but a developing country, as well, namely Mexico.

At the time, I was the general secretary of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux. We had changed the name of the Coalition Québécoise d'opposition au libre-échange—the Quebec coalition to oppose free trade—at the time the free trade agreement with the United States was being negotiated. With NAFTA, it became the Réseau québécois sur l'intégration continentale—the Quebec continental integration network.

So there is a very broad consensus in Quebec on the importance of opening up borders and doing so under a set of rules benefiting both parties. In our opinion, the free trade agreement between Canada and Colombia in no way serves the interests of Colombia or of Canada or of Quebec.

I point out first that the Bloc, like most stakeholders in international trade, advocates multilateral agreements within the context of the World Trade Organization or as part of an eventual free trade area of the Americas. As there is currently a blockage at the WTO, the former Bush administration in the U.S. had adopted the strategy of trying to sign bilateral agreements with countries unable to properly defend their interests. Free trade agreements have been attempted or have been signed between the United States and Chile, Peru and Colombia.

We note that the Conservative government has adopted this strategy with less success than the previous American administration. It simply blindly followed the Republican strategy, the prerogative of President Bush, negotiating bilateral agreements with powerless countries, through which the Americans imposed their vision of free trade. The Conservative government of Canada has adopted the same strategy.

This strategy, I note, is being questioned by the new American administration, and President Obama has called for a review of the strategy for expanding international trade.

It must be said that negotiations to expand free trade at the WTO and in the context of a free trade area of the Americas are currently blocked, not because people are opposed to opening up borders, but because they realized that opening up borders without another agreement on labour, the environment or culture and language leads to troubled waters, as we have seen with chapter 11 of NAFTA on the protection of investments, which has been reproduced in the free trade agreement with Colombia.

We should be very clear. This agreement is certainly not based on the amount of trade between Canada and Colombia. In 2008, Canadian imports from Colombia amounted to \$644 million. We are not even talking a billion dollars here. At the same time, Canadian exports to Colombia amounted to about \$700 million. These negotiations certainly do not involve a major trading partner. What is quite significant, though, is the amount of Canadian investment in Colombia, especially the mining sector, which is over a billion dollars.

Government Orders

If we take a look at the chapter on investor protection, we see that it is very prejudicial to governments, especially the Government of Colombia. The amount of Colombian investment in Canada is only a million dollars.

•(1350)

It is obvious that the purpose of the chapter on the protection of foreign investment is not so much to protect Colombian investors in Canada as to protect Canadian investors in Colombia.

Once again, we are not against protecting foreign investment if it is done well. The problem with the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement, as with the free trade agreement with Peru, is that the chapter on protecting foreign investment confers inordinate rights on foreign corporations. These are mostly Canadian corporations operating in Colombia. It is certainly not the Colombian companies operating in Canada that will pose a problem. Canadian companies operating in Colombia are given the ability to sue the Government of Colombia directly in some situations.

We saw this under chapter 11 of NAFTA, which was carefully negotiated although the people involved did not realize what all the ramifications were. We are more aware now of all the abuses that can arise as a result of NAFTA chapter 11, which has been copied in the treaty between Canada and Colombia.

These abuses have to be stopped. We will not support free trade agreements that include chapters to protect foreign investment similar to chapter 11 of NAFTA. That is why we voted against the Canada-Peru free trade agreement and it is one of the reasons why we will vote against this act to implement the free trade agreement between Canada and Colombia.

On the other hand, we recently voted in favour of the free trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association because it did not have any provisions allowing either Scandinavian companies—because the countries in this association are mostly Scandinavian—or Canadian companies to sue the other government.

It is rather strange that the kind of protection provided in these treaties is different as soon as we are dealing with a developing country that cannot bargain from a position of strength. When it comes to a developed country on our own level, the protective agreements are government to government, that is to say, it is Canada that goes before a tribunal like the London tribunal. Unfortunately, a decision was recently handed down that was unfavourable to Canada and its softwood lumber. American companies did not sue Canadian companies or the Government of Canada directly. Instead, it was the American government that filed a complaint with the tribunal and the interests of the Canadian companies were represented by the Government of Canada.

We think that is how it should be done. It is known as the OECD formula for investment protection, but that is not what we see in the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement. We can add to that Colombia's terrible human rights record, and I think we have very good reason to oppose such a bill to implement the agreement.

I would remind the House that my hon. Conservative colleague was talking about improvements earlier. I do not know where he sees any improvements, considering, for example, that in 2008 crimes committed by paramilitary groups increased by 41% and 14% the

year before, and considering that, in 2001, there was a slight decrease in the number of murders of trade unionists, but in 2008, there were 46 such murders. So, clearly, human rights and union rights are being systematically violated.

By signing a free trade agreement with Colombia, Canada is condoning the state of human rights and union rights in that country. The Bloc Québécois refuses to be complicit in this, and Quebecers will not be complicit in a situation that will benefit Canadian mining companies alone, at the expense of human rights and union rights. I am also convinced that environmental rights are not being respected, because, if we were to take a closer look, I think we would find that these mining companies do not respect the environment in Colombia.

I think I have been quite clear. No one will be surprised to learn that the Bloc Québécois will vote against Bill C-23 and will be very proud to do so.

•(1355)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a quick question and some clarification points. I am not sure where Bloc members stand on the situation when they mention the United States of America. They seem to be of the impression that the Americans are against what we are doing and they too are against it, but my research tells me that it is not the case. President Barack Obama has admitted that they are proceeding and that he is confident that ultimately we can strike a deal that is good for the people of Colombia and good for the people of the United States. I certainly do not think Congress has tossed this out either.

I wonder if the hon. member could clarify his points on that matter. I think he did touch on the United States situation. I was wondering if he could give his reasoning why they are refusing this in light of the situation in America.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Madam Speaker, I do not think my colleague understood what I was saying or maybe he was not listening. The Doha round at the WTO is currently blocked. It is blocked because emerging countries do not want developed countries to be the only ones benefiting from freer trade. That should be the focus of debate regarding international trade. To avoid having to have this debate and having to make concessions to open the borders, the American government, under the Bush administration, decided to jump into all kinds of bilateral agreements with different countries. As I said, they were generally countries with which they did not have existing trade relationships, but that were not able to hold their own in the balance of power with the Americans.

I condemn the fact that Canada and its Conservative government took exactly the same approach, using the villages to surround and take the cities, as Mao Zedong said. They are currently trying to establish a model of free trade that does not take into account human rights, union rights or environmental rights.

The government is trying to force this on countries that cannot defend themselves, and make that the standard. That is unacceptable from a country like Canada or the United States. That is what President Obama said he would change.

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, numerous Liberal and Conservative members who have spoken to the bill have talked about the importance of signing the free trade agreement between Canada and Colombia as a way to improve human rights records in that country.

Does the member have any evidence that signing free trade agreements with any country has improved the human rights record of that country and, if he is aware of one, would he please tell me which one it would be?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Madam Speaker, it is clear to the Bloc Québécois and to most people in Quebec that human rights must come before trade.

I think that if human rights, labour rights and environmental rights were taken seriously, then free trade agreements and investment protection would also be subject to environmental, labour rights and human rights standards.

Major international conventions exist. They must be respected in order for the advantages in the agreement to apply. That is one way Canada and other developed countries could help democracy and prosperity flourish in these emerging countries and in developing countries.

I do not buy the argument that economics and freer trade alone will lead to democracy and prosperity. That has not been proven in the past and it will not be in the future.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, in these difficult economic times, Canada needs to attract business growth and investment. That leads to more jobs and more opportunities for Canadians.

For years, under Liberal governments, high business taxes put Canada at a competitive disadvantage to the United States. That is why our government put the federal corporate tax rate on a downward track. The federal corporate tax rate will go down to 15% by 2012 from 22% just a few years ago.

Statements by Members

Cutting taxes is working. Tim Hortons, a Canadian icon, has packed up its location in Delaware and is coming home, shifting its base of operations to be a Canadian company once again.

Our actions are driving business investment home and that is a stark contrast to the Liberal plan of higher taxes, higher spending, a plan that would only drive business the other way.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since being elected to Parliament, I have been involved in cultural matters. Today, I am pleased to tell you about a petition from the Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne or FESFO, signed by several hundred young Franco-Ontarians who are concerned about the decline in the revenues of CBC/Radio-Canada.

The FESFO is calling for Radio-Canada programming to be restored to its previous level in francophone Ontario and for the station in Windsor to be reopened.

Unfortunately, because of a technical detail, I am unable to present this petition in the House. However, I feel it is crucial that the minister responsible for CBC/Radio-Canada receive it, which is why I will give it to him by the end of question period.

I met with FESFO representatives, who also indicated that they would request a meeting with Sylvain Lafrance, executive vice-president of French services at CBC/Radio-Canada. I urge Mr. Lafrance to agree to meet with these people as soon as possible.

* * *

AYER'S CLIFF 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, Ayer's Cliff on Lake Massawippi, one of the most picturesque villages in my riding, is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

The first inhabitants of the village arrived in 1797 and called it Landmaid's Flat. The name was later changed to Ayer's Flat and finally to Ayer's Cliff.

Over time, the village has become a prime tourist destination. Ayer's Cliff is on the Townships Trail, which highlights the heritage of the Eastern Townships with its 415-kilometre marked road. The village is also known for its annual agricultural fair, and for one of the most beautiful campgrounds in Quebec as well as the Tomifobia Nature Trail which extends to the U.S. border.

For all these reasons, the Ayer's Cliff centennial is cause for celebration and something in which its inhabitants and Quebec can take pride.

*Statements by Members**[English]***ABORIGINAL FRIENDSHIP CENTRES**

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Madam Speaker, across the street from my office in Halifax is a colourful building with the word Pjila'si over the door. Pjila'si means welcome in Mi'Kmaq, and I have always felt welcome in this building, the Mi'Kmaq Native Friendship Centre.

However, the funding challenges that exist for Canada's 120 aboriginal friendship centres could end that warm welcome.

Fifty-four per cent of all aboriginal people live in urban areas and this number is increasing. With a relatively small investment from the Department of Canadian Heritage, we could ensure that services exist in urban areas for our first nations peoples, services that are culturally appropriate, accessible and stable.

It is my hope that a Prime Minister who recently declared that Canada has "no history of colonialism", will at least recognize that strong investments in friendship centres are a strong investment for Canada.

* * *

MEADOW LAKE, SASKATCHEWAN

Mr. Robert Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on August 31, it was my pleasure to announce, along with the Premier of Saskatchewan and local officials, that the town of Meadow Lake would become Saskatchewan's 14th city. For Meadow Lake, going from a town to a city is much more than a technical change.

It is recognition of the hard work of the Mayor Obrigewitsch, town council and community leaders and residents who have attracted new businesses and families to ensure that Meadow Lake thrived even during tough economic times.

Above recognizing past successes, becoming a city opens Meadow Lake to new investment opportunities and economic and social development.

My congratulations go out to Meadow Lake and I look forward to celebrating northern Saskatchewan's first city on November 9 with residents and community leaders alike.

* * *

● (1405)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from time to time there comes an individual willing to stand up for what is right and just, exposing the truth no matter the consequences to himself or herself.

A regional councillor from York stood up against his own party and blew the whistle on politicized infrastructure spending. Gordon Landon lost his candidacy in the Conservative Party because he dared to tell the truth. Gordon Landon blew the whistle on a scandal of epic proportions, billions of taxpayer dollars being dumped in Conservative ridings for political purposes, billions of taxpayer dollars being manipulated to serve only the interest of the Prime Minister and his cabinet colleagues.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer requested documents last week to investigate the situation. Shockingly, the government refused his request.

This is how the government operates, firing candidates for exposing the truth and stonewalling the Parliamentary Budget Officer to cover up this massive scandal. This is how the Conservative government operates.

* * *

HIGHGATE FALL FAIR

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, September 26, I was pleased once again to attend the Highgate fall fair.

Highgate is located at the eastern border of my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex, a charming village founded by Scottish settlers in the mid-1800s. It has celebrated the harvest with a country fair for the last 155 years.

This year we started with a parade, then enjoyed the local politicians squirm as they tried to outbid each other for an award-winning pie and then wandered about checking children's agricultural displays, animal attractions, old farm equipment, antique cars and fire trucks. We capped it off with some really great country barbecuing of hotdogs and hamburgers.

It was a great time again this year at the wonderful Highgate fair that has been enjoyed for 155 years.

Congratulations Highgate. We will see Highgate again next year as it celebrates 156 years of country hospitality.

* * *

*[Translation]***MUSEUMS IN CANADA**

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we are celebrating the first annual Canadian Museums Day. A number of museum directors are here on the Hill to talk about various issues, including federal government funding.

Every year, 59 million people visit museums and art galleries. Museums play an important economic role because they generate an estimated \$17 billion in economic spinoffs. Museums employ over 24,000 people and spend \$650 million annually on salaries. In Quebec, they are an essential part of teaching people about our culture and history.

In this context, we cannot ignore the strike at the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the Canadian War Museum. The Bloc Québécois would like to see this conflict resolved as soon as possible.

Museums and art galleries are a valuable resource that we should support with a solid museums policy and adequate funding.

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week our Minister of Foreign Affairs led Canada at the United Nations General Assembly and proudly spoke on important issues for Canadians.

The minister strongly asserted Canada's foreign policy priorities: economic recovery, UN reform, human rights, climate change and terrorism. Our focus was clear and our priorities continue to project our values, Canadian values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Leading by example, our government stands up for those unjustly detained in the world's most oppressive regimes. Leading by example, our government stands up for Canadians.

This government is finally giving Canada a strong principled voice on the international stage. This government will continue to be a leader in principled foreign policy as we prepare to host the G20 next year.

At home and abroad, Canadians know that they can count on this government.

* * *

• (1410)

RICHARD WACKID

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a man who loved Parliament, Richard Wackid, who died yesterday after a courageous struggle with ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease.

[Translation]

For over two decades, Rick was a friend and colleague to employees of all political stripes. His expertise put him at the centre of every debate held in this House.

To many people, he was a mentor. We admired his kindness, his dedication to his colleagues and his unshakable devotion to his work until the end.

[English]

Rick loved the institutions of Parliament and he became an institution in turn. We will miss his curly hair, his cufflinks, his humour, his humility, his wisdom and his friendship.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Rick's wife Danielle, his daughter Stephanie, and his entire family.

Today, Rick Wackid is at peace, and we will remember him always.

* * *

TERRY FOX

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are times when a member of Parliament receives the opportunity to do something extraordinary.

On Friday, September 25, on behalf of the Government of Canada, I was asked to unveil a plaque in St. John's, Newfoundland,

Statements by Members

honouring Terrance Stanley Fox at the site where he began his "Marathon of Hope". I was joined by Terry's brother, Fred, many local dignitaries and hundreds of school children who, like tens of thousands of students across Canada, celebrated Terry's run on that day.

It was cold and damp, not unlike 29 years ago when Terry Fox ran for hope and ran for us. I met Terry and my memories of him are vivid. He was fiercely passionate and deeply caring.

As the inscription reads at Mile 0, "this is the place where a young man's dream began and a nation's hope lives on".

Terry Fox will forever be remembered as one of our greatest Canadians. Well done, Terry. We continue to be proud of him.

All Canadians would want him to know we will continue his battle until cancer is conquered. Terry Fox: a Canadian hero.

* * *

HARMONIZED SALES TAX

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives and Liberals bring in the harmonized sales tax, or HST, next July, families across Ontario will be taxed at a higher rate on children's vitamins, on newspapers, even on coffee. That is right. This is a tax on our trip to Tim Hortons. If we want to hire a lawyer to fight the HST, well, that will be taxed, too.

Why is this new tax being foisted on Ontarians? Because the federal Conservatives and provincial Liberals want to shift the tax burden from the wealthiest banks and oil companies to middle-income families, the very people most at risk from the decline in our Ontario industrial economy.

Along with Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath, we are fighting the HST because it would harm Ontario workers and their families.

Ontarians will not take this and neither will we. It is time to stop the HST, stop the attack on the middle class and stop the McGuinty-Harper tax grab.

* * *

[Translation]

JEANNETTE CORBIERE LAVELL

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on September 27, 2009, Jeannette Corbiere Lavell was elected president of the Native Women's Association of Canada. She is one of the founding members of the Ontario Native Women's Association.

[English]

She is probably best known for her challenge of section 12 of the Indian Act, which forced aboriginal women to lose their Indian status if they married a non-aboriginal person. In 1985, thankfully, section 12 of the Indian Act was finally repealed.

Oral Questions

A champion of women's rights, she has worked tirelessly against injustice toward aboriginal women in particular.

In recognition of her efforts, an award has been set up in her name, which is presented annually to native women recipients who exhibit the same qualities and dedication as Ms. Corbiere Lavell.

[Translation]

We would like to congratulate Ms. Corbiere Lavell, and we are eager to work closely with her to improve the quality of life of native women in Canada.

* * *

•(1415)

JONATHAN COUTURIER

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, Quebec is mourning the loss of one of its sons, Private Jonathan Couturier, from Loretteville, who died on September 17 when his armoured vehicle struck an improvised explosive device. Eleven other soldiers were wounded in the same incident.

Our hearts go out to Private Couturier's family and friends following his sudden death. Private Couturier fought valiantly in Afghanistan. We must come together and show our respect for this soldier's commitment.

He fought courageously on the front lines, along with his fellow comrades-in-arms, who have been facing a particularly difficult situation recently.

My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I would like to offer our most sincere condolences to Private Jonathan Couturier's family, loved ones and fellow soldiers.

We wish them courage; our thoughts are with all of them.

* * *

[English]

RICHARD WACKID

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was with great sadness that I learned yesterday of the passing of our dear friend Richard Wackid.

Richard served every Liberal whip since Jean-Robert Gauthier and every Liberal leader since John Turner, with both honour and distinction. The consummate professional and team player, Richard was part of the glue that kept the Liberal caucus together in the best of times and the worst of times. He faced his battle with ALS just as he lived his life, with courage and dignity.

His love for the Liberal Party, the Liberal caucus and the House of Commons is an example for all political assistants, and this affection was only surpassed by his love for his wife Danielle and his daughter Stephanie.

On behalf of the entire team in the whip's office and our entire Liberal caucus, I would like to extend my most sincere condolences to Danielle and Stephanie. We will miss Rick.

[Translation]

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in today's *Journal de Montréal*, a piece on the Liberal Party leader reads, "It is not clear whether his love for Quebec, which he professes endlessly, is real or a ploy".

The Liberal leader knows a thing or two about ploys.

His ploys and his lack of leadership have just created more victims in the Liberal family in Quebec. It is not surprising really. He changes his mind as often as he changes his shirt.

What the hon. member for Bourassa has just discovered about his leader is something the Conservatives from Quebec have known for a very long time. A Liberal leader cannot be trusted.

His vision of Quebec and Canada is the image of his own reflection in the mirror. To heck with the best interests of the nation. What is important to the Liberal leader is that he gain power, whatever the cost.

A Liberal leader truly cannot be trusted.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, I met with workers at the Kruger plant in Trois-Rivières. Soon, 500 of them will lose their jobs. They are worried about their families, their retirement and their future. Yesterday, we learned that because of this government's incompetence, forestry companies are going to have to pay the Americans millions of dollars more.

Why does this Prime Minister have nothing to say and nothing to offer to these workers in Trois-Rivières? Why?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition is talking about the ruling by an international tribunal, then of course, Canada will respect that ruling and will take action. That is the nature of our country.

In fact, we have programs to help the forestry sector. We also have a proposal before Parliament to improve employment insurance benefits, and I hope the Liberal Party will support these measures, which are important for workers and the unemployed.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to be able to count on the government to help them, even if they did not vote Conservative. But according to the report the Prime Minister released yesterday, it is clear that some Canadians are being penalized.

According to the government's own figures, the ridings in Quebec are receiving the lowest per capita infrastructure funding in Canada. Why?

Oral Questions

● (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is working with provincial and municipal governments, with colleges and universities and with the private sector on projects to turn the global recession around. I reported yesterday that we have identified more than 7,500 projects across Canada and that over 4,000 projects are now under way. That is what Canadians want us to do. It is crucial that we target the economy. That is the government's job. I encourage the opposition leader to do the same.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians should be able to count on their government to help them find jobs no matter how they vote and no matter where they live, but instead we have a government that is using infrastructure money like a rewards program. Quebec's unemployment rate is higher than the national average and yet Quebecers are receiving the lowest per capita infrastructure funding in all of Canada.

How does the Prime Minister explain this? How does he explain his own numbers?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely false. We are working with provincial and territorial governments across the country and there will be a more or less rough per capita distribution on all of these programs. The fact is that 7,500 projects have been identified and 4,000 are under way.

Rather than flailing around trying to come up with excuses for an unnecessary and wasteful election, the Leader of the Opposition and his party should be supporting the economic action plan and supporting these projects in Quebec and all across this country.

* * *

[*Translation*]**INFRASTRUCTURE**

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer asked the government to reveal details about its infrastructure spending. What did the Conservatives say? No, never.

Better still, in its report, the government said that the business credit availability program was working well in Quebec, but refused to provide any figures.

Canadians and Quebecers deserve better. When will this government tell the truth to Canadians and Quebecers? They deserve to know the truth.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every detail of every project announced and implemented is already on the Internet. We feel we must report on progress to the people of every region of Canada and of Quebec.

But the real success is that we are working well with the government of Jean Charest; we are working well with municipalities; and we are taking action and producing real results for Quebecers and for Canadians in every region of this country.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he is not answering the question. Why does he not want to disclose these figures to the Parliamentary Budget Officer?

The economic action plan report shows that the government has zero credibility. Less than 1% of the funds allocated to green infrastructure has been spent.

According to the report, only 105 jobs will be created in Quebec in colleges and universities by 2010. But we are losing 5,800 jobs per week.

When will the Conservatives stop making misleading statements and start telling Canadians the truth?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have put aside partisan politics and are working very well with every provincial government. They have done an outstanding job in response to this crisis, as have the municipalities throughout the country. All of the announcements we made are on the World Wide Web, on the Internet for Canadians to see.

However, if the member wants to talk about her province, let us look at this. The Quebec economy is in better shape than the rest of the country because its infrastructure spending is flowing. Who said that? Her premier, Jean Charest.

* * *

● (1425)

[*Translation*]**FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): The Prime Minister's stimulus package is unfair to Quebec. Yesterday's progress report states in black and white, on page 142, that the government has given almost \$10 billion to the auto sector, concentrated in Ontario, and only \$70 million to the forestry sector, which is concentrated in Quebec and where job losses continue to accumulate.

Does this not prove that the Prime Minister's stimulus package does nothing for the forestry sector and Quebec regions?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the forestry sector across the country is facing serious challenges. That is why the government has responded with a number of measures, not only in the economic action plan, but also in previous budgets.

For example, we increased funding for BDC and EDC in order to help this sector. Moreover, the Quebec forestry sector has received \$7 billion just from this program. I hope that the Bloc Québécois will support these important programs in future.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with respect to EDC, the Prime Minister is referring to guarantees in the event of buyer bankruptcies. This does absolutely nothing for corporate liquidity.

Oral Questions

I would like to ask him a question: is it just a fluke that we suddenly find, in his wonderful stimulus package, on page 142, \$10 billion dollars for the auto sector in Ontario and \$70 million for forestry throughout Canada? Quebec only has a share of the \$70 million.

Is that the fairness the Prime Minister is talking about—everything for Ontario, nothing for Quebec?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary. As I just said, the Quebec forestry industry has received \$7 billion from just one EDC program. There are many other programs in the economic action plan and in this government's previous budgets.

The problem is that the Bloc voted against all these measures to help Quebec's forestry industry. They are playing politics at the expense of Quebec's forestry sector and hurting it. The Bloc should support these measures as they are important to this industry.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is refusing to proceed with a fair and equitable division of the countervailing duties imposed by the London tribunal on companies exporting softwood lumber to the United States. Instead of paying the \$68 million countervailing duties tab and charging it to companies that have exceeded their quota, the federal government will allow the Americans to collect duties on future exports, thereby possibly penalizing Quebec businesses unduly.

Is this an approach that the Minister of International Trade considers fair and equitable?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the international tribunal has given us a very clear ruling. We are not very happy about it, but we have to abide by it and that is what we plan to do. It is very important to note that the revenues will be recovered by the Province of Quebec.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the government wants to be fair and equitable, it should have each province cover its own pro-rated share of the countervailing duties.

Given that Ontario companies were responsible for 60% of the quota overruns, will the government make sure that Ontario pays 60% of the countervailing duties?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting idea, but this is an international court ruling. I suggest that the hon. member take a look at the ruling because the Province of Ontario is subject to exactly the same ruling.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's economic update, the Prime Minister indicated that he intends to proceed with more corporate tax cuts. He will slash \$8 billion from the taxes owed by some of the biggest and most profitable companies in Canada.

However, at the same time he will raise \$26 billion more from Canadians with an EI payroll tax increase and the dreaded HST.

Will the Prime Minister come clean? Why is he picking the pockets of Canadians but giving big handouts to the big banks and the oil companies?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has not raised taxes and has no intention of raising taxes. We hope to continue to see taxes fall.

Just on that particular question, because the leader of the NDP raises the case of business taxes, yes, business taxes are falling and we will soon have the lowest rate in the G7.

I noticed that a recent report of the World Economic Forum says that partly because of this and other measures, Canada will be only one of two developed countries in the world to come out of this recession in a better competitive place than we were before, and that is the goal of the government.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the average Canadian who will have their pocket picked by this new HST tax will feel the same way.

[Translation]

The Conservatives rewarded Ontario and British Columbia for harmonizing their sales taxes. They gave those provinces a \$7 billion bribe for raising taxes.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what kind of gift he plans to give Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island for raising their sales taxes?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP leader seems to be quite confused.

[English]

Whether to harmonize a provincial sales tax with a federal sales tax is a decision made by the province. On the contrary, this government lowered the GST twice. The NDP members voted against it and argued against it both times.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. Stephen Harper: Mr. Speaker, they cheer. That is why nobody thinks they have any credibility when they talk about sales taxes.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no confusion on this side. We know where this tax started. It started with that government in its budget and now it is trying to hide from it.

In British Columbia, hard-working families are being hit with this surprise tax hike on everything from haircuts to home heating. We know about the \$1.6 billion bribe that is being paid to the provincial Liberals but what we do not know is when the negotiations started and why the government is now trying to duck the issue.

The people of B.C. have the right to know the truth. Could the Minister of Finance tell the House here and now when he began negotiating—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Oral Questions

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the decision on whether or not to harmonize was made by those provinces that have not yet harmonized. The discussions that I had with the Province of British Columbia began after the provincial election in British Columbia.

* * *

[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian softwood lumber industry is still losing out because of the Conservatives and the Bloc. The decision of the London Court of International Arbitration to impose a \$68 million penalty on the industry for exporting too much lumber to the United States was upheld.

This is the result of the sellout agreement the Conservatives signed with the support of the Bloc.

Will the minister finally announce concrete measures to support the softwood lumber industry? Is there a light at the end of the tunnel for this industry that is so important to Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia?

[English]

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us remember that under the previous Liberal government, before we had this softwood lumber agreement in place, there were huge and ongoing increases in taxes being imposed all the time. Court cases were going on non-stop.

We appealed this particular ruling and the ruling now stands. However, it is very important to recognize that the money from the back taxes that are now owed goes back to the provinces. If it were done the Liberals' way, they would let the Americans continue to collect that money and have the money in the United States. We want the money to go back to the provinces and that is where it is going.

•(1435)

[Translation]

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by agreeing that Canada exports too much wood, the Conservatives and the Bloc condemned thousands of loggers and dozens of sawmills, saying that they too were “excess”.

The Bloc is crying crocodile tears, claiming that the Conservatives are not helping the forestry industry.

Will the minister admit that the Bloc helped them sign that sellout agreement that is preventing us from helping a struggling industry?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is true that the Bloc Québécois supported this agreement in the past, but it is clear that when the Liberals were in power, the forestry industry still had major problems.

Now, we have an agreement. We will abide by the decision rendered, and the money will be collected by the provinces.

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an international tribunal is once again slamming the Conservatives for their incompetence on softwood lumber. The Conservatives actually violated their own softwood lumber agreement in 2007. Then, when the tribunals ruled against them, the Conservatives responded with a payment that further violated their own agreement.

How can Canadian forestry workers have any trust in a government that is too incompetent to defend their interests?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is just representative of how out of touch the Liberals are. I have talked with the ministers responsible for the forestry industry in the provinces today. I have talked with the minister from Quebec. We have talked with all of the participants in the forestry industry within the last 24 hours.

None of us are happy with the ruling but they are all in agreement with the direction we have gone. They are all appreciative of the fact that we fought, we appealed and now we have a decision. Every one of them is for this. Only the Liberals are against it. They should get in tune with what is going on.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the minister would talk to Canadian forestry workers, people who have actually lost their jobs because of his government's incompetence, he would realize not everybody is happy with his government's handling of the softwood lumber agreement.

Conservatives promised us peace in their time, but they have utterly mismanaged the softwood lumber file. Instead of heading off a dispute that was months in the making, they did nothing. Then, at the last moment, they thought that they could buy a solution, but their payment broke their own agreement.

How can Canadian forestry workers have any confidence in a government that does not understand its own trade agreements? How can they have any confidence in a government that breaks its own trade agreements?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals stood by for years while the forestry industry was wracked with lawsuits from the United States, with incredible countervail taxes from coast to coast. There was upheaval; there was turmoil and loss of money to the United States.

We signed this agreement. It returned \$5 billion to the Canadian industry which would have been left in the United States if the Liberals had their way.

We fought hard on this particular ruling about back taxes. Now the final ruling has come out. The back taxes are owing. The money will be going to the provinces. If it were up to the Liberals, that money would still be staying in the United States.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, thousands of unemployed workers in Quebec do not qualify for employment insurance, yet the government and the NDP are insensitive to their plight. The government's bill, designed for Ontario, does not meet the needs of older workers in Quebec who are laid off intermittently or seasonal workers who do not work enough hours to qualify for EI.

Does the minister realize that she is not meeting the needs of workers in Quebec and that she must propose comprehensive reform of the employment insurance system?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of our bill on long-tenured workers is to ensure that those who have paid into the employment insurance system for years and years but have not received benefits for an extended period can receive from 5 to 20 additional weeks of benefits when they lose their jobs during a recession.

We want to help these workers and people who are losing their jobs, but the Bloc is doing everything it can to block this bill and prevent it from going forward.

Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to the Quebec Forest Industry Council, the Conseil national des chômeurs and the FTQ, the proposed measures will have no impact in Quebec, because they will not apply to seasonal workers, forestry workers or vulnerable workers.

What is the government waiting for to propose comprehensive reform in order to improve eligibility for employment insurance?

• (1440)

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, with our bill, we are going to pay out \$935 million and help 190,000 people. People across Canada will benefit during these tough economic times.

What is more, a few months ago, we added five weeks of EI benefits, introduced measures to help people who want to take extended training, and expanded work sharing to help companies and employees.

The Bloc is against the bill. It does not want the bill to move forward and it does not want to help unemployed workers, whom we are working to help.

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a young female truck driver in Quebec was stunned to learn that the CSST could not grant her preventive maternity leave since trucking is a federal jurisdiction. She was asked by her doctor to stop working for her own well-being and that of her child.

What does the minister intend to do to ensure that female Quebec workers enjoy the same rights and benefits, regardless of the level of government that regulates their occupation?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that everyone is entitled to use our employment insurance system in the

same way. The same eligibility criteria, the same benefits, and the same premiums apply to both men and women.

We believe that everyone is equal in our system. That is what we believe.

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will rephrase the question.

With H1N1 on our doorstep, every pregnant woman in Quebec working under Quebec's jurisdiction can go on preventive leave in order to protect their health and that of their unborn child.

Does the minister plan to do the same for pregnant women working in Quebec under federal jurisdiction?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the rules for our employment insurance system are already established. It is up to each individual to take vacation or sick days if it is important to themselves or their family. We support that decision.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister forgot a few things when he was bragging in New Brunswick about how he was looking after the economy. He forgot to tell Canadians that he was really just looking after himself, how he gave his own MPs in New Brunswick an average of 44% more in grants than opposition ridings in the province.

Would the Prime Minister care to confirm to Canadians today what Mr. Landon, now a former candidate in Markham, has already made public, that Conservative ridings get more than other ridings and that the only jobs the government members are interested in are jobs for themselves?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are making decisions in the province of Ontario working in co-operation with Premier Dalton McGuinty and his government and with municipal leaders in every corner of the country.

If the member opposite wants to talk to the mayor of Markham about the great partnership this federal government has had with the provincial Liberal government, I would invite him to do so.

The city of Markham made 14 requests for infrastructure funding for the riding of Markham—Unionville and it got every single one of them. We are delivering for Markham—Unionville just as we are delivering for ridings right across the country, like Kingston and the Islands, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if that minister had the courage to actually put the numbers out, we could tell how he is letting down Canadians right across the country.

If the Prime Minister was not so nailed to his chair, he would stand up and say how it is fair that some Canadians are punished for not voting for him. The Prime Minister gave his six MPs in New Brunswick \$18.5 million more on average than the other ridings in the province, at the expense of the people who are unemployed in the province of New Brunswick. He made sure his people were four out of the top five.

Why should Canadians anywhere in Canada trust him to look after their interests?

• (1445)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of bluster, but just because the member for Parkdale—High Park repeats it does not make it true.

Let us look at what other people are saying about the distribution. Let us look at what one opposition member said: “To tell you the truth I have noticed I am attracting a lot of money to my riding”. Who said that? The NDP member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if someone in the government could please tell us how much taxpayer money has been spent on the total ad campaign for the budget and the economic plan, and by that I mean all of the spending up to and including the current third report.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government takes its responsibilities to report to Canadians very seriously.

We are undergoing a significant economic downturn. We see some signs of a fragile recovery taking root. We have an important responsibility, as Parliament has ordered us to do, to report back to the Canadian people to make sure that they are aware of all the good tax reductions, tax credits and benefits of Canada's economic action plan.

There is a lot of good news out there for working families in this country. We have a responsibility to make sure they are aware of that and we take that responsibility very seriously.

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I asked for a number and clearly got no number.

We have been asking for numbers for months now. We still do not have the numbers for fiscal 2008-09. We do not have last year's numbers, let alone the numbers for this most recent overload of taxpayer paid pat-themselves-on-the-back advertising.

Either it is fiscal incompetence or the government is trying to hide something. Could the member confirm that at the very least the government spent over a million dollars in one day yesterday alone?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm when it comes to construction projects around Canada in every province and territory, in municipalities across the country, we are getting a lot of money out the door. We are restoring hope and opportunity. We are creating jobs. That is good news for the people of Canada.

Oral Questions

Every single premier of every province and territory and municipal leaders right across the country have all put aside politics to work with this government. It is time the member for Willowdale joined that great group.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members of the Liberal Party have continued their major, unwarranted attack on the hard work of the small towns and big cities across our country, this time in my region of Kitchener—Waterloo. It is clear that the Liberal leader will say anything to force an unnecessary opportunistic election that Canadians do not want.

Could the transport minister please tell this House how our government has been working with the municipalities in the Kitchener—Waterloo region to create jobs and provide economic stimulus to help fight this recession?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for too long the people in Kitchener—Waterloo were left out. They are finally getting their fair share of infrastructure spending and public profile in this country.

More than \$108 million to support 16 projects in the region has been committed. The officials had full rein to begin spending money the minute those announcements were made.

Let me talk about Hazel McCallion, the mayor of Mississauga. She is not only starting infrastructure spending, she is not only engaging in construction projects, she is the first mayor in Canada to begin to complete infrastructure stimulus projects. She is getting the job done working with this government and Premier Dalton McGuinty.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's handling of the allegations of sexual abuse of young boys by the Afghan national army on our Canadian Forces base is a national shame.

The narrow scope of the military's NIS report amounted to a whitewash and said that the chain of command did not know anything about it. However, we now know that this is not the case. Now there is corroboration that the military brass knew about this as far back as 2007.

Canadians deserve to know, how long has the minister had knowledge of this tolerance of sexual abuse in Afghanistan?

Oral Questions

•(1450)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am quite surprised by the tone and tenor of the hon. member's comments.

The Canadian Forces take these allegations very seriously. They have been given clear direction to report, stop, prevent any abuse they would see.

It is absolutely intolerable in this country as it would be in Afghanistan. To suggest that an independent arm's-length body like the National Investigation Service of the Canadian Forces would come up with a whitewash or is covering something up is absolutely disgusting as well.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the sexual abuse of young boys is a serious matter.

There are now reports that military police were told not to intervene in such matters, and they had the belief that if they were to intervene they would not be supported by the chain of command.

We have a grossly inadequate NIS report and a board of inquiry report sitting with the military since May. The military should not be investigating itself in these matters.

Will the minister order an independent inquiry? What does he have to hide in not doing so?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to suggest that sexual abuse against small boys, or anyone for that matter, is intolerable is something on which the member and I can agree. But to suggest somehow that the Canadian Forces or the independent bodies are complicit in covering something up is also intolerable. The member should know better, having practised law.

These arm's-length bodies are there to get to the bottom, to be transparent, to be open, to gather information. Rather than cast spurious allegations on the floor of the House of Commons, he should wait for that board of inquiry to report.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a recent decision, an immigration board member attacked the rights of francophones when he said that the right to obtain evidence in French is conditional on the demonstration of irreparable harm to the appellant. Yet an individual's right to be tried in French, in Montreal, is non-negotiable.

How can the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism accept the remarks of a board member who is saying that we are being deprived of our right to obtain documents in French, but not to worry, because this will not cause any harm?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have pointed out many times, the IRB, IRB members and IRB decisions are independent of the government. It is a quasi-judicial organization. It would be irresponsible of me as minister to comment on any IRB decisions.

Except of course, the government fully supports the letter and spirit of the Official Languages Act.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the decision has been handed down, and it is now up to the government to take action, because the individual whose rights have been violated and his lawyer, who asked for the evidence to be translated into French, plan to appeal their case. They will face lawyers paid by the federal government, specifically, by the minister's department.

Will the minister instruct his own lawyers to recognize an individual's right to be tried in French in Montreal?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our position is that the Official Languages Act must always be implemented in all areas, including the IRB.

Of course, IRB and Federal Court decisions are independent of the government.

* * *

[English]

INDUSTRY

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask about the government's intimidation tactics when dealing with private and public institutions.

Last December during Hanukkah celebrations, an aide to the Minister of Industry tried to block our leader from attending a non-partisan event at a Jewish school for disabled children in Toronto. When this became public, the government said it was taking the issue very seriously, but it would not provide details.

Could the minister provide those details today, or are we to infer that his office did in fact interfere?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the allegation is a serious allegation and we took it seriously. I believe the individual is no longer at the ministry of industry.

* * *

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there may be a pattern here.

Yesterday we heard that the office of the Minister of State for Science and Technology suggested to officials at the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council that its future funding was at risk if it did not agree to a second funding review of a conference on the Middle East.

I want to be very clear that I am not questioning the second review; I am questioning the use of pressure tactics by one of the minister's officials against an arm's-length academic research council.

Why is the minister intimidating public officials by threatening to cut their budgets?

•(1455)

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member will be happy to know that the social sciences council has clearly stated that email is inaccurate.

Let us look at the facts. The fact is that the Liberals cut funding to the sciences and technology community by over \$400 million. The fact is that this government has increased funding by \$7 billion in the last three years.

The fact is the Liberals do not care about the economy. They do not care about science. They obviously do not care about the facts. All they care about is an unnecessary election.

* * *

HERITAGE

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government was caught hocking rare heirlooms on a website that usually sells broken desks. It turns out that these artifacts did not even belong to Canada.

A mirror that the government pawned off for \$200 has cost \$23,000 of taxpayers' money to get back. A vase that the government sold for \$500 has cost us \$50,000.

Would the government simply admit that it does not understand or care about the value of Canada's heritage collections?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what occurred of course was wrong. Those actions took place independent of this government, independent of my ministry. While we were not involved in those transactions at all, we are taking responsibility in ensuring it does not happen again.

What happened is not in the interests of taxpayers; it is not in the interests of our heritage. We are taking action to correct it in the future.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, that is the government that lost the gold at the mint and then sold off the silver at Rideau Hall.

When the Conservatives had the bright idea, they would not even wait for an appraisal. That is the rub. They were like bumpkins in a pawn shop. Tea cups that were worth \$250,000 were sold off for \$250.

I would like the minister to tell us what steps the government will take to ensure that our heritage collections are protected under his watch.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, those transactions took place without any consultation whatsoever with our government.

We are reforming the process by which these assets will be taken care of in the future. We are going to ensure that this does not happen again.

Oral Questions

This government has an unprecedented and untarnished record of standing up and protecting Canada's character, culture, our heritage, and ensuring that all our assets are treated with the due care they deserve. We are changing the process. What happened in the past will not happen again, because we are taking action.

The NDP can make all the noise that it wants; this Conservative government will always take action to protect Canadian heritage.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL AID

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the weekend typhoon Ketsana unleashed a devastating blow to the Philippines. The worst tropical storm to hit the region in almost half a century has affected over 108,000 people. Reports this morning indicate there is a death toll of 240 people, with many more missing.

Aid agencies around the world are scrambling to send money and supplies. Could the Minister of International Cooperation tell the House what Canada has done to help?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada and Canadians across the country are deeply concerned for the people in the Philippines who have been affected by the typhoon. We immediately provided \$50,000 to the Philippine National Red Cross on the ground. Today I am announcing that Canada will make up to \$5 million available for emergency and humanitarian assistance.

I can assure Canadians, and particularly the Filipinos in the Canadian community, that Canada and this government will monitor the situation, do its part with compassion and do it responsibly.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, illegal U.S. country of origin labelling continues to financially ruin Canadian hog and beef producers, yet the minister remains confused, thinking a press release accounts for action.

In May, the minister announced that he was going to take the fight on COOL to the United States administration. It never really happened. What do livestock producers have to show for his illusory work? Hog exports to the United States are down 60%, cattle exports are down 20%, farmers are going broke.

When is the minister actually going to challenge COOL and stand up for Canadian farmers?

•(1500)

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many of us, including the member for Malpeque and I, had the opportunity to attend a luncheon hosted on the Hill by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association. Its members gave a glowing account of what this government is doing for them on country of origin labelling, on marketing around the world.

Points of Order

In fact they had great things to say. But there are two things that really concerned them: one was the hypocrisy of the member for Malpeque in voting against drought deferrals, and the other was him and his leader dragging them into an unnecessary election when we are making progress on COOL. They are upset and I do not blame them.

* * *

[Translation]

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have learned that in addition to spending years depriving tens of thousands of seniors of the guaranteed income supplement, the federal government is maintaining the administrative hurdles for those who experience a drop in income. Some individuals have to wait 28 to 30 weeks for their supplement to be increased.

When does the minister intend to put an end to these unjustified delays and give seniors living below the poverty line the money they are entitled to?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, we have made significant improvements to the guaranteed income supplement system since we took office. We made sure that seniors would not have to apply year after year.

As long as they file their income tax return and they have applied once, they will automatically receive the GIS if they are eligible. After they file their income tax return, their eligibility is determined as well as any change in what they are eligible for.

There is also an automatic trigger for an adjustment in the cost of living. Recently we have not had an increase in the cost of living, so there have not been adjustments. People must file their income tax returns in a timely manner to get the benefits they deserve.

* * *

INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the industry minister admitted there is a problem in the auto repair market. I thank him for finally coming to that realization, years later. That is not bad for his track record, to be quite frank.

However, he accepted a non-binding manufacturers agreement that will not protect consumers, does not ensure competition, and it is completely unenforceable. It is not worth the paper it is written on.

The House voted overwhelmingly for a legislative solution like there is in Europe and the United States. Could the minister explain why Canadians are not going to get the same consumer, environmental and public safety protections as the citizens of those other countries? Why does he think Canadians are second rate?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Quite the contrary, Mr. Speaker, we were able to work with the automobile manufacturers, both foreign and domestic. We worked with those representing the after market and garages that seek to do this work,

and we came up with a voluntary agreement that has mediation in it; it has a price structure in it.

It has all the details that are necessary to make sure that when people take their cars to a place other than their dealer for servicing, they can get the advantages of the repairs in that particular place. That is good news for Canadian consumers and it is good news for the Canadian auto industry.

* * *

[Translation]

JEUX DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some 300 young athletes and artists from Canada are currently in Beirut proudly defending our country's colours in top-level competitions.

Three delegations, from Canada, Canada-Quebec and Canada-New Brunswick will be competing over the next few days in various events.

Can the Minister for La Francophonie tell us what the Government of Canada is doing to contribute to the success of this event?

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Kenora for his question.

I recently had the pleasure of announcing that our government was giving \$1 million to the International Organization of la Francophonie to help organize the sixth edition of these games in Beirut. More than 3,000 young athletes and artists from five continents are currently in Beirut, Lebanon, in one of the largest gatherings in the history of the Francophonie games.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the judo team for already winning four medals. I am sure that our athletes and artists will all do as well in the coming days.

* * *

● (1505)

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during question period the minister admitted he attended a barbecue with the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, but he must have selective hearing because what I heard was not what he said. I heard concerns about these provisions and the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Wayne Easter:—difference with this one is that the Canadian Cattlemen's Association held the barbecue and the minister was not allowed to set up a photo op like he did at the Canada Pork Council barbecue in which he spent hundreds of thousands of dollars and Agriculture and Agri-Food time to put on a photo op, and he was worried about how he looked rather than address the crisis.

The Speaker: I could not hear much of that, but I am not sure it was a point of order.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is rising on the same point of order?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure there is much more than a lot of loud baloney. We had good beef over there, so I am not sure where all that baloney came from.

Having said that, we are working extremely hard with the livestock sector, with the pork sector, on country boards and labelling. As the member opposite should know, we actually won the first challenge during the consultation phase last fall. Now the new administration decided to retroactively make some changes and put that into play. We are working with our industry. I actually made a comment from the podium today that I am expecting a report from the Canadian cattlemen within the next few days to add to our arguments to take south with us.

The Speaker: Having not been able to hear much of the point of order, it sounded like a supplementary question to me, especially when I heard the answer, so we will move on.

The hon. government House leader is rising on a point of order?

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions and consultations between all the parties. If you seek it, you may find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Orders or usual practices of the House, the House immediately revert to Statements by Ministers, provided that Standing Order 33(2) does not apply.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I declare the motion adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as hon. members are aware, yesterday the London Court of International Arbitration tribunal issued its final decision with respect to use

of the adjustment factor in the calculation of the volume of exports to the United States.

In March 2009, the tribunal had ruled that Canada had breached the adjustment factor of the softwood lumber agreement. Canada applied the adjustment factor to some provinces beginning in July 2007, but the tribunal ruled that it should have been applied since January 2007.

In April 2009, Canada offered the United States a payment of \$46.7 million to cure the breach. This payment was rejected by the United States, at which point Canada requested that the tribunal rule on whether the proposed payment in fact would cure the breach.

Yesterday, Canada's proposed lump sum payment was rejected by the tribunal and Canada was ordered to impose compensatory adjustments to Canada's export charges, in effect to collect that back tax.

The tribunal sent a strong message that the export charge should be collected on a first-to-ship basis, and should be applied to Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan until the amount of \$68.26 million has been collected.

As members are no doubt aware, the United States is currently imposing an import tax of 10% at the border. In order for this tax to be removed, Canada must comply with the tribunal's ruling.

The Government of Canada is disappointed that the tribunal did not accept Canada's proposed solution to cure the breach. We continue to believe that our offer to pay \$46.7 million was fair. However, there is no further route for appeal.

I have consulted with the provinces and have received their support to comply with the tribunal's decision.

We remain committed to the success of the softwood lumber agreement. This agreement has brought stability and has returned nearly \$5 billion to the industry.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows full well that the Conservatives violated their own softwood lumber agreement back in 2007. The minister actually made things worse when he tried to buy a solution back in April, and in doing so, we now know that the Conservatives further violated their own agreement.

What took place yesterday in the London Court of International Arbitration tribunal came as a surprise to no one who has been studying this issue.

The Conservative strategy has been to do nothing but to delay. This past spring, the Conservatives literally tried to buy time with payments, paid for and offered by Canadian taxpayers. They perhaps hoped to punt this issue, to cover their mistakes, to punt the issue beyond the election, but these delays have meant economic uncertainty and job losses for Canada's forestry workers, a sector that has been punned time and time again under the Conservative government.

Privilege

The softwood lumber agreement was supposed to stop this litigation. It was supposed to bring peace in our time. That was the promise from the Conservatives. That has not been the reality. The reality is that the litigation continues and the Conservative incompetence has worsened the situation.

The export duties on softwood lumber products continue. Meanwhile, the U.S. forestry industry has held onto and profited from \$1 billion in export duties that was previously owed to Canada's forestry sector. It is amazing that the Conservatives would call giving \$1 billion to our forestry competitors in the U.S. a victory for the Canadian forestry industry.

The Conservatives have failed Canada's forestry sector. Canadian forestry workers deserve better. How can Canadian forestry workers trust a government that does not even understand its own trade agreements? How can Canadian forestry workers trust a government that breaks its own trade agreements?

Canadian forestry workers deserve better.

● (1510)

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, over seven years ago, in May 2002, the forestry industry in Quebec was hit hard by the Americans' imposition of countervailing and anti-dumping duties. In the four years following the imposition of these measures, all the Liberal government did was throw crumbs to the forest industry in Quebec, which was dying.

So in 2006, at the request of the Quebec forestry sector, the Bloc Québécois supported the softwood lumber agreement, not because it was a perfect agreement—far from it—but because the inaction of the Liberal government of the day had pushed the Quebec forestry industry to the edge of the abyss. The softwood lumber agreement was not a long-term solution to the industry's problem. The proof is that the Quebec forestry industry remains in a state of crisis.

For this reason, the Bloc, like the forestry industry, has been calling since the start of the dispute for a program of loans and loan guarantees to help the industry, something the Liberal has always rejected and a promise the Prime Minister personally reneged on. The Liberals and Conservatives are tarred with the same brush.

The federal government prefers to give billions of dollars to the automobile industry in Ontario, gifts to the polluting oil companies in the west and special privileges to the ultra rich through tax havens, rather than to meet the needs of Quebec.

In the light of yesterday's decision by the tribunal in London, the federal government must ensure that the penalties imposed by the tribunal are allocated according to individual responsibilities. Quebec must not pay for Ontario's offences.

The minister has the duty to ensure Quebec pays only for the offences it is charged with and not those of Ontario, Manitoba or Saskatchewan. This is a matter of justice and fairness. It is a matter of respect for the Quebec nation.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for softwood communities across this country, today is a sad day. It is just another case of a very clear, unmitigated and

absolute defeat imposed by the Conservative government on softwood communities.

It is hard to underestimate the scope of the defeat that we have received because of the government's mismanagement. Nearly \$70 million in punitive tariffs will now be taken out of softwood communities. The government defends itself by saying that at least under the softwood sellout, this money will somehow not go to the American lumber lobby but back to government.

However, the reality is that this money is taken out of softwood communities. This softwood sellout has contributed to the loss of tens of thousands of jobs across this country and the closures of dozens of softwood mills. In British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, we have seen a hemorrhaging of jobs as a result of this softwood sellout.

This defeat comes as a result of the government's mismanagement of the softwood file. It mismanaged export licences. It did not know how to count them. Through backroom deals, it tried to get out of the anti-circumvention clause that it signed with Liberal support. The anti-circumvention clause is like handcuffs on our softwood industry. We are paying tens of millions of dollars now, but just next month, hundreds of millions of dollars are on the table as the Americans come under another aspect of the anti-circumvention clause to come after the industry in Ontario and Quebec. That tribunal hearing starts next month.

The shame of this is that all of it was unnecessary. On October 13, 2006, we won a clear and final victory in the Court of International Trade and it was given away by the government with Liberal support. The minister should apologize to softwood lumber workers who have lost their jobs and he should apologize to Canadians.

● (1515)

The Speaker: The hon. member's time has expired. The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe. I would be pleased to hear him now.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN PRESENTATION

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. Earlier this year, the Liberals ensured that the government would provide Canadians with regular updates on the state of the economy and progress with respect to stimulus spending. Yesterday, the government provided a form of report card in Saint John, New Brunswick, but as I discovered, not all Canadians were welcome.

Government Orders

As a parliamentarian from New Brunswick, I arrived to listen to the report only to be denied entry. Also stopped was Minister of Tourism Stuart Jamieson and local MLA Abel LeBlanc. Meanwhile, a number of local Conservatives, including former MP Elsie Wayne, the Conservative leader in the province and of course senators were allowed front row seats. This blatant partisanship was even criticized by the member for Saint John, who said that it was “an unfortunate incident” and that he felt “badly” about it.

These political games prevented me from performing my duties as a member of Parliament and the government must put the respect of Parliament ahead of political games.

The Speaker: I will examine the submissions made by the hon. member and come back to the House with a ruling as is appropriate. I am not sure how much jurisdiction the Speaker has in respect to activities that occur off the Hill, but I will examine the matter and come back to the House in due course.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Colombia and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to resume the debate on this important issue. As we start to wind down towards the end of this debate, I can say that it is a privilege to stand here, along with many who have spoken on this particular subject, discussing C-23, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Colombia and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Colombia.

This is an important agreement for Canadian businesses. Clearly it will have broad-reaching benefits not only for those in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex but for those in ridings across this country, particularly ridings that are involved in manufacturing, industry, primary production in mining and oil, and other areas.

This is only a small part of the Conservative government's broader trade agenda. As countries cope with the global economic downturn, protectionist elements like the United States' buy American policies that are emerging are unfortunate. These are the same kinds of policies that plunged the world into the Great Depression in the 1930s.

Canada is setting an example. We are not only opposing protectionism, we are leading the way to recovery. In fact we heard that earlier today in question period. We are also doing that by pursuing an aggressive trade agenda, a trade agenda in the Americas, Europe, India, the Middle East and China.

In fact, over the last four years our Conservative government has opened doors to Canadian businesses by signing new free trade agreements with Colombia, Peru, Jordan, Panama and the European Free Trade Association states of Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

We are not just focusing on smaller bilateral agreements, we have been busy launching discussions on comprehensive economic partnerships with two of the world's largest economic powerhouses, the European Union and India. Once negotiated, these agreements will mean billions of dollars of new business for the Canadian economy. These agreements will help expand trade, open doors for Canadian exporters, encourage economic growth and create jobs.

When we look at the past, prior to our Conservative government, there were only three agreements in 13 years. As part of a trading nation, Canadian businesses understand the significance and quite honestly the importance of trade and trade agreements. If we compare our record to that of the past Liberal government, the contrast could not be starker.

Let us take a look at some of that record. For the Americas, as part of this government's strategy, we have signed new free trade agreements with Peru, Colombia and Panama. We have also initiated trade agreements and talks with the CARICOM group of countries, about 17 of the Caribbean countries, and a round of negotiations will start in the coming months.

We are also focused on expanding our relationship with South America's largest economy, Brazil. That is why the Minister of International Trade has opened new trade offices, to open doors for trading companies in that market. In 2008, our exports to Brazil totalled \$2.6 billion, an increase of an incredible 70% over the year before. Our commercial relationship continues to grow.

Let us take a look at another one, Europe. In Europe Canada has concluded a free trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association states of Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. The agreement came into effect on July 1 of this year and it is already benefiting Canadian exporters.

I am also happy to note that we have initiated free trade agreements with the European Union. This is an historic initiative that has the potential to boost the Canadian economy by about \$12 billion. That, in one initiative, is an incredible boost to our economy.

● (1520)

Let us take a look at India, and maybe a little later at China.

We have heard some of the grandiose speeches, quite honestly, by the Liberal opposition about expanding trade with India and China. Actually, those are just speeches. What we have done is take action. This is ironic, given the record of the Liberal Party.

Government Orders

In the 1990s, the Liberals pursued a policy of isolation toward India because they did not agree with India's decisions regarding its national security. The effect of this Liberal policy was to marginalize Canada's influence for nearly a decade.

Our government has taken steps to re-engage with India, as we have had to do with many countries around the world, for many agreements and with many trade markets to get them back.

We have already lost negotiations on a comprehensive economic partnership agreement that has a huge potential to increase bilateral trade.

Discussions are also under way for a nuclear cooperation agreement between Canada and India.

Furthermore, the Minister of International Trade just last week opened new trade offices in Gujarat, in addition to the offices we opened in Hyderabad and Kolkata. This fulfills another campaign commitment and expands Canada's network to eight trade offices in India. We have created one of Canada's most extensive trade networks anywhere in the world.

Now I would move, just for a minute before I wrap up, to China, because we have also been making impressive gains in our commercial relationship over the last little while, particularly, in the past few years. Consider that China is now Canada's second-largest merchandise trading partner. We have opened six new trade offices in China, under the global commerce strategy. Never before has there been a serious initiative to expand Canadian benefits through trade with China. We are putting a lot of work into building relationships with the decision makers.

In addition to the regular meetings between the Prime Minister and President Hu at international fora, there has also been a steady flow of visits by Canadian ministers. In fact, if we go back, we will find that since 2006 there have been over 14 ministerial delegations that have gone on trade missions and ministerial visits to China.

Finally, let us move now, just for a minute, to the Middle East. We cannot forget the significance of the Middle East as a trading partner. We recently signed a free trade agreement, a foreign investment protection agreement and a nuclear cooperation agreement with Jordan. Further discussions have been launched and aim at a free trade agreement with Morocco.

In conclusion, at this time of an economic downturn, Canadians can count on our government, but we also ask to have the cooperation of all the parties as we try to oppose the protectionism that has been put about by some of our trading partners and our neighbours and as we defend free and open trade on a world stage.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that my colleague has tried to go off on a fairly substantial tangent by speaking about just about every country except Colombia. I believe Bill C-23 concerns Colombia. So why did he talk about China, India, Brazil and other countries? Was he trying to give us examples? That really does not work very well, because Colombia is a very special case.

I would like my Conservative colleague to explain to us how our exports could increase, when imports from Colombia in fact increased by 36% in a single year, from 2007 to 2008, and are increasing again in 2009. So, we are importing a lot more.

How can he tell us that exports will increase?

[*English*]

Mr. Bev Shipley: Mr. Speaker, it has been interesting listening, as we have gone through some of the discussions today, to the NDP members and their politics about not trading. They seem to want to circle the wagons within our own country. They oppose any agreement on trade that would give our manufacturers, our industry and our agricultural community any benefits from reaching out and having trade agreements with other countries.

We make trade agreements that are beneficial to both countries. Colombia does not have the same standards of living that Canada has. We are very blessed and fortunate in this great country. We have been able to move ahead in a collegial movement, working on win-win discussions and negotiations with countries that have not had the opportunity to trade into Canada, so we can give them the goods and services and the investment that they need within their country to help them raise their standards.

Why did I talk about the agreement with Colombia in comparison to other trade agreements that we have? We have historical data, but I think it is always important to use good agreements that benefit all the countries with which we have them, as reinforcement to show where we have been able to move ahead on this great agreement with Colombia.

I suspect that NDP members across the way have said that they do not support any agreement. They do not support any movement ahead by Canada in terms of being able to export. That is just amazing, because we are a country with minerals, natural resources and agriculture in abundance that we cannot deal with ourselves.

It is always important that we develop great trade agreements. The Conservative government is the only one that has been able to reach out with these agreements, not just the multinational ones covered by the European discussions, but also the bipartite ones.

I would hope that when the time comes, the hon. members across the way would actually change their mind and come on side and help us to move Canada ahead in this free trade agreement, which is good for both countries, Colombia and Canada.

• (1530)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are suggesting that the government should not be signing free trade agreements with countries like Colombia that have atrocious human rights records. The members opposite and some of the Liberals have been making speeches saying that it is okay to sign free trade agreements because by doing so we might encourage them to have better human rights practices and a better human rights record.

Government Orders

I would like to ask the member whether he can give me one example of an agreement with a country that had a bad human rights record which, with the signing of the agreement, was somehow improved.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Mr. Speaker, when we talk about human rights, we are very fortunate within Canada to have such a high standard of human rights, protection of workers, protection of families and protection of our individuals, because our democracy has allowed that.

In terms of why we sign these agreements, I would like to read a couple of quotes into the record, if I may.

The government's efforts to strengthen the rule of law, mainly through increasing regional state presence in locations previously under the control of illegal armed groups....

This comes from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. I have a number of those. What is really important to the democratic forum is that we actually work with these countries through these agreements to help them improve their human rights.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise with regard to Bill C-23. First, this side of the House has been and continues to be supportive of positive free trade initiatives. However, looking at the Colombian situation, a number of questions have arisen.

I had the opportunity to meet with President Uribe and his trade minister last June. We had a very thorough and frank discussion on a number of issues, particularly dealing with human rights. It is absolutely critical that those issues be addressed to the satisfaction not only of parliamentarians but of Canadians and certainly of Colombians.

In those discussions we looked at those issues such as what was happening with the drug lords. They are unfortunately taking advantage of innocent civilians and we have seen murders take place. We have seen the government try to deal with the paramilitary, but at the same time these abuses still go on and there is much more work to do.

I met earlier this year with a number of civil society organizations from Colombia when they were in Canada, for example Omar Fernández Obregón, leader of the Movement of Christians for Peace with Justice and Dignity and with Yolanda Becerra Vega, a well known human rights defender and leader of the women's movement in Colombia. Their message was very clear. They are concerned about the impact of the free trade agreement with Columbia. If we have a free trade agreement, what will change in terms of the human rights situations, which happens to be a central tenet of Canadian foreign policy, the protection of the individual, and at the same time ensure that the quality of life and the betterment of people that they represent, and Colombians in general, will improve. What can Canada do if a free trade agreement is enacted?

They had concerns about what was happening with the current government, and there continues to be a high level of violence in Colombia. They wanted to make me, and I am sure other parliamentarians, aware of that. They were certainly concerned about the effect it was having on indigenous people and on farmers. They wanted to know how a free trade agreement could help deal with that kind of situation.

There is a fear of loss of cultural identity. I commend the Standing Committee on International Trade on its evaluation. Our party very strongly believes the bill needs to go to committee for a very thorough airing of all of the issues, particularly on human rights and the benefits that will accrue to Colombians and to Canadians and how that will be measured.

Measuring it is extremely important. Therefore, the kind of hearings we need to have here, across the country and back in Colombia will be important. We do not want just any deal. We want a deal that will be beneficial to both sides and to enhance human rights.

When we were the government, we made a free trade agreement with Chile. The central element of that happened to be on the issue of human rights. We wanted to ensure that human rights were protected but also on human rights that people walked the talk. Therefore, engaging is important. That is why the members of this caucus, in support of our trade critic, felt it was very important to meet with Mr. Uribe and to ask the tough questions of him.

On this side, we are concerned about any change in the constitution in which he would want to run again on the pretext that this would, in his view, help Colombians. We are concerned about labour issues. We are concerned about the state of unions and the fact that union growth in Colombia is less than 5%. If we could engage constructively and help both civil society and the government of Colombia, that would be very helpful.

Therefore, the parliamentary Standing Committee on International Trade has recommended that a human rights impact assessment be carried out. I would advocate that the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights be invited to the standing committee. We need to get all possible avenues evaluated on the situation.

The mechanism is important in terms of what we do to assess progress in any free trade agreement, particularly in the area of human rights. Whether that was in Chile, whether that is even an evaluation on an EU agreement, we have to look at what we said we would do and have we lived up to that. That is why transparency and clarity is extremely important in any bilateral discussions, and that needs to be looked at. We need to have a periodic review.

● (1535)

However, the opportunity for parliamentarians, who speak for Canadians, to invite trade unionists, business and all sorts of organizations to evaluate this will be important. This will have an impact when we deal with other regimes. Other states have looked at Colombia very carefully and have gone through a very important evaluation process to ensure that this is in fact carried out.

Government Orders

When I met with Maria Burges, who is organizing unions in Colombia, she said that they were very challenging and threatening times. Our society has unions which represent our workers. We want to ensure the ability to organize is part of that. In fact, one of the things we said, and this was outlined very clearly in side agreements dealing with labour, co-operation and environment, was the right of freedom of association, the right for collective bargaining, the abolition of child labour, the elimination of forced and compulsory labour and the elimination of discrimination were important. We welcome the ability for the standing committee to have those thorough discussions.

An agreement that is not based on strong human rights evaluation and on certain human rights guarantees is no agreement. We want to ensure we have that in place and ensure we address the issues that have been raised, not only by human rights organizations but by union leaders and by others in Colombia as well. We want to ensure that is done, and the way to do it is to have an evaluation that this committee can do.

Also, some of my colleagues have gone to Colombia. I do not think we have left any stone unturned to ensure we get answers. In some cases, as we know, we get an answer that leads to another question. When the president of Colombia was here, it raised a lot of questions. I will not say that we were satisfied. If we were satisfied, there would be no need to have detailed hearings. However, we need to ensure we get an agreement that is in the best interest of workers both in this country and in Colombia. It has to be a win-win situation both for the Colombians and for Canadians alike. We have to ensure they are walking the talk, in terms of what they say, in terms of their domestic laws and to what they agree.

I could go on and deal with issues on the environment. Again, it is important we ensure that we have the highest standards in environmental protection, in what Canadian companies do. We have and continue to support those. The side agreements are important, but again we need to evaluate a year from now, three years from now, what has happened with any agreement. We need to ensure it is being adhered to and being adhered to effectively. If the agreements are not adhered to, what are the repercussions? What are we prepared to do if they are getting a failing grade or they are not living up to what we had agreed to at the time?

In speaking to those human rights advocates who came here, they are simply telling us not to rush. They want us to ensure it is done correctly. I did not hear too many say they did not want an agreement. What they said was that unless we get an agreement which is in the best interests of all, it is not an agreement at all. As parliamentarians, we have to be very careful when we call our witnesses and that these witnesses come forward and give us their frank and honest assessments. However, often it is useful for parliamentarians to go unfettered to Colombia and talk to those parliamentarians, to talk to those members of civil society and get the kind of answers they have looked for, then come back and put forth a comprehensive report.

I welcome the fact that we are going to, hopefully, move on that front. I hope not only parliamentarians but people in general will send in their views and we will be able to get an agreement that we can be proud of and that will benefit Colombian society as a whole.

● (1540)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the comments that were just made on the Colombia free trade agreement. As the member will know, New Democrats will be voting against this very flawed trade agreement, in large part, because it completely ignores human rights, labour rights and environmental rights. In comments that our caucus has made in the House it has certainly been abundantly clear and detailed the deficiencies in the trade agreement.

Would the member opposite, though, square the circle for me? One of his colleagues has adopted a bill that was first introduced by a former colleague of mine, Alexa McDonough, the former leader of the NDP. She brought in a bill on corporate social responsibility. The whole point of that legislation was not to allow companies to do elsewhere in the world what we would prohibit them from doing here.

What we see now with the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement is an agreement that would fundamentally ignore the rights of indigenous people. It contemplates an agreement with a country that kills labour leaders and then asks simply for a fine to be paid when those murders occur.

Could the member square for me that circle between his party's support for the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement and his apparent support, as well, for corporate social responsibility legislation.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question. There is no question that this agreement will develop a rules-based approach, which enhances corporate social responsibility.

Liberals have advocated corporate social responsibility for a long time. That is very true, whether it is investments in the Canada pension plan or to ensure a mining company practices the same high environmental standards here as it would if it went abroad. We want to ensure that is in place.

Having a rules-based agreement is absolutely important. They are not contradictory at all. If we want that, then I would hope the New Democratic Party would at least agree to support it to allow it go to committee. It is really at committee where all these issues can be addressed. Obviously if they are not addressed to the satisfaction of the member or any other member, they can certainly vote against it.

● (1545)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has a great interest and expertise in foreign policy and trade policy issues.

Government Orders

Given the 40-year civil war in Colombia, the strife that has occurred and the fact that most of these issues and human rights violations have been carried out by either FARC guerrillas on the left or disbanded paramilitary who have become drug gangsters, not ideological any more but simply a drug war, does he see the potential of legitimate trade opportunities with Canada, which are rules based, as providing an opportunity to the Colombian people to wean themselves off the narco economy and to take that source of revenue away from those gangsters and FARC guerrillas, the revenue they enjoy from that economy?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, the fact that there was a 40-year civil war means that the Colombian government is starting out relatively new in terms of the institutions that we need to build to create a functional democracy there. One of them is parliamentary engagement, and that is where we can play an extremely important role.

We have to get them weaned off the issue of the narco economy. One way to do that is to strengthen the parliamentary institutions. Another way is to work with civil society organizations. An additional way is to ensure there is an effective police force, one that understands and practices human rights.

These are institutional building issues, which are important. Having a rules-based agreement will help and enhance that approach about which the member is asking, and there is only one way to do that. We have to remember that after 40 years of civil strife, society will not be transformed overnight. Rome was not built in a day. However, I think we can play a very important building role in assisting in that regard.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-23, the free trade agreement between Canada and Colombia.

At the outset I want to indicate that we have had many comments from members across the way saying that the NDP is against free trade. We have repeated many times that we are for fair trade agreements but we have given a lot of ideas and a lot of conditions that would constitute a fair trade arrangement. Truly, that is the only way that we should be dealing in trade with a lot of countries in the world that essentially end up mistreating their people.

When we signed the NAFTA agreement 20 years ago, I was a member of the provincial legislature at the time. There were huge arguments back and forth but that agreement was signed by two very developed countries, not exactly equal but certainly two developed countries. Even then we did not agree with the concept of the race for the bottom, which is what we see developing with Conservative and Liberal free trade agreements where they are put together with the idea of what benefits corporations the most, how will international corporations benefit by signing this particular agreement. When we approach it on that basis from the beginning, we get an agreement that eventually works against the development of local industry in our communities. It should be a goal of all governments to try to make their people as self-sufficient as possible.

Trade is good and it has been going on since the beginning of time but trade has developed along the lines of people wanting to trade surplus production to people who need that particular product. They in turn would take some of the surplus production from the other

people. For example, we need bananas in the winter time but we do not grow that product here in Canada so we need to get that from another source. We produce products here that the world needs but we should be trading on a fair basis. We should not be importing those bananas on the basis that the people producing them are getting 2¢ or 3¢ an hour for their labour. They should be getting a fair price for their product. I applaud different private companies like Starbucks, which have developed a fair trade policy as it relates to purchasing coffee.

There are certain actions people and organizations can take to promote different countries and different practices that will ensure better working standards for people in the country. For example, with regard to the Colombia free trade agreement, one of the things we are trying to achieve from a Canadian perspective is to be able to trade our agricultural products in Colombia. That is how we are looking at it. However, we need to recognize that by doing so we will end up displacing a certain amount of production that is already occurring in Colombia and those people will then be put out of jobs.

When we are trading, we should be looking more on the basis of a sustainable development position as opposed to ramping up our production as high as we can get it and basically trying to flood the world markets, making people dependant on our products and then losing their own capacity to produce their own goods.

We support a fair trade concept. We would like new trade rules and agreements that promote sustainable practices. We want to promote domestic job creation, healthy working conditions while allowing us to manage the supply of goods, and promote democratic rights abroad, which is certainly a crucial issue in this particular free trade agreement with Colombia.

● (1550)

Members opposite have talked about how we should just sign the agreement and the human rights abuses will correct themselves. I keep asking them where there has ever been a situation where a free trade agreement was signed and somehow, after that agreement was signed, the other country's government all of a sudden turned around and improved its human rights abuses. None at all. These agreements are being signed for economic purposes and once they are signed that is it. There is no incentive for that country to change those abuses.

I have lots of good examples for those members who quote the United Nations. In Colombia this year, 29 trade unionists have been murdered and there seems to be no abatement whatsoever. Half a dozen have been killed in the last 30 to 35 days. I am not sure that the information members have is viable, up to date or reliable given the information that we have indicating how many people have been killed in recent times.

How can we promote fair trade? I would like to see a government somewhere come up with a model agreement, a government that operates not necessarily always in its own best interests, because that is what this all boils down to, I guess. It boils down to a country trying to squeeze every ounce of advantage for its side, and that is the kind of environment we are in.

Government Orders

It would be good if we could develop a model that would be fair, a model where we could sign a trade agreement with a particular country on the basis that it properly recognizes labour rights and promises to adhere to certain environmental rights. That would go for us too. If the country agrees to human rights, then what is the problem with signing the agreement?

We in the NDP have suggested over the years that the government should look at getting our trading balance moved a little bit away from the United States. We rely too much on our trading relationship with the United States and we should be looking to other countries and to other markets to develop trading relationships.

We have to applaud the government for doing that, for starting to look at getting more trading opportunities. However, to simply take the George Bush template for free trade agreements and scurry around the world and sign as many of these things as we can is not the right way to proceed.

I would like the government to keep trying to increase trade but to change the model. I would like the government to start making the argument to the countries with which it is negotiating that we will not sign an agreement unless that country follows basic human rights, basic labour rights and basic environmental rights in an effort to sort of bring us all up as opposed to the race to the bottom.

What we are seeing right now is a template that tends to lead to the lowest common denominator, which is the race to the bottom over time. What I and my party would like to see and, if we talked to a lot of members privately, would probably like to see, is a trade agreement that would bring everybody up as opposed to developing winners and losers and having a race to the bottom.

We have indicated that we would like to have federal and provincial procurement policies which would stimulate Canadian industries by allowing governments to favour suppliers here at home.

Even on a provincial level, we have, over the years, fought with the argument about whether or not we should open up our markets. We do not even trade openly right across the country. We have a free trade agreement with the United States and yet we do not freely trade with our neighbouring provinces.

However, at the end of the day we must try to foster local business. We cannot just for a few cents buy a product from some far away place and then have no maintenance contract in place to deal with the problems.

• (1555)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was very interested in my colleague's speech because he said that the goal of a free trade agreement should be to bring everyone up.

What we are looking at here is an agreement that was negotiated between two free countries that are able to make their decisions. In chapter 16, articles 1603 and 1604 talk about the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement and it sets out the two countries' objectives and obligations with respect to labour. The labour agreement covers the right to freedom of association, collective bargaining, the abolition of child labour, elimination of discrimination, providing protections

for occupational safety and health, and minimum employment standards such as minimum wages and overtime pay.

What we have in front of us is an agreement that was negotiated by two countries and agreed to by both countries. I do not understand the NDP's rationale here. We have two countries that agree to a free trade agreement and agree that it will bring both countries up.

If there is a fair trade agreement template out there that the countries agree to but it is not good enough for the NDP, who should be negotiating these free trade agreements around the world? Should it be two independent countries that agree on it or should the NDP negotiate it?

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, I was making a general statement about how I think trade agreements should be developed. Under no circumstances was I suggesting that somehow a free trade agreement with Colombia be negotiated until its human rights conditions are improved. Just this year alone there have been 29 trade unionists murdered in Colombia, a dozen killed in the last 30 days.

This is a non-starter. A free trade agreement or a fair trade agreement or any type of trade agreement with Colombia right now should be a non-starter until we resolve this whole issue of the human rights abuses in Colombia.

The government, by its own admission, is working on several options. It is not working just with Colombia at this point. It is pursuing free trade agreements or fair trade agreements with a lot of different markets right now, and I think it should keep pursuing them, but a little more attention should be put on trying to get a fair trade component.

• (1600)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the New Democrats has expressed some real concerns today.

In terms of trade unionists, however, he must realize that the murders of unionists have declined 73% since the election of the Uribe government in 2002, that the Uribe government actually provides full-time, 24-hour paid security for 1,800 union leaders and that the attacks on these union leaders are almost exclusively from drug gangsters or FARC guerrillas. The narco-economy in Colombia is one of the biggest challenges.

How does the member not realize that providing legitimate, rules-based trading opportunities will actually help the Colombian people wean themselves off that narco-economy?

These attacks have occurred without any free trade agreement, without any rules-based approach. He says, and I believe him, that he wants to see a rules-based approach. How does signing the most robust labour and environment side agreements we have ever signed in any trade agreement have any potential but to make things better?

Government Orders

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the member's attention to the fact that in 2008 the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade recommended that no agreement be signed with Colombia until the human rights situation improved. It also recommended that a human rights impact assessment study be undertaken to determine the real impact of a trade agreement. So far the government has totally ignored this report.

Why is the Liberal Party, the Liberal caucus and the member going along with the government and ignoring this particular recommendation of the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade from just a few months ago?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to have this opportunity to take part in this important debate on Bill C-23, the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

I am going to begin my remarks with a quote from Woodrow Wilson, the 28th president of the United States. I would ask that members of the NDP and the Bloc Québécois pay close attention. President Wilson said:

You are not here merely to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand.

We are here to discuss a free trade agreement between Canada and Colombia, and during the course of this discussion some pretty extreme statements have been made. There have also been some misleading statements made by those who oppose this agreement. To those who have issued these statements, may I say that they are forgetting the errand. We are on an errand through this free trade agreement to enhance not only Canada's prosperity but that of the Colombian people. There is no better weapon in the war on crime than prosperity. When people prosper, they do not jeopardize that prosperity by committing crime.

I may be new to this chamber but I am not new to the world of crime and justice. Before coming to this place I practised law in Kitchener for over 30 years, both in defence and prosecution criminal work. During my legal career I represented people who committed crimes. What I learned is that crime is often fed by fear and by desperation.

Empowering people, enriching people gives them more choices, not fewer choices, and that is sometimes the best answer to crime. It is the best answer for Colombians.

In the year that I have been a member of Parliament, sadly I have been approached by many Canadians whose loved ones face death and imprisonment from oppressive regimes all around the world. My heart has gone out to them. I have advocated trade sanctions against some of those regimes.

But trade sanctions take a toll on ordinary people, not just the oppressive regime. For that reason, economic sanctions should be a last resort. There is no reason to restrict trade when a regime is actually trying to improve the rule of law. That would simply cut off those efforts at the knees and punish ordinary Colombians.

Colombians have been through some pretty tumultuous times in the past, but let us look at what has happened since President Uribe came to power.

Between 2002 and 2008, kidnappings decreased by 87%. Homicide rates have dropped 44%. Moderate poverty has fallen from 55% to 45%. Currently, some form of the health system covers 90.4% of the population. Universal health coverage is expected by 2010. These are all signs of a regime which is really making an effort.

According to other reports, Colombia experienced accelerating economic growth between 2002 and 2007. Expansion was above 7% in 2007, chiefly due to advancements in domestic security, rising commodity prices and President Uribe's pro-market economic policies.

Colombia's sustained growth has helped reduce overall poverty by 20%. It has cut unemployment by 25% since 2002.

• (1605)

Now, we may observe that Colombia's economic growth slipped in 2008 as a result of the global financial crisis and weakening demand for its exports. In response, President Uribe's administration has cut capital controls. It has arranged for emergency credit lines for multilateral institutions. It has promoted investment incentives, such as Colombia's modernized free trade zone. The Colombian government has also encouraged exporters to diversify their customer base from limited markets in the United States and Venezuela, Colombia's largest trading partners.

Colombians are making progress. The Colombian government is making progress. The Colombian people are making progress. Our free trade agreement will certainly promote their prosperity. The agreement contains some very strict guidelines on how that prosperity will be attained. These include the right to freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the abolition of child labour, the elimination of discrimination, providing protections for occupational safety and health, and basic employment standards such as minimum wages and overtime pay.

I must also point out that Colombia is not the only free trade partner that our government has pursued. We are fortunate to have a Prime Minister who believes that the route to our prosperity is through good relations with our trading partners and agreements that have our exports in high demand all around. We are pursuing an aggressive trade agenda in the Americas, Europe, India and the Middle East, just to name a few.

We will no doubt have a similar debate when some of those agreements are signed. My response will again be: Do not forget the errand. One cannot influence without dialogue, and without influence, one cannot advocate for change.

Since taking office four years ago, our government has opened many doors for Canadian businesses by signing new agreements with eight countries. We have also initiated discussions with the European Union and India, two of the world's largest economic groups.

Government Orders

During challenging economic times, we cannot close the doors and bar the windows. Protectionism does not work. To weather the challenges, we must throw open the doors and welcome new trading partners. We must keep the manufacturing sector, like mine in Kitchener, producing and in turn, our economy flowing. These agreements help expand trade, open doors for Canadian exporters, encourage economic growth and create jobs around the world. They build a better, friendlier world.

I am particularly proud of our government's efforts at trade diversification because I have long observed the mischief created by our heavy reliance on exports to our great friend and neighbour to the south. I began my remarks with a quotation and I will end them with another quotation, which I am sure my NDP colleagues at least will recognize:

Courage, my friends, 'tis not too late to build a better world.

Even today, Tommy Douglas is right. It is never too late to build a better world. I encourage—no, I implore—everyone in the House to vote in favour of this bill. Give the people of Colombia this chance. Build a better relationship between the people of Canada and the people of Colombia.

•(1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Conservative member if he has the courage to answer this very specific question.

In his view, how will an investment agreement—I said investment and not trade—help reduce poverty in Colombia? In fact, Canada wants to protect its investments in Colombia. How will investments, especially mining investments that can generate a lot of money, help reduce poverty in Colombia? We know that we cannot eliminate crime if we do not reduce poverty.

More to the point, how can Canadians who invest in Colombia in order to maximize their profits—we do not imagine that they are giving away their money—help reduce poverty?

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I am going to begin with a general answer and then give the Bloc member a more specific answer as he has requested.

The general answer is that we can well observe over the last 20 or more years the general growth in prosperity around the world in countries, for example, like India and China, which have thrown open their doors to investment and which have invested in our country, a growth in prosperity, and alleviation of poverty around the world. I fully expect that this will occur in Colombia.

As to specifics, I would like to add that these agreements that we sign with Colombia will include, for example, Canadian labour projects which will provide technical assistance in Colombia, including \$400,000 for the modernization of Colombia's labour administration, and \$644,000 for the enforcement of labour rights. These agreements will help establish an independent review panel which will impose penalties if labour rights are not respected.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for a very interesting speech and good quotations, but he made some assumptions that I find hard to

understand. He assumed that free trade would bring a decline in crime rates; with less poverty there would be less inclination to commit crime.

In one country with which we have signed a free trade agreement, Mexico, and in the free trade zones in the north of Mexico we have actually seen a ramping up of crime over the past 10 years. This is an epidemic.

Could the member explain how the free trade agreement with Mexico has reduced the crime rate and poverty in that country?

•(1615)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to try to analyze all of the problems that are occurring in Mexico right now, but I will remind my friend of something I am sure he learned in his educational days and that is an old principle of logic that sometimes things can be necessary, but not sufficient. In my view, the elimination of poverty is a necessary prerequisite for the kind of rule of law that one of my Liberal friends mentioned earlier. It may not be sufficient and it may be that there are other factors at play, but the logic of the matter dictates that we have to do something to lift Colombia out of poverty.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I, too, listened to the member's passionate speech and I thank the member for his passion. In my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex there is a refugee family that came from Colombia about 10 years ago. Yaneth, who was a prosecuting attorney, was driven out of her country by the corruption. I know that she was so pleased to meet with the Colombian president. I want to tell the House how thrilled she is about the prospects.

What does the member see as the future for law-abiding people in Colombia? What can they expect with this new agreement?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I, too, have a Colombian family in my riding. I spoke to them very recently about this and they are encouraged by President Uribe's efforts. They know that he cannot solve everything overnight, but they believe he has put the country on a road to a more law-abiding context and a more prosperous future.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have been waiting for nearly two weeks to speak on the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement. You will therefore understand how pleased I am to rise in this House to express my thoughts, which have benefited in the last two weeks from all the debates in this House.

We see that opinion is quite divided. The Conservatives are determined to encourage investment in Colombia and protect their investor friends. On this side of the House, and especially in the Bloc Québécois, we would like to see protection for human rights and the men and women of Colombia, and also for sustainable development and the environment. I stress that human rights must be protected, because there is really very little respect for human rights in Colombia.

I do not need to reiterate that the Bloc Québécois does not support Bill C-23, the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act. It is clear that the main motivation for the Canadian government to enter into this free trade agreement is not about trade at all, it is about investments, essentially investments and only investments: it wants to protect the investments of Canadian corporations and to protect investors. This agreement contains a chapter about protection of investments. It will make life easier for Canadian investors, particularly in the mining industry, who invest in Colombia and who will be able to do so without regard for human rights, the quality of the environment and sustainable development.

Colombia has one of the worst track records in the world, and certainly in Latin America, when it comes to human rights. Thousands of trade unionists have been killed in recent years: 2,690 trade unionists have been killed since 1986, and 46 in 2008. Unions are targeted by violence, to say the least. And they want to do business with a country like that!

Ordinarily, when a responsible industrialized state wants to do business and engage in trade, when it wants to sign a free trade agreement with a country like Colombia, it first asks it to solve its human rights problems, protect its trade unionists and protect its environment, and then it actually signs the agreement that will benefit Colombia.

With a free trade agreement like this, Colombia will benefit from all the financial investments made by Canadian mining companies. We are not opposed to it benefiting, but let us first protect the people of Colombia and this country in every way possible. Let us not send investors there who are going to excavate or operate strip mines, or who might be employing children. Let us not stand by while trade unionists who might, for example, want to do something to resolve labour rights problems are attacked by Colombia's terrorist groups. In Colombia, trade unionists have been killed. It is one of the places in the world with the worst track record when it comes to human rights.

There have also been numerous population displacements. That shows that Colombia is a state that has little regard for fundamental rights. There are human rights abuses. In fact, it is small subsistence farmers and small miners who are sometimes forced to leave their land, for the benefit of giant agrifood or mining companies. In the vast majority of cases, the people who are displaced receive no compensation. Various methods are used to displace populations: threats, murder, flooding their land, and so on.

As if that were not enough, the Canadian and Colombian economies are not very similar, even though it is usually desirable in a free trade agreement for them to be so in order for both countries to benefit more or less equally. Lowering trade barriers between similar countries is attractive because of the volume of trade between them.

Government Orders

Colombia, though, is a very poor country: 47% of its people still live under the poverty line and 12% live in extreme poverty.

• (1620)

In 2005, 42% of Colombians lived under the national poverty line. That is nearly half. More than 24% lived on less than \$2 a day, and nearly one-fifth lived on less than \$1. These are UN figures. They hardly compare to the average incomes in Canada and Quebec. We are very far here from similar economies.

The crime statistics also point to a very sinister side of Colombia. In 2008, the crimes committed by paramilitary groups increased by 41%, in comparison with 14% the previous year. It is the reign of the guerrillas. Colombia suffers from an armed struggle among the government, guerrillas and paramilitary groups. There is no doubt, under the circumstances, that the Government of Colombia is unable to effectively control the country, let alone foreign corporations that come to exploit its resources.

Before going to Colombia, I went to Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada to see what its recommendations were and whether these were similar economies. If we are going to conclude a free trade agreement with a country, we have to be able to go there and feel safe.

Here are the warnings and recommendations issued by Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada and therefore by this Conservative government about Colombia, under the heading "Exercise high degree of caution":

There is no specific information about future terrorist activities or threats against Canadians citizens in Colombia. However, the security situation remains unpredictable. Possible terrorist targets include military and police vehicles and installations, restaurants, underground garages, nightclubs, hotels, banks, shopping centres, public transportation vehicles, government buildings, and airports located in major cities. Canadians should be vigilant...

That is a warning from Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada on the website of the Conservative Government of Canada.

And that is not all. That is the mildest of the warnings, and it applies to the whole country. There are also regional warnings.

Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada advises against non-essential travel to the city of Cali and most rural areas of Colombia, because of the constantly changing security situation and the difficulty for the Colombian authorities to secure all of its territory.

How can we sign a free trade agreement with a country we cannot even travel to, a country where there is a risk of terrorist attacks at airports and government buildings? We should ask Colombia to make the country safer first. Then, maybe we can start negotiating, but not before.

The exception to this would be some parts of the coffee growing area southwest of Bogotá (Risaralda, Quindio and Caldas) [I am being honest], and resort areas with established tourist industries, such as the Rosario Islands off the Atlantic coast and the Amazon resorts near Leticia. In all cases, travel to rural areas should only be undertaken following the overland travel advice in the Safety and Security section of this report.

Government Orders

I will read another, slightly better warning from Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada about Colombia and regions of the country, under the heading “Avoid all travel”.

The presence of armed drug traffickers, guerrilla and paramilitary organizations, including the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) [who kidnapped Ms. Betancourt] and the ELN (National Liberation Army), poses a major risk to travellers. These groups continue to perpetrate attacks, extortion, kidnappings, car bombings, and damages to infrastructure in these areas. Landmines are used by guerrilla groups, especially in rural areas.

I have nothing to add.

• (1625)

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for having raised points that had not yet been mentioned. I think they are important in today's debate because they shed the light on the way people are treated in Colombia.

Does my colleague realize, in reading the Government of Canada's recommendations to not visit Colombia, that this is nothing more than an investment agreement?

People would not even go there because it is much too dangerous. So this is not an economic agreement as they would have us believe. Investments are made, people are hired there and exploited as much as possible, in mines in particular, without the investor even having to visit the country. They invest and then make as much money as possible.

I do not see how this can address the issue of poverty. Can my colleague explain how investments could help address the issue of poverty in Colombia?

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Mr. Speaker, the member for Brome—Missisquoi is absolutely right. I did not want to repeat all the other points brought up by the Bloc Québécois in this House regarding this agreement, because my colleagues all did so brilliantly. They were very precise. They have very carefully examined this agreement.

This is not a commercial free trade agreement. This is not what will help Colombians. This will not help free them from the violence and misery. This will not ensure that human rights are respected in Colombia. On the contrary, the agreement with Colombia before us now—that is being made, but that I wish would never be made—will simply enable Canadian investors to conduct mining operations in Colombia and to exploit not only the soil and subsoil, but also the Colombian people. It is an agreement to exploit the people of Colombia.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert on her excellent speech. I have a question for her.

We have just about reached the end of debate on Bill C-23. We have submitted a number of arguments to the effect that in Colombia human rights are not respected, companies do not meet environmental standards in mining and many people are displaced when the mining companies move in. While we have submitted a number of arguments, we have the feeling that the Conservatives and Liberals are insensitive to the points we have made.

How can we explain their feeling that signing a free trade agreement will result in economic development and the resolution of Colombia's social problems, crime and so on?

As my colleague put it so well in her remarks, the opposite is true.

• (1630)

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Mr. Speaker, we see on the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade that there will be absolutely no way of helping these people with the free trade agreement as currently proposed.

As we have said, it is an agreement that protects investments, exploits the local population and exploits the Colombian environment, but it is not an agreement that can help the people in any way at all. Even if we wanted to, we would still have to be able to go there, and the Canadian government tells us to avoid non-essential travel there because it is too dangerous. That is what they say at the foreign affairs website. We are told not to go, that it is dangerous. There are guerrillas and armed drug traffickers. They may perpetrate attacks, extortion, kidnappings, car bombings, and damages to infrastructure in all regions. We cannot go to help the people if we cannot at least go and see the situation.

[*English*]

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to join this debate on the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement, Bill C-23.

I spent three months on the international trade committee on first becoming a member of Parliament and so I have a great interest in this particular agreement. I have also had the opportunity to travel to Colombia and meet with a number of representatives and individuals during the course of that trip.

I would like to first make the point that this has been a very complex decision because Colombia has such tremendous challenges that have been so capably outlined by a number of the members. However, I believe we really need to think about the question that we are trying to answer in this debate. Therefore, that is what I will be aiming my remarks at and what I believe is the key question here.

Before going to Colombia, the trade committee spent two months in hearings in Canada and heard from a great number of witnesses both for and against the idea of a free trade agreement with Colombia. Of course, we had very serious concerns among the committee members after hearing from the witnesses: the human rights issues, the lawlessness in regions, displaced persons, the drug trade, vigilante groups, unexplained deaths, a very troubled country.

We had concerns about environmental issues and that was one of the key things that I addressed as a member of the committee. It was the weak compliance mechanisms of the Colombian government, the absence of a strong enforcement mechanism for investigating complaints in the environmental side agreement.

Given those concerns, when I went to Colombia to hear firsthand from the Colombian people, I certainly was not clear that this was the right step for Canada to take.

I understand that the Liberal Party has rightfully always been for free trade agreements in principle and so am I, but this was a challenging situation. Colombia was not a huge trade partner for Canada and there were certainly serious concerns.

Having heard a number of the members talk about the very difficult situation there, I do want to point out that independent voices are verifying the great progress that has been made in Colombia. Here is a statement from the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights.

It states:

I first want to commend the Government for the significant improvement in the overall security situation in the country since 2002. Respect for the right to life and the exercise of fundamental freedoms for Colombian citizens have improved. I further want to commend the Government for designing policies and strategies for the protection of human rights defenders...I find it remarkable that the Government and the civil society, given the current polarization, have reached a number of agreements through the roundtables for guarantees of protection of human rights defenders.

I personally ran into a young person in Vancouver recently who had returned from a vacation travelling in Colombia, knew nothing about my involvement with the free trade agreement, and made the comment that it was a great trip and it felt so much safer both for people in the country and for visitors to be in Colombia. Therefore, the situation is improving.

However, that is not the key question. It is not whether the situation is improving. The key question is not whether this agreement will solve all of Colombia's problems. The question is not whether it is a perfect free trade agreement, whether Colombia is a problem-free country, and the question is not whether President Uribe is a paragon politician.

The question really should be: On balance, is this a benefit to Canadians and to the people of Colombia? Overwhelmingly, when I ask that question, is this a benefit to the people of Colombia, the answer was yes.

• (1635)

In Colombia, we had three full days as a committee meeting with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the ILO, international labour representatives, Canadian companies of course and environmental groups. I met with displaced families in one of the neighbourhoods in Colombia. I met with the women who had their farms and homes taken from them and asked them the same question I asked every group I met with. We met with indigenous people, with the president of the country, members and ministers of the Colombian government, human rights groups and labour groups, a great variety, and the question that I asked each of the people I spoke with during my trip to Colombia was, "Will you be better off or worse off with increased trade with Canada through this free trade agreement?" Overwhelmingly, the response was that they believed they would be better off.

That is not to imply that conditions there are perfect. It is not to imply that there were not many pieces of advice as to how the situation could be improved and what the Canadian government and Canadian people could do to help with that. There were many requests for how a free trade agreement might be structured or may be worded, but at the end of each conversation when I would ask, "If you had the choice to have a free trade agreement with Canada or not have a free trade agreement, which is preferable?". The answer was very consistent, with the exception of the public sector unions.

Government Orders

Everyone I spoke to agreed that a free trade agreement with Canada would be beneficial to their situation. It would help the enforcement by the government of human rights and environmental issues by providing more dollars to the economy. It would help put jobs in the legal economy and help to displace that vacuum that was drawing young people into the drug trade. The free trade agreement would help reduce displacement by having the presence of Canadian companies in remote areas that were currently lawless and were perhaps without police forces and without judiciary to even follow up on crime.

The free trade agreement would help fund prevention measures, training for the army, help for the displaced, the things that government was improving and spending money on, but needed a budget to do.

I was told that the free trade agreement would help with the standard of corporate social responsibility because that is a strong focus of Canadian firms in Colombia and they are providing leadership on that level. It would help build infrastructure, afford the roads and the access into the remote areas. It would help to reduce control by the narco-economy. A free trade agreement would actually help with environmental compliance by having this rules-based trade and the scrutiny that would follow.

One main argument that has been made is that even the United States will not go into Colombia. I have a quote from President Obama very recently in which he acknowledged that he has instructed his ambassador, the United States trade representative, "to begin working closely with President Uribe's team on how we can proceed on a free trade agreement". I am quoting President Obama. He continues:

There are obvious difficulties involved in the process and there remains work to do, but I'm confident that ultimately we can strike a deal that is good for the people of Colombia and good for the people of the United States. I commended President Uribe on the progress that has been made in human rights in Colombia—

The point there is that for the president of the United States the key thing is not, as I have mentioned previously, is Colombia perfect? Of course, it is not. And it is not, are there problems? Are there deep concerns? Are there tragedies happening in Colombia? That is not the question. The question is: Would free trade be good for the people of Colombia and good for the people of the United States? My question was similar: Would it be good for Colombia and good for the people of Canada? And overwhelmingly, the answer I got, right across the spectrum of witnesses, was yes, it will be good for us here in Colombia.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to the Liberal member.

For a while now, we have known that, each time the word environment is mentioned, the Liberals want to hide under the carpet. They just vanish. The environment is over for them. However, the member had the courage to say that this measure could protect the environment in Colombia.

I would ask her to explain how this agreement—this pact—could protect the environment in Colombia, when we know the extent to which this sort of agreement is not made to protect the environment.

Government Orders

[English]

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, one of the challenges with the environment right now is an absence of financial ability by the Colombian government to carry out compliance and enforcement, just as in Canada. According to our Auditor General, the Conservative government has not adequately invested in compliance and enforcement in some areas of its responsibility.

A free trade agreement brings an additional flow of funds to the government, allowing it to implement that compliance and enforcement. The scrutiny of the international community and the Canadian government combined with mechanisms for complaints to be filed would help with environmental protection.

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of things that makes Canada the powerhouse that it is and gives it strength is the fact that we trade with other countries. The more countries we trade with, the better it is.

I am not saying that we make a blanket statement that the Colombian free trade agreement is 100% correct and that is all there is to it. Some people are saying they do not even want to look at it.

Maybe the hon. member can explain the process. At the stage we are at right now, it is not like we are saying yes and that is it or no and that is it. If we say no, it is dead. If we say yes, it goes to committee. The committee will have to be very thorough before coming back to the House. Perhaps the member can explain what the process is within committee to ensure that Canada is getting the best deal possible.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, the debate has been providing some guidance as to what areas the committee can look at in order to make some recommendations, if it has any, for modifying this agreement.

Really, the key question is this. In a country that is having such a difficult time and humanitarian tragedy as Colombia, is this going to be helpful? It is very important to listen to the voices of people in Colombia.

With respect to the previous member's question around environment, witnesses who came to committee to talk about the environment and their concerns in Colombia also answered that yes, a free trade agreement would be a benefit to Colombia. Even as environmentalists, that was their view. Can we strengthen our environmental side agreement? Absolutely.

As for the member's question about committee, I would like to see a stronger compliance mechanism in terms of a complaint process that has teeth in our side agreement and I encourage the committee to put that idea forward.

• (1645)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech.

I was also part of the international trade mission to Colombia and we did not necessarily hear the same things. She says that, in general, people were in favour of this agreement. My recollection is that all the groups we met with—the national indigenous organization of Colombia, all the social clubs, the social association, the

popular women's organization, the national agrarian coordinator, the Christian movement for peace with justice and dignity—actually expressed their displeasure with the signing of this agreement.

I would like the member to explain why she perceives the people she met in Colombia to be in favour of the agreement.

[English]

Ms. Joyce Murray: Perhaps we were in different meetings, Mr. Speaker, but as I said, there were groups that had advice for us and ideas about how to improve a free trade agreement. When the question was posed, “Are you better off with this trade agreement or without it”, the answer invariably was that it is better to have more trade and have rules-based trade through a free trade agreement. That was my experience.

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Konrad Adenauer, Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman—visionary figures all—took it upon themselves, with their nation states, to build something beautiful in postwar Europe on the ruins of a continent that had been through the worst war in human history.

First they created a common market for coal and steel, which subsequently became a general common market covering more and more countries. They demonstrated, by this very fact, that there is nothing wrong with the concept of a free trade agreement, provided—and this is the key condition that is missing here—that there is prior agreement on a common vision of the rights that must be respected. This is what makes the Liberals' discourse so hollow, so empty, so void of any moral sense. There is nothing very surprising about that though. All we need to do is go on-line on the Internet to hear their leader say, in his best professorial tones, that perhaps we shall need “targeted assassinations”. That is the leader of the Liberal Party saying things like that. The leader of the Liberal Party not only supported the war in Iraq but supplied George W. Bush and Dick Cheney with the terminology they used to justify the use of torture. They were not to say “torture” any more but “enhanced interrogation techniques”.

He provided the 1984 terminology, the Liberal Newspeak that could justify almost anything. That is what we are dealing with here. What a disgrace that a party which used to support a just vision with a charter of rights has been reduced to making bogus arguments in favour of a free trade agreement with a country that has the worst human rights record in the western world: Colombia.

Canada should again reject the proposed agreement with Colombia because the prior requirement for any agreement is that all the problems have been ironed out. The Liberal attitude, though, is if you build it, it will get better. But that is *Field of Dreams*, not the real world.

I have a list here of 28 union members who were killed simply because they were part of a union trying to exercise social rights in Colombia. A 29th person has just been added. It is a tragedy. We saw the Liberal member who just spoke. It was as if she had not lived the last 30 years. That was the argument the Progressive Conservatives used at the time when the North American Free Trade Agreement was signed. We will increase trade among our countries. We will create wealth. So what has been created?

Government Orders

Now, ever since the signing of NAFTA, the Canadian middle class has watched its income drop continuously. That is the sad truth. When I was Quebec's environment minister, I banned the pesticide 2,4-D, which is manufactured by Dow Chemical, an American company, and based my decision on the work of one of my predecessors, Mr. Boisclair. We are going through it again, the same as the first attempt to undermine Canada's sovereignty before the courts.

Does anyone remember what happened with Ethyl Corporation? Does that ring a bell? That company produced a fuel additive that Canada found harmful to human health.

• (1650)

Using NAFTA, they sued the Canadian government and were awarded tens of millions of dollars in compensation for having dared say that we did not want their products added to our gas only to be spewed into the atmosphere. That is the reality of a free trade agreement that was not thought through.

Would anyone in this House agree to sign a free trade agreement with a country that allows slavery? The answer is obvious: of course not.

Would anyone rise in this House and have the audacity to say, "Let's sign the agreement. It will make us rich. Perhaps they will no longer need slavery in that country"? Of course not.

Would we sign a free trade agreement with a country that forces children to work in factories? Would we advocate that? Of course not. We would say that those problems need to be solved first.

How is it that the Conservative government, supported by the Liberals on this, is trying to fool us by convincing us that we have good reason to sign this agreement, that like magic, contrary to what everyone else around the world has experienced, signing this agreement with Colombia will miraculously change things for the better in Colombia, and no more union activists will be murdered, as is the case now.

That is nonsense and is not supported by any real-world experience. The only ones who will benefit from this agreement are the multinational corporations that are trampling the rights of workers, social organizations and trade unions in Colombia.

When I was president of the law students' association at McGill University in 1976—I was finishing my law school studies—I was assigned to represent one side in a debate against Ralph Nader, the famous American lawyer who was fighting for social rights at that time. His position, and I did not agree with it at the time, was that the multinationals had become too powerful and were superseding nation-states. Given what I have seen as Minister of the Environment, seeing how the North American Free Trade Agreement has been applied and has given corporations the right to impose the use of a substance that is considered and believed to be toxic to the environment and human health, there are grounds for concern.

People who call themselves Liberals joining with the Conservatives and trying to impose this agreement in Colombia, in spite of the evidence of what is going on there, in the country with the worst track record for social rights and human rights—it is beyond comprehension.

I congratulate the Bloc Québécois on its principled position in joining with the NDP against Bill C-23, to implement the agreement they want to sign with Colombia.

The way to go about this, if we want to follow the potential model and produce good results, is to demand change first. We do not need to look back as far as post-war Europe, we need only look at the model we have in the North American Free Trade Agreement. It will undoubtedly be recalled that the Americans, fearing that their factories would relocate to what were called the *maquiladoras*, along the Mexican border, demanded a parallel agreement on the environment. It should be pointed out that this agreement on the environment ultimately has to be incorporated into the main chapter and have greater capacity for enforcement. However, for the first time in the history of these agreements, a social and environmental aspect that affected people's health was considered, and we said we would not sign until that was resolved.

How is it that the Americans can demand this, when it comes to the environment, when it suits them, and we in Canada are not even capable of standing up and telling the government of Colombia that we do want more and better trade with them, provided they resolve these problems first?

• (1655)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, Canada Day; the hon. member for Malpeque, Health; the hon. member for Pickering—Scarborough East, Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague and say that he has hit the nail right on the head. We get what he is saying because we share the same opinions.

The member mentioned other countries' experiences. Does he remember what happened with bilateral agreements between European countries and Africa, specifically? Did those bilateral free trade agreements improve things in African countries, or did they merely enrich Europe? There have been many examples justifying our concern about two countries with different levels of prosperity signing a free trade agreement.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, the member for Brome—Missisquoi suggested a very relevant comparison because if the two parties signing such an agreement are not equally matched, we will never be able to ensure that its provisions are carried out in the public interest. Once again, the only parties that will benefit are multinational corporations that consider borders to be something of a nuisance. They will figure out how to take advantage of the situation every chance they get.

Consider the diamond wars going on in Africa and conflicts over other natural resources where foreign interests are pillaging nations despite obligations to follow various international trade regulations. Clearly, we are fooling ourselves if we think that by signing this agreement, somehow, magically, we will create laws where there is no way to enforce them.

Government Orders

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my NDP colleague for his remarks on this matter. The government and the Liberals say that signing an agreement with Colombia will improve the rights of that country's citizens. I would like my colleague's opinion about one thing. Over the past 10 years, 60% of union leaders killed throughout the world were Colombians. Does my colleague really believe that signing an agreement with Colombia will improve conditions for the citizens of that country?

• (1700)

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Nickel Belt for his question. It is completely unrealistic to believe that the mere act of signing such an agreement will have any impact whatsoever. In fact, the reality is just the opposite.

Rather than using its moral authority to tell a country that if it wants an agreement it must have a good human rights record, Canada is condoning, accepting and sanctioning the state of affairs in Colombia. Rather than using these agreements to bring about positive change, we are about to ensure that the government of that country can turn to its people and tell them that a country like Canada, with such a fine human rights record, has just signed an agreement with it, which is tantamount to an endorsement that all is well in Colombia. However, we have just given a number of examples that prove that this is not at all the case.

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to say that we in Quebec have experienced a situation with foreign investment mining similar to but less dramatic than the one in Colombia.

Some 50 or 60 years ago, such investment yielded 1¢ a tonne. It was almost a free market. Those investments gave the government 1¢ for every tonne of iron ore. One cent! What is more, the miners' salaries were rock bottom.

Did the investments made at the time to extract our ore really contribute anything positive and allow Quebec to leave behind a bleak situation? Not at all. Those investments did not help. Well, that is what will happen in Colombia if investors are allowed to give minimal royalties to the government, which is not very strong, and pay minimum salaries because there are no laws to protect workers, or there are very few.

Unions are not strong enough to organize in Colombia and push for favourable conditions for the workers. They will end up in the same situation. It will amount to nothing more than exploitation.

This agreement with Colombia will protect investments such that they cannot be nationalized or taken over. Furthermore, if the investor feels wronged at any time, it can sue the Colombian government.

This agreement is being described as a balanced free trade agreement and there is talk of a common market. That is absolutely not the case. They are not interested in selling more automobiles. People in Colombia do not have money to spend on buying more automobiles. If our wheat is not sold in Colombia, it could be sold anywhere else in the world, what with the rising cost of food and the shortage of food around. It is not in the interest of Canada to conduct trade under this free trade agreement. The interest of Canada is to

protect major Canadian investors wanting to extract raw materials in Colombia.

This is truly the height of the neo-liberalism of the past 30-odd years. It is not an agreement on trading goods, where producing goods will make money for a country. It has more to do with investment, making money on investments and exploiting a country to bring mined ore back to the fold.

So do not tell us that the agreement will be a balanced one in the interests of both parties. That is not the case. It will be of greater interest to Canadians and Canadian investors. I would not say that it is meant to protect only that kind of economy, since the economy is based on the production and the exchange of goods. At present, this agreement is not based on the exchange of goods, but rather on opportunities to go to Colombia to extract valuable raw materials.

That is why, as some of my colleagues have said, we oppose Bill C-23, which, we hope, will change drastically in committee, but we doubt it. In our opinion, trade is the foundation. We are also in favour of investment, but on the condition that investments are made with proper protections in place.

Chapter 11 of NAFTA does not protect people's interests. It was the beginning of a negative trend. The following has been said about chapter 11:

...foreign investors can apply directly to international courts, bypassing the filter of the public good that governments use;

That is one aspect of chapter 11. Here is another:

The concept of expropriation is so broad that any law that would reduce an investor's profits could represent an expropriation and lead to a lawsuit.

There is a third point that is also important and must be borne in mind:

...the amount of the lawsuit is not limited to the value of the investment but includes all potential future profits.

That is completely ridiculous.

• (1705)

An hon. member: The law of the jungle.

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Exactly. Let us take the example of an environmental protection law. This is important to me because I have really spent my whole life arguing that the environment is something precious and important. So, for example, if a foreign investor feels it is being harmed by some Colombian environmental protection legislation—perhaps regarding water runoff from extractive material that could pollute the well water of farmers, or could contaminate the groundwater—because the legislation will decrease the investor's profits, the Colombian government is open to major lawsuits, because there are no limits.

It is not true that this agreement with Colombia, Bill C-23, would protect the environment. On the contrary, it would give investors the opportunity to sue the Colombian government if it ever decided to pass environmental protection legislation.

The Bloc Québécois is opposed to the bill to implement this free trade agreement with Colombia because it contains clauses modelled on chapter 11 of NAFTA, as I explained earlier. We want the government to return to the old format for these agreements, which did not give the multinationals a free hand at the expense of the public interest. Canada has already signed worthwhile bilateral agreements with other countries, but not this one. Members must understand that this one is dangerous because it is based on chapter 11 of NAFTA.

We are not anti-investment. We are open to the idea, but it should have been—should be—put forward under chapter 16. Chapter 16 is about being open to investment while leaving room for governments to adopt environmental regulations or laws to protect workers and the health of people who live in areas to be mined. None of that is in the Bill C-23 agreement.

It would be good for Canadian business to be able to invest with no constraints, no obligation to take care of workers and the environment, and that is what this bill proposes. However, the Bloc Québécois believes that Colombians are really against this agreement. Representatives went to Colombia, met with workers and unions there and found out that they are afraid of it. I can understand why. I did not go to Colombia, but I have been living in Quebec for a long time. If a law like this had been passed in Quebec 50 years ago when there was a lot of mining activity and the only ones benefiting were investors, I would have been against it. I would have been afraid of it because it would have been impossible to pass laws to protect workers.

We are being told that there is trade with countries like Brazil, but we cannot compare Brazil to Colombia. Both countries are in South America, but poverty in Brazil—which I have been to—cannot be compared to poverty in Colombia—which I have also visited. They are two completely different countries. We are being told that exports will go up, but I am very skeptical. Over the past few years, imports from Colombia have gone up by 36% per year, while our exports to Colombia have barely risen by a few percentage points.

So we are against a bill that will not protect the environment, workers or the health of Colombians.

● (1710)

[English]

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to put a few thoughts on the record about this important piece of public business before us, the proposed free trade agreement with Colombia.

Members may remember that a couple of weeks ago I was here asking questions and debating with members who spoke at that time. I focused my comments on the very terrible human rights record of this country with which we now propose to enter into an arrangement regarding our economic future. I talked about the hundreds of people who have been summarily killed: trade unionists, social activists and innocent civilians caught in the crossfire of that terrible reality.

We heard from the daughter of a trade unionist who spoke with some of us in our offices about her father who was killed by the government forces of Colombia as he tried to do what we take for

Government Orders

granted in Canada as ordinary. We go about trying to keep a balance between labour and management in our workplaces, to organize people, and to demand fair wages and benefit packages and health and safety conditions in workplaces.

However, I do not want to focus my comments today on that, although it is of pre-eminent importance and something we need to continually keep in front of us as we debate this public policy.

I want to talk about why this is the wrong thing for us to be doing at this particular point in our history, particularly when we consider the economy at the moment and what got us here. The chasing after free trade agreements and arrangements with mostly multinational corporations that literally dictated to countries what they could and should not do with their resources and their workplaces in an unfettered, unregulated way, driven by greed, got us to a place where we lost control and the financial system collapsed.

For a time, and I suggest it continued for quite some time, we really did not fully appreciate nor understand how we got there, the dynamic that was in place and what we needed to do to get us out of it.

I suggest that we have had a wonderful track record and history in this country, particularly in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and some of the 1990s, of managing our domestic economy in a way that recognized the communal ownership of natural resources we had some stake in, and that we needed to make the economy work for everybody, that we needed to be acting in this country in the best interests of all people, that we left nobody behind.

I remember when my parents, in the late 1950s, sold everything they had in the wonderful country of Ireland, which at the time was struggling economically, and they bet the resources they generated on a dream for their family. They came to Canada, and we arrived in the wonderful little pristine town of Wawa, in northern Ontario. There were about 5,000 people in the town at that time, and 1,200 of those people were working in the mines. They were working in the sinter plant, mining ore and turning it into a product they then shipped to Sault Ste. Marie, where 12,000 people in a community of around 80,000 turned that sinter into steel.

They then sent that steel off to communities across this country, to every end of the country, to Vancouver, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and southern Ontario, to make boats, airplanes, cars and trains. Literally hundreds of thousands of other Canadians were kept working in good jobs, making good money, belonging to unions where they got good benefit packages, and in their retirement years they were able to live on the pensions that were negotiated.

That was not all that we did as a country at that time, and since then, to have us become the envy of many economic jurisdictions around the world.

● (1715)

The market did not create Canada, which is why today I say that we should not be allowing our future to continue to be driven by this trolling in the world for further trade agreements with countries and jurisdictions in which human rights are in question.

Government Orders

The market did not create Canada. Our history is one of interventions by national and provincial governments to ensure that the market did not dictate or limit our choices: Sir John A.'s transcontinental railroad, the Wheat Board, public health care, wartime buy Canada policies, unemployment insurance, the CPP, Hydro-Québec, the Canada-U.S. auto pact and efforts to foster a domestic aerospace industry, to name just a few examples.

Such interventions reduced the Canadian economy's dependence on exports of largely unprocessed resources and agricultural products by growing a significant manufacturing sector, providing good, well paid, often unionized jobs that guaranteed a comfortable family living, plus a tax base to pay for high quality public services across this country. That is what my family came to experience over the years after making their home in this country in the late 1950s.

Policies to boost the value-added component of the Canadian economy cut the unprocessed or barely processed proportion of Canada's exports from more than 90% in the late 1950s to under 45% in the late 1990s. An undervalued dollar at the time and the country's public health care system helped to add to Canada's appeal for investors in job rich manufacturing.

By the mid 1990s, Canada had a sophisticated mix of high value export industries, including automotive products, aerospace, telecommunications equipment, machinery, high tech applications and computer software.

Alas, the lessons of history are too soon ignored. The diversified economy that placed Canada among the most envied of nations has come undone. Of the 600,000 manufacturing jobs lost in this country since 2002, half of them disappeared since mid-2008. Our manufacturing trade balance is once again in deficit: \$32 billion in 2007 and growing. The proportion of unprocessed or slightly processed resource exports is growing again, reaching almost 60% in 2007 from its low point of under 45% in 1999. The rise in commodity prices, especially that of oil, has boosted the value of our resources exports but done little for employment, with new jobs in the oil and gas industry offsetting only one-fifteenth of lost manufacturing jobs.

All one needs to do is look at that track record to see this almost obsessive compulsive attention and attraction to free trade agreements here, there and everywhere. Not considering the human rights records of any of the countries that we enter into agreements with is taking us down a road that will not produce, protect or grow the kind of country that we have the potential to be and, in fact, we were heading toward before free trade agreements and free trade arrived in this land.

Today, I suggest to everyone in the House and to the people out there watching that this is not the right time nor the right thing to be doing. This will not get us out of the difficult financial situation that we are in right now, nor will it help the people of Colombia.

• (1720)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to speak to this bill earlier and I addressed some of the concerns about human rights issues that constituents and others have raised with me.

Maybe the member has received some other information since that time, but the committee considered this deal and made a recommendation that an independent human rights assessment be done and that it was essential in terms of assessing the context in which a free trade deal could be addressed. Subsequently, I have found out that Amnesty International has refused to participate in an independent human rights assessment. This is troubling and maybe equally confusing since this is clearly an area that requires some attention.

I wonder whether the member has any idea where we are in terms of an independent human rights assessment to address the concerns expressed by many Canadians. If organizations like Amnesty International are not prepared to deal with it, what options do we have to satisfy that criteria?

Mr. Tony Martin: Mr. Speaker, this independent review has still not been taken up by the government, which has the ability to actually launch such a review and make that happen.

I would suggest that the fact that Amnesty International does not want to participate should tell us a lot about the potential of such a review and what that says in terms of our going ahead with this free trade agreement with Colombia.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak in the House today to Bill C-23.

I want to congratulate the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, our trade critic, who has the solidarity of 100% of our caucus in trying to defeat this legislation.

It strikes me that we are often accused in the House by the government of trying to delay legislation but 99 times out of 100 we are not. We just want to debate legislation because it needs to be debated. However, if we do it for more than a day we are accused of holding it up and trying to delay something, particularly if it is a crime bill.

However, I must say that on Bill C-23, the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement, we are trying to hold it up. I am proud of the job that all members of the NDP have done. There is a huge movement of people, not just in the labour movement but in civil society who see this as a terrible bill.

I attended a press conference in May 2008 with our trade critic and Hassan Yussuff, who is the secretary-treasurer of the CLC, when we were first contemplating this agreement. At that time, the NDP and the CLC announced their intention to launch a public campaign about how bad this agreement was. It is to the credit of that campaign and all of the work that has been done across the country that this agreement still has not gone through the House.

Yes, we are being diligent in trying to ensure there is full public exposure about the negatives of the bill and the damage it would cause not only to Canadian workers but also to Colombian workers.

Government Orders

As New Democrats, we do not see these huge trade agreements with hundreds if not thousands of pages of technical issues as technical documents that pass between bureaucrats at the highest level of politics. We see them as agreements that impact the daily lives of workers around the world. That is why we have invested so much time and energy with civil society and with our partners in the labour movement in trying to understand the impact of these so-called free trade agreements.

Given all of the research that we have done and given the record of abuses in Colombia, we are absolutely and thoroughly convinced that the Canada-Colombia agreement we are debating here today should not go through.

We know that about 2,600 trade unionists have been murdered in Colombia since 1986, 27 murdered in 2009 alone. We know that the Colombian government has been accused by international human rights organizations of corruption, electoral fraud, complicity in extrajudicial killings by the army, links to the paramilitary and to right-wing death squads, just to name a few. Why on earth would we have an agreement with a country that puts the lives of regular working people or people belonging to a trade union at risk?

We have heard many times from government members and Liberal members that this trade agreement would cover all of these risks and that somehow things have changed. However, all of the research done on this agreement shows that there is no evidence whatsoever that any of the incredibly violent and dangerous situations that exist in that country will change as a result of this agreement or that the lives and safety of workers in Colombia will improve as a result of this agreement.

As New Democrats, I feel proud that we stand very strongly on the principle that when these agreements come forward they should be based on fair trade, on sustainability, on principles of social justice and on principles and practices of supporting and upholding the rights of labour. None of the agreements we have seen to date have done that, including this one.

One of the things we find most offensive about this particular agreement is the idea that there will be a fine if a trade unionist is killed. The so-called kill a trade unionist pay a fine provision that is contained in the agreement is unconscionable. We cannot allow that to go through.

• (1725)

I would point out that it is not just New Democrats in Canada, the labour movement and civil society trying to stop this agreement. This has become a global expression. We know that the U.K. recently ended military aid to Colombia because of the systematic crimes committed against the Colombian people. We know the U.S. Congress put a hold on the U.S.-Colombia FTA last year and that President Obama has said that he will not pursue the agreement because of human rights abuses.

A leader in the trade union movement in the United States, James Hoffa, who is the president of the International Teamsters Union, wrote articles and said things like, "The state-sponsored violence against union members in Colombia is part of a broader assault on workers". Then he used the example of women who pick the flowers

being given out at Union Station and how their rights are being abused. That is just one example.

As New Democrats, we are firmly opposed to this agreement and, thus, to this bill. We fought it in committee. We did our best to ensure that there were hearings to be held around this agreement.

We believe a broad section of Canadian society understands that the kind of agreement the Conservative government is entering into, as did the previous Liberal governments, will not serve the interests of workers in Colombia but will, in fact, if anything, entrench and systemize the system of violation and give legitimacy to the abuses and violations that have taken place.

• (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): When the House returns to this matter, the member for Vancouver East will have three minutes remaining.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

The House resumed from September 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-50, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and to increase benefits, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-50.

Call in the members.

• (1755)

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

(Division No. 105)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Angus	Arthur
Ashfield	Ashton
Atamanenko	Baird
Benoit	Bernier
Bevington	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casson	Charlton
Chong	Chow
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Crowder
Cullen	Cummins
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dewar	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant

Routine Proceedings

Glover
Goldring
Gourde
Grewal
Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Hyer
Julian
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Layton
Lemieux
Lobb
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maloway
Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
McColeman
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Obhrai
Paradis
Petit
Prentice
Rafferty
Rathgeber
Richards
Rickford
Savoie
Scheer
Shea
Shory
Smith
Stanton
Storseth
Sweet
Thompson
Toews
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Woodworth
Young — 175

Godin
Goodyear
Gravelle
Guergis
Harris (St. John's East)
Hawn
Hill
Hoepfner
Hughes
Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lebel
Leslie
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mark
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Mulcair
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Oda
Payne
Poilievre
Preston
Raïtt
Reid
Richardson
Ritz
Saxton
Schellenberger
Shipley
Siksay
Sorenson
Stoffer
Strahl
Thibeault
Tilson
Trost
Uppal
Van Loan
Verner
Warawa
Wasylycia-Leis
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wong
Yelich

Gaudet
Guarnieri
Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Hall Findlay
Holland
Kania
Kennedy
Lalonde
LeBlanc
Lessard
MacAulay
Malo
McGuinty
McTeague
Mendes
Mourani
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau
Ouellet
Paquette
Pearson
Pomerleau
Rae
Rodriguez
Roy
Savage
Sgro
Simms
St-Cyr
Thi Lac
Valeriotte
Volpe
Wrzesnewskyj — 105

Goodale
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Jennings
Karygiannis
Laframboise
Lavallée
Lee
Lévesque
Malhi
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Ménard
Minna
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murray
Neville
Paillé
Patry
Plamondon
Proulx
Regan
Rota
Russell
Scarpaleggia
Silva
Simson
Szabo
Tonks
Vincent
Wilfert

PAIRED

Members

Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Dechert
Laforest

Carrier
Faille
Rajotte — 6

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the second report of the Standing Committee on International Trade.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous agreement to support the motion before the House.

The Speaker: Is it agreed that the motion carry unanimously?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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

NAYS

Members

André
Asselin
Bains
Bélanger
Bevilacqua
Blais
Bouchard
Brisson
Byrne
Cardin
Crombie
D'Amours
Demers
Desnoyers
Dhalla
Dorion
Dryden
Dufour
Easter
Foote
Fry

Andrews
Bachand
Beaudin
Bellavance
Bigras
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Brunelle
Cannis
Coady
Cuzner
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Dhaliwal
Dion
Dosanjh
Duceppe
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Eyking
Freeman
Gagnon

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1800)

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from September 15 consideration of Bill C-268, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (minimum sentence for offences involving trafficking of persons under the age of eighteen years), as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of Motion No. 1.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the bill proposes changes to the Criminal Code provisions dealing with human trafficking. It creates a new offence for trafficking persons under the age of 18 and calls for a minimum sentence of five years for those convicted and life sentences for cases where death results. As the section is presently worded, there is no mandatory minimum sentence for the offence and no specific reference to age. Essentially, this bill says that if a victim is under the age of 18, there should be a minimum sentence of five years.

This bill is problematic for several reasons.

First, I will consider the use of mandatory minimums. Mandatory minimums mean that if a person is convicted of a crime there is a minimum sentence that must be served. Mandatory minimums are based on a deterrence theory of punishment for which there is no evidence.

Anthony Doob and Cheryl Webster, in their article, "Sentence Severity and crime: Accepting the Null Hypothesis", conclude that 25 years' worth of research, sometimes even in ideal conditions, has shown that there is no support for the idea that harsher sentences reduce crime. They also point out:

Deterrence-based sentencing makes false promises to the community. As long as the public believes that crime can be deterred by legislatures or judges through harsh sentences, there is no need to consider other approaches to crime reduction.

In other words, adding a harsher sentence is pretending to do something instead of actually doing something.

Next, the proposed changes to the Criminal Code are in keeping with the ad hoc approach that the government has to justice issues. When we make ad hoc changes, we are very likely to get changes that are entirely inconsistent with one another.

In the last comprehensive review of the sentencing provisions by Parliament specifically aimed at reducing the use of jail, section 718.2(e), states:

all available sanctions other than imprisonment that are reasonable in the circumstances should be considered for all offenders...

The bill flies in the face of that, preventing the use of anything but imprisonment.

Let us consider other sentences in the Criminal Code.

Why are we proposing a minimum sentence for this offence when, for example, manslaughter does not have a minimum sentence? Aggravated sexual assault has no minimum sentence. Abduction of a child under 14 has no minimum sentence. Abandoning a child under 10 so his or her life is likely to be endangered has no minimum sentence. Perhaps most tellingly, taking a person under the age of 18

Private Members' Business

out of the country for the purpose of committing a sexual offence has no minimum sentence. Abduction of a person under the age of 16 or 14 has no minimum sentences.

What we have is a bill that attempts to divert our attention from the real issue of child trafficking and that makes it look like we are tough on crime, without actually dealing with the issues of crime and with child trafficking.

The Conservative government has clearly failed to deal with the issues of human trafficking. Despite the need for clear and effective policies and legislation, it has been content to leave this matter to a private member's bill.

This bill is in response to two cases of human trafficking in which the accused were tried and convicted, but then received what were considered by most to be very minimal sentences. In one of the cases, the offender was credited with time served and got no additional jail time.

The NDP categorically opposes human trafficking and would welcome any legislation that assists in actually realizing this outcome. However, in my opinion, the bill, in all likelihood, will have very little impact on curbing human trafficking and child exploitation.

In preparation for this speech, I took a look at statistics from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime February 2009 report. For all forms of human trafficking in Canada, here are the statistics on convictions: from March 2004 to February 2005, there were 19 convictions; from March 2005 to February 2006, there were 6 convictions; from March 2006 to February 2007, there were 5 convictions. We have 19, 6 and 5 convictions over three years. These are convictions for, in fact, all forms of human trafficking. On the flip side of this, we have the RCMP that estimates that 800 people are trafficked into Canada each year.

•(1805)

We have a situation here in which five people have been convicted. Let us remember that the bill deals only with people who have been convicted, and we have 800 people who are being trafficked. They are not addressed by the bill at all, not one bit. Five versus 800: I wonder why we are even wasting our time talking about this when what we really need is action on child trafficking.

After making this speech, I fully expect some mail-outs and accusations saying that I support pedophiles, but I am speaking the truth. The truth is that we need to get tough on child trafficking, and we know how to do it, but the bill is not the answer. If the government were serious about child trafficking, it would introduce a bill and it would introduce a bill that has an effective anti-child-trafficking approach.

What would a bill like this look like? Our colleague, an international human rights expert, the hon. member for Mount Royal, has talked loudly and often about the need for prevention, the prevention of trafficking by raising awareness of a new global slave trade and the urgency of acting against it. I agree absolutely with this approach.

Private Members' Business

An effective anti-trafficking approach would also include a strategy for enforcement. Many studies on mandatory minimums have concluded that predicted length of sentences has very little, if any, impact on crime, but getting caught does. It has a huge impact on crime. Not only would an enforcement strategy actually arrest traffickers and prevent them from continuing to do their work, but it has also been shown that crime decreases when there is a perception that getting caught is likely. So, I am left to ask why the bill does not attempt to channel funds into a special enforcement team, an investigative team that would actually track and arrest child traffickers, a special enforcement team with the expertise to navigate the complex underground system that trafficked children are trapped within.

I am also left asking why there is not more in the bill for the victims of trafficking who face innumerable challenges including overcoming traumas they have faced and attempting to reintegrate themselves. The key with reintegration is reintegration with the help of support networks, and I am not sure that support networks really exist for these children. This is another issue that is widely acknowledged regarding all forms of human trafficking, not just that involving children. The support networks do not exist and the victims are very reluctant to come forward to authorities. This makes it very hard to prosecute traffickers, because to get to the traffickers we have to get to the victims.

In the journal *First Peoples Child and Family Review* there is an article by a woman named Anupriya Sethi entitled “Domestic Sex Trafficking of Aboriginal Girls in Canada: Issues and Implications”. In this article Ms. Sethi argues that the current discourses on human trafficking in Canada do not take into account domestic trafficking, which includes trafficking within Canada, especially of aboriginal girls. Notwithstanding the alarmingly high number of missing, murdered, or sexually exploited women and aboriginal girls, Sethi states that as long as this issue continues to be portrayed as an issue of prostitution or sexual exploitation, we are not getting at the real issue which is domestic trafficking.

Through her interviews with key informants across Canada, Sethi identifies the root causes of trafficking of aboriginal girls. These root causes include the legacy of colonization and residential schools, isolation and the need for a sense of belonging, as well as violence, racism, substance abuse and poverty. Poverty is a major cause of sexual exploitation and as we all know, poverty in aboriginal families is at an all-time high. But the bill neglects to look at preventing trafficking and neglects to consider the root causes of child trafficking.

The bill claims to help children but it in fact abandons them. The only expected outcome is to change the sentencing of those convicted, not to prevent children from being trafficked. Mandatory minimums continually fail to result in lower crime rates, so with the bill, we find ourselves in the situation of having to explain to victims of child trafficking that the proposed legislation fails to provide assistance to children and their families and worse, that it will likely fail to prevent trafficking, because the bill is about scoring political points and not about a strategy for tackling the issue of child trafficking.

● (1810)

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in support of private member's Bill C-268, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (minimum sentence for offences involving trafficking of persons under the age of eighteen years).

[*Translation*]

This bill addresses a pressing issue – child trafficking involves the exploitation of society's most vulnerable – and the bill would ensure a strong criminal justice response to what we must all agree is amongst the vilest of criminal conduct. For this reason, this bill has enjoyed widespread support in this House. For this reason, I add my own voice of support for it.

● (1815)

[*English*]

Might I add that the amendment proposed by the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, which would remove the provision for mandatory minimum penalties for trafficking in persons under the age of 18, shows the true colours of the Bloc Québécois' soft approach to serious crime in this country.

Trafficking in persons is often referred to as the modern-day form of slavery. It involves the recruitment, transportation and/or harbouring of people for the purpose of exploitation, typically sexual exploitation or forced labour.

Traffickers control their victims in many ways, but often through force, sexual assault and threats of violence. As a result, victims provide labour and services in circumstances where they believe that their safety or the safety of someone known to them would be threatened if they failed to comply with the demands of their traffickers.

I am sure we all agree that this is a serious issue that warrants attention from all levels of government.

[*Translation*]

Toward that end, I am pleased that this House again has the opportunity to consider Bill C-268 introduced by the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, which would amend the Criminal Code to impose mandatory minimum penalties for the offence of trafficking in children.

Bill C-268 would create a new separate offence of trafficking of a person under the age of 18 years. This offence would mirror the existing offence of “Trafficking in Persons”, found in section 279.01 of the Criminal Code, that protects all victims, adult and child.

[*English*]

The bill was amended by the justice committee in June. Now Bill C-268 proposes to impose a mandatory minimum penalty of six years for the aggravated branch of the offence of trafficking in children, for which the maximum penalty is life imprisonment, in addition to the five-year mandatory minimum penalty with a maximum penalty of fourteen years, as originally proposed by the bill.

Private Members' Business

In my view, this law reform is an important part of our efforts to combat this terrible crime. What do we really know about trafficking in persons, given that it is so often hidden from public view due to its criminal nature? Global estimates show us just how widespread the problem is.

The United Nations estimates that more than 700,000 people are trafficked globally each year. Further, a February 2009 United Nations report states that over 24,000 victims of trafficking were identified by 111 countries in the year 2006, that 79% of these cases involved trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, and that 18% involved trafficking for the purpose of forced labour. However, the actual number of forced labour cases may be even higher, as forced labour is less frequently detected and reported than is trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Also in 2005, the International Labour Organization estimated that at least 2.45 million people across the world are in situations of forced labour as a result of human trafficking. Of these, it is estimated that 32% are trafficked for economic exploitation and 43% are trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation, with 98% of the latter being women and girls. Finally, UNICEF estimates that 1.2 million children are trafficked around the world each year.

These estimates confirm that this crime affects the most vulnerable. We know that trafficking in persons also occurs within Canada. As is the case with all countries, it is difficult to estimate the full extent of human trafficking within Canada. This is so not just because of the clandestine nature of the activity, but also because traffickers may be charged with trafficking in persons and/or other related offences.

In Canada, law enforcement has a tool box of offences that may apply in trafficking cases. As hon. members know, in 2005, three new trafficking-specific Criminal Code offences were enacted. These provisions address all forms of trafficking in persons.

The main offence of trafficking in persons, section 279.01, which provides the model for the new child trafficking offence proposed by Bill C-268, prohibits anyone from engaging in specified acts such as recruiting, transporting, harbouring or controlling the movements of another person for the purpose of exploiting or facilitating the exploitation of that person. This offence is punishable by up to life imprisonment, reflecting the severity of the crime and its harmful consequences for victims and Canadian society.

Section 279.02 makes it an offence to receive a financial or material benefit knowing that it results from the trafficking of persons. This offence is punishable by up to 10 years' imprisonment.

Section 279.03 prohibits the withholding or destroying of travel or identity documents in order to commit or facilitate the trafficking of persons. This offence is punishable by a maximum of five years' imprisonment.

These offences supplement existing Criminal Code offences such as kidnapping, forceable confinement, assault and the prostitution-related provisions, which have long been used to address trafficking cases, as well as section 118 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which prohibits cases involving victims who are foreign nationals.

Police and Crown now have the ability to charge the offences that best meet circumstances of a given case. To date there have been five convictions in Canada under the specific offence of trafficking in persons. Many other cases are currently being investigated or are before the courts.

There have also been numerous charges laid and convictions secured in trafficking cases under other related Criminal Code offences. These cases reflect international estimates. The majority of known victims are women and girls who are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Further, anecdotal information suggests that aboriginal girls are particularly vulnerable to this type of exploitation.

● (1820)

We must continue to be vigilant in ensuring a strong criminal justice response to this global scourge that victimizes the most vulnerable among us. I believe that we are doing just that. The issue of trafficking in persons transcends party lines. I am sure that hon. members remember the all-party support that Bill C-49 received in 2005. It enacted the three Criminal Code trafficking offences that I have already mentioned.

In 2006, the House unanimously supported Motion No. 153, which was also introduced by the member for Kildonan—St. Paul. This motion condemned the crime of trafficking in persons and called for a national strategy to combat the trafficking of persons worldwide.

Further, in 2007, the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women released its report entitled "Turning Outrage into Action to Address Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation in Canada". The government's response to this report reiterated the importance of a multidisciplinary response to trafficking in persons. This response is reflected in the international framework established by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplemental protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

Canada continues to use this framework as its overarching model for a comprehensive response to the issue by focusing on the four *ps*: the prevention of trafficking, the protection of its victims, the prosecution of offenders and the building of partnerships, both domestically and internationally.

[*Translation*]

I believe we all understand and appreciate the seriousness of the issue, which Bill C-268 addresses. I hope that all honourable members will join me in supporting this important initiative.

*Private Members' Business**[English]*

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in favour of Bill C-268, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (minimum sentence for offences involving trafficking of persons under the age of eighteen years). It provides for a minimum punishment of imprisonment for a term of five years for offences involving the trafficking of children.

I would like to begin my remarks by thanking the member for Kildonan—St. Paul for proposing this legislation and her tireless effort to address this very important issue.

This bill is of personal interest to me because as a new father, I see the world through the eyes of my 23-month-old girl, Nanki Kaur Bains. I want to ensure that she or any other child is never victimized by the horrors of human trafficking. The trafficking of minors is an issue that, by its very definition, crosses borders and this is something all Canadians can support regardless of their political affiliation.

To many Canadians, human trafficking seems like an issue from another age. Just over 200 years ago Canada and its Commonwealth partners led the western world by banning the slave trade throughout the British Empire and actively used the power of the Royal Navy to prevent other countries, including the United States, from engaging in this despicable practice.

Slavery itself was banned in 1833 and Canada became a beacon of hope for tens of thousands of slaves escaping the American south, but slavery was not relegated to history. It may no longer be practised openly and certainly has no official sanction, but for the victims of human trafficking it is still painfully very real.

The International Labour Organization, an agency of the United Nations, estimates that presently there are 12.3 million adults and children in forced labour, bonded labour and commercial sexual servitude. Think about that. Every day a population the size of Ontario labours as modern-day slaves. The United Nations estimates that the numbers grow each year, with 700,000 people trafficked annually.

Many of those trafficked are children who are very helpless by their nature and are unable to do anything about it. Yet, many Canadians think that this is a problem that does not pertain to us or reach our shores, something the government should address through our foreign policy and international development efforts. However, human trafficking is a Canadian problem, as well as a global problem.

The U.S. state department, in a report from June of this year, refers to Canada as “a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor”. This is a wake-up call. Many of these people come from Asia and Eastern Europe but victims also come from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

More disturbingly, the report says, “Canadian women and girls, many of whom are aboriginal, are trafficked internally for commercial sexual exploitation”. For example, there was a case of a man from Victoria who allegedly lured a 14-year-old girl from the B.C. interior and then forced her into prostitution and beat her.

Last year in Montreal, another man trafficked a 17-year-old and procured three others for the purposes of prostitution. Even in my own backyard in Brampton, there was a case of a man convicted of human trafficking and living off the avails of prostitution of a 15-year-old homeless girl who was sold in Toronto. During his trial he revealed that he had made \$360,000 by selling two young girls for sex.

Human trafficking exists in our communities. It affects our children. What can we do? How can we help?

Last year a report of the Canada-United States Consultation in Preparation for World Congress III Against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents pointed out inconsistencies with our approach to addressing the trafficking of children.

The report pointed out that “under Canadian law, procuring a child is punished more severely than trafficking a child”. The report went on to recommend that Canada must “amend the Criminal Code to provide a mandatory minimum penalty for child trafficking”. I believe Bill C-268 does just that.

Just like the banning of the slave trade did not completely remove the scourge of slavery, I do not expect that this bill alone will tackle the problem. It is an important first step, but there is much more that can be and should be done.

● (1825)

One of the major concerns is the issue of victims' rights compared to the larger struggle against the traffickers. Recognizing trafficked persons as victims of crime rather than as criminals themselves is important if we are to uncover trafficking networks and bring perpetrators to justice. This has been difficult because traditionally trafficked persons have been treated as illegal immigrants and are often deported.

A frequently cited gap in a victim protection scheme is the lack of an early identification procedure for victims of trafficking. Currently, there is no formal process for the identification of trafficked persons which is a prerequisite for providing victim protection.

Immigration and law enforcement officials must be given the tools to recognize trafficked persons and to know when trafficking has occurred. How else can we expect these new laws to be meaningfully applied?

Another gap that exists involves the services offered to trafficked persons. These include protection services, shelter, health services, long-term counselling and economic services. The Government of Canada currently does not have a national approach to services for trafficked persons and since many of these services are offered at the provincial level they exist at uneven levels.

Private Members' Business

What we need is a national strategy to address human trafficking. The government has an opportunity here to use the goodwill in the House to do the right thing and ensure that we address this issue in a coordinated fashion from coast to coast.

Even those who are happy to return home face the lack of support for a safe return. Trafficked persons can face a wide variety of emotional and physical obstacles, ranging from ostracism in the home community, threats from traffickers and a repeat of the same conditions of poverty that led them to leave in the first place.

We need to work with the international community to address these issues and create an organized process to facilitate a safe return and reintegration.

These are not simple issues. They involve legislative and regulatory changes. They involve the co-operation with all levels of government, NGOs and community groups. They involve decisive leadership not just by Canada but by the entire international community.

It is important that we as parliamentarians continue to fight for the victims of trafficking and that we work with all the relevant stakeholders to remove this horribly tragic situation.

William Wilberforce, the British parliamentarian who led the movement to abolish the slave trade once said, "Let everyone regulate his conduct...by the golden rule of doing to others as in similar circumstances we would have them do to us, and the path of duty will be clear before him".

Our path of duty is clear and this bill is another step in the journey toward a world where human trafficking is a distant memory.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we will soon come to the end of this debate, and we will have to vote on this bill. That is why I first want to assure all my colleagues that, like all the members of the House of Commons, the Bloc Québécois believes that child trafficking is a horrible crime that warrants the stiffest sentences for offenders. We are confident that judges feel the same way.

However, the Bloc takes issue with this bill because it targets all forms of exploitation of minors, not just trafficking of persons under the age of 18 years, as the bill's title indicates. When they talk about this bill, the Conservatives always talk about "child trafficking" to justify their proposed minimum sentences of 5 and 6 years.

It is true that children are under the age of 18 and therefore fall into the category of persons under that age, and it is true that child trafficking is covered by the broader concept of exploitation of minors. But child trafficking is probably the worst and most advanced form of exploitation of minors. Many forms of exploitation of persons under 18 are not as horrible as child trafficking. People who engage in certain forms of exploitation do not deserve the same sentence as child traffickers.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Nicole Demers: I would like to make a comparison. I would ask my colleagues on the other side of the House to show the same respect they expect when they are speaking.

Tigers are very dangerous animals. They are also felines. But not all felines are tigers. Cats are also felines, but they are not dangerous animals.

I share the view that everyone who has ever exploited minors deserves to be punished. But the sentence must reflect the seriousness of the exploitation, its duration, the form it takes and all the other circumstances a judge has to consider in handing down a sentence. Not all offenders deserve the sentence the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, who introduced this bill, intended for child traffickers.

To fully understand our position, hon. members should first read the most important clause in this bill:

279.011 (1) Every person who recruits, transports, transfers, receives, holds, conceals or harbours a person under the age of eighteen years, or exercises control, direction or influence over the movements of a person under the age of eighteen years, for the purpose of exploiting them or facilitating their exploitation is guilty of an indictable offence—

The key thing here is exploitation. The clause describes a number of ways to commit the offence, but what all of these have in common is that they must have been committed "for the purpose of exploiting them". Not for the purpose of trafficking in children.

Yes, as I already said, trafficking in children is a form of exploitation, but it is not the only method of exploitation. Members can read the entire bill and will not see a single mention of "trafficking in children" or "child trafficking". The bill covers something much broader than the trafficking of children.

In everyday language, the word "exploitation" is a very broad term, but in this case here, it is defined in the Criminal Code. Let us see if it limits the scope of the legislation to child trafficking.

The bill lists the proposed offences to be added to the Criminal Code between sections 279.01 and 279.02.

The current section 279.04 provides a definition for the word "exploitation" found in clause 279.011 that I quoted in part just now. It states:

279.04 For the purposes of sections 279.01 to 279.03, a person exploits another person if they

(a) cause them to provide, or offer to provide, labour or a service by engaging in conduct that, in all the circumstances, could reasonably be expected to cause the other person to believe that their safety or the safety of a person known to them would be threatened if they failed to provide, or offer to provide, the labour or service—

• (1835)

It certainly cannot be said that this definition applies only to human trafficking. We are talking about causing a person to provide labour or a service by use of intimidation. That is a definition that certainly covers human trafficking, but many other things as well.

Let us compare this definition to the way the UN describes human trafficking. In its Global Report on Trafficking in Persons published in February 2009, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime wrote:

Private Members' Business

The term trafficking in persons can be misleading: it places emphasis on the transaction aspects of a crime that is more accurately described as enslavement. Exploitation of people, day after day. For years on end.

The use of the word “exploitation” in referring specifically to the phenomenon of trafficking in persons is inadequate. This is something much more serious. The comparison with enslavement is significant. Slavery goes beyond exploitation and child trafficking goes beyond exploitation, even though both are forms of exploitation. What concerns us is the application of sentences that were meant for child trafficking to all other forms of exploitation, .

Reading this interesting report gives us another reason to condemn the use of minimum sentences. Is there any other country that has minimum sentences for child trafficking or even human trafficking?

We learn that:

—a disproportionate number of women are involved in human trafficking, not only as victims, but also as traffickers. Female offenders have a more prominent role in present-day slavery than in most other forms of crime.

The authors of this report add, “This fact needs to be addressed, especially the cases where former victims have become perpetrators”.

Is that not the best reason to give judges the necessary latitude to take into account the specific circumstances of each defendant? Should victims who are forced into prostitution and end up playing a role in trafficking get the same sentence as those who profit from this crime?

Some might say that judges could hand out more than the minimum sentence. Nonetheless, if we trust judges to give more than the minimum in cases where that is justified, why not trust them to give a fair sentence in cases where a minimum sentence is not justified?

We know that large criminal organizations involved in the trafficking of young women procure them in countries where the poverty rate is very high. Under various pretexts, and sometimes by force, they are brought to rich countries where various means—sometimes even drug addiction—are used to force them into prostitution. If one of these young women is now at least 18 years old and accepts her situation, and if she has agreed to harbour other young women who speak the same language or are of the same nationality, are under 18 years of age and have been recruited as she was, who is to say whether she deserves the minimum sentence of five years under this bill?

When a trafficking network that deals with individuals under the age of 18 is uncovered and the police charge all those who were involved, the judge must have all the latitude required to ensure that the sentences reflect the role of each accused.

Therefore, there are two fundamental reasons why we must vote against this bill.

The first, is that the definition of the offence envisaged is much too broad.

The second is that even if it did not apply to individuals involved in child trafficking, there would be cases—and there already are plenty—where a judge would need a great deal of latitude to issue a fair sentence.

We must remember that, in Canada, it is impossible to become involved in child trafficking without committing at least two crimes that come with serious punishments: kidnapping and false imprisonment.

We found this important sentence quoted by France's foreign affairs minister, Hubert Védrine, when he spoke in the French Senate on December 5, 2001, about the bill to ratify the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children. He said:

● (1840)

The protocol states that exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

That is clear. That is what a law should clearly state when it supposedly deals with the issue of human trafficking.

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to debate Bill C-268, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (minimum sentence for offences involving trafficking of persons under the age of eighteen years).

My colleague the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul in Manitoba is a good friend of mine, someone I have worked very closely with since I became a member of Parliament and who is considered to be an expert in human trafficking. I would like to acknowledge the international award she has received for her work on this issue. I am pleased to support her, and I also want to congratulate her on her efforts.

Bill C-268 is an important bill. It seeks to impose a mandatory minimum penalty of five years imprisonment for trafficking a person under 18 years of age.

The bill addresses the horrific crime of trafficking in persons, a deplorable act. The crime of trafficking in persons involves the recruitment, movement or harbouring of a person by means of deception, coercion or force. It is known as modern-day slavery.

It is estimated that between 700,000 and four million people are trafficked annually worldwide, through sexual exploitation or forced labour. The estimates vary widely because these crimes go unreported and the victims are often unknown.

It is also estimated that the underground market in the trafficking and smuggling of persons represents close to \$7 billion U.S. per year globally, quickly rivalling the extensive trade in illegal drugs and firearms as a source of profit for organized crime.

Those involved in the adult sex trade are often among the most vulnerable members of our society. Their involvement in sex work often puts them at an increased risk for harm and abuse.

This government remains deeply committed to combating the exploitation of women and girls.

Addressing such harm requires the enforcement of existing criminal laws as well as a range of non-legislative responses, including prevention and other support initiatives.

Our government has been working diligently through its overall anti-trafficking strategy, guided by the three P's that were mentioned by my colleague earlier: preventing trafficking, protecting victims, and prosecuting offenders.

Our government is committed to combating violence against women and girls. We are committed to helping the most vulnerable. As Minister of State for the Status of Women, I can confirm that our government, through Status of Women Canada, is funding grassroots organizations across the country that are working to address trafficking. We believe they are best equipped to help the most vulnerable.

One of those organizations, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, has a project called prevent human trafficking: stop the sexual exploitation of first nations women and children. This initiative will develop partnership networks as well as other measures to prevent and protect women and youth from sexual exploitation and trafficking. Aboriginal women and youth are among the most vulnerable members in our society today.

We are also proud of the work we are doing with Sisters in Spirit. This initiative is spearheaded by NWAC, the Native Women's Association of Canada. I want to take a moment to congratulate the new president Jeannette Corbiere-Lavell. I look forward to working with her. I also want to acknowledge the incredible work of Bev Jacobs, and the families and victims for the stories they have told. The program is a research project to ensure there is more public awareness of the aboriginal women we have lost. I want to commend them for their courage in their work to give the lost spirits a voice.

I mentioned briefly the grassroots organizations that we are supporting.

Our government has made some significant changes to Status of Women Canada. We have increased the funding available to grassroots organizations across the country by 41%. With that, we have seen an increase in the number of organizations that are receiving support and funds to deliver their projects to the most vulnerable women across the country. The benefits from these changes to date have impacted 100,000 women directly and one million women indirectly.

Over the past year I have been meeting with many Canadians, particularly women, from coast to coast to coast, to engage in discussions about violence against women. I have met with thousands of Canadians, and they have indicated the need to address this very serious issue of human trafficking as well as the need to ensure that women have a safe place of refuge, such as shelters.

• (1845)

That is why our government was proud to support the first ever World Conference of Women's Shelters. I was pleased to bring the organizations together toward establishing an international network of shelters, so that Canada can continue to lead, so that we can transfer knowledge and share best practices.

Human trafficking in women and girls occurs, we know, both domestically and internationally, and our government is tackling the issue on both fronts. I had the honour of leading the Canadian delegation to the annual meeting of the UN Commission on the

Private Members' Business

Status of Women to reiterate our government's commitment to end this practice, along with other gender-based crimes.

In November 2005 this government introduced reforms to Canada's Criminal Code that created three indictable offences related to human trafficking. The Criminal Code reforms were the first deliverables through this government's anti-trafficking strategy. As a result, Canada's Criminal Code is strengthened and now includes three human trafficking-related offences: one, the actual act of trafficking; two, receiving material benefit from trafficking; and three, the withholding or destroying of identity or immigration documents. There is also a trafficking offence under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act which was introduced by our government.

In helping to increase the application of new legislative tools, training on the laws and issues surrounding human trafficking is currently being delivered to law enforcement, border and immigration officials across Canada. This program includes a strong focus on victims' issues. Federal efforts are coordinated by the Interdepartmental Working Group on Trafficking in Persons, which brings together 17 departments and agencies, including my agency, Status of Women Canada. The RCMP and federal partners, including my agency, have held training workshops across Canada for law enforcement officials on human trafficking.

In 2007 this government introduced legislation that allows Citizenship and Immigration Canada officers to issue temporary resident permits of up to 180 days to victims of human trafficking. Recipients are also eligible to apply for a fee-exempt work permit.

The parliamentary Standing Committee on the Status of Women, which I have had the pleasure of sitting on and participating in since I became an elected member, has tabled two motions calling on the government to prevent trafficking at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. Federal, provincial and municipal officials are collaborating on a strategy. We have also engaged in initiatives to combat trafficking in persons, including national law enforcement training and providing funding to groups with survivors and victims as their focus.

Our government also focuses on raising awareness, which is a key element in curbing demand for trafficked persons. These awareness-raising measures include the creation of a website on trafficking in persons. It is accessed through the Department of Justice website. Posters and information pamphlets are available in 14 different languages, which have been developed and distributed widely within Canada and throughout Canadian embassies abroad to help prevent human trafficking.

Federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for the status of women have also agreed to identify best practices to respond to this crime.

Adjournment Proceedings

Our government has a strong record on supporting women, particularly those who are victims of criminal activity, and Bill C-268 further demonstrates this commitment.

Clearly, if hon. members of the House embrace the values of justice, human rights and compassion, they should and will support this legislation, particularly if they care about the situation of women and children in Canada and around the world who are subjected to the crime of trafficking.

I look forward to this bill receiving support from the opposition in the House. I will close by congratulating my colleague, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, on the incredible work she has done and for her leadership on this issue.

• (1850)

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 1. 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 98, a recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, September 30, 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.

[*Translation*]

CANADA DAY

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak in today's adjournment debate.

On April 28, 2009, I asked a question in this House concerning this government's financial contributions to Canada Day celebrations. We know the federal government has a document on the funding it has provided to provincial and territorial celebrate Canada committees for the years 2003-04 to 2008-09. That document shows that Quebec received the biggest piece of the pie, we could say, since Quebec was given \$3.2 million out of a budget of \$3,766,000. The

money was given to Quebec's provincial committee. A sum of \$3.2 million out of a budget of \$3,766,000; that equals 85% of the entire subsidy, of the entire program.

The pie was shared by Quebec, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Ontario—Ontario received only \$100,000. This must be the first time the government has not helped Ontario, although it gives billions of dollars to the auto industry while giving nothing to Quebec's forestry industry. For Canada Day, this government gives \$100,000 to Ontario, and \$3.2 million to Quebec—and by Manitoba, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, British Columbia and Alberta—even Alberta, only \$50,000—and Yukon, \$20,000. In short, \$3,766,000 in total, 85% of which was given to Quebec for its committees. Let me quote:

These amounts represent the usual operational contributions provided to Celebrate Canada committees and do not include other amounts that could be allocated for special initiatives such as the Year of the Veteran, the centennial celebrations of Alberta and Saskatchewan, and the 400th anniversary of Quebec City.

This really is just for Canada Day. It is a document produced by the government across the floor, the Conservative government, that comes directly from Canadian Heritage.

The minister to whom I posed the question in this House told me that my numbers were completely inaccurate. I asked him for permission to table the document in the House. He refused. I will ask the parliamentary secretary again in a moment.

I seek leave to table this chart in the House. This is a Canadian Heritage chart that clearly shows how the \$3,766,000 budget was distributed to provincial and territorial celebrate Canada committees.

Very few programs allocate 85% of their budget to Quebec. Typically, that only happens with programs under which the Conservatives, like their Liberal predecessors, spend taxpayers' money to boost their visibility and spread their propaganda in Quebec.

As I said at the time, they are trying to shove the Canadian flag down Quebecers' throats. They are taking advantage of Canada Day and spending millions of dollars to force the Canadian flag and their vision of Canadian unity on us.

• (1855)

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am kind of shocked by this question, to be honest. It was only a few short months ago that the member stood in the House and argued in support of a great national institution, CBC/Radio-Canada, something which our government is very proud to support.

Maybe I could add a bit of logic so the member can understand the fulsome of the answer that the minister gave.

Adjournment Proceedings

The best way to bake a cake is to use a recipe, but if we only use half of the recipe, we are not going to wind up with a cake. The member, frankly, is using half the recipe here. She is talking about a part of the program. She is not talking about the entire program. I would like to correct the member's facts. The member cited a figure of \$3.7 million, but the only problem is that the program is \$6.7 million. We can see why her facts are somewhat misleading. We can see why this cake simply would not look like a cake if she were to bake it. It is not the recipe.

I would like to add a bit to what she said and talk about some of the things that the celebrate Canada pool of funds supports. For example, in Newfoundland and Labrador, there are 194 projects across the province. In Nova Scotia, there are 89 activities, including Pier 21. In Manitoba there were 123 events funded in 2009, including a ceremony to bestow citizenship on 60 new Canadians. Wow, 60 new Canadians; what a way to celebrate Canada. The celebrate Canada program supported many other projects such as the Canada Day breakfast in Edmonton which served over 10,000 people.

The list goes on and on from coast to coast to coast of Canadians who want to get together to celebrate what is the greatest country on this planet. That is why they get together. Our government is proud to support it because we think it is important that we celebrate Canada, all it has to offer and all its greatness.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Mr. Speaker, once again, the parliamentary secretary has not agreed to allow the document to be tabled.

This program is called "Funding to provincial and territorial Celebrate Canada committees". According to the document, Quebec gets 85% of the pie.

This is an example of the Conservatives' pathological obsession with propaganda and visibility, the same obsession that inspired the Liberals to create the sponsorship program, which ended in scandal.

• (1900)

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the example that I used.

The member is using half of the facts. If it were a recipe, she would only be using half of the recipe. That is no way to bake a cake. We have to use the whole recipe. The amount she is speaking of, the \$3.7 million, is the amount that is given to the granting committees, but the full budget, including the committees, is \$6.7 million.

Celebrating Canada is not propaganda. It is celebrating what a great country we have, what a great nation we have, the friendship that binds this country together from coast to coast to coast, Canadians in every part of this country standing and celebrating together in great numbers. I am very proud that this government supports it.

HEALTH

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I am compelled to raise the matter of the public inquiry and the government's mishandling of the listeriosis crisis once again. It

might have helped if the parliamentary secretary had answered my questions the last time we had an adjournment debate rather than reading a prepared statement without substance. However, it is not unusual for the government to read a prepared statement out of the PMO.

The government has consistently and desperately avoided the one means by which to fully clarify and adequately resolve the crisis of confidence that has surrounded the government since the outbreak of the listeriosis crisis that claimed 22 lives last year. It refuses to hold a full public inquiry.

The minister has made a great deal about the Weatherill investigation, an investigation for which there are no transcripts. We cannot see the evidence. It is not available to us. We do not even know who she met with. We do not even know what questions she raised. The report, according to the terms of reference of the investigator, was to be made available for editing or revising by those who were interviewed.

We do not know if that happened but we do know, according to the terms of reference, that the investigator who was supposedly doing the inquiry was to pass over the document before it was released to the people she was supposed to be investigating and then ask them if they wanted to edit it before it went to the minister who would then decide if it would be made public. It has been made public but we do not know what revisions were made.

After this report was released to the public, it failed the test of even one of the government's own advisers to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. The University of Manitoba's food microbiologist, Rick Holley, a member of the academic advisory panel on food safety at the inspection agency, said that the "lack of knowledge about food-borne illness—how it happens and its cost to society in terms of death and illness—is a weak spot in the Canadian food safety system that none of the recommendations addressed adequately".

And worse, he went on to say, "if all 57 recommendations are implemented—will ignore this very, very large issue of food-borne illness surveillance"

That was in the *Toronto Star* on September 12 of this year.

Professor Holley went even further when he was asked: Are we better off today than in the summer of 2008 with respect to food safety? He said, "Oh, hell no".

If scientists, who have had a role in advising CFIA, have so little confidence in the government's efforts to improve the food safety system, then why should Canadians? Canadians deserve some answers.

As a member of the standing committee, the problem I have with the report concerns the discrepancies between her report and what she gave as evidence in her report and what we were told at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. That is a very serious matter but the parliamentary secretary and his group prevented her from coming before the committee. We need answers.

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1905)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows and as the House of Commons is well aware, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and our Conservative government have made food safety one of our top priorities. I would like to remind the member for Malpeque that our government took action on food safety immediately after the listeriosis outbreak in 2008.

In the 2008 budget our government committed itself to the food and consumer safety action plan and dedicated \$113 million to enhancing food safety. In addition, listeria testing procedures and reporting requirements were revised to include environmental testing, something that the Liberal government cut when it was in office.

In addition, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada have been working together to improve their coordination at the federal and provincial levels. Our Conservative government took action because Canadians wanted assurances that Canada's food safety remains at the forefront of our government agenda.

On September 11, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of Health announced a further investment into Canada's food safety system. With that action, all 57 recommendations set out in the Weatherill report to strengthen Canada's food safety system have been accepted.

An additional \$75 million over the next three years has been committed, along with 166 new food safety staff including 70 new front-line inspectors for ready-to-eat meats. They will be hired to address immediate risks. These new inspectors are on top of the 445 inspectors that have been increased in number under our government. This Conservative government's actions mean a sustained response to help prevent food-borne illness and to better respond to any illness or any type of outbreak that might occur in the future.

We are taking action.

Hon. Wayne Easter: The only action, Mr. Speaker, to be blunt about it that the government is taking action on, is covering the minister's butt and that is the fact. The minister went into hiding when the issue happened in the summer of 2008. The parliamentary secretary can talk all he likes about money, but we are not talking about money here. We are talking about confidence in Canada's food safety system and we are talking about Canadian lives.

The government had no qualms at all about calling an inquiry into the Mulroney-Schreiber dealings, an issue of some 24 years ago, but gosh no, the Prime Minister would not dare call an inquiry into what took 22 lives in this country, because his minister or his government might have been implicated in the result. What we needed was an open and earnest inquiry so we could get to the bottom of this matter with sound recommendations. Those are the facts. This is about cover-up by the government, and about hiding its responsibility and using an investigator under the guise of an inquiry to cover the minister.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the House that the member for Malpeque ended up leaving the food safety committee meeting early. He could not even bother to stay for

the duration of a food safety meeting, and he continually attacked the good work of Ms. Weatherill. In spite of the member's actions, I would like to remind the House that the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food was so impressed with the work of Ms. Weatherill that it passed a motion stating:

That the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food would like to commend Sheila Weatherill, the independent investigator into last summer's listeriosis outbreak for her excellent work. Ms. Weatherill's in-depth examination has provided Canadians with a complete and comprehensive review of the events of last summer and recommendations that will improve Canada's food safety system. Due to this extensive review, the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food is of the view that no public inquiry is necessary.

That decision was made by the standing committee, and the decision that no public inquiry was needed was reported to the House. That decision was arrived at after the committee had studied all the facts, which included Ms. Weatherill's report.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take the floor further to a question that was raised back in April concerning the plight and the ongoing incarceration in Mexico of Canadian Pavel Kulisek.

Members will recall that Mr. Kulisek was charged with very serious offences, but those offences were in fact allegations that were made by an individual whose own reputation was very dubious within the Mexican judicial system, a prosecutor who himself is alleged to have been involved with other issues surrounding the drug cartel within Mexico.

Mr. Kulisek has had a number of medical concerns that apparently have not been raised, particularly, his dental care. As well, I should point out he was very sick for a period of time. Mexican authorities wanted to make some form of intravenous injection to his stomach. He resisted.

The Mexican authorities have offered to provide Mr. Kulisek an answer to some of the witnesses that he has provided as character witnesses to his good nature and his good reputation. They have offered to the Canadian government to provide assistance in obtaining the responses by many of those witnesses. I wonder will it be possible? Has the government heard anything? Have any witnesses here in Canada been approached?

I do not want to go back into a situation we have seen before, a standoff between countries. However, when one is brought before a tribunal, whether that be in Mexico which honours the system of due process as we do here in this country, it seems to me that a year and a half incarceration in one of the most notorious jails arguably in the world is hardly a way of demonstrating to Canadians and others that Mr. Kulisek's case, the plight of his family, the plight for those who seek justice, that he in fact was railroaded, has an opportunity to be given a fair and appropriate day in court. That has not happened. I am very concerned about this. We, as Liberals, are concerned about this.

Adjournment Proceedings

I certainly do not want this to be seen as another example of the government turning a blind eye on a Canadian abroad. I am hoping that the parliamentary secretary can provide some answers. I did not ask him the question originally. I asked his minister. There seems to be some confusion as to whom I should be asking these questions. If the issue happens to occur in America, it tends to be a minister of state. If it happens to be a consular case, it might be the hon. parliamentary secretary. If it is a more general case, dealing with other parts of the world, it tends to be the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

That confusion aside, I would like to hear from the parliamentary secretary. It has been six months since I raised this question. Mr. Kulisek has been a year and a half in prison. I want to know whether the government has provided consular services, if it has been able to raise the question of due process and if he is receiving the treatment that he needs. Above all, I would like to ensure that Mr. Kulisek is not left in a situation where he is being treated differently simply because he is a Canadian.

I will acknowledge that the government is going to respond by saying the charges against Mr. Kulisek are serious. The parliamentary secretary knows that I did his work and he is now doing my work, and we want to work together on some of these cases. What I am asking for are very specific timelines as to when the government believes the Government of Mexico's judicial officials will proceed with this case so that we can find out one way or another determination under Mexican law whether or not Mr. Kulisek will have a fair trial, whether that trial will be timely and, more important, when he will be freed.

I ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to answer a few of those questions.

•(1910)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the member's concern on this issue. He and I have been working on many conflict cases.

It is very important to note that this government's responsibility is to ensure that they are afforded due process when Canadians are arrested or imprisoned in foreign lands and that they are treated fairly under the local law.

The government takes its responsibility seriously and we have been working tirelessly on Mr. Kulisek's behalf since learning of his arrest in March, 2008. Since that time, over 20 consular visits have been made to Mr. Kulisek which is not a normal process, as the member knows. As he was on this side of the House, he knows that this is the Government of Canada process.

Not only that, but we have been engaged at the highest level in talking with the Mexican authorities for a quick, fair and transparent trial. In fact, the Minister of Foreign Affairs talked to his counterpart and the attorney general of Mexico on April 20 when he visited Mexico.

He has even asked the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs Americas, when he goes to meet with his Mexican counterpart, to raise this issue, as I do all the time. Not only that, but I have met with Mrs. Kulisek in Vancouver.

I would like to add another point to my hon. colleague's question about the health of Mr. Kulisek. Last week, my colleague from Vancouver North, who works tirelessly on this file with me, personally went to Mexico. He informed me and the government that he received full co-operation during his visit from the Mexican authorities as well as from the officials. He met personally with Mr. Kulisek for one hour in the prison to inquire about his health.

Understandably, Mr. Kulisek was distraught and unhappy about the situation, which is quite normal considering the fact that Mr. Kulisek is in prison. However, in talking to Mr. Kulisek, there were issues but not very serious issues from the health aspect.

I want to assure the hon. member that, yes, the Government of Canada will continue monitoring this case very seriously. The ambassador, when he meets with the Mexican authorities, raises this issue all the time. In fact, the ambassador told my colleague that every time he went to any function with the Mexican authorities they looked at the ambassador and knew he would raise the Kulisek question.

I assure the member and everyone here that this government takes its responsibility very seriously. We will continue doing it. As he is involved in this file, I have no problem in keeping the member abreast of the situation that is taking place.

•(1915)

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for that critical update. It looks like several points have been addressed.

The real question that remains is one that perhaps he can choose to suggest that it may not be the place for him to respond, but certainly we can do that in a meeting or perhaps with the family. It is the of whether witnesses in Canada have in fact been contacted and what level of co-operation the Canadian government has given to Mexicans to ensure that, from our perspective, it is seen as a measure to ensure Mr. Kulisek has a speedy trial, considering the year and a half that he has been there.

I ask the parliamentary secretary then to clarify and to ensure that requests by Mexicans to obtain more information have been agreed to and confirm that Canadian witnesses have been interviewed. Ultimately, he and I would certainly like to see this case move on and have Mr. Kulisek returned. That will require a quick and speedy trial.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise my colleague that the Government of Canada is involved in that request. It first came through the Department of Justice and others.

We are working on this file, but due to some further concerns expressed by many sides I can assure him that this matter will continue to be addressed and looked after by this government.

I also want to assure him that the government will do everything and anything possible that will assist in a speedy and fair trial for Mr. Kulisek.

Adjournment Proceedings

When the member meets with me in a couple of days, I will be able to advise him, in detail, on his question.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands

adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:18 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, September 29, 2009

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Immigration and Refugee Protection Act

Mr. Siksay	5291
Bill C-445. Introduction and first reading	5291
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	5291

Committees of the House

International Trade

Mr. Julian	5291
Motion for concurrence	5291
Mr. Allison	5293
Mr. Cullen	5294
Mr. Brison	5295
Mr. Julian	5297
Mr. Szabo	5298
Mr. Cullen	5298
Mr. Cardin	5298
Mr. Julian	5300
Mr. Szabo	5301
Mr. Tonks	5301
Mr. Szabo	5302
Mr. Tonks	5304
Mr. Allen (Welland)	5304
Mr. Allen (Welland)	5307
Mr. Julian	5307
Ms. Wasylycia-Leis	5308
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	5311
Mr. Cullen	5312
Mr. Bigras	5312
Division on motion deferred	5313

Petitions

Employment Insurance

Mr. Rafferty	5313
--------------------	------

Forestry Industry

Mr. Rafferty	5313
--------------------	------

Public Safety Officers Compensation Fund

Mr. Szabo	5313
-----------------	------

Income Trusts

Mr. Szabo	5313
-----------------	------

Employment Insurance

Mr. Julian	5314
------------------	------

Public Service

Mr. Maloway	5314
-------------------	------

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Carrie	5314
------------------	------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act

Bill C-23. Second reading	5314
Mr. Siksay	5314

Mr. Easter	5315
Mr. Rickford	5316
Mrs. Hughes	5316
Mr. Brown (Barrie)	5317
Mr. Wrzesnewskyj	5318
Mrs. Hughes	5319
Mr. Paquette	5319
Mr. Simms	5320
Mr. Maloway	5321

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Economy

Mr. Stanton	5321
-------------------	------

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

Mr. Bélanger	5321
--------------------	------

Ayer's Cliff 100th Anniversary

Ms. Bonsant	5321
-------------------	------

Aboriginal Friendship Centres

Ms. Leslie	5322
------------------	------

Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan

Mr. Clarke	5322
------------------	------

Infrastructure

Ms. Neville	5322
-------------------	------

Highgate Fall Fair

Mr. Van Kesteren	5322
------------------------	------

Museums in Canada

Mr. Pomerleau	5322
---------------------	------

Foreign Affairs

Mr. Obhrai	5323
------------------	------

Richard Wackid

Mr. Ignatieff	5323
---------------------	------

Terry Fox

Mr. Holder	5323
------------------	------

Harmonized Sales Tax

Mr. Christopherson	5323
--------------------------	------

Jeannette Corbiere Lavell

Mrs. Glover	5323
-------------------	------

Jonathan Couturier

Mr. Bachand	5324
-------------------	------

Richard Wackid

Mr. Cuzner	5324
------------------	------

Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada

Mrs. Boucher	5324
--------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Forestry Industry

Mr. Ignatieff	5324
---------------------	------

Mr. Harper	5324	Mr. Baird	5329
The Economy		Infrastructure	
Mr. Ignatieff	5324	Mr. Braid	5329
Mr. Harper	5325	Mr. Baird	5329
Mr. Ignatieff	5325		
Mr. Harper	5325	Afghanistan	
Infrastructure		Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	5329
Mrs. Jennings	5325	Mr. MacKay	5330
Mr. Baird	5325	Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	5330
Mrs. Jennings	5325	Mr. MacKay	5330
Mr. Baird	5325	Citizenship and Immigration	
Forestry Industry		Mr. St-Cyr	5330
Mr. Duceppe	5325	Mr. Kenney	5330
Mr. Harper	5325	Mr. St-Cyr	5330
Mr. Duceppe	5325	Mr. Kenney	5330
Mr. Harper	5326	Industry	
Mr. Cardin	5326	Mr. Garneau	5330
Mr. Day	5326	Mr. Clement	5330
Mr. Cardin	5326	Science and Technology	
Mr. Day	5326	Mr. Garneau	5330
Taxation		Mr. Goodyear	5331
Mr. Layton	5326	Heritage	
Mr. Harper	5326	Mr. Angus	5331
Mr. Layton	5326	Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	5331
Mr. Harper	5326	Mr. Angus	5331
Ms. Davies (Vancouver East)	5326	Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	5331
Mr. Flaherty	5327	International Aid	
Softwood Lumber		Mr. Preston	5331
Mrs. Mendes	5327	Ms. Oda	5331
Mr. Day	5327	Agriculture and Agri-Food	
Mrs. Mendes	5327	Mr. Easter	5331
Mr. Day	5327	Mr. Ritz	5331
Mr. Brison	5327	Guaranteed Income Supplement	
Mr. Day	5327	Mrs. Freeman	5332
Mr. Brison	5327	Ms. Finley	5332
Mr. Day	5327	Industry	
Employment Insurance		Mr. Masse	5332
Mr. Lessard	5328	Mr. Clement	5332
Mr. Blackburn	5328	Jeux de la Francophonie	
Mrs. Beaudin	5328	Mr. Rickford	5332
Mr. Blackburn	5328	Ms. Verner	5332
Ms. Demers	5328	Points of Order	
Ms. Finley	5328	Oral Questions	
Ms. Demers	5328	Mr. Easter	5332
Ms. Finley	5328	Mr. Ritz	5333
Infrastructure		Mr. Hill	5333
Mr. Kennedy	5328	Motion	5333
Mr. Baird	5328	(Motion agreed to)	5333
Mr. Kennedy	5328		
Mr. Baird	5329	ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	
The Economy		Softwood Lumber	
Ms. Hall Findlay	5329	Mr. Day	5333
Mr. Baird	5329	Mr. Brison	5333
Ms. Hall Findlay	5329	Mr. Cardin	5334

Mr. Julian	5334
Privilege	
Economic Action Plan Presentation	
Mr. Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	5334

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act	
Bill C-23. Second reading	5335
Mr. Shiple	5335
Mr. Ouellet	5336
Mr. Maloway	5336
Mr. Wilfert	5337
Ms. Charlton	5338
Mr. Brison	5338
Mr. Maloway	5339
Mr. Carrie	5340
Mr. Brison	5340
Mr. Woodworth	5341
Mr. Ouellet	5342
Mr. Bevington	5342
Mr. Van Kesteren	5342
Mrs. Lavallée	5342
Mr. Ouellet	5344
Mr. André	5344
Ms. Murray	5344
Mr. Ouellet	5345
Mr. Rota	5346
Mr. André	5346
Mr. Mulcair	5346
Mr. Ouellet	5347
Mr. Gravelle	5348
Mr. Ouellet	5348
Mr. Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	5349

Mr. Szabo	5350
Ms. Davies (Vancouver East)	5350
Employment Insurance Act	
Bill C-50. Second reading	5351
Motion agreed to	5352
(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee) ..	5352

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Committees of the House	
International Trade	
Motion for Concurrence	5352
(Motion agreed to)	5352

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Criminal Code	
Bill C-268. Report Stage	5353
Ms. Leslie	5353
Mr. Saxton	5354
Mr. Bains	5356
Ms. Demers	5357
Mrs. Guergis	5358
Division on Motion No. 1 deferred	5360

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Canada Day	
Mrs. Lavallée	5360
Mr. Del Mastro	5360
Health	
Mr. Easter	5361
Mr. Lemieux	5362
Foreign Affairs	
Mr. McTeague	5362
Mr. Obhrai	5363

MAIL  POSTE

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

Lettermail

Poste-lettre

**1782711
Ottawa**

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:
Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

*En cas de non-livraison,
retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :*
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and
Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the
following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les
Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à
l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>