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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, September 30, 2009

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 30, 2009

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

SENIORS OF OAK RIDGES—MARKHAM

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to recognize a few of the outstanding seniors in my community who were recently recognized by the town of Markham.

The recipient of the Hall of Fame Award this year was Dennis Patchell. Dennis is bound to a wheelchair because of cerebral palsy, but that did not stop him from starting the Tabs for Chairs program, a worldwide program that has collected more than 3.5 billion aluminum can pull-tabs, giving almost 200 people wheelchairs.

Doreen Lawson, who has been involved with Older Adults in Action at the Markham Senior Centre for more than 10 years and has volunteered at the Markham-Stouffville Hospital, received the meritorious service award.

Certificates of Appreciation were presented to Philip Garnet, the Chair of the Board of Directors of Participation House in Markham, and Marjorie Nielsen who has been involved with Girl Guides of Canada for many years, has been a member of the Markham multicultural association and currently volunteers at the Markham Seniors Centre.

These amazing individuals continue to give back to our community and are yet another example of why I am so proud to represent such a great community.

VISITOR VISAS

Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every week I meet with constituents to discuss solutions for various problems. The single most common issue that I am asked to address is the high rates of refusal for temporary residence visas.

Relatives and friends are denied entry to Canada for important events like birthday celebrations, weddings and funerals. Many applicants who have been granted visas in the past are now finding their applications being rejected without ever being told why.

The refusal by the government to address the needs of Canadians by amending the current practices for issuing visas and creating a bond system is only causing anguish for Canadians and their families.

I call on the government to immediately institute a system of visitor visa bonds and end the unfair treatment of these Canadians and their loved ones abroad.

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[*Translation*]

375TH ANNIVERSARY OF TROIS-RIVIÈRES

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last weekend, Cirque du Soleil wrapped up the celebrations for the 375th anniversary of the founding of Trois-Rivières with some magical moments for spectators.

Despite a last-minute, modest contribution from the federal government, the city of Trois-Rivières, with the help of its volunteers, the Government of Quebec and private sponsors, was able to host a series of activities throughout the year. Since January, the organizing committee has found some truly marvellous ways of drawing attention to the founding of the second francophone city in North America.

The anniversary celebrations are a testament to the pride that the people of Trois-Rivières have in their city and its founding, so pivotal in Quebec's history.

Congratulations to the organizers and volunteers on these wonderfully successful events. They showcased the vitality of our community and the talent of our many artists and would not have happened without the participation and overwhelming enthusiasm of all the people of Trois-Rivières.

Statements by Members

[English]

KELLY MORRISSEAU

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been over two years since the death of a young woman from Ottawa, Kelly Morrisseau. Ms. Morrisseau, a mother of three, was found murdered in Gatineau Park and her case remains unsolved.

According to the Native Women's Association of Canada, over 500 aboriginal women are missing or have been murdered across the country. Ms. Morrisseau's tragic death is an example of the violence faced by aboriginal women in Canada.

In honour of her memory and in support of her children, I will be hosting, along with the Native Women's Association of Canada, a screening of the film *Finding Dawn* on October 7 at 7 p.m. at Carleton University. We will be accepting donations to the Kelly Morrisseau Education Fund which raises money for her children.

I invite the community to join us at this event. I call upon the House and the government to take action so all aboriginal women and their families can find justice and safety in our communities.

Together, let us start investing in a better future for all aboriginal children.

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FIRE SERVICES EXEMPLARY SERVICE MEDAL

Mr. Ted Menzies (Macleod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to share a story of dedication and volunteerism.

A former resident of my riding of Macleod has recently been presented with the Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal by the Governor General.

For the past 27 years, Leonard Weiss has dedicated himself to preserving Canada's public safety, both as a volunteer and as an employee. He spent 12 years as a volunteer with the Claresholm Fire Department before moving to the north. He is currently the airport fire chief in Iqaluit, a position he has held for the past five years.

During the summer and into the fall in my riding and, indeed, across the entire country, volunteer firefighters have been busy with grass fires, forest fires, building fires, as well as fires caused by harvesting equipment.

I would like to extend a special note of gratitude to firefighters across the country for the work that they do. They run toward danger when many of us run away from it. We respect the important work they do, a necessary part of our communities.

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● (1410)

FUEL PRICES

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, something amazing is happening in the United States. Almost a decade after the Enron loophole was opened during a flawed attempt at deregulating the energy market, the Obama administration is looking to close it. However, here in Canada nothing is happening.

Two summers ago, as we all recall, gasoline prices soared to a national average of \$1.45 per litre. Diesel, jet fuel and other heating distillates soon followed. High and volatile fuel prices drive up inflation and hurt Canadians, business and the energy industry itself.

Canadians deserve a government that will take these issues seriously. We now know that increased and unregulated speculation in the energy commodities market, including over the counter trades right here in Canada, and not market fundamentals, are the cause of these volatile energy prices. Governments around the world are taking this issue seriously and are looking for solutions.

To avoid a repeat of last summer, I am calling upon the Prime Minister to do more than say there is nothing that he can do. If our government is not part of the solution, then it is part of the problem. Canadians deserve a government that can indeed do better.

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EMERGENCY AID ASSISTANCE

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, four days ago, tropical storm Ketsana hit the Philippines, causing the nation's worst flooding in more than 40 years.

I want Canadians and the Filipino community in the Lower Mainland and across Canada to know that this government did not wait before responding to this tragedy. We immediately provided \$50,000 to the Philippine National Red Cross and yesterday, the Minister of International Cooperation announced that Canada would make up to \$5 million available for emergency and humanitarian assistance.

This storm has dramatically affected the lives of nearly two million people, but our international assistance will go a long way in helping to alleviate the suffering of victims as we provide food, water and basic shelter.

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

Canada is continuing to lead on the international stage and Canadians can truly be proud of our accomplishments.

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[Translation]

ARIANE MOFFATT

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, singer-songwriter Ariane Moffatt is raking in the awards, and she deserves it. This young, talented Quebec artist received two prestigious awards this spring: the Juno for francophone album of the year and the Rapsat-Lelièvre prize, both for *Tous les sens*. Most recently, she was awarded the Diane and Lucien Barrière Foundation prize in Paris.

Statements by Members

This prize is awarded every year to a performer selected by a jury of ten top names in the field. In 1999, the Groupe Lucien Barrière Hôtels et Casinos created a foundation to support contemporary creativity in the arts from literature to film and theatre, the only one of its kind in France.

The award includes a cash prize that Ariane will certainly find useful once she begins her 12-city tour of France.

My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I would once again like to applaud her exceptional talent, and we are sure that she will be very successful in France.

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[*English*]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's number one priority is the economy and we continue to execute Canada's economic action plan. Because of our swift actions, 90% of the plan is already being implemented.

Funds have been committed to 7,500 projects and 4,000 have begun in the first six months of our 24-month plan.

Projects across the country are up and running, jobs are being created and communities across the land are seeing the benefit.

We have reduced taxes for families and businesses and implemented measures, such as the home renovation tax credit and the first time homebuyers' tax credit. We are helping the unemployed by extending EI benefits, making it easier to qualify, and expanding EI training programs.

Yet, the recovery is fragile. We are not out of the woods yet and that is why it is crucial that we continue to implement our plan.

This government is committed to staying on course. Doing anything else would be reckless and irresponsible.

* * *

●(1415)

KWANTLEN POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, I met with Mary Jane Stenberg from Kwantlen Polytechnic University, one of the premier post-secondary institutions in British Columbia.

Kwantlen is rapidly become a first-rate centre for research and innovation in Canada. While it hopes to attract the best and the brightest from within our borders, it also hopes to bring in those from India, China and the Americas who can truly raise our game for the 21st century economy.

I urge the government to finally take proactive steps so we can be competitors, not gatekeepers, in the international student marketplace.

* * *

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, apparently the only person in Canada who wants an election is the

Leader of the Opposition. This is only the latest example of just how out of touch he is with Canadians.

Another example is that, given the chance, he would reach further into Canadians' pockets and take more of their hard-earned money by imposing a slew of new taxes. After all, he calls himself a "tax and spend Liberal". He brags that he was the first to push a carbon tax. He muses about raising the GST, and he openly admits that he will raise taxes.

The Liberal leader continuously demonstrates that he does not understand economics, as it does not take a rocket scientist to know that taking more money from Canadians will hurt the economy, not to mention the harm an election would do to our recovery.

It is becoming clearer by the day. The Liberal leader is out of touch and is not in it for Canadians. He is just in it for himself.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATASHA ROBERGE

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to salute a young woman in my riding of Nickel Belt, Natasha Roberge, who is in first year at Laurentian University and has her sights set on a teaching career.

Last week, Natasha was awarded a \$16,000 scholarship by the Canada Company, a charity that pays tribute to soldiers who have died on duty and their families. Natasha's father, Warrant Officer Gaëtan Roberge, died in Afghanistan a few days after Christmas last year.

The whole community is very proud of Natasha, and we wish her the best of luck in her studies.

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BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Bloc members voted against a proposal to help the Canadian workers who have been hardest hit by the global economic crisis.

They chose to follow the Liberals' example and betray the men and women who need help. I am talking about Canadians who have worked hard and paid into the employment insurance plan for years. Today, they are unemployed through no fault of their own. For those of us on this side of the House, it makes no sense for the Bloc to be allied with the Liberals against Canadians and Quebeckers.

Is that what they call standing up for Quebec? Is that what the Liberals call national unity?

All Canadians know what an election involves. Yesterday, we had yet more proof that neither the Bloc nor the Liberals really want to help these unemployed workers. They would rather force an election no one wants.

Canadians and Quebeckers can rest assured that the Conservative government is working to bring about an economic recovery.

*Oral Questions***GHISLAIN BOUCHARD**

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was deeply saddened to learn earlier this week of the passing of Ghislain Bouchard, a great pioneer of the arts community of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. A writer and friend of mine, Mr. Bouchard made his mark on the history of my region in spectacular fashion.

Everyone remembers Ghislain Bouchard as the creator of *La Fabuleuse Histoire d'un Royaume*, an amazing historical performance to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the region. With his unbridled creativity, Ghislain Bouchard put together, without realizing it, an enduring theatrical production that contributed greatly to the economy of the region. Over nearly 20 years, this first extravaganza of its kind in Quebec was acclaimed by some one million spectators.

Recipient of the Ordre national du Québec, Ghislain will be remembered for his many wonderful theatrical productions and artistic projects. He had the great admiration and profound respect of his fellow citizens.

Adieu, Ghislain, and thank you for everything.

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● (1420)

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Gordon Landon is a Canadian hero, and you can bet your bottom infrastructure dollar he is. Setting aside his own political ambitions, he decided to blow the whistle on the multi-billion dollar boondoggle now known as shovelgate.

As a town councillor, Gordon always put principle above politics and people before partisanship. Obviously, that kind of commitment to stand up and speak the truth put him in direct contradiction to the Conservative game plan. The truth is Gordon carried out an enormous public service for all Canadian citizens.

Last week, Gordon pulled back the curtain on one of the most nefarious and despicable of schemes. What Gordon revealed was a mammoth misallocation of public funds in pursuit of a vote-buying scheme funnelling tens of millions of dollars into Conservative ridings throughout the country. Gordon's whistleblowing may have cost him his candidacy, but his noble actions will not be forgotten by the House.

Let us raise our glasses to a true Canadian hero, Mr. Gordon Landon.

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DAVE BATTERS

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to a former parliamentarian who tragically lost his battle with depression and anxiety this summer.

Dave Batters first came to this House in 2004. He was motivated to enter public life for all the right reasons, out of a deep love of his country and a deep commitment to his community.

In Parliament he championed criminal justice issues and introduced a private member's bill to protect victims of domestic violence.

I got to know Dave on a personal level, as well, and was impressed by his enthusiasm for everything he did and by his positive attitude. Dave was the consummate team player, always encouraging his colleagues and cheering them on.

At his funeral, Dave's friends praised him for his integrity, his honesty and his loyalty to those around him. Unfortunately, most recently Dave had begun to suffer from severe anxiety and depression. Parliamentary work often comes with a great deal of stress, and Dave found it difficult in the last few months of his career.

This summer we were all shocked and deeply saddened by his death. I know that it affected anyone who knew him or worked with Dave because it was so out of character with the Dave we remember. I know that we will remember the Dave who loved his family, loved his colleagues and felt passionate about the work that he did.

We would like Dave's wife, Denise who is here today in Ottawa, his parents and the rest of his family to know that our thoughts and prayers are with them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada reported that the economy stalled in July.

While the government spent millions of dollars telling Canadians that everything was fine, experts do not agree. The deputy chief economist at the Bank of Montreal stated that the economy's flat performance is "a shocker". It is not just "a shot across the bow", said the bank. It is "more like a torpedo through the hull".

Could the Prime Minister advise when he and his ministers plan to start bailing?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Canada's economic performance was flat in July, of course we did see growth in June, and this is a much better performance than we are seeing south of the border.

As I have said repeatedly, while we are seeing the beginnings of a global recovery, it is fragile. That is why the House of Commons needs to be at work on the economy, passing measures for the unemployed and not out forcing an unnecessary and wasteful election.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister tried to sell his softwood lumber deal to Canadians, he said it would buy peace in our time, but it cost Canadian industry \$1 billion.

In the years since, Americans have filed two more grievances, and now the government will have to impose a new tax on our forestry companies. All of this is on top of layoffs at Tembec, Abitibi and Canfor, from Quebec to British Columbia.

What will the Prime Minister tell forestry workers today, that they are out of luck?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the House well knows, there was a recent tribunal decision on back taxes against Canada in the order of \$60 million.

That is not pleasant news, but it is sure a lot different from the \$5 billion that the previous government had tied up in disputes with the United States.

That is why nobody in the provinces or in industry wants to go back to the bad old days and why we must keep making the softwood lumber agreement work.

[Translation]

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a good government must protect our children from the tobacco industry.

But the Conservatives—at least a few of them—do not agree. The member from Beauce said: “Consumers must not be deprived of their legitimate free choice without justification. It is a question of principle.”

And now the chair of the Quebec Conservative caucus wants “to remove certain irritants from the law”.

Does the Prime Minister share the views of his MPs?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government introduced a bill to protect children from tobacco. The Liberal government refused for years to do so.

We have also heard some industry concerns. However, our priority continues to be to protect children from tobacco.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he should perhaps explain that to his Quebec caucus.

In recent decades, a great deal has been accomplished in the fight against smoking. However, much, much more work is required. That is why we are surprised that a number of members of the Quebec caucus are working behind the scenes to oppose the bill that prohibits the sale of flavoured tobacco. Who does fruit- or candy-scented tobacco target? It targets our children and young teenagers, and they are against prohibiting these products.

Will the Prime Minister listen to his Quebec caucus and cigarette manufacturers or will he listen to us and protect our children?

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): As the Prime Minister mentioned, and in line with the government’s position, Bill C-32 is a bill that seeks to protect our children. The objective has not changed.

Having said that, members from the Quebec City area are also concerned about the impact on Rothmans and we are confident that we will find a solution.

Oral Questions

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are looking out for the future of our children.

Three years ago, the government failed us by signing a sellout agreement with the U.S. It said that the agreement was not perfect, but it would prevent any problems in the future. We knew that was not true.

The proof: on Monday, an arbitration tribunal ruled that Canada has to pay \$68 million in compensation to the United States. This is a disastrous ruling for forestry workers and it is further evidence of the Conservative government’s incompetence.

Are the Conservatives waiting for our industry to fold? Are they waiting until there is not a single job left before taking action?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the tribunal made its ruling a year ago. We appealed the decision. Now we have a final decision from this international tribunal.

One thing is very important, however: after the agreement was signed by this government, close to \$5 billion was repaid to the industry here in Canada, not in the United States, where the money was the whole time the Liberals were in power.

We have accomplished things for the industry and we will continue to do so.

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TAX HARMONIZATION

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, negotiations between the Government of Quebec and the federal government over GST harmonization have stalled. The federal Minister of Finance is refusing to release \$2.6 billion to Quebec unless it agrees to let Revenue Canada collect the GST and QST.

But Quebec signed a GST harmonization agreement in 1992. Why is the Prime Minister now deciding to put conditions on this agreement, and blocking the transfer of \$2.6 billion that rightly belongs to Quebec?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has signed agreements with the provinces on GST harmonization based on a model established a long time ago by the previous government. We are able to offer the same terms to Quebec, and the Minister of Finance is in the process of negotiating with his provincial counterpart.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec’s minister of intergovernmental affairs himself, Claude Béchard, admitted that negotiations on GST harmonization are far from being concluded; in fact, they are now stalled. I remind members that Ottawa owed \$8 billion to Quebec, and compensation for the GST represents only one-third of the total amount.

Oral Questions

Quebec harmonized its tax with the GST in 1992, and Quebec was designated as the one to collect it. Why is the government changing its mind? Is this the government's way of showing openness? Is this the government recognizing the Quebec nation, by giving Ontario and the Maritimes what it will not give to Quebec?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the previous government signed agreements with the provinces for GST harmonization. The model used with Quebec was completely different than with other provinces. Our government is clear. We are prepared to negotiate the same terms and the same contract with Quebec as with the other provinces, and the Minister of Finance is in the process of negotiating that with his provincial counterpart.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, another issue is playing out much like sales tax harmonization. The \$68 million in countervailing duties imposed by the London Court of International Arbitration will likely hurt Quebec. Ontario companies were responsible for 60% of the quota overrun, so they should be responsible for paying 60% of the penalty imposed by the court.

Will the Minister of International Trade take steps to ensure that Quebec companies are not penalized for Ontario's overrun?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we appealed the decision several months ago. The court reviewed our appeal and once again ruled quite clearly that the industry had to pay the duty, as the tribunals said.

It is not within our power to decide otherwise. The tribunal made that clear.

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the only thing that the companies and the U.S. government want is to get their hands on the \$68 million.

Can the government provide assurance that the guilty Ontario companies will pay the fine on their over-quota exports and that Quebec will not end up footing the bill?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is continuing to provide plenty of support to the industry. For example, Export Development Canada has created a fund worth nearly \$7 billion for forestry industries and companies to help finance several months of operations. There are also programs for workers. We will continue to support forestry companies. This is a difficult time for them, and we are here to help.

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[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister's decision to impose a new tax on everything from diapers to gasoline to funerals is going to be a hardship on families, particularly as they are struggling with this economic crisis.

He thinks so highly of this new tax that he bribed Ontario and British Columbia with seven billion taxpayer dollars in order to impose and accept the new HST. He even brags in the media today that the HST will not be a big issue in the next election because consumers will have become used to it.

Does the Prime Minister also think that Canadians are going to be so forgetful that they are going to forgive him for his new death tax?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think that Canadians understand that provincial governments impose provincial taxes and federal governments impose federal taxes.

Yesterday, the members of the NDP were cheering and demanding a 7% GST. Let me assure the House that, under a Conservative government, the GST is not going to go above 5%.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is a complete fabrication on the part of the Prime Minister. The HST memorandum of agreement says:

Canada and British Columbia will use their best efforts to enter [a harmonized tax deal] on or before September 30, 2009.

We know that the federal government did not consult with anybody, least of all the taxpayers, before it went along and pushed this new tax increase. Since today is the deadline for the B.C. agreement, could the Prime Minister tell us if he has either already signed it or that he is going to postpone the harmonized sales tax deal, reveal the details, and give more time for the citizens to say that they do not want his new tax?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I was a boy, my father used to say that I should work on things that I am good at. The NDP is not good at fighting taxes.

The NDP opposed cutting the federal sales tax. The NDP opposed reducing business taxes. It opposed our cuts to personal taxes. It opposed our cuts to seniors. The NDP never saw a tax it did not like and never saw a tax it did not want to hike. Everybody knows that.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister is not so good at is saying that with a straight face.

[Translation]

Another problem raised by the increased sales tax is the aboriginal exemption. Aboriginal leaders have asked that the treaties be complied with. This type of exemption is in place in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

Can the Prime Minister tell us whether he will impose the new harmonized sales tax on aboriginal people despite the treaties that are in place?

Oral Questions

[English]

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am a serious guy, but I do have trouble keeping a straight face when the NDP claims to be fighting taxes.

[Translation]

The government's position is clear. The provinces impose their own sales tax. Our government has lowered the GST twice. The NDP voted against these measures twice because the NDP is in favour of a 7% GST. We favour a 5% GST. So do Canadians.

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[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister refused to answer simple questions about the misspending of infrastructure money in New Brunswick. How about today we try the other side of the country, where it is even worse?

In British Columbia, the Prime Minister has now promised to give \$158 million in extra government funds to his Conservative colleagues at the expense of the unemployed and their families in other parts of the province. Rather than focusing on jobs, the Prime Minister is focused on helping his Conservatives keep theirs.

Why should Canadians anywhere in this country trust the government?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am always excited to get up and talk about the great infrastructure investments that this government is making in the great province of British Columbia.

The biggest stimulus program with the biggest grant made anywhere in the country was made just last week by the Prime Minister of Canada. We are supporting green energy in northwestern British Columbia. It is a lot of effort to get a lot of diesel power generation off the grid, get more clean non-emission generation onto the grid. Where is that all happening? In an opposition riding.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 10—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park has the floor.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Mr. Speaker, for 10 long months the unemployed in British Columbia have waited to even hear an announcement. The Prime Minister has his priorities badly mixed up. These are difficult times. He is supposed to be standing up for Canadians in need.

Instead, in B.C. he gave his own MPs an average of three times as much money as those in opposition ridings in the province. All the top 10 allocations went to hungry Conservatives. Two-thirds of his cabinet took those top 10 positions.

Will the Prime Minister explain today why he and his ministers are too busy dividing up the cash among themselves instead of looking after British Columbians who need the assistance?

● (1440)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Parkdale—High Park will always be remembered for making a great contribution to democracy and to the Conservative Party by his actions at the Liberal leadership convention in Montreal some three years ago.

Let us look at the commercial news today. The president of the Canadian Construction Association says the following:

We are starting to see a lot of competition for infrastructure projects...Many of our members say they are very busy and it will be one of the busiest seasons on record.

The building Canada fund is radical and it is making a significant difference in the remaking of our public infrastructure.

This government is working co-operatively with Liberal, New Democratic and Conservative governments right across the country. We are working hard. We are getting the job done. We are seeing job creation right across the province.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the shovelgate saga continues. The photo op cameras keep rolling but the jobs are nowhere to be seen.

For months we have been told about infrastructure spending. Where is it? All we can see is Conservative pork-barrelling. The Parliamentary Budget Officer asked a month ago to see the numbers from the department. Its answer was four weeks of delay and it will still not say when it will have the numbers.

My question for the minister is, what is the holdup?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are very few things that have been more un-Canadian than the actions of the member opposite. She actually had the gall and the nerve to protest outside of a Tim Hortons. Shame on her.

I was just looking at the September 21 *Mississauga News* where it states, "Money given to the City of Mississauga through the federal government's infrastructure stimulus funding program is rapidly bearing fruit", even in the member opposite's own constituency.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know the real reason the Conservatives will not give the numbers is that the money is not getting out and when it does, it goes to the Conservatives' pet projects. That is what they are hiding from the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Conservative cabinet ministers in Ontario have received two to three times more funding despite higher unemployment elsewhere in the province. This Conservative rewards program is unfair and it punishes hard-working Canadians who did not vote Conservative.

Oral Questions

Will the minister come clean and open the books for all Canadians?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all the member has to do is talk to her colleague from Willowdale or go to the World Wide Web and she can see an example of all of the great infrastructure projects that we are working on.

We are working constructively with the Liberal Government of Ontario to make things happen. Let us look at what the mayor of the Township of King had to say to my colleague from Oak Ridges—Markham:

We really appreciate your dedication and hard work in making this dream become a reality for our township. This project is a great example of the federal, provincial and municipal governments working together to enhance [our] community.

Do members know who said that? It was Mayor Margaret Black, who is now the Liberal candidate running in Newmarket—Aurora.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, under NAFTA, the United States government does not have the right to engage in preferential purchasing. However, President Obama's plan gets around the problem by forcing states and municipalities, which do not come under NAFTA rules, to buy American exclusively.

Although an agreement appears imminent, does the Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway realize that the real problem is not the buy American act, which has been around since 1933, but rather the provisions of Mr. Obama's plan?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question, because we have been working hard on this file. The Prime Minister, the provincial premiers and I have taken action. We now have an agreement between our provinces and territories, which, in our opinion, meets the requirements of the buy American act. We have sent the plan to the Americans and we will continue to work on the matter.

• (1445)

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the agreement had to be based on full reciprocity as indicated by the Prime Minister, that would mean breaking away from one of the benefits of NAFTA, and would prevent Quebec, the provinces and the municipalities from using preferential purchasing as a tool for economic development.

Does the minister realize that full reciprocity could have a very negative impact on small and medium-sized businesses?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many people have said that the process we followed with the provinces was unprecedented, because we respected the jurisdictions of the provinces and their goals. I particularly appreciate the work of the

Premier of Quebec, Jean Charest, who showed leadership amongst the provinces and encouraged them all to sign the agreement. Thanks to his hard work and that of the other provincial premiers, we can now hope for a solution.

* * *

LABOUR

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in answering a question on preventive withdrawal, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development said that it is important to her government to treat men and women equally. The minister could start by ensuring that female workers in Quebec are all treated the same way.

Does the minister plan to implement a preventive withdrawal program for female workers in Quebec who work under the Canada Labour Code?

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is spreading erroneous and false information about the rights of pregnant women who are in the federal jurisdiction workforce.

The reality and the truth of the matter is that if a woman at any time feels that her health and safety or the health and safety of her fetus is at risk due to any health issue, including the H1N1 virus, she has the right, under the law, to refuse to go to work and continue to be paid.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is missing the point. The most shocking thing about this is that, under the Canada Labour Code, Quebec companies already have to provide their employees with CSST coverage for workplace accidents.

Why refuse to do the same for pregnant women working in Quebec who are calling for preventive withdrawal?

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Labour, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, it is important for all women who work in the federal jurisdiction, particularly pregnant women who are concerned about their own health and safety and the health and safety of their fetuses, to know that they do have rights. If they feel in any way any risk to their safety or the safety of their fetuses, they are able to discontinue work. They can refuse to work and will continue to be paid.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Francis Valerioté (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we learned today that the Canadian Secured Credit Facility, which the finance minister promised in December, January, April, May and then again in June, has yet to offer Canadian car purchasers, lessees and dealers any chance to get the loans they need. It is not working. The money is not out there.

Lending money to GM and Chrysler is only half the equation. Helping car sales and leasing by loosening up credit is the other half: no sales, no industry.

Oral Questions

We cannot rely on the minister's promises at all. Will he ever keep his word?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, in this case, I would be happy to educate the hon. member.

Private investors and financial institutions have been leveraging the CSCF account in order to ensure there is a market for these kinds of ABS securities. In fact, Ford Credit was able to issue \$600 million of ABS in the public markets. Ford also raised some \$3 billion in private placements over the summer months, again leveraging the CSCF.

Working with my colleague, the Minister of Finance, we have improved this fund most recently and we believe it will continue to operate for the benefit of Canadians.

• (1450)

Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is contrary to what has been said by the Business Development Bank.

In today's *Financial Post*, the VP of the Business Development Bank stated, "I don't know when a deal will happen...But I think", she thinks, "we will see something before Christmas". That is one full year since it was announced.

The Canadian Automobile Dealers Association says, "That's one of the biggest problems facing the industry".

Car dealers cannot borrow money for cars. Auto jobs and taxpayer loans to the industry will only be protected if sales increase.

If the finance minister does not want this money out the door, why does he not just say so?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me then put on the record that this fund already levered \$3.6 billion in the first tranche. We have improved the program for the next months. It is working for consumers and for credit facilities in the auto sector.

The hon. member is mistaken. If he would actually spend his time researching rather than trying to force an unnecessary and expensive election, maybe he would have better questions.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health knows of the poverty in first nations communities. She knows of the challenging living conditions.

Her department shipped body bags to prepare them for H1N1. We also know she refused to take responsibility. The minister said that it was regrettable. That is not good enough.

When will the minister apologize to first nations peoples for sending body bags to those Manitoba communities?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know full well what it is like to live in first nations communities because I come from one.

I have said that what happened before was insensitive and offensive and I have asked my deputy minister to investigate the matter. I have had meetings with Grand Chiefs Ron Evans and David

Harper in Manitoba in regard to the situation. Once I receive the information and a full report, I will travel back to Manitoba to meet with the chiefs to discuss the situation.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope an apology will be coming.

The Minister of Health misleads Canadians by telling them that first nations are prepared for H1N1. She claims that 90% of communities have a pandemic plan. Yesterday, the grand chief of MKO told us that only two of his thirty communities had a plan. That does not sound like 90%.

When will the minister stop misleading Canadians, start working with first nations and develop a truly national pandemic plan?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with the provinces, territories and first nations communities to develop the pandemic plan.

I met with all the chiefs in British Columbia this week and addressed the National Assembly. As well, I have been to Manitoba five times to meet with the chiefs and Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. I have been working very closely with all first nations communities in our country to develop their plans.

We have a plan in place and we are acting on it.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in coastal B.C. questions are being raised about the prospect of lighthouses being destaffed. In fact, six of these lighthouses are in my riding.

B.C. Conservative MPs have personally championed the importance of these light stations in the past and in recent times. In fact, our party prevented previous Liberal attempts to close light stations in B.C. and in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Could the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans update the House on the latest status on this important issue?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the input regarding the gradual automation and destaffing of lighthouses in B.C. and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Oral Questions

With rapidly developing technology, an ever-changing technology, light stations in the rest of the country and around the world have been fully automated for quite some time now, and it is clear that mariner safety has not been compromised. However, it is my understanding that many light stations in British Columbia and Newfoundland and Labrador are located in remote areas, where lightkeepers perform a range of additional services.

I have asked therefore that a further review of the extent of these services at the remaining staffed light stations be undertaken and no further lighthouses will be destaffed until that review is completed.

* * *

● (1455)

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government continues to undermine the Military Police Complaints Commission's hearings into detainee transfers in Afghanistan leading to torture.

The government has ordered subpoenaed witnesses to say nothing to the commission. Now it has been revealed that a secret military police investigation took place and the results have not been made public.

Is this the government's response to the charges of Canadian complicity in torture in Afghanistan? What is the government trying to hide from the Canadian people?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that is simply not true. The military has been co-operating with the MPCC. In fact, we have provided dozens of witnesses to provide testimony. We have provided hundreds of documents. That board will say so itself.

With respect to this evidence, there is sensitive information. There are national security considerations. There is information that has to be vetted.

We are co-operating with the commission. We will continue to do so, and the board itself has said so.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the issue was sexual assault of young boys and today it is a gag order, hiding from torture allegations.

Now the Minister of National Defence is saying that Canada is prepared to continue the mission in Afghanistan beyond 2011. He said this despite countless promises by the Prime Minister that Canadian troops would not remain in Kandahar beyond that date and despite a vote in the House confirming 2011 as the redeployment date for our troops.

Is the defence minister violating the will of the House and breaking the government's word to the people of Canada on our Afghan mission?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was a remarkable rhetorical flourish from the member for St. John's East. It is amazing how many falsehoods he was able to get into one question.

We have said repeatedly, and the Prime Minister has repeated it, as have I, that we will respect the motion that was passed by the House of Commons. We cannot fight for democracy in Afghanistan and not respect the democracy in the House of Commons.

I would ask the hon. member to go back and read the record and get his facts straight.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is becoming more obvious by the day that this government intends to do as little as possible when it comes to the environment. Manufacturers of electric cars attending a conference this week in Montreal are calling on the federal government to provide incentive programs for buyers.

Rather than denying that climate change is real, why does this government not implement targeted programs to help develop alternatives to the conventional automobile?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc should read today's news. As we said, our budget is clear. We will develop an integrated North American carbon exchange system. Today, in the United States, Senators Boxer and Kerry introduced legislation with the same target as that adopted by our government two years ago. These are Canadian targets. The Bloc should support our efforts.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Americans are working on and introducing a bill, but we are still waiting for the government's bill. That is the reality.

The government did not hesitate to make \$10 billion available to the auto industry in Ontario but when the time comes to give a helping hand to the green economy, it does nothing.

The Prime Minister justified his rejection of the California standards adopted by Quebec by saying that he wanted to align his position with that of Obama. Now that Obama has accepted the California standard will the federal government follow suit?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not the case.

I am surprised today. The Bloc and their coalition partners signed an agreement last November to bring down the Canadian government. The agreement stated that the Liberals, the Bloc and the NDP support a continental emissions exchange system. I am surprised today by the change in direction of the opposition, which wants a continental system without the continent.

* * *

[English]

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Foreign Affairs about Afghanistan.

Oral Questions

The motion that we passed in the House was very unambiguous and very clear with respect to Canadian troops being redeployed out of Kandahar by December 2011. Certain comments have been made by other ministers and by other candidates for the Conservative Party with respect to the intentions of the Conservative Party post-2011.

My question for the Minister of Foreign Affairs is about Canada's presence in Afghanistan. Is he sticking to the motion that was passed by the House in March 2008?

• (1500)

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will say this clearly and succinctly so that the member will understand. Yes, we are sticking to that motion. Yes, the Minister of National Defence answered that question previously with the same response that we always give. We are putting an end to our military combat mission by 2011, and that is clear.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that yesterday outside the House the minister said something else. The other problem is—

An hon. member: No, he didn't.

Hon. Bob Rae: The record will stand. The record will stand.

Mr. Speaker, what I would like to ask the minister is very clearly it states that Canadian forces will be redeployed out of Kandahar by December 2011. It is unambiguous and clear.

I would like to ask the minister, how is that compatible with the statements by the minister, as well as the statements of the candidate who is running in Ajax? The two statements are incompatible.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the answer to his question is yes. I would strongly recommend that the hon. colleague read the transcript so that it will be clear. He might not understand what is written, but we all understand that is what it means.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry.

As I am sure he knows, the auto workers at Ford Talbotville are facing the closure of that plant within the next two years. Many of these workers live in my riding and contribute significantly to the tax base and the prosperity of our community. The government has done precious little to save those auto jobs.

Will the minister come with me to the plant gate at Ford and explain this lack of action to the workers at Ford?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may be aware, because it was well publicized, that this government has been supporting the Canadian auto sector and, in doing so, supporting the Canadian economy from coast to coast. That is what the finance minister indicated in his most recent report to Canadians as well and that is what the Prime Minister and his leadership did in conjunction with the United States.

Of course, members of the NDP voted against all of that, as they vote against anything that will help save our economy. That is their

record. Perhaps she should explain that at the gate to the workers in her community.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL AID

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, typhoon Ketsana has left 246 known dead and flooded the homes of nearly two million families in the Philippines, creating a crisis in food and shelter. The government says the most it will do is contribute about \$1.50 per family in total.

Could the minister tell us what else is being considered and whether or not DART, our armed forces disaster assistance response team, which has world-renowned expertise in disaster relief, is being made available to help on the ground? While she is at it, could she give the House an update on any assistance being provided in the face of the tsunamis and the earthquake in Southeast Asia?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the House knows and as Canadians know, Canada always responds to those who are facing disaster. We are doing it responsibly. Currently we are assessing the actual needs, the appropriate medicines and what will be needed for those in all areas facing the storms, the tsunami and the floods that are being experienced.

We are monitoring it. As I said yesterday, Canada and Canadians will respond compassionately and in a fully responsible way.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday members in the House voted on second reading of Bill C-50. This bill was introduced by our Conservative government to provide extra weeks of support through EI to long-tenured workers who have been hardest hit by the global recession. This is the fair and right thing to do. This bill is yet another way that our government is helping unemployed Canadians.

Could the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development please provide the House with an update on Bill C-50?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to report that last night in the House Bill C-50 passed second reading. This is a bill that is going to provide extra support to Canadians who have paid EI premiums for a long time and are really having a tough time finding a job in these tough economic times.

Sadly, the Liberals voted against this bill. Shame on them. It is just further evidence that the Liberal leader does not care about the unemployed. Not only did Liberals walk out during our EI panels to help the unemployed this summer, but last night the Liberal leader, instead of helping the unemployed, was helping raise money for an unneeded election.

Oral Questions

●(1505)

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you know, one of the defining characteristics of the government is to announce but never deliver.

The Minister of Agriculture announced in the spring he was going to challenge U.S. COOL; however, there is still no investigation. October 9 is a crucial date that must be met in order to achieve a WTO investigation. While the minister dilly-dallies, farmers go broke.

I have a simple question: Will the minister act before October 9, or by default, is he just admitting that he has an absolute record of failure when it comes to farmers?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, someone should read transcripts to the member for Malpeque. The Prime Minister raised this issue directly with the president on his last trip down there. My counterpart at trade has raised it with Ron Kirk in the U.S. at every opportunity. I have done the same with Secretary Vilsack. We are also making use of our allies in the U.S., working with their counterparts here in Canada, the meat trade as it were, to raise the issue down there. We have done that exceptionally well. We are in the consultation phase on the WTO challenge. We will raise it to the next level as soon as we have all the information that we require to win that challenge.

* * *

[Translation]

AIRPORT FACILITIES

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in April, Aérocentre YHU, DASH-L and the City of Longueuil announced a plan to build a new airport terminal at the Saint-Hubert airport thanks to a private investment of \$20 million. The Saint-Hubert airport expansion project requires federal government funding for extending the runway.

Can the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities give us an update on the status of this request and tell us why no support has been offered yet, despite Conservative election promises in 2008?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously we are concerned about infrastructure spending at airports across the country and the airport in question. I would certainly be happy to take the member's renewed interest in the file back to my officials. I will report back to her in short order.

* * *

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at a time when President Obama is galvanizing the international community to focus on nuclear disarmament, Canada is justifying proliferation. In fact, the Minister of International Trade is out there encouraging proliferation as a trade policy.

Why is the government isolating our country when it comes to nuclear disarmament? Why does it not commit Canadian expertise to verification and disarmament instead? In fact, where is our team Canada for nuclear disarmament?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very encouraging to see around the world especially in countries that are significantly developing, such as India, that they have a desire in their development to use clean energy in the years ahead. They have been pursuing an ongoing future of nuclear energy. Canada has a lot to offer in that particular aspect. We will continue to be with other countries signing nuclear cooperation agreements whereby the countries that are involved have to fully respect the International Atomic Energy Agency guidelines. This is not only helping the environment, but it discourages proliferation at the same time.

* * *

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, identity theft is considered by law enforcement officials as one of the fastest growing and most lucrative crimes in North America, especially for organized crime. Between January 1 and October 31, 2008, more than 9,000 Canadian victims of identity theft were reported, totalling more than \$8 million. The Canadian Council of Better Business Bureaus estimated identity theft may cost consumers, credit card firms and other businesses more than \$2 billion annually.

Could the minister reaffirm to the House what this government is doing to combat this growing crime?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact the government has reintroduced a bill that would take aim at identity theft and would give police the tools they need to stop this activity before the damage is done. We know that organized crime and modern technology are changing the criminal landscape to make identity theft easier than ever. I have been calling on the opposition to expedite the passage of this bill. This is the second time we have introduced the bill. What is the problem with those people? Let us get Bill S-4 passed.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Dr. Sein Win, Leader of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

HOUSE OF COMMONS CALENDAR, 2010

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 28(2)(b), I have the honour to lay upon the table the House of Commons calendar for the year 2010.

●(1510)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during question period, in response to a question put by the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, the Minister of the Environment misled the House of Commons in his answer. He said that today, United States senators Kerry and Boxer tabled a greenhouse gas emissions bill with targets that were identical to the targets he claims were set out two years ago by the government. These fossil fuel emissions targets in the United States are 17% below 2005 levels by 2020. They are hard caps, in contradistinction to the minister's intensity targets, which are based on 2006 as a baseline year, and are 20% by 2020.

The minister continues to deliberately mislead the Canadian people. He must apologize once again.

The Speaker: It sounds like a debate to me. Sometimes statements are made in the House with which hon. members disagree, but to suggest that that somehow constitutes a point of order puts the Chair in a position where the Chair has to decide on the accuracy of statements, which is totally beyond my competence.

In the circumstances, we will regard this as a matter for debate. The hon. member may want to have a discussion with the minister about the matter and maybe something will come of it in subsequent discussions in the House.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I have the honour to table a notice of a ways and means motion to amend the Softwood Lumber Products Export Charge Act, 2006.

I would ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(1) of the House of Commons and section 696.5 of the Criminal Code, I am tabling the annual report to Parliament in relation to applications of ministerial review, miscarriage of justice.

* * *

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS TRIBUNAL

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the provisions of section 72 of the Access to Information Act and section 72 of the

Routine Proceedings

Privacy Act, I rise today to table the annual reports of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal for the fiscal year 2008-09.

* * *

WEST BANK FIRST NATIONS SELF-GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2006-07 annual report of the West Bank First Nations self-government agreement.

* * *

INDIAN CLAIMS COMMISSION

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2008-09 annual report of the Indian Claims Commission.

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[Translation]

CANADA-U.S. BORDER

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with leave of the House and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I would like to table, in both official languages, the Framework Agreement on Integrated Cross-Border Maritime Law Enforcement Operations between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America, signed in Detroit on May 26, 2009.

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●(1515)

THE INTERNATIONAL BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with leave of the House and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I would like to table, in both official languages, the Amendment of the Articles of Agreement of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Board of Governors — Resolution No. 596, Part A).

* * *

UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with leave of the House and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I would like to table, in both official languages, the Acts of the 24th Congress of the Universal Postal Union, signed in Geneva on August 12, 2008.

*Routine Proceedings***CONVENTION BETWEEN CANADA AND THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC**

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with leave of the House and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I would like to table, in both official languages, the Convention Between Canada and the Hellenic Republic for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income and on Capital, signed in Athens on June 29, 2009.

* * *

AGREEMENT BETWEEN CANADA AND THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with leave of the House and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I would like to table, in both official languages, the Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Turkey for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income and on Capital, signed in Ottawa on July 14, 2009.

* * *

[English]

ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT (STIMULUS)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-51, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and to implement other measures.

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

* * *

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-446, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (members who cross the floor).

He said: Mr. Speaker, three years ago, in Vancouver Kingsway, a member of Parliament was elected as a Liberal and crossed the floor to sit as a Conservative two weeks after that election.

Our citizens were outraged. They regarded this as an act of democratic betrayal. It rendered their votes meaningless. People from every political persuasion joined together to demand the restoration of their democratic rights. People like Mike Watkins, Jurgen Claudepierre and Shannon Steele worked tirelessly for this noble goal.

I am honoured to rise today to introduce a piece of legislation that serves to restore respect for democracy in our country.

This bill would require any member who crosses the floor to resign and run in a byelection. It would put the actions of a floor-crossing member to the test of the will of the voters of his or her constituency, where it properly belongs. In a time when voters are increasingly cynical, I believe this would go some way towards restoring confidence in our political system.

I hope that all members of this House put their partisan interests aside and support this law. It is good for our democracy. It is good for our country.

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

* * *

DEPARTMENT OF PEACE ACT

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-447, An Act to establish the Department of Peace.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to table a private member's bill today that calls for the establishment of a department of peace as a full federal government department.

I would like to thank the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for seconding the bill.

The bill is based on the model developed by the Canadian department of peace initiative. This bill would establish a full, comprehensive department of peace as part of the infrastructure of the Canadian government, with its own minister, department and resources, and put peace at the centre of government rather than on the corner of a desk of another minister or other public servants.

There would be a voice dedicated to the promotion of peace at the cabinet table.

The department's mandate would be to promote a culture of peace and the non-violent resolution of conflict in Canada and around the world and to build institutions for long-term research policy and action for sustainable peace.

The bill would also establish a Canadian civilian peace service to further professionalize peace work by Canadians.

A similar youth peace service is also contemplated by the bill.

As the co-chairs of the Canadian department of peace initiative, Bill Bhaneja and Saul Arbess have noted that this bill is about the need to bring peace through peaceful means.

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

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CANADA LABOUR CODE

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-448, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (minimum wage).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table my private member's bill, which is an act to amend the Canada Labour Code with regard to the minimum wage. It seeks to ensure that an employer shall pay to each employee a wage that is not less than \$12 per hour.

At a time when the cost of food, medication and home heating is increasing at an alarming rate, it is essential that all those governed by the Canada Labour Code have wages that can feed a family.

With the impending 8% increase to B.C. and Ontario families caused by the Liberal-Conservative HST scheme, families need a living wage.

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

* * *

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

FREE PUBLIC TRANSIT FOR SENIORS ACT

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-449, An Act regarding free public transit for seniors.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling a bill that would help seniors across Canada break free from their isolation. We know it is good to encourage seniors to live active social lives, and for them to break out of the isolation they may experience. We also know that it is difficult for many seniors in Canada to get around, and often public transportation is their only option.

I am tabling a bill to allow the Minister of Finance to make direct payments to a fund established to help the provinces, territories and municipalities offer seniors across Canada free local public transportation, outside peak hours.

I am calling on all the members of the House to support this bill and to ensure it is passed as quickly as possible.

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

* * *

[*English*]

CANADA POST CORPORATION ACT

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-450, An Act to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act (rural mail delivery).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce this private member's bill. As everyone in the House knows, a current review of rural mailboxes across the country is going on because of a court order. As a result, a number of mailboxes in rural communities have had to be moved, some at great expense.

For example, I have a senior lady, in her 80s, in my riding who was asked to move her mailbox. She neither had the ability to do it herself nor to hire someone. This bill would simply change the act so that when a mailbox is ordered moved under the Canada Post Corporation Act it would cover the cost.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

CANADIAN NEUTRON CENTRE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. The first states that the Canadian Institute for Neutron Scattering has released a plan to build the Canadian Neutron Centre. They are calling upon Parliament to implement the plan for a national laboratory at Chalk River to replace the NRU.

Routine Proceedings

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon Parliament to end the wasteful long gun registry and asks parliamentarians to vote in support of Bill C-391.

ANIMAL TRANSPORTATION REGULATIONS

Mrs. Michelle Simson (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to present two petitions today. The first is signed by a number of constituents of Scarborough Southwest and across Ontario. They are calling upon the House of Commons to strengthen the animal transportation regulations under the Health of Animals Act to be consistent with the findings of the EU's scientific committee on animals.

• (1525)

CANADA POST

Mrs. Michelle Simson (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by constituents of Scarborough Southwest who are calling on the Government of Canada to maintain the moratorium on post office closures and withdraw the legislation to legalize remailers. The petitioners are also calling upon the government to instruct Canada Post to maintain, expand and improve postal services.

HARMONIZED SALES TAX

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from constituents in British Columbia regarding the HST. The petitioners point out that taking money from the pockets of hard-working families makes no sense in these difficult economic times and it represents an unfair tax shift from corporations onto consumers.

They note that, from restaurants to realtors, small businesses in Vancouver will be hurt and consumers will pay more on everything from haircuts to vitamins. Further, they note it was a product of political deception in the last B.C. election by the provincial Liberals. Although they are aware that the HST is supported by both federal Conservatives and Liberals, they urge the government to change its mind and withdraw its support for the British Columbia HST.

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present to the House. The first is signed by citizens of my riding of Dufferin—Caledon asking that all members support Bill C-391, which would ban the ineffective and costly long gun registry program.

Routine Proceedings

HORSE SLAUGHTER

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from citizens from across Canada asking the members of the House to ban the slaughter of horses in Canada for human consumption and the export of horses for the same purpose.

BURNS BOG

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Burns Bog in my riding of Newton—North Delta is often referred to as the lungs for the Lower Mainland.

Last weekend hundreds of people gathered to support its cause by participating in the Jog for the Bog. Over the summer the Burns Bog Conservation Society and members of my community created this petition to support the Burns Bog.

I am honoured to present this petition on behalf of my constituents from Newton—North Delta.

It asks that the government initiate the process outlined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to establish Burns Bog in Delta, British Columbia as a World Heritage site in recognition of it being a cultural and environmental landmark. We believe this would go a long way to preserving the bog for generations to come.

DUCHESS OF KENT LEGION

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions today.

The first is on behalf of the Duchess of Kent Legion, branch 263, which has fallen into financial difficulty with the Canada Revenue Agency due to the theft of the GST fund by a former employee. While that employee was charged and convicted of the crime, the stolen monies were never recovered.

The Duchess of Kent Legion has a debt of more than \$275,000, and despite paying thousands on this debt, the accruing interest is driving the legion deeper into debt every month.

The Minister of National Revenue has the authority under section 23(2) of the Financial Administration Act to forgive the interest.

The petitioners ask that the Parliament of Canada direct the Minister of National Revenue to exercise his authority and forgive the interest debt. We owe it to our veterans who served our country with honour and courage to save their legion.

• (1530)

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): My second petition, Mr. Speaker, asks that the Government of Canada reinstate federal pay equity. Equal pay for work of equal value has still not been achieved in Canada.

The Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act is an attack on pay equity. It is the antithesis of the recommendations made by the 2004 pay equity task force and it removes pay equity protection under the Canadian Human Rights Act for public sector employees.

The petitioners call upon the Parliament of Canada to implement all the recommendations of the 2004 pay equity task force, ensure

pay equity protection under the Canadian Human Rights Act and scrap the Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act.

SOUTH YEMEN

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Finally, Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from petitioners who are very concerned about events in south Yemen. They ask the Government of Canada to immediately take action with the international community to end atrocities in south Yemen.

The real risk and implications of the current situation there are so grave that such a situation, without a doubt, would profoundly affect the security and stability of the region and endanger the interests of many countries, including Canada.

The petitioners ask that the House of Commons tell the Canadian government to take action to prevent an imminent crime against humanity by coordinating efforts with other friends and allies to send a fact-finding mission to south Yemen to ask the president to refrain from any escalation of violence, release all detainees and fulfill his obligations under UN Security Council resolutions 924-94 and 931-94 to resume dialogue with the legitimate and recognized representatives of the people of south Yemen.

CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege to present a petition from people, predominantly from southern Ontario, calling upon the Government of Canada to stop all funding to Planned Parenthood by CIDA.

FUEL PRICES

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition that is signed by Canadians from across this country, ranging from Dawson, Yukon, all the way to British Columbia, back to Kamloops and over to Richmond Hill.

The petitioners call upon the government to acknowledge that the high price of fuel is damaging the Canadian economy, on a day when gas prices are probably going to go up 2¢ to 3¢ a litre; reinstate the office of petroleum price information, which was abolished by the government in 2006; begin hearings into the energy sector to determine how the government can foster competition and provide transparency in the energy market; and eliminate the monopolistic efficiency defence cost to the competition of Canada.

The petition has been signed by over 103 Canadians.

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present today.

The first petition concerns the CBC. The petitioners would like the Government of Canada to understand that CBC programming is an essential service in northwestern Ontario and to ensure that the quality of local programming remains and that jobs are not lost in northwestern Ontario.

CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present signed by petitioners who are concerned about the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

The petitioners call on Parliament to reject the agreement at least until an independent human rights impact assessment and some other measures are carried out.

SUICIDE

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present a petition from about 400 people from Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and Ontario.

The petitioners are calling on the government to enable prosecution of those who encourage or counsel someone to commit suicide, and to update the Criminal Code to reflect the new realities of 21st century broadband access.

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present three petitions from Canadians right across the country, including individuals in Quebec.

The petitioners call on Parliament to pass legislation to enable the prosecution of those who encourage or counsel someone to commit suicide and to upgrade the Criminal Code to reflect the new realities of the 21st century broadband access.

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today calling for a stop to the wage rollbacks and a restoration of pay equity for public service workers.

The budget implementation bill empowers the government to roll back negotiated wages and arbitration awards retroactively and to radically change the rules governing pay equity in the federal public sector.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to support Motion No. 384 presented by the member for Burnaby—New Westminster and to rescind the provisions of Bill C-10 that violate workers' rights to collective bargaining, including the right to arbitration awards and the right to have equal pay for work of equal value.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Dona Cadman (Surrey North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, I would like to present petitions from many communities across Canada.

The petitioners call on parliamentarians to support Bill C-268. The bill will be voted on tonight, and Canada's citizens are counting on parliamentarians to support it.

*Routine Proceedings***QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS**

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 231 could be made an order for return, the return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 231—**Mr. Nathan Cullen:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, listing each department of agency, initiative and amount?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

• (1535)

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to be so kind as to call Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-5 in the name of the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Motion No. P-5

That a humble Address be presented to Her Excellency praying that she will cause to be laid before the House a copy of all contracts between Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Hill and Knowlton between September 1, 2007 and February 25, 2009.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-5 is acceptable to the government subject to the usual reservations concerning confidential information, and the documents are tabled immediately.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the other notices of motion for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

The House resumed from September 29 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 Speaker: When the matter was last before the House, the hon. member for Vancouver East had the floor. Three minutes are remaining in the time allotted for her remarks, and I therefore call upon the hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I intend to use my full three minutes.

I want to talk a bit more about the crisis situation in Colombia as we debate this bill.

I find it rather concerning that the Liberal member for Kings—Hants, during this debate, said that the NDP was hallucinating about the situation in Colombia. That is really a bit over the top, because when one looks at the real facts of what is going on, the reality in Colombia for workers, it is terribly serious. People are receiving death threats. Workers are being murdered.

I want to read into the record some information from the International Centre for Trade Union Rights, the Colombia bulletin, from January to September 2009. In that report they assess, as a result of their information and investigations, that there has been a total of 27 trade unionists assassinated in Colombia between January and September of this year alone. This is not a hallucination. This is a very dire situation that is facing workers in this country.

I just wanted to read out a couple of the citations in this report.

On May 5, the president of the Santander public sector workers' union received death threats that were sent to the union office by letter.

On May 28, a letter was sent to the offices of Atlántico containing death threats against a whole number of union leaders, including those from the health workers' union, the teachers' union, the court staff and judicial workers' union, the university workers' union and the pensioners' union. The list also included a death threat against a human rights lawyer. This letter was signed by paramilitary groups.

One of the grave concerns that we have about this bill is that it will do nothing to improve the atrocious violations of human rights and labour rights in Colombia. This is something we are very concerned about and the reason we are opposing this bill and trying to stop this bill from going through Parliament.

We think there is very broad support right across the country to do this, and I want to congratulate the activists in the CLC, in local labour councils across the country, as well as those in civil society. People have really taken this issue on, and they are really making the

connections between what happens to us as Canadians and what happens to our brothers and sisters, whether they are in Colombia or elsewhere.

We talk about living in a global village. These trade agreements are written in the far distance with no involvement from ordinary people. In some ways it is like signing one's life away and that is how we see this trade agreement.

I do want to say that because of the work by civil society and the labour movement, and particularly by our own trade critic, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, we aim to stop this bill. So far it is going pretty well and we are going to keep at it.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member claims that paramilitary groups have murdered trade unionists this year. She should be aware that paramilitary groups have been disbanded in Colombia, but there are drug gangsters who continue to exist. There continues to be a battle between FARC, the leftist guerrillas who philosophically are closer to her party, and the drug lords who continue to operate in what has become not an ideological war today but a drug war.

To say that paramilitary forces are murdering union leaders today is false, because everybody who has been studying the issue recognizes that the paramilitary forces have been disbanded, and in fact the trend line on these attacks has decreased tremendously. The fact is that there is a drug war in Colombia and the best way to provide an alternative to the narco-economy is through legitimate trade.

She also has said, and the trade critic for the party has claimed, that President Obama is against it. In fact President Obama has said that he supports the free trade agreement and has instructed Ambassador Kirk, his trade representative, to work closely with President Uribe's team to proceed with the free trade agreement, so the U.S. Democrat position is in support—

• (1540)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would like to give the member for Vancouver East the opportunity to respond.

Ms. Libby Davies: Madam Speaker, I am glad the member for Kings—Hants got up and I know he would like us to believe that everything is okay in Colombia—

Hon. Scott Brison: No, that's not true.

Ms. Libby Davies: —and that somehow this trade agreement is going to make things better. I know he would like to downplay the situation, but the fact is, what I just read comes from the International Centre for Trade Union Rights. It is their latest report, the Colombia bulletin—

Hon. Scott Brison: You are a big supporter of free trade.

Ms. Libby Davies: —that contains information right up until September 2009, so this is very recent information. I only read a very small part because I only had three minutes left to speak, but I would be happy to share with the member the information that is contained here, and then I think he will begin to appreciate that the source material that is here tells us about the dire situation, violence, death threats and murders that have actually taken place.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would like to call the hon. member for Kings Hants to order.

Government Orders

I will not recognize those who continue to heckle. Questions and comments.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for a terrific speech on the subject.

I want to point out, as many other members have, that just last year the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade recommended that no agreement be signed with Colombia until the human rights situation there is improved. It also recommended that a human rights impact assessment study be undertaken to determine the real impact of a trade agreement.

Now the question is, why has the government completely ignored this report and why are the Liberals going along with this?

Ms. Libby Davies: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question.

We have pointed out over and over again that not only is this a bad trade deal, but the process by which it is being taken through this Parliament has also been seriously flawed. I know that our member on the trade committee and other members of the NDP caucus have fought tooth and nail to try to ensure there is a proper public consultation process and assessment, just as the member for Elmwood—Transcona has outlined.

The only response I can give is that we have a Conservative government that, like the Liberal government before it, is more interested in creating these trade deals and signing on the dotted line than it is with the real impact on the lives of ordinary people in some of these countries, including the impact on Canadian workers.

I think it is because it is so divorced from the reality of what it is that workers face as a result of these trade agreements, particularly in the situation in Colombia. The government has no regard for what those real impacts are.

This happens at a very high level, and I think it is very reflective of the problem with these trade agreements and how they come about. They do not involve trade unions and they do not involve civil society. We are not a party to these things and yet we live with the consequences of them. Some of them, as we have pointed out, are hugely negative and problematic.

We will always try to work to ensure that there is a proper process, at least through our Parliament. If the Conservative government and the Liberal members choose to ignore that, I guess that is their problem. We will always seek to ensure that there is that kind of wide consultation and examination of these agreements.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to focus on the current social, human and political situation in Colombia, so as to explain why the Bloc Québécois opposes Bill C-23, Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act.

It is important to consider the impact and repercussions that the terms of this agreement will have on the people of Colombia. We must ensure that the rights of Colombians are respected and that their opinions will be taken into account before we ratify such an agreement.

Civil society and the people of Colombia are opposed to a free trade agreement that enhances the rights of foreign investors and exporters, but does nothing to take into account local issues in terms of development and human rights.

Yes, trade can support development and the realization of human rights, if it brings benefits to vulnerable populations and allows those states that are willing to do so to promote development and protect the environment.

The uproar against this free trade agreement between Canada and Colombia is only growing in strength, in Canada and in Colombia. According to the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, the Canadian Association of Labour Lawyers, the Canadian Labour Congress and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement and the two side agreements—one on labour rights and the other on the environment—will only exacerbate the problem of human rights violations, and the legislative provisions meant to guarantee those rights and protect the environment will not work.

We cannot enter into a free trade agreement with Colombia without looking at the human rights situation in that country. Under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to life, security of the person, freedom of expression and freedom of association. It is therefore incomprehensible that the Canadian government should ratify a free trade agreement given the Colombian government's deplorable record of violating human and workers' rights.

Can the Canadian people, who consider themselves a democratic society and stand up for workers' rights, sanction a free trade agreement with a country where people put their lives at risk just by demonstrating or wanting to join a union? It is regrettable that the Canadian government is supporting a regime that is heavily involved in human rights violations and mired in a huge political scandal because of its ties to paramilitary groups.

Those responsible for the crimes against union members and civilians are very seldom found guilty in court. Only 3% of the crimes committed have led to a conviction and in the meantime, the paramilitaries are reasserting control over the territory, and the government is doing nothing to stop them.

In Colombia, it is easier to organize an armed paramilitary group than a union. The anti-union culture prevailing in Colombia makes it one of the most dangerous countries in the world for union members. A number of groups are targeted. The Liberal member who said that everything is great in Colombia must be hallucinating because when we examine what is happening we see that major groups such as teachers, those involved in labour disputes, those against privatization, women, children, prison guards and farmers are being targeted. Furthermore, thousands of people are being displaced.

Government Orders

I would like to cite just a few statistics: 2,685 union members have been killed in recent years, 474 of them since President Uribe came to power. Thousands of men, women and children have been threatened and even kidnapped. In 2008, 41 union members were killed and in 2009, 29 were murdered, as mentioned by the NDP member. More than 300,000 people were displaced in 2007 and more than 380,000 in 2008. That is unacceptable. Such displacement occurs more frequently in rural areas.

• (1550)

These people are being displaced with the support of mining companies and large agricultural companies, making this a major humanitarian issue, bigger than what is going on in Sudan. That says something.

Why is Canada, and especially a government like this one, acting like this? The Prime Minister has said:

I will sign trade agreements with parties who respect the rights we respect in Canada; fundamental values like democracy, human rights, the rule of law and good governance.

How can the Prime Minister and the current government sign, or try to sign, an agreement with Colombia?

Earlier, we spoke about paramilitary groups, and I said that it was easier to form this kind of group than to form a union. It is true that they are now called something else. We call them militias, the Black Eagles. They go by many names, but they continue to systematically kill unionists and/or civilians who speak out against the Uribe government, which is also trying to finally sign this free trade agreement that only gives rights to investors and has nothing to do with trade.

Bill C-23 contains a chapter on investments. As the agreement contains a chapter on investment protection, it will make life easier for Canadians investing in Colombia, especially in mining.

Judging by all the investment protection agreements Canada has signed over the years, the one that would bind Canada and Colombia is ill conceived. All these agreements contain clauses that enable foreign investors to sue the local government if it takes measures that reduce the return on their investment. Such clauses are especially dangerous in a country where labour and environmental protection laws are uncertain at best. By protecting a Canadian investor against any improvement in living conditions in Colombia, such an agreement could delay social and environmental progress in that country, where the need for progress is great.

Canadian mining companies have to be careful not to become complicit in human rights violations or cause forced displacement of any populations, since regions that are rich in minerals tend to become theatres of violence, paramilitary control and displacements.

This chapter pays mere lip service to corporate social responsibility. Its "best efforts" provisions are purely voluntary and completely unenforceable.

As mentioned earlier, a parliamentary group studied the issue and submitted a report that was completely ignored by the current government. We made some important recommendations in that report.

As members of the Bloc Québécois, we cannot condone such stubbornness and such disdain for parliamentarians. Such behaviour stems from an authoritarian trend that is completely unacceptable and cannot become a precedent. This is not how we would like democratic institutions to operate in the future.

M. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on his speech. We just heard the Liberal Party critic say that there are no longer any paramilitary groups in Colombia. He dismisses all of the evidence presented by the member and ignores the humanitarian and human rights groups that say exactly the opposite, that Colombian paramilitary groups are still killing people.

I would like the member to comment on that. Does he think that the Liberal Party's position is even remotely credible when it claims that paramilitary groups no longer exist in Colombia?

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague. Earlier, I said that the Liberal member was hallucinating. Parliamentarians are not the only ones talking about these paramilitary groups. A number of civil society groups in Canada, Quebec and Colombia are still condemning paramilitary activities in Colombia.

As I said earlier, paramilitary groups are no longer known by that name. Instead, some such militias are now known as the Black Eagles. The Colombian army, which I now consider to be a paramilitary group, has been told to make sure that Mr. Uribe can pursue this kind of trade agreement with Canada in a way that prevents the Colombian people from benefiting from it.

• (1555)

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, who gave an exceptional speech about why we will be voting against this truly bad agreement.

I would like to talk about some of the examples he gave. He emphasized that this agreement is quite hypocritical. The Conservative government says that this agreement is about trading goods, but we know that it is mainly about investment, particularly in the mining sector, and about protecting Canadian investors.

I know that my colleague was a unionist and that he has had personal experience with a similar situation in Quebec, not unlike what is going on in Colombia. Iron ore was being mined and Quebec was getting 1¢ per tonne. Workers were being paid starvation wages. Foreign investors were the ones making money.

Can my colleague tell us whether such conditions in the Quebec mining industry improved workers' quality of life, their health and the environment?

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Government Orders

We could draw a parallel between what happened here in Canada and what could happen in Colombia if we were to apply this kind of agreement to investors. Indeed, there was a time when workers here in the mining industry were terribly exploited. That was the genesis of unions, which helped secure decent working conditions in our mines.

Right now in Colombia, it would be impossible to ensure similar improvements to the working conditions, because the people are not allowed to unionize or to negotiate. Workers who choose to oppose something are systematically excluded from working, or even worse, killed instantly in some cases, especially when it comes to labour activists. I am not afraid to say that this practice is still a common occurrence in Colombia.

These are things that we denounce here at home, although the situations we face are much less severe. It is completely unacceptable that a government like the one across from me in this House would dare ratify this kind of agreement.

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-23, the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement implementation act. I have followed this debate with great interest and have listened to the arguments being made for and against.

Given my own personal experience with Colombians and having spent time in Colombia, I can appreciate on some level what is being said by those with one point of view and on the other level, I am inclined to want to fill them in on my understanding of what has gone on in Colombia over the years.

There is no doubt that this debate is about people. It is about ensuring that people have a right to live the kind of life that we live comfortably, and that they have the same rights and freedoms that we enjoy. That has been a problem in years past. That was a problem when I spent time in Colombia working with street children. There were times when young boys would be taken and destroyed. Young street boys were destroyed by the paramilitary and police because they were considered a nuisance.

However, we were there. I was working with a not for profit group and we were there to show that it did not have to be this way. It did not have to be that way then and it does not have to be that way now. I know from what I have read and people I have spoken with that progress has been made in Colombia. We will continue to make progress if we lead by example.

That is what my remarks are going to be about today. Countries like Canada have an obligation to make the point that we can lead by example. Look at what we are doing. Let us enter into business arrangements and whatever arrangements we have to enter into, so that people will understand that this is not the right way to do it. We do not take people for granted. We do not treat people with disrespect. We do not hold people up and tell them that they are no good because they cannot do this or that or make a contribution.

We as Canadians must show them that that is not the way to go. When I listen to colleagues talk about trade unionists being murdered, that is serious. The colleague who just spoke referenced information that she read suggesting that a great number more trade

unionists are being murdered. That is not the same information that we have. We would not stand here supporting anything that would be detrimental to the people of Colombia.

I stand here today because I believe that we can make a difference. We can show people that the way to live is to work together and share our values with people who want to make a change in the world, and understand that we can work together to make that difference.

The people of Colombia need to feel confident. They need to know that there are people out there who care and want to help them make a difference. How do we do that? Again, we lead by example. If that means entering into business with Colombia business people, then we do that. Through building relationships and working together, we can lead by example. By building these relationships, one builds trust. When one builds trust, people come to understand that they can in fact depend on them.

I think it is really important to go down this path. I think it is important for a group of people that I spent a considerable amount of time with. I referenced street children earlier. Street children are children who were members of a family, particularly in rural parts of Colombia. Their fathers had to leave home through no choice of their own. They left a family behind. In some cases, they left 10 children behind for a mother to raise. The fathers did not leave because they wanted to leave. They left because there were no legitimate employment opportunities for them.

This is where the drug lords enter the picture. Drug lords are providing employment. The fathers never returned to the home because they knew that in doing so they would probably be putting their families at risk. They continued to work in an environment that was less than safe for them and one that they felt was probably even worse for their families should they return home because their families could be held to ransom.

• (1600)

We have families living without a father. We have mothers trying to raise as many as 10 children. What happened? The mother could not do it. It was just impossible to do. The young boys in the family, many of whom were not even teenagers, left home to form street gangs, and they became a member of a family. That family was the street gang. As members of that street gang, they did whatever they had to do to survive. In doing so, that was when the paramilitaries and the police and whoever else was in authority considered them to be a nuisance and more often than not got rid of them.

We need to be there. We need to do whatever we can to help those children. When I talk about not for profit organizations, they are doing tremendous work in these countries, but we cannot leave it up to the not for profit organizations. It is not fair to do that. They only have limited resources, and there is no way that they can possibly do everything that needs to be done.

Government Orders

All of this is to make the point that entering into economic arrangements is not only good for Canadians but it is good for Colombians. I know that, as a Canadian, I want to do whatever is good in an economic free trade agreement that is going to be good for the people I represent and for the people in our country. We do that by seeking out opportunities around the world. This is one such opportunity.

I know it works. As a previous minister of industry, I led trade missions to different countries. In fact, I could list many companies that have entered into successful business arrangements with companies around the world.

One example is Rutter Technologies in St. John's, Newfoundland, which is doing business in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, South America and North America. By doing that it is providing employment opportunities not only for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador but for people in other countries.

The same will happen in Colombia. There will be those opportunities that will come that will be legitimate opportunities for the men and women of Colombia. We have a part to play. We can help to make a difference in this country and I think we need to do that. I think we have an obligation to do that.

What we have seen happening in Colombia in the last while is a good news story. Last year we saw two-way merchandise trade between Canada and Colombia that amounted to approximately \$1.3 billion. Canada exports \$703 million worth of goods to Colombia in motor vehicles, manufactured goods, wheat and paper, and imports \$644 million worth of goods from Colombia in coffee, bananas, coal, oil, sugar and flowers.

It is a two-way opportunity and there are benefits for both countries. That is what we need to recognize. By doing that, by entering into these kinds of arrangements, we do provide those legitimate working opportunities for Colombians.

What is just as important to me as the free trade agreement itself is the side agreement on labour co-operation. There is also one on the environment. This side agreement with an economic arrangement cannot be overlooked. As with Canada's free trade agreements with Chile, Costa Rica and NAFTA, the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement includes side agreements on labour co-operation and the environment.

The Canada-Colombia labour co-operation agreement recognizes that both countries have obligations under the 1998 international labour organization declaration and fundamental principles and rights at work, which requires each country to ensure that its domestic laws, regulations and practices protect the following rights: the right to freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the abolition of child labour, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour, and the elimination of discrimination.

This is an incredible, important part of this particular free trade agreement.

• (1605)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to briefly

commend my hon. colleague for her very articulate remarks. I had not heard her speak before in the House. I think we could all benefit from her more active participation in future debates. Her intervention struck me as balanced and based on personal experience.

Just very briefly, I think members of all parties say that we need to expand our trade markets so that we are less reliant on the United States. We certainly hear that from our friends in the New Democratic Party. However, at the same time, we often hear from those voices advocating an expansion in trade, opposition to particular trade agreements.

I wonder if she would care to reflect on the fact that there does appear to be a consensus that we need to expand our trade markets so there is less reliance on the United States, but in order to do so, we actually need to establish better trade arrangements with particular nations, such as Colombia.

Ms. Judy Foote: Madam Speaker, if we are going to play the role that we should play as a country in this world, and we are talking about a global marketplace here. If we are going to make a difference, if we are going to be the country that we are known as, a country that cares, then the obligation is on us to reach out to other countries throughout the world, no matter where they are, and work these arrangements so that they are in the best interests of both countries.

I think we can all speak about atrocities that are happening throughout the world. Do we just ignore them or do we take measures that are going to improve the situation and put an end to them? I think that is our obligation. There are wonderful opportunities throughout this country, working in a global marketplace, to see a benefit for all involved.

• (1610)

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened as the member talked about Colombia, and I have a brief question for her.

Does she believe that that country's labour laws are up to International Labour Organization standards?

[English]

Ms. Judy Foote: Madam Speaker, we have seen great strides made in Colombia in the last while. If we look at the last 10 years particularly, we have seen significant strides made. The leadership in Colombia is working very hard to make a difference. It is working very hard to change the actions of the past. I think we have to recognize that. It will not happen overnight. However, with input from countries like Canada, leading by example, we will see the kind of Colombia and the kind of working environment in place that the people of that country are entitled to.

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Madam Speaker, does my Liberal colleague believe that having a free trade agreement will increase exports?

She has already given bananas and flowers as examples. Flowers have killed just about the entire market for flowers grown in Ontario and Quebec greenhouses. Tariffs are already so low that I do not see how trade could increase.

Government Orders

I have the feeling my colleague did not realize that what this agreement primarily does is make it easier for Canadians to invest in the mining sector.

Why did my colleague not talk about that and tell us what the agreement is really all about?

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Foote: Madam Speaker, to just identify flowers as one commodity being traded is really doing an injustice. We should look at the many other examples of things that are being traded, whether it is coal, flowers or bananas. We have to look at the total number of products that are being traded and then work from there. Obviously, we have to start somewhere. We are making great strides. Both countries are benefiting from what we have in place now. So, let us make more opportunities for both countries and I think we will see a difference.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was hoping the member for Kings—Hants would stick around and listen because some of his remarks stirred me today. It motivated me to ask for a speaking opportunity in the context of this debate about the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

I am a socialist and a trade unionist and as such, if I lived in Colombia I would probably be dead today. I would not be alive at all. I would have been whacked by paramilitary hit squads associated with the ruling party, the government of the day.

I used to do my job in an aggressive way to elevate the standards of wages and working conditions of the people that I represented. What happens to people in Colombia who have reputations for trying to interfere with the absolute rule of the corporate structure is that they get killed.

Trade with Canada is not a right. Trade with Canada should be a privilege granted to those who are worthy of such an esteemed position in the international trading community. If it is one of our goals to elevate the standards of wages and living conditions for workers around the world, that is a laudable notion, but in this we are putting the cart before the horse, because once the Uribe government gets this free trade gift signed, the incentive to improve the well-documented human rights abuses will be gone. They will have vanished because there goes the only lever to try to elevate its performance on the international world stage.

I have very little time to make this case but a dear friend of mine, the former head of the Manitoba Federation of Labour who became the secretary treasurer of the Canadian Labour Congress, Brother Dick Martin, the head of the Steelworkers Union local 6166 in Thompson, became the head of ORIT, which is the labour central organization under the Organization of American States representing members of the OAS. Canada is a member of the Organization of American States, as is Colombia, Peru and much of Central and South America.

Dick Martin spent a lot of time in Colombia and, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, came back to report horrific assassinations of people he knew and worked with. People he would be meeting with one day would be killed in their driveway or home that night for having the temerity to speak out for fair wages and working

conditions for the people they represented. It was the wholesale slaughter of trade unionists and it continues to this day.

The reason I raise this is that we are not talking about something that happened in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a result of the drug war or the power struggle that was going on in that country. We are talking about a report from the International Center for Trade Union Rights, Colombia Bulletin, January to September 2009. In that period between February and June, 27 trade unionists were assassinated in Colombia.

Acts of violence against trade unions were continued at an alarming rate. I have dozens of examples. On June 9, Pablo Rodriguez Garavito, a teacher and member of the teachers union, was assassinated by unknown gunmen in his classroom in the town of Puerto Rondon. It was in his classroom in front of his students because he was a trade union activist.

Colombia is a country that is unworthy of trade with Canada because once this agreement is signed it will dine out on the fact that its country is okay because a nice country like Canada saw fit to join with it.

My question would be: Why Colombia? It is not even the biggest trading partner of that region. It is the fifth largest trading partner with Canada in that particular area of South America. However, there is this compulsion to rush into this free trade agreement without consultation and without adequate thought going into it to maximize any benefit that we could gain from it.

I want to quote the chairman of the House trade working group in the United States, Chairman Mike Michaud from the state of Maine. He said:

If [I] had been born in Colombia, [I] would be dead. That's right. As members of our respective labor unions, the fight for higher wages, better working conditions, and a secure pension could have cost [me my life].

That is an American congressman, the chair of a House trade working group.

● (1615)

What about Colombian senator, Jorge Robledo, who said, "You can be sure of the fact that should this free trade agreement be ratified, Canada will become extremely unpopular and disliked by the people of Colombia". This is a Colombian politician sounding the alarm that this agreement does not have any kind of unanimous support among the people of Colombia and certainly is unworthy of the support of the House.

I want to take a moment to recognize and pay tribute to the diligent work of my colleague, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, who has been working with a large group of civil society in Canada, trade unions, lawyers, environmental groups, parliamentarians and members of the Colombian congress. My colleague has been in contact and has met with members of the Colombian congress who are opposed to this agreement and concerned citizens all around the world to raise awareness and to stop this agreement. I do not think anyone has worked as hard to sound the alarm that this agreement is unworthy of our support and it should not be ratified by the House of Commons. The bill should not pass.

Government Orders

I also want to challenge some of the claims made by my colleague from Kings—Hants who, as I said, I was hoping would stay and listen to the remarks I have to make because I do not know where he gets his information from. I know he travelled to Colombia and met with people who support this agreement but he claimed that he met with a significant number of trade union groups which supported it. I have a declaration here signed by the general secretary of the General Labour Confederation, which would be Colombia's equivalent of our Canadian Labour Congress; the president of the Confederation of Colombian Workers, another trade union central umbrella organization; and the president of the Unified Central of Labour Unions, the CUT. It is too long to read, but I will perhaps read the last paragraph. These three leading trade union leaders, who represent the bulk of the unionized workers in that country, say:

That under these conditions...

Which they cited in great detail,

...the Colombian labour movement invites the Canadian society as a whole, and its Parliament, to demonstrate its solidarity with the Colombian people in mobilizing against and abstaining from signing...[the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement]...

... like those signed with the U.S., the European Free trade Association (EFTA) and the one it intends to sign with the European Union, because these will only aggravate the already difficult situation of a country that does not deserve the situation it is currently facing.

They make a compelling argument that by engaging in this free trade agreement we will be compounding the problems that they face and we will be making it that much more difficult for the working people in that country to elevate the standard of wages and working conditions under which they toil, and that human rights, as such, will continue to be violated on a monumental scale in the state of Colombia without the global pressure that would come from our holding back on this liberalized trade agreement.

Time does not permit going through many of the details here, but the United Kingdom recently ended military aid to Colombia because of the systematic crimes committed against the Colombian people by the Colombian military. The connection has been made that the Colombian government of President Uribe has been accused by international human rights organizations of corruption, electoral fraud, complicity in extrajudicial killings by the army, links to paramilitary and right-wing death squads and using its security forces to spy on the supreme court, opposition politicians and journalists. In fact, many government members, including ministers and members of Uribe's own family, have been forced to resign or have been arrested.

The Colombian government is a corrupt regime unworthy of a free trade agreement with Canada. We should be far more particular with which country we trade. It should be a reward. It should be a recognition that we have stipulated ourselves to certain guidelines that are befitting of democracies in the 21st century such as adherence to human rights, labour rights and environmental conditions within these free trade agreements, not as some auxiliary side agreement that has no enforcement mechanism.

● (1620)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Madam Speaker, I respect the member's passion, but I have one factual question for him I wonder if he could try to answer to the best of his ability. Is he aware of any free trade

agreement that the New Democratic Party has ever supported, because I have been here for 13 years and I cannot recall one?

Mr. Pat Martin: The people I hang with are for fair trade, Madam Speaker.

My colleague may remember the points that we made when the FTA was signed, when NAFTA was signed and when SPP was being promoted. We have always argued that trade agreements should contain clauses that stipulate both parties to standards of human rights, labour rights and environmental standards, otherwise we engage in this race to the bottom, as it were, and it is not a fair trade agreement at all. Free trade does not necessarily raise all boats, as the zealots would have us believe. In fact, the opposite is often true.

● (1625)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome the member's input into this matter. He always does it with passion.

In the briefing notes I was looking at, there is presumption that a rules based trade system will somehow address the problems of the drug trade in Colombia. I can only assume that the drug business out of Colombia is probably one of the most profitable ventures with certainly lots of support and interest of various nefarious types of people.

I am wondering if the member has any response to those who suggest that a trade deal with Colombia at this time would have any meaningful impact on the drug trade in Colombia.

Mr. Pat Martin: Madam Speaker, I think my colleague is sincere and genuinely interested in how we might help that country with the social problems it has and the criminal economy that seems to override any domestic economy from legitimate means.

Trade with other countries has often changed, I suppose, the patterns of both of the trading partners. In this case, however, we have no reason to believe that improved economic opportunities through trade with Canada will do anything to replace the illegal drug based economy that exists.

What we do know is that the current regime is linked to and connected to some very unsavoury activities. I wanted to use my time to pay tribute to some of my brothers and sisters in the labour movement who are being whacked in the streets for having the temerity to stand up for fair wages and working conditions in that country.

On April 18 of this year, the leader of a prison officers' union was assassinated as were nine members of his union. He was the ninth member of this particular union to be killed.

The teachers union seems to be targeted quite often. Dorado Cardona, a member of the Association of Teachers, received death threats saying that he has been considered a military target and will be killed. He has not yet been killed but he has received these threats.

Because people speak out for workers' rights, it makes them a target of the paramilitary. Do we really want to enter into any kind of free trade agreement with a country with that kind of record? I certainly do not.

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[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi has only one minute for a very brief question.

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be brief.

I would first like to congratulate my colleague. I do not often agree with him, but his position on unions is excellent. Very briefly, in 30 seconds, could he tell us why there will be no progress in Colombia as far as unions are concerned, once this agreement has been signed?

[English]

Mr. Pat Martin: Madam Speaker, first, the elimination of trade union activists and leadership is paving the way. It is laying the foundation for the implementation of this new liberalized trade regime. It was a necessary prerequisite to whack 2,700 trade union leaders. Can members imagine what would happen if the leaders of the teachers union, the carpenters union and the steelworkers union were all assassinated in their home communities? There goes the leadership and the backbone of the trade union movement in that country, leaving the workers vulnerable to whatever trade regime is imposed on them by this new international agreement. It is an atrocity. It is a travesty—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the Bloc Québécois to speak to Bill C-23, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia .

First of all, I must say that our party, the Bloc Québécois, is not in favour of this bill. The main reason that the Canadian government wants to sign this free trade agreement has nothing to do with trade and everything to do with investments. This agreement contains a chapter on investment protection, making it easier for Canadians to invest in Colombia, particularly in mining. This is important to note, because we are in the middle of an economic crisis brought on by the investments made by our bankers. That is the reality.

The Conservative government let the major Canadian banks invest in certain areas, and Quebeckers and Canadians lost huge amounts of money as a result. In fact, every three months, dividends were being paid to shareholders without regard for the quality of the investments made.

It is the same thing with this Canada-Colombia free trade agreement. In order to ensure a return on the investments of Canadian mining companies, who want to pay dividends to their shareholders every three months at all costs, these companies are being given free reign to invest in Colombia with no regard for such things as human rights and environmental protection legislation.

This is why the Bloc Québécois is opposed to the bill. I must say that the Bloc Québécois, and our sister party, the Parti Québécois, have always been big proponents of both economic and commercial free trade. We were in favour of free trade, but agreements had to respect the laws and the quality of life of the people of all communities that are a party to the free trade agreement.

That was the case with the United States, and that was the case with Mexico and the United States under NAFTA. However, in this free trade agreement, the Conservative Party listened to the mining lobby without ever listening to Quebeckers. When it comes to doing business with foreign countries, Quebeckers want above all for human rights and quality of life to be respected and protected under international environmental laws. This free trade agreement does not guarantee in any way the respect of human rights and rights related to respecting the environment.

Judging by all the investment protection agreements Canada has signed over the years, the one that would bind Canada and Colombia would be ill conceived. All these agreements contain clauses that enable foreign investors to sue the local government if it takes measures that reduce the return on their investment. Such clauses are especially dangerous in a country where labour and environmental protection laws are uncertain at best.

By protecting a Canadian investor against any improvement in living conditions in Colombia, such an agreement could delay social and environmental progress in this country, where the need for progress is great. If these Canadian companies push the limit because they want to make profits above all else, and if they do not respect human rights and international environmental laws, they could commit irreparable acts causing international relations problems with respect to offences under international law, in turn resulting in bad publicity. The reputation of all Quebeckers and Canadians would be tarnished.

We have to prevent that from happening. That is our purpose in this House. That is why we were elected: to protect our laws, our territories, our quality of life and the quality of life of those we do business with. If we want to leave our children and our grandchildren with a good quality of life, we have to start by setting an example in our business relations with those with whom we sign free trade agreements.

This agreement is all about investments. It is designed to enable companies to make money at the expense of environmental laws and laws that protect human rights and the quality of human life.

● (1630)

Colombia's human rights record is one of the worst in the world and certainly in Latin America. In order to promote human rights in the world, governments generally use the carrot and the stick. They support efforts to improve respect for human rights and reserve the right to withdraw benefits should the situation worsen. With this free trade agreement, Canada would forego any ability to bring pressure to bear. In fact, not only would it give up the possibility of using the carrot and stick approach, but it would be surrendering all power to the Colombian government.

Government Orders

The government keeps saying that this agreement would come with a side agreement on labour and another one on the environment. The fact of the matter is that such agreements are notoriously ineffective. They are not part of the free trade agreement, which means that investors could destroy with impunity Colombia's rich natural environment, displace populations to facilitate mine development or continue murdering unionists.

That goes against Quebecers' values. We not only defend the interests of Quebecers in this House, but we represent their values, one of which is respect for human rights. That applies to everyone we do business with.

The Conservative government, supported by the Liberals—because we can see they want to give their support—wants to give companies the capacity to invest. I will come back to my initial analogy. The government did the same thing with the banks, giving them the flexibility to make huge profits and pay quarterly dividends. But none of the big banks predicted the latest crisis. These people were being paid big bucks to speak to chambers of commerce and travel all over the place. They were invited everywhere. They told us that everything was just fine, but like sheep, they were caught making bad investments, and most Quebecers and Canadians lost pension money as a result. That is what happens when the government gives companies leeway, as it is doing in this case with the mining sector or as it did with the banks, without restricting what they can do.

The Conservatives are hesitating yet again. There is an international movement to prevent bankers from collecting astronomical bonuses, but Canada is not following suit. Once again the government is prepared to trust the very people who are laughing at us behind our backs. That is what happened. They had a good laugh at our expense. That is the truth. I do not want us to sign a free trade agreement that will give mining company presidents an opportunity to line their pockets at our expense or at the planet's just because they can unapologetically take advantage of the Government of Canada's support. They can invest in Colombia without complying with international environmental laws and human rights.

That is the truth. We must be their conscience because making money at any price is the order of the day for big-time investors, just like it is for top banking executives. Their only goal is to ensure a payout for their shareholders every three months. That is how banking executives get their year-end bonuses, regardless of what might happen to people or, in the case of this free trade agreement, to Colombians.

It should come as no surprise that the Bloc Québécois will not support an agreement that strips the government of its ability to pressure the Colombian government, which is not exactly an exemplary government. I will not repeat the examples given by other members of the House, examples to do with the assassination of union organizers and anyone else who might oppose the regime. We know that the Colombian government is corrupt to the core. Is there any reason to sign an agreement with these people other than to enable Canadian investors to collect a profit every three months?

• (1635)

We have to act as their conscience. We have to act as the conscience for mining company presidents. We have to tell them that

this time, they will not be allowed to go too far. That is what we plan to do.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am not at all surprised that the Bloc members support the NDP on this issue, and we support them.

What surprises me is the position of the Liberals, particularly the member for Mississauga South who the other day sounded like he was on our side on the issue. Today, we heard the speech of the member for Kings—Hants in which he said that Colombia's human rights record was improving. Another Liberal member said this afternoon that she was unaware of any trade unionists being killed. She said that she would not support the bill if she had this information.

The information is out there. In fact, 2,690 trade unionists have been murdered in Colombia since 1986. In 2008 the number of murders was up by 18% over the previous year. This year alone there have been 29 murders, with six or seven of them in the last thirty days.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I have been talking about the banks and this is an opportunity to give an illustration. When I was first elected to this House in 2000, the first lobbyists I had to deal with were bank lobbyists, for the banks wanted to merge. That was their M.O. The Liberals were in power at the time.

I met with them and asked them why. I told them they were already making profits that were growing tremendously every quarter, and I asked them why they wanted to merge. They said it was because they wanted to buy other banks, for example, American banks. We voted against the whole bank merger idea. We saved those banks. They would be bankrupt today.

We must do the same thing with mining companies. We must act as the conscience of these business owners, who want nothing more than to pay dividends every quarter, regardless of whether or not they are respecting international environmental standards and human rights. That is not important to them. What they want is to earn profits every quarter. So we must be their conscience, and together, we must say no. We must vote against this bill. By doing so, we will send them the simple message that they cannot go to Colombia just to make a profit, without obeying the law.

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague from Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel on his very sensible, rational speech concerning our position.

However, I wonder if he might clarify something, because I heard the Conservative government say to the NDP earlier that that party is always against these agreements. We in the Bloc Québécois—I think this is the case, and I would like my colleague to confirm—are not systematically against free trade. We are against free trade when there is an imbalance, and when we cannot imagine that this kind of free trade will improve the situation, especially for workers, in a country like Colombia.

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He is a hard worker. He is a passionate young man who likes to take part in every debate. I would be pleased to answer his question.

We belong to the sovereigntist family. The Parti Québécois was in power in Quebec when the Conservatives signed the free trade agreement with the United States. The Parti Québécois supported that agreement. We are in favour of free trade agreements with countries that respect human rights, such as the U.S. This also applies to NAFTA. We were in favour of the NAFTA agreement with Mexico although we worked hard to strike a balance with respect to human rights in that country.

Yes, we are open to the world. The image that Quebec has always wanted to project is one of being open to the world in terms of respect for human rights, the rights of individuals and for the environment. This will always be a guiding principle for us.

In this case, we are about to give rights to private corporations and mining companies that, in the past, showed themselves to be incapable of respecting these rights because all they were interested in was turning a profit at the end of each quarter. We cannot accept this. We must be their conscience. I am pleased to be part of a political party that serves as their conscience in this House.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform that House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, Arts and Culture; the hon. member for Windsor West, Foreign Investment.

• (1645)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House to bring forward my contributions to the debate on the Colombia free trade proposal in Bill C-23.

I want to take us to a point where we can talk about Canada's place in the world. As the foreign affairs critic and looking at where our country is in this multipolar world, I would like to take some time to situate Canada's role as not only a major economic player, but one that should take its role responsibly and view the effects on other jurisdictions when we enter into agreements such as the proposal in front of us.

I point to recent news from other places in Latin America. People living in some of the areas with extractive industries have paid a very heavy price because of Canadian companies operating without proper rules of engagement or proper oversight. Canadians want us to be a little more responsible as legislators in our oversight of the economic activities of our businesses abroad.

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I also point to the most recent news out of Honduras. Sadly, we have seen the coup d'état there. The military is reasserting itself, replacing what many would see as a democracy that had been tenuous for sure, but had existed, with an elected office of the president. Right now Canadian companies are operating and making money there. At the same time, a horrific political situation is suppressing human rights. People are being abused and are disappearing.

I had some experience in Latin America and Central America in 1986. It was a time when death squads were running rampant. On one hand, companies were engaged in operations that were turning their backs on what was happening with the political situation. A convenient contract was going on between those who were responsible for political repression and those who were responsible for profit-taking.

I do not think Canadians want to see us go into these kinds of arrangements without doing due diligence. We see what is happening in Honduras today. Canadian companies are active there. We see the effects on the population of some of the economic activity. In a sense that gives what now is a coup d'état by the military a legitimacy. Canadians want to ensure that Canada's name is not being lent to that kind of anti-democratic action.

When we look at Colombia, the same applies. We do not want to see our Parliament give its approval to a trade agreement with a government that has if not directly implicated, been complicit with some very egregious human rights abuses.

Before I was elected to the House, I was a teacher. I read of the horrific situation and the human rights abuses of teachers in Colombia. I could not believe the testimonies when I first read about this issue. It was surreal. There were stories of teachers who were taken out by death squads, much like what happened in Central America in the eighties, which I witnessed when I was there. They would disappear, sometimes found miles down the road, sometimes not at all. It was not until I met a delegation of teachers from Colombia in Ottawa that it really came to light that this was happening to real people, real teachers.

• (1650)

It was chilling. These teachers were not always targeted because they were members of the teachers union. Sometimes it was simply because they had spoken out against the government. At other times, it was simply their association with the teachers union. We have a responsibility as a country to ensure that, when we sign on to deals, we are not just somewhat certain but absolutely certain that the government we trade with is not complicit or ignoring human rights. That has to be a guarantee.

Government Orders

This has been mentioned many times, but I have to repeat it for people who are in the business of teaching children and education. To think that people are a target just because they speak out or are affiliated with a trade union or a teachers union does not rest well or easy with anyone. In this agreement, there are “side agreements”. When we have side agreements, that means they are not embedded. That means they are afterthoughts. We will have our truck and trade of goods and we will take a look at human, labour and environmental rights on the side.

If we look at other trade arrangements and co-operative economies like those in Europe, they are embedded in the trade agreement. They are embedded in the economic agreements that countries have between them. It is chilling in the sense that, for those of us who believe there has to be absolute certainty that human rights abuses will not be permitted and that there will not be a culture of impunity with the government with which we trade, we need to have these things embedded.

We do not have voluntary human rights in this country. It is not called the “voluntary charter of rights”. It is in our Constitution. It is something that is a guarantee. It is inconsistent and inconceivable that we would enter into a trade agreement with a country like Colombia with side agreements. That is really important.

For my friends in the Liberal Party, when we repatriated the Constitution, could anyone imagine that we would have said that we would have a side agreement on our Charter of Rights and Freedoms? People would have been out on the streets. In fact, people were out on the streets because aboriginal peoples and women were not originally included in our Constitution. People fought hard and it was repatriated with them in it. The same standard has to apply when we are trading with other countries and that includes Colombia.

I could give a very long list of the people who have lost their lives, not because they are part of a militia or a part of the insurgency, but because they were people who stood up to the government. They were human rights advocates, members of unions and people who said that they believed the government was not doing the right thing in environmental and labour standards. These are people who lost their lives.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I say to the government, my colleagues in the opposition parties and specifically the Liberal Party, we cannot have substandard agreements. We cannot have a good conscience and say that we have done our best. In fact, it means that we are taking second best. When it comes to this place and our responsibility, second best does not rank. We must do better. That is why we oppose this agreement.

• (1655)

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague and I think it affects all of us. One of the problems with Colombia driving the FARC, the ELN and the paramilitaries is the fact that they get a lot of their moneys from drugs, primarily from cocaine and, to a lesser extent, heroin.

Would part of the solution be countries like ours getting their own house in order in terms of reducing the demand for these drugs? If there was not any demand, there would not be any supply. One of the

great failures we have from the federal government's perspective is this. It is not willing to deal with the facts and adopt programs like NAOMI, which is the North American opiate medication initiative, and enable communities across our country to adopt those initiatives that would allow people to get away from consuming these drugs. This would reduce demand, enable people to get back to their lives, reduce harm, reduce incarceration and reduce costs. Is that not part of the solution in dealing with the problems in Colombia?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member from B.C. on his idea of harm reduction. It is something we should pursue and take away the oxygen to many of the militias. This is why it is so important that we focus on that and not put our stamp of approval on a government that clearly is out of bounds when it comes to human rights. Yes, I would applaud that, and we should pursue it. However, for heaven's sake, let us not get involved with the kind of government that is overseeing some of these abuses and is involved in this kind of corruption. That is the wrong way to go.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Ottawa Centre for his presentation in which he talked about teachers. We are all touched by his remarks. We are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that certain political parties in this House are siding with investors whereas other parties are supporting workers, teachers, ordinary people, miners and so forth.

I would like my colleague from Ottawa Centre to explain why they are supporting just the investors.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Dewar: Madam Speaker, my colleague's question is at the core of what we are talking about.

Why do we have a government that does not want to sign on to corporate social responsibility in a real way? Why do we want to rush into a trade agreement with a country that has not put its house in order when it comes to human rights and environmental oversight?

What I think is at play is we have a government that is so enthusiastic about looking like it is expanding trade at any cost that it has forgotten about the core values of most Canadians. When we go abroad and we make deals with people, we have to ensure we check the whole package. In this case, it is only about the bottom line.

At the end of the day, it is just not worth it to trade with regimes that do not have their human rights or environmental houses in order. It is not worth it. The government needs to examine that a lot more carefully and the Liberal Party needs to do that as well. Trade at any price is not worth it.

Government Orders

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was intrigued by the member for Ottawa Centre. I am sure he was a very good teacher and a passionate one.

He reminded me when I was practising law many years. As a member of the Canadian Bar Association, we received a letter from a member of the judiciary of Colombia saying they needed interaction with Canadian lawyers and with judges because they were under threat all the time. They pleaded for us to take an interest and for more interaction, which would be facilitated by the type of agreement we are debating today.

Would the member respond to that?

• (1700)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Madam Speaker, there is a way to engage without having to make things worse and this trade agreement makes things worse.

Through the Organization of American States, we could intervene. We could work with those who trying to bring democracy and fairness to civil society in Colombia, which is actually going on now. That is the route to go.

Until we see enough change, we should not be involved in this trade deal, and I think most Colombians—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate, the hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Madam Speaker, with regard to this agreement, we have talked about labour rights and I want to underline the fact that Colombia is one of the most dangerous countries on earth for trade unionists. We have had examples given by my hon. colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, and others who are saying that these folks are regularly victims of violence, intimidation and assassination.

This agreement does not have any kind of tough labour laws or labour standards. By putting these labour provisions in a side agreement, outside of the main text and without any enforcement mechanism, will not encourage Colombia to improve its horrendous human rights situation for workers and will actually justify the use of violence.

That is something that we have talked about here and I believe warrants more thought and consideration.

This agreement also does not really address the environment issue. It is addressed in a side agreement with no enforcement mechanism to force Canada or Colombia to respect environmental rights.

Then we come to another point that we have not really talked about a lot and that is the investor chapter. This is copied from NAFTA's chapter 11 which provides powerful rights to private companies to sue governments, enforceable through investor state arbitration panels.

I find this particularly worrying because of our many Canadian multinational oil and mining companies operating in Colombia. The arbitration system set up by chapter 11 gives foreign companies the ability to challenge legitimate Canadian environmental labour and

social laws here in Canada. It will give the same opportunity to foreign companies in Colombia. I think this is absurd.

If we look at chapter 11 and what has happened in Canada as a result of this clause, we see that for example in early April American chemical company Dow sued the federal government for \$2 million in damages it claimed it would suffer from Quebec's cosmetic pesticide law. This is absurd, a foreign company suing a Canadian government that wants to protect its citizens.

We have seen that our tax dollars have been used by the Canadian government to pay Ethyl Corporation, \$13 million to be exact, for an out of court settlement following a challenge filed on April 14, 1997, to Canada's ban on the import and interprovincial trade of gasoline additive MMT, a suspected neurotoxin.

The list goes on and on. Our government has been challenged by chapter 11 of NAFTA and now we want to transport this clause to Colombia so that other multinationals including ours can challenge their laws. For this reason alone, we should not be signing this agreement.

We look at agriculture tariffs. We look at Colombia's poverty. We know that in Colombia 22% of the employment is in agriculture. An end to tariffs for cereals, pork and beef, although favourable to us, the trading partner, will flood the market with cheap products and lead to thousands of lost jobs.

We have seen this in Mexico. We have seen that 30% of the corn in Mexico consumed now is imported from the United States, which is heavily subsidized corn. It has displaced over two million and up to fifteen million, I am not sure of the exact count, farmers from the land who have not been able to compete with produce coming in from out of the country.

Personally, I do not think that Canadians would want to see their farmers being displaced because of goods coming into our country. Surely there must be a way to have fair trade in these commodities between our countries and not trade which displaces farmers off the land.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

I would like to talk about the fact that in any trade agreement, it is essential for fair trade to ensure full respect of human rights. The Canada-Colombia agreement is fundamentally flawed. It only tentatively addresses the issue, and does nothing to improve the serious problem with human rights in Colombia.

Government Orders

By ratifying the trade agreement with Colombia, Canada would be condoning a dangerous regime that is involved in acts of violence and murder against its own citizens. We heard a number of examples in our discussions today. The “kill a trade unionist, pay a fine” provision is ridiculous. It is particularly offensive. Under this provision, when a trade unionist is killed in Colombia, the government would simply have to pay into a development fund, up to a maximum of \$15 million per year. That is unacceptable.

The Canada-Colombia agreement is essentially a reproduction of the outdated trade approach taken by former President George Bush. In the United States, Congress put a hold on the U.S.-Colombia free trade agreement last year, and President Barack Obama has said he will not pursue the agreement because of the human rights abuses. If our neighbour to the south had second thoughts about this agreement, the least we could do is carefully examine the agreement before us today and not blindly accept it.

In 2008, the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade recommended that we not sign any agreements with Colombia until they have improved their human rights record. It also recommended that we conduct a human rights impact assessment to determine the real repercussions of a trade agreement. The government completely disregarded this report. This is another example of how the government does not listen to its own committees, in this case, the Standing Committee on International Trade.

Members in this House have said that they will support this bill. The Standing Committee on International Trade published a report in June 2006 recommending that Canada not sign and implement a free trade agreement with Colombia before conducting an independent, impartial, and comprehensive human rights impact assessment. That was recommendation No. 4.

I would also like to applaud and thank my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster for the work he has done to raise awareness of the facts we are talking about today and for the work he has done with parliamentarians from other countries to show that this is not really a free trade agreement. This is an agreement for huge multinational corporations that want to enjoy the same benefits in Colombia as they do here in Canada, corporations that were not protected with all of the free trade agreements like NAFTA or the agreement that may now be finalized, the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America.

Some may not agree with what is happening here. For instance, some may think that NAFTA has not helped Canadian agricultural producers. Twenty years ago, beef producers earned twice as much as they do now. That was just before we signed the free trade agreement with the United States. We are always being told that markets have to be opened up. The market for beef has tripled in size, and we are now exporting three times as much beef as we were 20 years ago, yet producers are earning half as much as they were then.

● (1710)

That is one outcome of the so-called free trade agreement we signed. The same thing happened to cherry producers this summer. They had the best harvest ever, but they lost money because we imported U.S. cherries thanks to the so-called free trade agreement

with the United States. That is why we have to be so careful and really think about what is being proposed.

[*English*]

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to the member's comments. He talked about standards and that there are not enough tough standards in this agreement. Of course, we know that if the NDP had its way, there would be no trade agreements, period.

I have an article from a newspaper that I want to quote. It says, “The pact”, referring specifically to this trade agreement, “is broadly modelled on others Canada has signed with the United States, Mexico, Israel, Chile and Costa Rica—”, and it goes on.

The member spoke about President Obama. I would like to quote again from the paper. It states, “Now U.S. President Barack Obama's trade czar Ron Kirk is seeking a way forward”.

I chaired a committee not too long ago, before the recess, at which President Uribe appeared. He reached out to us and said, “We need help”.

I want to ask the member, are we going to help this country by staying away and ignoring it or are we prepared to go there and show it how we do things here in Canada?

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Madam Speaker, with regard to trade, I would ask him to look at our last year's agricultural policy and our statement on food sovereignty, for example, which stated that we believe in trade, but we also believe in self-sufficiency and the fact that we should not be hurting the small farmer. In this case, we are looking at the farmer in Colombia. We are looking at fair trade as opposed to free trade.

While we are talking about trade, I would like to ask the member why he and his party did not support our amendment, which basically kills our shipbuilding industry, when we signed on to that so-called free trade agreement with the European countries, of which Norway was a part.

The NDP put forward an amendment that could have protected our shipbuilding industry, so that at least people could keep working in Halifax, Quebec and Vancouver. Because Canada signed that agreement, in the name of free trade and more trade, in 15 years our shipbuilding industry will be gone because he and his party supported the Conservative Party and the other opposition party in signing that agreement.

I would like him to reflect on that.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to my colleague from British Columbia Southern Interior.

I had the opportunity to visit his riding where I learned of his humble nature and his work with farmers. I have heard a lot of good things about my colleague. He talked about farmers today and in fact, when I look at this particular trade agreement with Colombia, it is my understanding that this free trade will help farmers.

Government Orders

My question to the member is this. How would it positively impact small farmers, not the multi-millionaires, either in Saskatchewan or—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. The hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Madam Speaker, I certainly enjoy speaking with my hon. colleague on various issues. I know he works hard. He certainly has many friends in my riding and we talk about the issues concerning farmers.

Any time we can open up markets, it is obviously good for farmers who export. We have organizations fighting on behalf of our farmers. There is the dynamic Canadian Wheat Board which supports trade and exporting more grain would see more markets open up. That is what these organizations should be doing and they are doing that. They are working hard on behalf of farmers.

It is up to us here in this building to look at the overall picture and ensure that if we happen to open up a few more markets for our farmers, it does not kill markets for other farmers in the world.

I gave the example of Mexico. It is a ludicrous situation. A country that was self-sufficient on corn production now has farmers displaced off the land, many of whom are involved in the drug trade and are now illegal farm workers working on farms in the United States because we have signed these ridiculous free trade agreements. That is what I do not want to see happen to Colombian farmers and that is what our farmers certainly do not—

• (1715)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Halifax.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased today to rise and add my voice to this debate.

Not long after my election last fall, I was contacted by some constituents who are with KAIROS. KAIROS works on Canadian ecumenical justice initiatives as part of a dynamic church-based social justice network and social justice movement.

I was very familiar with the community work that KAIROS had been doing, so I was eager to meet them, thinking we would talk about some of their work on ecological justice or human rights and trade, or maybe their work on actions for global justice.

What I did not expect were the guests they would bring to the meeting. I did not know that KAIROS was working on the issue of trade and human rights, specifically measuring the impacts of trade on human rights. They were bringing leaders of Colombian social movements to meet with people in Canada to talk about what was going on in Colombia. These movements represent women, indigenous peoples, workers and faith-based communities.

They were coming to Canada to talk about the human rights impacts they believe will result if Canada actually implements the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement act. The Colombian leaders that KAIROS is working with include German Casama, who is a leader of the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia. They are also bringing Maria del Carmen Sanchez, the national president of the Colombian Health Workers' Union and Yolanda Becerra, national director of the Popular Women's Organization. They were

also bringing Brother Omar Fernandez, director of the Inter Franciscan Commission for Justice, Peace and Reverence for Creation.

All four people are also leaders of the Coalition of Social Movements, which brings together a range of civil society movements and organizations that represent women and indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombian communities, small farmers and churches. This organization, as I understand it, represents almost two million people.

I had the distinct pleasure of meeting with Brother Omar Fernandez in my office in Halifax. During this meeting I heard Brother Omar's first-hand account of human rights violations in his country, how trade and investment would be expanded by this agreement and how that will actually impact on the rights and livelihoods of Colombian communities.

It was chilling to hear his first-hand stories of violence and human rights violations. After our meeting, Brother Omar asked me to write a letter to authorities asking for his protection upon his return to Colombia. That was a sobering letter to write, to say the least.

It is very irresponsible for the government to push an FTA with Colombia. This is a country with the worst human rights record in the western hemisphere, and it is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for trade unionists.

The belief that trade will bring human rights improvements to Colombia is completely contradicted, not just by the facts, but also by the text of the agreement. The full respect of fundamental human rights must be a precondition of any trade agreement. This was made very clear to me after my meeting with Brother Omar.

It is interesting how this issue has captured the attention of Canadians across the country. I have received letters and phone calls and emails about the CCFTA, and they have been unanimous in asking me to stand up against the implementation of this act.

I have been at community meetings about other topics. I was at a community meeting about a school closure when someone slipped me a copy of the Canadian Labour Congress' write-up on Colombia and the free trade act. A couple of weeks ago I was doing a radio call-in show on P.E.I. along with a Liberal member of the House. This Liberal member cited our ability to co-operate and collaborate here in the House. He actually pointed to the Liberal Party's support of the CCFTA as an example of how we can work together in Parliament.

• (1720)

A caller on the phone said, "That is wrong and you really need to reconsider what you are doing, because workers are being shot and killed on the shop room floor". The caller actually asked that this member reconsider his position on the bill.

Government Orders

There are four main aspects to the FTA that are really the most offensive: a failure on human rights or labour rights protection, a failure on environmental protection, the investor chapter, and agricultural tariffs. I will summarize each.

The failure on labour rights protection is of particular interest to me with my law background. Colombia, as I said earlier, is one of the most dangerous places on earth for trade unionists. They are regularly the victims of violence, intimidation and assassination from paramilitary groups that are linked to the Colombian president's government.

The CCFTA does not include tough labour standards. Putting the labour provisions in a side agreement, outside the main text and without any kind of enforcement mechanism, will not encourage Colombia to improve its horrendous human rights situation for workers.

Madam Speaker, 2,690 trade unionists have been murdered in Colombia since 1986. In 2008, the number of murders was up by 18% over the previous year. So far this year, as of September 2009, 27 trade unionists have been murdered. According to the International Labour Organization, over the last 10 years 60% of all trade unionists murdered in the world were murdered in Colombia. This is reason enough not to go through with enacting the legislation, but there is more.

The Colombian government of President Uribe has been accused by international human rights organizations of corruption, electoral fraud, complicity in extra-judicial killings by the army, and links to paramilitary and right-wing death squads. It has also been accused of using its security forces to spy on the supreme court of Colombia, opposing politicians, government politicians and journalists. Many government members, including ministers and members of Uribe's family, have been forced to resign or been arrested.

It is telling to look at our neighbours around the world. One of my colleagues alluded to this earlier. The U.K. recently ended military aid to Colombia because of the systematic crimes committed against the Colombian people. This happened within the context of false positives coming to international attention. This is the practice of the Colombian army that involves the dressing up of murdered civilians as guerrillas to show results. It is this body count of false positives that the government and the Liberals are rewarding with Bill C-23.

We need to be talking about fair trade, and fair trade means fully respecting human rights as a precondition for all trade deals. The Canada-Colombia agreement is fundamentally flawed and does little more than pay lip service to the serious damage it could do to human rights in Colombia.

Another area where this agreement fails is environmental protection. The environment issue was addressed again on the side agreement, and there is no enforcement mechanism to force Canada or Colombia to respect environmental rights. The process is very flawed; it is just a smokescreen.

We have seen in the past that side agreements are unenforceable. For example, there has not been a single successful suit brought under the NAFTA side agreement on labour. Before the House rose this summer, I had the distinct pleasure of hearing my colleague from

Edmonton—Strathcona, an environmental law expert, discuss this aspect of the agreement in great detail.

Another area where there is a flaw with this agreement is the investor chapter. The investor chapter is copied from NAFTA's chapter 11 investor rights. The CCFTA provides powerful rights to private companies to sue governments, enforceable through investor state arbitration panels. We have seen this before. This is particularly worrying because there are many Canadian multinational oil and mining companies operating in Colombia. The arbitration system set up by chapter 11 gives foreign companies the ability to challenge legitimate Canadian environment, labour and social protection. Giving this opportunity to private businesses in Colombia and elsewhere will further erode Canada and Colombia's ability to pass laws and regulations for the public interest.

● (1725)

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am sure that the House appreciates and respects the overview that has been given by the member, in particular from a legal perspective.

The free trade agreement is a bilateral agreement. The argument has been made that side agreements are more than just footnotes to a bilateral agreement; they give the force of international law the opportunity for further enforcement through multilateral organizations. That is not just through the WTO, but when talking about human rights, it is through the United Nations. If there is an abrogation with respect to the bilateral agreement, the side agreements actually provide more opportunity for a more broad and enforceable adjudication through such international organizations.

Would the member like to comment on that? Rather than magnifying the opportunity for enforcement, I think her argument, based on the precedents she cited, is that it rather constricts it. That is not my understanding of international law.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Madam Speaker, international law is a nebulous thing at best, and I go back to the point I made earlier that not one single successful suit has been brought under the side agreement on labour with NAFTA.

If I may take a moment, I want to read something from the International Centre for Trade Union Rights:

28 January: Leovigildo Mejia, a member of farm workers' association of Santander ASOGRAS, was assassinated in Sabana de Torres in the Department of Santander.

12 February: Luis Alberto Arango Crespo, president of the fishing and farm workers' association of Barrancabermeja, was assassinated in Barrancabermeja in the Department of Santander.

15 February: Guillermo Antonio Ramirez, a member of a local teachers' union of Belen de Umbria, was assassinated in Belen de Umbria, in the Department of Risaralda.

18 February: The secretary of the Valle del Cauca region of the CUT federation received an anonymous phone call in which threats were made against local CUT leaders Álvaro Vega and Wilson Sáenz.

20 February: Leoncio Gutierrez, a member of the teachers' union of Valle del Cauca, SUTEV, was assassinated in El Toro, in the Department of Cauca.

This speaks for itself.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I certainly thought I heard the last two speakers on this side reaching out to the Liberal Party. The party, under John Turner, was opposed to the free trade agreement with the United States, and it is now supporting a free trade agreement with Colombia, which is a country with a terrible human rights record.

We had the members for Mississauga South and Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca asking questions that would indicate they have quite a lack of support for this agreement.

We had the member for Random—Burin—St. George's saying she is not aware of any trade unionists being killed, and she said she would not support the bill if she had any information to the contrary.

The member for Kings—Hants said that human rights have improved. I would ask him then to explain the improvements when 2,690 trade unionists have been murdered in Colombia since 1986. In 2008, the number of murders was up by 18% over the previous year, and in 2009 alone, 29 trade—

• (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I must give the hon. member for Halifax time to respond. She has about 50 seconds.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Elmwood—Transcona for his question, and frankly, I could not have said it better myself.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

SECURE, ADEQUATE, ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT

The House resumed from September 17, consideration of the motion that Bill C-304, An Act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): 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-304, under private members' business.

Call in the members.

• (1800)

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

(Division No. 106)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Andrews
Ashton
Atamanenko
Bagnell
Beaudin
Bellavance
Bigras
Bonsant

André
Angus
Asselin
Bachand
Bains
Bélangier
Bevilacqua
Blais
Bouchard

Bourgeois
Brunelle
Cannis
Charlton
Christopherson
Comartin
Crombie
Cullen
D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers
Desnoyers
Dhaliwal
Dion
Dosanjh
Duceppe
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Faille
Foote
Gagnon
Gaudet
Goodale
Guarnieri
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Hall Findlay
Holland
Hyer
Julian
Karygiannis
Laframboise
Lavallée
LeBlanc
Lemay
Lessard
MacAulay
Malo
Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Ménard
Minna
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau
Oliphant
Paillé
Patry
Plamondon
Proulx
Rafferty
Regan
Rota
Russell
Savoie
Sgro
Silva
Simson
Stoffer
Thibeault
Trudeau
Vincent
Wasylycia-Leis
Wrzesnewskyj

Brison
Byrne
Cardin
Chow
Coady
Cotler
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Dewar
Dhalla
Dorion
Dryden
Dufour
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Eyking
Folco
Freeman
Garneau
Goldring
Gravelle
Guay
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jennings
Kania
Kennedy
Lalonde
Layton
Lee
Leslie
Lévesque
Malhi
Maloway
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
McGuinty
McTeague
Mendes
Mulcair
Murray
Neville
Ouellet
Paquette
Pearson
Pomerleau
Rae
Ratansi
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Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Benoit
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Arthur
Baird
Bernier
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge

Private Members' Business

Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Finley	Flaherty
Fletcher	Gallant
Glover	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mark
Mayer	McColeman
McLeod	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Paradis	Payne
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Raitt	Rathgeber
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young — 137	

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill is 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)

* * *

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from September 29 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.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division at the report stage of Bill C-268. The question is on Motion No. 1.

● (1810)

[Translation]

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 107)

YEAS

Members

André	Asselin
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bigras
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Davies (Vancouver East)	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dorion
Duceppe	Dufour
Faille	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Laframboise	
Lalonde	Lavallée
Lemay	Leslie
Lessard	Lévesque
Malo	Ménard
Nadeau	Ouellet
Paillé	Paquette
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Roy	Siksay
St-Cyr	Vincent — 46

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Andrews	Angus
Arthur	Ashfield
Ashton	Atamanenko
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Bélanger
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannis	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Charlton	Chong
Chow	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Coady	Comartin
Cotler	Crombie
Crowder	Cullen
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Day
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Dreeshen
Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)

Private Members' Business

Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dykstra
 Eyking
 Finley
 Fletcher
 Foote
 Garneau
 Goldring
 Goodyear
 Gravelle
 Guarnieri
 Hall Findlay
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hawn
 Hill
 Hoepfner
 Holland
 Hyer
 Jennings
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Karygiannis
 Kennedy
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Layton
 LeBlanc
 Lemieux
 Lukiwski
 Lunney
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Malhi
 Mark
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
 Mathysen
 McCallum
 McGuinty
 McLeod
 Mendes
 Merrifield
 Minna
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Murphy (Charlottetown)
 Neville
 Norlock
 O'Neill-Gordon
 Oda
 Paradis
 Payne
 Petit
 Prentice
 Proulx
 Rafferty
 Ratansi
 Regan
 Richards
 Rickford
 Rodriguez
 Russell
 Saxton
 Scheer
 Sgro
 Shipley
 Silva
 Simson
 Sorenson
 Stoffer
 Strahl
 Szabo
 Tilson
 Tonks
 Trudeau
 Uppal
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Volpe
 Warawa
 Wasylcia-Leis
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Wilfert
 Woodworth
 Yelich

Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Easter
 Fast
 Flaherty
 Folco
 Gallant
 Glover
 Goodale
 Gourde
 Grewal
 Guergis
 Harper
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hiebert
 Hoback
 Holder
 Hughes
 Jean
 Julian
 Kania
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lauzon
 Lebel
 Lee
 Lobb
 Lunn
 MacAulay
 MacKenzie
 Maloway
 Marston
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Masse
 Mayes
 McColeman
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 McTeague
 Menzies
 Miller
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Mulcair
 Murray
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 Obhrai
 Oliphant
 Patry
 Pearson
 Poilievre
 Preston
 Rae
 Raitt
 Rathgeber
 Reid
 Richardson
 Ritz
 Rota
 Savage
 Scarpaleggia
 Schellenberger
 Shea
 Shory
 Simms
 Smith
 Stanton
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Thibeault
 Toews
 Trost
 Tweed
 Valeriot
 Van Loan
 Verner
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Watson
 Wong
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Young

Zarac — 239

Nil

PAIRED

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I declare the motion lost.

[English]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If you seek it, you will find agreement to apply the votes from the previous motion to the current motion in reverse.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 108)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
 Aglukkaq
 Allen (Welland)
 Allison
 Anders
 Andrews
 Arthur
 Ashton
 Bagnell
 Baird
 Benoit
 Bevilacqua
 Blackburn
 Block
 Boughen
 Breitreuz
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Brown (Barrie)
 Byrne
 Calandra
 Cannis
 Carrie
 Charlton
 Chow
 Clarke
 Coady
 Cotler
 Crowder
 Cummins
 D'Amours
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 Del Mastro
 Dewar
 Dhalla
 Dosanjh
 Dryden
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dykstra
 Eyking
 Finley
 Fletcher
 Foote
 Gameau
 Goldring
 Goodyear
 Gravelle
 Guarnieri
 Hall Findlay
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hawn

Ablonczy
 Albrecht
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Angus
 Ashfield
 Atamanenko
 Bains
 Bélanger
 Bernier
 Bezan
 Blaney
 Boucher
 Braid
 Brison
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Bruinooge
 Cadman
 Calkins
 Cannon (Pontiac)
 Casson
 Chong
 Christopherson
 Clement
 Comartin
 Crombie
 Cullen
 Cuzner
 Davidson
 Day
 Devolin
 Dhaliwal
 Dion
 Dreesen
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Easter
 Fast
 Flaherty
 Folco
 Gallant
 Glover
 Goodale
 Gourde
 Grewal
 Guergis
 Harper
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hiebert

Private Members' Business

Hill	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Holland	Hughes
Hyer	Jean
Jennings	Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kennedy	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Layton	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukivski	Lunn
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Malhi	Maloway
Mark	Marston
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	McTeague
Mendes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mulcair
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Neville	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Ohrai
Oda	Oliphant
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Pearson
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Proulx	Rae
Rafferty	Raitt
Ratansi	Rathgeber
Regan	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shea
Shipleay	Shory
Silva	Simms
Simson	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Stoffer	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Szabo	Thibeault
Tilson	Toews
Tonks	Trost
Trudeau	Tweed
Uppal	Valeriotte
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Volpe	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Wasylcia-Leis	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilfert	Wong
Woodworth	Wrzesnewskyj
Yelich	Young
Zarac — 239	

NAYS

Members

André	Asselin
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bigras
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Davies (Vancouver East)	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps

Desnoyers	Dorion
Duceppe	Dufour
Faille	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Laframboise	
Lalonde	Lavallée
Lemay	Leslie
Lessard	Lévesque
Malo	Ménard
Nadeau	Ouellet
Paillé	Paquette
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Roy	Siksay
St-Cyr	Vincent — 46

PAIRED

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I declare the motion carried.

When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Joy Smith moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think you will find there is agreement to apply the vote from the previous motion to the current motion.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

*(Division No. 109)***YEAS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Andrews	Angus
Arthur	Ashfield
Ashton	Atamanenko
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Bélanger
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannis	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Charlton	Chong
Chow	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Coady	Comartin
Cotler	Crombie
Crowder	Cullen
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Day
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dewar	Dhaliwal

Private Members' Business

Dhalla
 Dosanjh
 Dryden
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dykstra
 Eyking
 Finley
 Fletcher
 Foote
 Garneau
 Goldring
 Goodyear
 Gravelle
 Guarnieri
 Hall Findlay
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hawn
 Hill
 Hoepfner
 Holland
 Hyer
 Jennings
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Karygiannis
 Kennedy
 Kerr
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Layton
 LeBlanc
 Lemieux
 Lukiwski
 Lunney
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Malhi
 Mark
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
 Mathysen
 McCallum
 McGuinty
 McLeod
 Mendes
 Merrifield
 Minna
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Murphy (Charlottetown)
 Neville
 Norlock
 O'Neill-Gordon
 Oda
 Paradis
 Payne
 Petit
 Prentice
 Proulx
 Rafferty
 Ratansi
 Regan
 Richards
 Rickford
 Rodriguez
 Russell
 Saxton
 Scheer
 Sgro
 Shipley
 Silva
 Simson
 Sorenson
 Stoffer
 Strahl
 Szabo
 Tilson
 Tonks
 Trudeau
 Uppal
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Volpe
 Warawa
 Wasylycia-Leis
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)

Dion
 Dreeshen
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Easter
 Fast
 Flaherty
 Folco
 Gallant
 Glover
 Goodale
 Gourde
 Grewal
 Guergis
 Harper
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hiebert
 Hoback
 Holder
 Hughes
 Jean
 Julian
 Kania
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lauzon
 Lebel
 Lee
 Lobb
 Lunn
 MacAulay
 MacKenzie
 Maloway
 Marston
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Masse
 Mayes
 McColeman
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 McTeague
 Menzies
 Miller
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Mulcair
 Murray
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 Obhrai
 Oliphant
 Patry
 Pearson
 Poilievre
 Preston
 Rae
 Raitt
 Rathgeber
 Reid
 Richardson
 Ritz
 Rota
 Savage
 Scarpaleggia
 Schellenberger
 Shea
 Shory
 Simms
 Smith
 Stanton
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Thibeault
 Toews
 Trost
 Tweed
 Valeriotte
 Van Loan
 Verner
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Watson

Wilfert
 Woodworth
 Yelich
 Zarac — 239

Wong
 Wrzesniewski
 Young

NAYS

Members

André
 Bachand
 Bellavance
 Blais
 Bouchard
 Brunelle
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Demers
 Desnoyers
 Duceppe
 Faillie
 Gagnon
 Guay
 Basques)
 Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
 Laframboise
 Lalonde
 Lemay
 Lessard
 Malo
 Nadeau
 Paillé
 Plamondon
 Roy
 St-Cyr

Asselin
 Beaudin
 Bigras
 Bonsant
 Bourgeois
 Cardin
 DeBellefeuille
 Deschamps
 Dorion
 Dufour
 Freeman
 Gaudet
 Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les

Lavallée
 Leslie
 Lévesque
 Ménard
 Ouellet
 Paquette
 Pomerleau
 Siksay
 Vincent — 46

PAIRED

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

● (1815)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): It being 6:15 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business according to the order indicated in today's order paper.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I would like to withdraw some intemperate remarks that were made on another point of order this afternoon after question period when I referred to some remarks made by the Minister of the Environment as having deliberately misled the House. I apologize to the House for making those remarks and I do withdraw them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The matter is then settled.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC) moved:

Private Members' Business

That, in the opinion of the House, for greater certainty, the government should take steps to ensure that counselling a person to commit suicide or aiding or abetting a person to commit suicide is an offence under section 241 of the Criminal Code, regardless of the means used to counsel or aid or abet including via telecommunications, the Internet or a computer system.

He said: Madam Speaker, I rise today to discuss the need to update one section of our country's laws. We all know someone who has been touched by depression. Too many of us are aware of incidents where this depression has led to suicide.

Our society has long recognized that vulnerable people require the protection of the law. That is the purpose behind section 241 of Canada's Criminal Code which makes it illegal to counsel someone to commit suicide.

The need for section 241 has not changed. The goals of section 241 remain as important today as ever.

Since section 241 was last updated, however, our society has changed. The result is that while the law intends to make counselling suicide illegal, new circumstances appear to have opened loopholes as the wording in section 241 may need updating.

Depression and suicide are not issues that any one of us takes pleasure in speaking about. By speaking of them openly, however, I believe we can remove the shrouds of shame and secrecy that often serve only to perpetuate myths and empower predators.

In an age of such rapid progress in the worlds of economics, space travel, health care, scientific research and many other sectors, it is a sad commentary that so many of our youth with such great potential have come to the point of desperation and cannot find a way out other than to end it all.

With the support of friends and loved ones, there are much better choices. They can become healthy and live productive lives full of hope and purpose.

We all know that adolescence and early adulthood is a time of dramatic change. The journey to adulthood is complex and challenging. There are immense pressures to succeed at school, at home and in community social groups.

In the U.S., suicide rates among youth aged 15 to 24 have tripled in the past half-century. For every youth suicide completion, there are nearly 400 suicide attempts.

Right here in Canada suicide is the second highest cause of death for Canadian youth aged 10 to 24. Each year on average 294 youth die from suicide in Canada and many more attempt suicide.

For our youth, during the challenges of moving into adulthood, when an added stressor, such as moving from home to college or university or losing a family member or friend or having parents divorce, is added to the mix of an already complex social environment, all too often the future looks entirely hopeless. Tragic actions lead to the loss of lives that have so much potential.

Each of us in this chamber has gone through periods of discouragement and perhaps depression, or at least we have family members and friends who struggle with depression and mental health issues.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could ask for order.

● (1820)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Kitchener—Conestoga raises a good point. There are quite a few conversations going on around the chamber. So if members need to discuss some things with their colleagues, luckily the designers of this great building put in two lobbies, one on either side of the chamber, for that very purpose. If they could take advantage of those, I think the member would appreciate it.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I will add those few seconds to my time.

For some people, these downtimes might be a fleeting emotion that lasts only for a few hours or days. For others, it may drag on for weeks, months or even years. In these times of feeling overwhelmed, discouraged or depressed, many have had the thought of ending it all in order to avoid the ongoing pain.

For those who experience shorter periods of depression, hopefully we will be able to remember the famous adage "this too shall pass" and we wait and work toward brighter days. Periodic bouts of depression for those with shorter episodes are troubling, deep, dark valleys in the journey of life, but experience and encouragement from fellow travellers tell us that this is a normal part of human life.

For youth, however, they may not have yet had the life experience or may not have found a trusted friend who lets them know that difficult situations will not last forever.

In this very crucial period of days that seem to never end, or weeks, months or even years, it is absolutely essential that every resource is deployed in order to counteract the overwhelming helpless feelings and to provide hope and encouragement.

Unfortunately, it is exactly at these lowest points in life where predators can change the picture irreversibly. Rather than pointing to a brighter future and offering help to access resources to help and encourage the one who is suffering, these predators counsel depressed individuals to throw away the very gift of life.

In March 2008 in Ottawa, Nadia, a Carleton University student, was going through a period of depression when an Internet predator encouraged her to take her own life. In fact, this online friend allegedly said that she would end her own life on the same day. It was only Nadia that followed through, jumping from a bridge into the Rideau River.

The online friend turned out to be a 46-year-old licensed practical male nurse from Minnesota who allegedly lurked as a predator in online chat rooms. He has also admitted to U.S. police that he coaxed at least five different people to commit suicide using the Internet. This was a premeditated act.

The premature ending of Nadia's life is a tragedy that should have been prevented. Nadia had every promise of a bright future ahead of her. Nadia aspired to enter the fields of law and politics. She presented both the aptitude and the attitude to achieve both of those goals. Nadia was accepted and enrolled in Carleton University where she studied for only a short duration and her goals were never realized.

Private Members' Business

Stories like Nadia's make it necessary to clarify our laws in order to remove any doubt surrounding the issue of counselling to commit suicide by use of the Internet.

I ask my colleagues to listen to Nadia's mother in excerpts taken directly from her message in a press conference earlier this year as she asked each of us as members of Parliament to do all that we can to clarify and update Canadian law. Her mother stated, "I'm very pleased to be here today to show support for a motion put forth calling for clarification to our existing laws on assisting and counselling a person to commit suicide. The clarification is designed to make it clear to everyone that this type of crime is a criminal offence regardless of the means used".

She goes on to say, "These changes will send a message to Internet predators that they will indeed face criminal charges for their actions. It will make it abundantly clear to the police that they are expected to investigate these crimes and pursue criminal charges, and most importantly, when that is not done as it should be, it will give victims' families the ability to demand action from the authorities".

She continues by saying, "Nadia did not want to die. When she became depressed Nadia did seek professional help. Unfortunately, her search for help also led her to a predator intent on feeding on her illness. Nadia wanted to live. Nadia had a right to live. We as a society need to protect the vulnerable among us".

• (1825)

She goes on to say, "One thing that has now been brought to light is that this predator is not alone. There are many more just like him out there. And when things go wrong in our lives, or in the lives of the people we love, they'll be out there - hunting. Hunting for just that opportune moment. It is with all this in mind that I hope each of you lends your support and helps to send a clear message that we expect those criminals to be prosecuted.

It appears that Nadia's family members and others may have been misled by Canada's current laws pertaining to counselling to commit suicide. In fact, section 241 of the Criminal Code does make it illegal to counsel someone to commit suicide, and it provides penalties for up to 14 years of imprisonment for someone convicted of the same. However, the current Criminal Code does not explicitly state that a person who commits an offence under section 241 by means of telecommunications, the Internet or a computer system is also guilty of an offence under that section.

The story of Nadia is a troubling one. Transcripts, which were released by the *Ottawa Citizen*, of the conversation between Nadia and the predator clearly show the predator taking advantage of Nadia in her vulnerable state. He manages to enter into a false pact with Nadia, again under the guise of a young woman with similar problems.

Stories like this make it necessary to clarify our laws. In our Internet age, we need to make it clear that the use of technology where one might presume to hide behind the anonymity of the Internet is not a defence against prosecution for very serious criminal offences.

I have three children and eight grandchildren. Many of my grandchildren are already using the Internet for education and

entertainment. I want to ensure that my family is safe and that individuals like Nadia are protected from online predators.

The current section 241 of the Criminal Code states that everyone who counsels a person to commit suicide or aids or abets a person to commit suicide, whether suicide ensues or not, is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 14 years.

I propose that the current section 241 of the Criminal Code be amended to include subsequent subsections that build on the current section 241 to clarify that the use of computer systems, telecommunications or Internet is also explicitly included in that section.

Preying on a vulnerable individual like Nadia Kajouji should be punishable. While the Internet is deemed as a haven of free speech, it is important to protect individuals like Nadia from committing suicide at the encouragement of a predator.

I call on government legal experts to address the principles that are included in my suggestions and to craft appropriate legislation that will close any possible loopholes in our current laws. These changes are needed in order to provide greater protection to those who are at a very vulnerable point in their lives. Predators must be stopped before they repeat their crime. Their destructive deeds will not be tolerated and those predators who choose to ignore the law must face severe consequences.

As Canadians, we are constantly setting examples for the rest of the world as we strive for a better world. We are world leaders on many fronts. We provide care for our elderly and our sick, as well as the unemployed. We provide overseas support in times of catastrophe and we stand up for and defend the freedom of others.

However, on the issue of preventing Internet counselling to commit suicide, we are not world leaders. In fact, we are behind many other countries on this issue. Countries like Australia and the United Kingdom have been working rigorously to introduce amendments to their criminal code that would make using the Internet, among other media, to counsel someone to commit suicide illegal. In fact, Australia has managed to change its law and, as of 2005, has made it illegal to counsel someone to commit suicide via the Internet. This has also occurred in parts of the United States. Early this year a bill was introduced to amend title 18 of the United States code to prohibit the use of interstate commerce for suicide promotion.

I encourage Canadians and members of Parliament from all parties to continue to show their support for Motion No. 388 and I urge the Canadian government to make amendments to the current Criminal Code. I have received over 8,000 signatures in support of this initiative.

My concern is for vulnerable Canadians. The changes called for in Motion No. 388 are needed in order to provide greater protection to those who are at a very vulnerable point in their lives. Predators must be stopped before they repeat their crime. Their destructive deeds will not be tolerated and predators who choose to ignore the deterrent message need to know that they will face severe consequences.

Private Members' Business

●(1830)

I would remind all members of the House that Motion No. 388 does not seek to expand the scope of Canadian law, criminalize any new activities or add penalties to crimes, but in the case of Internet suicide counselling, the computer system and the use of the Internet is an integral part of the offence, and that point needs to be made very clear.

Some members of the House believe that our existing laws already make this behaviour a crime. I would like to believe they are correct but the predator who drove Nadia to her death remains free without charges. If this crime is already covered under section 241 of Canada's Criminal Code, why have no charges been laid?

As Nadia's grieving mother noted:

...as long as there are predators who believe the Internet is some kind of exclusive sanctuary and as long as there are police officers who believe, for some unwritten reason, that the Internet is not governed by our existing laws, this clarification is very much needed.

I call upon all members of the House to support my Motion No. 388 which would provide our youth with the protection they deserve.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member.

First, I agree with him that the facts he cited are extremely troubling. That is why we are supporting this motion. However, I personally think that the provision in the Criminal Code is quite clear no matter how a person coaxes, helps or encourages someone to end their life, whether on the phone or face to face. To me it seems this should naturally apply to the Internet.

Does the hon. member agree that by including "via the Internet", we should make sure we are not excluding other ways of counselling suicide?

If we decide to draw up an exhaustive list of all the ways such incitement could be communicated, some may be forgotten. I think the rule of law *inclusio unius est exclusio alterius* applies, that is, the inclusion of one thing implies the exclusion of another. The risk is there and I think that we should consult some law professors on these issues when we hold committee meetings.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the question and for his indication of support for the motion. I am very heartened by that.

I have had the argument put to me that this is already covered in the Criminal Code. I am not a legal expert nor am I a lawyer but I will repeat the question that I asked during my comments. If it is already included in the Criminal Code, why have no charges been laid after 500, 600 days following March 2008 when this crime occurred? To the best of my knowledge, up to this point no charges have been laid.

Our youth and the victim's family deserve better than that. Those of us who have close friends who have experienced the trauma of suicide, let alone being counselled over the Internet, just suicide, are left to deal with haunting questions: Why? Could I have done more? What else could I have done? They are left to face that empty chair at

family gatherings. I do not think we can afford to ensure we avoid any possible little legal wranglings just to ensure we do not create some potential problem five years down the road. It is important that we act now and act decisively, and that we give a clear message as a deterrent to those who are out there intending to give bad advice to young people that is irreversible. It is unconscionable.

●(1835)

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Kitchener—Conestoga for bringing forward this important motion, which I think is going to have a meaningful impact on this debate.

I know a number of people in Canada have been affected by suicide, and clearly within the aboriginal community it is an extensive problem. People do not actually want to end their lives. They simply want to end the pain and that is sometimes forgotten in discussions on suicide. Too often suicide is seen as the only way to end the pain.

Thankfully, many people in the House, from all parties, are looking for ways to improve that culture of life. I am hopeful this motion, when passed, will motivate the House to perhaps make the clarifications that the member has suggested.

In relation to the debate on suicide, there is a movement of late to promote suicide on many fronts. If the motion passes, does the member think it will help push back on the defence of people's views on suicide? Many groups are trying to normalize suicide.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear to the House that my main concern with the motion is to address the issue of predators who are taking advantage of vulnerable people, especially youth. I realize suicide has no boundaries in terms of the age, but my main concern with this is to deal with predators who are taking advantage of vulnerable youth.

However, it is my hope that this discussion will open the possibility for further discussion. Too often we are afraid to talk about suicide and because of that, as I said in my speech, it is shrouded in this mystery that nobody wants to open up. If we are open and talk about it, it will in fact create a healthy environment to allow us to move forward to protect life at all stages.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank and congratulate the member for Kitchener—Conestoga on raising this issue through his private member's motion, Motion No. 388.

When we talk about the sanctity of life, it is the full spectrum of life. The motion deals with life as it basically applies to young people who are tormented by their day to day demons, which statistics indicate are on the increase as they try to adapt to modern society. Our heart goes out, through this motion, to try to deal with that situation through the Criminal Code. It focuses on existing predators who are observant of the needs of young people and are going to exploit them.

The member pointed out the situation that occurred at Carleton University. A young student named Nadia Kajouji was tormented by the nature of adapting to Canadian society and to the university. She was looking for help and she thought that help was coming through Internet communication. That turned out to be her murderer, or one who advised her to take her own life. I use the term murderer advisedly. I know it probably does not bear up to Criminal Code scrutiny, but I think that anyone who advises under those circumstances, knowing what the end result is going to be, is guilty of that particular act.

It is interesting that the last question also dealt with assisted suicide, which is an issue that will be before us through other legislation. I had not intended on addressing that, but I was looking at other documentation that has been before the House. Reports were done in 1995 and 2000 with respect to the need for increased support services to the elderly. At that time, we were finding them in a position where they were taking their own lives. The issue came up again as to whether under those circumstances, with medical support and advice, assisted suicide was ethical and moral and whether we should support it.

The entitlement of the report is still not there and here we are again trying to address that issue because no initiatives were taken. I think the whole House is in agreement that the issue is not whether there should be better advice for those who want to commit suicide. The issue is whether the sanctity of life can be protected to the extent that those people can live out their lives in dignity with the support services around them.

The member for Kitchener—Conestoga has given a very excellent overview with respect to where the Criminal Code is not living up to the expectation to protect that sanctity of life. I am not going to take that part. Through the most recent statistics that have been gathered, I will attempt to try to make a case that since young people have a greater probability and propensity because of the kinds of lifestyle and issues that they face, there is a need for us to take the kind of action as suggested.

● (1840)

An article in today's *Summerside Journal Pioneer* indicated that about 14% of first year students were dropping out. According to Statistics Canada's Youth in Transition Survey, the overall post-secondary dropout rate is about 16%, suggesting that those who are going to drop out do so early in life.

They are doing that for a reason. They are alienated by the system, they are caught up by it and I would suggest they are more prey to those who, in their time of need, would be advising them, in an ill-considered way, as to how to deal with that. This is just an indicator.

Another news item in yesterday's *Truro Daily News* talked about how Canada's schools were not dealing with failure and that students were struggling in university, but they were struggling in life in general. A Statistics Canada report entitled "Persistence in Post-Secondary Education in Canada: The Latest Research" concluded that 14% of students dropped out in their first year.

We have a problem that we all share in how we protect and enhance the life of our young people. The indicators have not done it successfully and that leaves them more open to exploitation. What

Private Members' Business

the motion is aimed at is dealing with that exploitation of the most dramatic and terrible nature.

I will talk about some of the statistics to which the member referred because, in a very graphic way, they give us an indicator of how serious the situation is.

In two reports through the American College Health Association, and I am quoting these from a survey done by McMaster University, there are indicators that young adults 18 to 24 have the highest prevalence of diagnosable forms of mental illness in the whole population, that suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students, that 95% of college students who commit suicide suffer from mental illness, usually depression, and that 75% of people with schizophrenia developed the disease between the ages of 15 and 25.

The 2006 survey also points out that 40% of clients had severe psychological problems, 8% so severe that they could not remain in school without extensive psychological help.

In a 2007 survey done by McMaster, it indicates that there is a total lack of support services to deal with those particular mental health problems.

I would conclude, with respect to referring to the statistics, that the statistics from 1988 to 2006 have increased and that suicides are the second or third leading cause of death among students.

Just as I referred to the report based on assisted suicide, we are going to have to come to grips with not having taken action when action was required. We are now going to take action in one particular area, through the Criminal Code, where the statistics indicate the need is huge. We would be derelict, in terms of being parents, teachers and, in fact, responsible members of civil society, if we did not act.

The first action would be through the Criminal Code and this action should be supported by all parties. Second, further research should be done in terms of why these statistics are of the nature they are and how we can reach out to our young people and make them believe they can fulfill their expectations and not—

● (1845)

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as I have already indicated, we plan to vote in favour of the motion, at least at this first stage. While the offence of counselling, encouraging or helping someone commit suicide set out in section 241 of the Criminal Code might seem clear at first glance and seem to cover cases when such acts are committed by means of telecommunications, the Internet or a computer system, in light of certain recent events, we believe that it is our duty as legislators to make sure that is the case. With that in mind, we will support the amendment to the Criminal Code if it proves necessary, although we oppose any unnecessary amendments.

Private Members' Business

Since 1999, suicide rates have dropped considerably in Quebec. In eight years, from 1999 to 2007, it has dropped by more than 30%. However, with 1,091 deaths in Quebec in 2007, suicide is still a major concern, since it is the second leading cause of death among Quebecers aged 15 to 19 and, by far, the leading cause of death among those aged 20 to 34. Similarly, among developed nations, Quebec remains in an unenviable position in that regard, although it is not the worst.

I must say, I was not surprised when I read those statistics. When I was in university, I was very involved in the student newspaper, and when I ran it, I began a series of news stories on sociological topics of interest to students. For instance, we ran a story on married students, and another one on student deaths.

In 1964—I know I look younger than that—we discovered that traffic accidents were the leading cause of death among students, but the second cause was suicide. So we ran a series of stories on student suicides. However, back then, Quebec was in a rather better position. Our rates were among the lowest of the countries on the list. By far the most suicides were found in the Scandinavian countries. However, at the time—in 1964—the Scandinavian countries were generally more likely to recognize suicide, whereas even in a society like Quebec or Canadian society, at the time we were more likely to look for other possible reasons for the death, before declaring it a suicide. Some people considered it shameful to admit that someone in their family had committed suicide.

Given the importance of this issue today, the Bloc Québécois believes that it is imperative to consider all options to further curtail this phenomenon. For this reason, the Bloc Québécois will support the motion.

We believe that it is important to ensure that counselling or aiding and abetting suicide is an offence, no matter the means used—including telecommunications, the Internet or a computer system.

At first glance, section 241 of the Criminal Code seems sufficiently clear and comprehensive, as confirmed by David Paciocco, a law professor at the University of Ottawa. According to this expert, the Criminal Code, as it exists, already allows charges to be laid against an individual who uses the Internet to encourage a victim to commit suicide. That is my opinion as well.

•(1850)

In view of this, we wondered whether it was advisable to support this motion. In fact, since arriving in Ottawa, the Bloc Québécois has adopted the following approach: act responsibly. Amending an article of the Criminal Code to add an unnecessary detail is not an example of that.

It could even have the opposite effect because such changes may weaken rather than strengthen a provision. I am convinced that no parliamentarian wants that. However, I must add that the wording of the motion avoids this risk. That was my opinion when I read it over carefully.

The failure to prosecute in the case of Nadia Kajouji's suicide was troubling. Ms. Kajouji was an 18-year-old student at Carleton University who took her own life in March 2008 by jumping off a bridge into the Rideau Canal. The newspapers reported that she was extremely depressed and that a malicious Internet contact, who was

posing as a young woman in the same circumstances, had urged her to hang herself in front of her webcam. That person was identified. He is William Melchert-Dinkel, a 46-year old Minnesota nurse.

The police force in charge of the investigation in Canada did not give a reason for its decision not to press charges, which is disturbing.

According to professor Paciocco, whom I mentioned earlier, the fact that the offence was committed on the Internet may complicate the investigation but should not preclude a trial in Canada.

According to this legal expert, there is no real problem of jurisdiction in a case like this. In the case of cybercrime, the communication received in Canada creates a link between the accused and the victim that is strong enough to give Canadian courts jurisdiction.

But although this type of crime is fortunately rare, it does sometimes occur, and it has led to charges and a guilty verdict. For example, Gerald Klein was convicted after entering into a suicide pact on the Internet in 2005 in Oregon.

In Canada, section 241 has not been tested in the case of counselling on the Internet. That is why we want to ensure that it is adequate and clearly understood by the police.

Before moving on to other considerations, I want to point out—and I believe that this is the intention of the person who introduced the motion—that we are not talking about assisted suicide involving someone who is terminally ill and experiencing prolonged, unbearable suffering. That is a topic for another day.

We agree that this offence must exist and that this section must be enforced. I appreciate that the motion has been carefully worded. I cannot say the same for other laws I have criticized recently. The motion has been carefully worded to apply only to the cases we agree on.

Of course, changing the Criminal Code will have only a minimal impact on suicide in Canada and Quebec. There are other, more effective things we could do, such as dropping the attack on the Canadian firearms registry. Simply possessing a firearm increases the chances of suicide fivefold. That is what I am told, but I suspect it applies when people are contemplating suicide and have access to a gun. I do not think that possession alone creates the risk of suicide, but when the intent is there and the gun is available, the chances go up. As such, thanks to the buy-back program it includes, the Canadian firearms registry has helped to limit possession of firearms to those who really wanted them.

One section of the Criminal Code provides that when those close to a depressed person know that he or she has one or more firearms, they can ask a judge for an order to seize the firearms and confiscate them until medical exams show that they can be returned without risk. That has happened several times.

•(1855)

Some people got their firearms back after recovering from their depression. People fighting suicide believe that this is a useful provision and one of the good—

Private Members' Business

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has no time left. His ten minutes have run out. The hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was prepared to give my Bloc colleague another minute, but I will go ahead now.

[*English*]

This issue that brings us before the House today is one that obviously gives all parties, all members of Parliament, and all Canadians for that matter, a great deal of concern.

I know from my own experiences, in dealing with people who are depressed or confronting great problems in their personal lives, just how vulnerable they are. I do not think it is possible for any of us, without actually having been to that depth of depression and levels of vulnerability, to really appreciate that, but it is very real. I suppose most scary in this regard is the fact that there are perpetrators out there who would prey upon that vulnerability. We have seen that in the case of the Ottawa student and in several other cases as well.

It is quite appropriate and very timely that this motion is before the House. I believe the government, the Department of Justice in particular, needs to be looking into this area and seeing if there are ways that we can tighten up either under the Criminal Code or in other areas to, as much as possible, prevent this type of predatory activity.

I do have a couple of suggestions in that regard. In particular, when we deal with the Ottawa case of Nadia Kajouji, that person has in fact not been charged. Like the member for Kitchener—Conestoga, I have been following the case very closely. The person has not been charged and it begs the question of why not.

If in fact we find that the U.S. federal government and the state of Minnesota in particular do not have mechanisms in place to charge him, then it is crucial that we put those mechanisms in place here in Canada. It would take a two-phase approach to this.

First, we would have to create a specific crime dealing with the issue of this type of counselling over a broad range of telecommunications and have wording broad enough to cover telecommunication developments that are still coming.

Once we have done that and made it a very specific crime in Canada to counsel suicide in this way, we then would have to be clear within our extradition treaties that that would be an offence for which we could extradite people from any place in the world, if in fact the crime had been committed either in Canada, that is, it was perpetrated here, or it was perpetrated in Canada on one of our citizens or residents.

We have some precedents for that, particularly in the sexual assault cases elsewhere in the world, that we will prosecute in this country under any circumstances. There are a couple of other precedents, so this is doable, but it is something that we would be pressing the justice department to look at once this motion gets to committee.

The other area in which we could be doing some work is simply looking at section 241 of the Criminal Code, which is the section that deals with counselling of suicide. We also could be looking at the

criminal negligence sections. It may be more convenient perhaps, more in keeping with those sections, to create a new offence there of counselling suicide using telecommunication mechanisms that result in death. That may be a better tool, a better section of the Criminal Code to look at.

Those are two areas that we could be dealing with, specifically with the Criminal Code and our extradition treaties.

The other area that I believe we have to look at, and this is more along the lines of prevention as opposed to reacting to the crime having been committed, is the regulation of the Internet. My colleague from Timmins—James Bay was telling me today, and I was not aware of this, that one can actually go online to certain websites where people are actually demonstrating their attempts to commit suicide. He believes that on one or two occasions a suicide has actually been committed live, with people watching and not intervening. In addition, we know from any number of cases of the number of suicide chat rooms that are on the Internet.

● (1900)

There are some lessons to be learned from what we have done to combat child pornography on the Internet. We need to compel those who provide service to the Internet to monitor these chat rooms. Some of these chat rooms are actually beneficial because they are a form of counselling. They aid people in their depression and help them with their mental health problems.

However, if this counselling actually crosses the line into counselling the act of suicide, then those sites need to be shut down. The servers who provide that service need to be directed that it is their responsibility to monitor these sites and shut them down if actual counselling of suicide is identified. That has begun to be fairly effective in the child pornography area.

Canada is taking some lead in this in terms of tracing those sites and then shutting them down. There is some precedent for us to be able to follow.

The combined approach of both strengthening our provisions within the Criminal Code to deal with the crime within this country or even extra-territorially and working much more preventively with the Internet is absolutely imperative.

I have been following some of the debate on this issue in the United States. There has been an ongoing debate there about limiting freedom of speech within that context. But as we said with the child pornography issue, there is no issue with another freedom where that kind of abuse is going on.

The same arguments could be made both nationally and internationally to restrict those sites and shut them down if there is this kind of active counselling of suicide.

Those are the suggestions I have for my colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga. I congratulate him on moving as rapidly as he has on this issue. I urge the government to pick up on these suggestions and on his motion, and perhaps we will actually get some meaningful advancements in preventing these types of suicides.

Adjournment Proceedings

●(1905)

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know my time is short this evening but I want to take a few moments, first and foremost, to congratulate and thank the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga for bringing forward this motion. This motion speaks to an issue that has, unfortunately, impacted too many people.

When the hon. member brought forward this motion in September of this year, I believe he said that suicide has caused the tragic deaths of far too many Canadians and tonight I have to concur and I think all members in the House would agree.

I would like to go through a number of things. As I said, my time is limited, but I felt it was necessary for us to contemplate the merits of this bill as well as its place in terms of the current Criminal Code provisions.

Section 241 of the Criminal Code makes it an indictable offence to counsel a person to commit suicide. It also provides that it is an offence to assist or encourage someone to commit suicide. It is important to note that it is so, regardless of the means chosen to counsel, encourage or provide assistance, and regardless of whether the person attempts to commit suicide. The maximum penalty provided for this specific offence is 14 years imprisonment.

It is interesting to note that the assisted suicide offence provision in our Criminal Code is very similar to the provisions in force today in England. On September 23 of this year, and it is interesting that this is so timely, the British director of public prosecutions issued an interim policy for prosecutors in respect of cases of assisted suicide.

I would like to mention a few of the relevant points that are in the public interest in Canada as we are contemplating what we need to do to ensure that provisions within our own section are keeping up with the current technologies. The director of public prosecutions outlined a number of points. The first point reads:

The suspect persuaded, pressured or maliciously encouraged the victim to commit suicide, or exercised improper influence in the victim's decision to do so; and did not take reasonable steps to ensure that any other person did not do so.

That, obviously, means suicide.

The second point reads:

The suspect was unknown to the victim and assisted by providing specific information via, for example, a website or publication, to the victim to assist him or her in committing suicide.

The third point in making clarification reads:

The suspect gave assistance to more than one victim who were not known to each other.

The fourth clarification made reads:

The suspect was a member of an organisation or group, the principal purpose of which is to provide a physical environment (whether for payment or not) in which to allow another to commit suicide.

I mention those specific factors that were found in favour of prosecution on the charge of assisted suicide under legislation that is very similar to ours. As my colleague from the NDP pointed out, there are many ways that we could bring clarification to our current legislation.

However, it is important that our laws be broad and that we not try to name all the different ways in which a person might assist or counsel someone to commit suicide but that we allow for the legislation to be broad enough that it encapsulates any changing technology. I am certain the government will take that into consideration when this bill, hopefully, passes.

Section 241 of our Criminal Code is currently very broad. If charges are laid under this section for actions to be carried out over the Internet, I imagine there will be a number of challenges that the investigators will find problematic, specifically as to how they will collect evidence and the evidentiary burdens of the investigation. However, let this not be a deterrent to pursuing this initiative. For example, we have heard it noted already this evening that in cases of child pornography, which is the same challenge, we are seeing some success on that front.

●(1910)

Let us continue to work together to ensure that the opportunities are limited for those people who counsel and maliciously attack others over the Internet and who use the Internet to perpetrate this crime. I am pleased that my colleague has introduced this motion and has sought to clarify that the assisted suicide offence in section 241 of the Criminal Code needs to include those people who would use the Internet to perpetrate this crime.

As I mentioned at the beginning, it is very important that we as Canadians ensure that our laws keep up with the advanced technologies to ensure that we are protecting the most vulnerable in our society.

As members of Parliament, our number one responsibility is to protect the most vulnerable in our society. Tonight, as I have listened to the different life stories of people who have been affected by perpetrators, I have come to believe that we have an obligation to act. We have a responsibility to do what we can to protect those most vulnerable in our society.

We must stand with the victims' families, those families that bear the pain of suicide, who have lost family members. We must stand with those families that have been victims of a perpetrator who came into their loved one's life and encouraged their loved one to commit suicide. We have to stand with those people who might be victimized by a perpetrator in the future.

This motion is the first step in moving forward on this issue. We must continue to work toward the preservation of life. We must continue to protect those who are most vulnerable in our society.

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1915)

[*Translation*]

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this evening, I want to talk about heritage, culture and artists. On May 11 I asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages a question. That was the day the papers reported that Robert Lepage, Stanley Péan and even Clémence DesRochers condemned this government's lack of consideration for artists. I commented that this government was so disconnected from reality that it had come to regard it as virtually the norm for recipients to criticize it when they accepted their prizes.

I wondered and I asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages whether he realized that his cultural policies were not helping artists, but in fact were hurting them. Obviously, I was referring to the programs he had cut in August 2008, including the PromArt and Trade Routes programs. He had cut \$25 million from seven programs. PromArt and Trade Routes were just two of those seven programs.

I have to say that artists are struggling because of these cuts. This is no longer front-page news, it may not even be in the news anymore, but the fact is that artists are quietly stopping their activities. They have cancelled tours. Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, for one, went ahead with its tour, but incurred a deficit of \$150,000.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages confirmed to me in writing that there was no longer a grant program to help Les Grands Ballets Canadiens tour abroad. Artists are in the process of assessing the situation, and when it comes out, it will not be pretty.

More recently, this summer, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, who learned absolutely nothing, did it again, and made cuts to the Canadian musical diversity component. It never ends. Many artists are falling through the cracks after the announcement of the elimination of the Canadian musical diversity fund. That is another \$1.3 million that the department has taken away from artists.

In fact, 80% of artists who had access to this fund have no other form of funding. The government is shutting the door on yet another piece of cultural life, and is telling artists to go home. The department did not announce any new money for the Canada music fund. The music industry needs more money, in addition to the money managed by the Canada Council for the Arts for specialized music.

People who create jazz, world and contemporary music contribute to cultural diversity. People need to understand that. The Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages needs to understand that. Life is not just about entertainment. These creators are the driving force behind new music.

Consider La Bottine Souriante. Initially, La Bottine Souriante fell into a particular category because it played traditional music. Now their music is inspired by a broad range of genres and has become popular music.

Once again, my question for the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages and for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage is this: do they realize that instead of helping artists, these policies hurt them?

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here this evening to talk about all the great things our government is doing in support of the arts.

I think that the Bloc critic is very confused on this file. We continually get questions that demonstrate she does not understand the file very well. For example, with respect to the Canada music fund, which she cited, this summer the minister announced, with great appreciation from the industry, a five year commitment. That is a \$138 million commitment to the Canada music fund over five years.

I could give a pile of quotes from the industry that demonstrate exactly how appreciative the industry is.

However, the Bloc members voted against that. In fact they voted against a lot of things in the 40th Parliament, things that have really surprised me. They voted against record funding for the Canada Council. The member cited the Canada Council, and the Bloc was against that.

It is hard to say anything about the amount of money the Canada Council received because the Bloc voted against giving it anything. It was record funding for the arts in Canada, but as I said, the Bloc Québécois is voting against a lot of things these days in the 40th Parliament.

Tonight the Bloc members voted against minimum sentences for offences involving trafficking of persons under the age of 18 years: child trafficking. The Bloc voted against a bill that would bring tougher laws against child trafficking.

I cannot believe the audacity of the member to come to the House and complain about funding for the arts when the Bloc members have voted against funding for the arts. Every night it is the same thing: not enough money. They voted for no money for the arts. That was the Bloc's position when our government put record funding behind the arts. When we put record funding behind the arts in the economic action plan, the Bloc members were against it.

Artists in Quebec, if they are listening, should remember that the Bloc Québécois members had a choice. They had a choice to vote in support of artists or to vote against them and the Bloc members voted against them.

That is the record the Bloc members will have to defend. They will have to stand up and say they voted against it and then fill in the blank after that. It is a sad story, because we have stood behind Quebec artists.

When I rise in my supplemental response to the member, I will let the House know what some people in Quebec had to say about what our government is doing for the arts in Canada.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1920)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Mr. Speaker, I am truly surprised by the rhetoric in his arguments and by how many half-truths can be uttered in such a short time. I am truly dumbfounded by it all. It has been a long time since I heard as much in such a short time.

As for the parliamentary secretary's accusations that the Bloc Québécois votes against the government's budgets, I would just remind him that on May 10, 2006, and March 27, 2007, the Bloc Québécois voted in favour of this government's budgets. However, this year's budget contained poison pills and our artists would certainly not have wanted us to vote for that. And there was also the \$27 million in cuts the previous year. I believe they would not have wanted us to support that either.

This government keeps saying that it is giving more to artists but we do not know where that increase is going. In fact, it continues to play hide-and-seek with the numbers. That is what it did this summer. Of course, it did give more to the industry and it is true that one part of the industry is pleased. Nevertheless, 80% of artists and musicians who need it—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, I promised I would give you some third party quotes on what our government is doing for the arts and what the Bloc Québécois voted against. I do not know how that could be a half-truth, by the way.

The Bloc member knows very well that her party voted against the stimulus plan, which included record funding for the arts.

Let us look at what the director of the Just For Laughs Festival said. Maybe she has heard of it. It is in Montreal. He said:

By including the arts and culture in its policy for fighting the crisis, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister recognizes the role and power of this sector for the national economy," says Gilbert Rozon, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Just For Laughs Group...

That is what people in Quebec are saying about what our government has done in its economic action plan. I wonder what they will say to the Bloc Québécois members in the next election when they stand up and say they voted against all those increases to the arts.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to participate in tonight's continued discussion that we are having on the question I raised in the House of Commons on May 12 related to Nortel and the takeover by Ericsson. Many Canadians know that this iconic company, Nortel, has struggled in the last couple of years, and the end result is that it went into bankruptcy and to auction. Sadly, we have witnessed the loss of Canadian technology, research and development. With this foreign takeover, I asked the minister that day to look at the foreign investment legislation.

There are a couple of thresholds that are important. There is the threshold of \$312 million in terms of net value when the minister must intervene. Also, a new national security clause was introduced. The national security clause is something I have been after since

2002, with China Minmetals. There was a state government of China buying up Canadian oil sands projects, and I opposed that. A non-democratic government was buying Canadian companies.

We finally did get a change to the Investment Canada Act, but it was done in a budget bill. That meant it did not have the proper parliamentary review that would normally be done for a bill. It did not go through the committee. We did not hear witnesses. We did not debate it in the House of Commons, aside from the debate on the budget bill. It is quite an Americanization of our legislation. The Americans have a similar system, where they add riders to a government spending bill that has legislative changes. This is the way the government has done a couple of things, such as the immigration act and now the Investment Canada Act.

Unfortunately, it has now resulted in some weaknesses that we saw evident in this case. This case was interesting. Ericsson had purchased the assets from Nortel for \$1.13 billion and then later said the net value was less than the \$312 million. To make sure that viewers understand this correctly, it paid over \$1 billion for something it later on argued was worth a lot less, including under the threshold of the \$312 million. There is a significant difference between the purchase price and what it is saying the net value is. Later on the minister bought that and dismissed it outright.

Second, the minister has dismissed the national security clause. What is interesting is that we had testimony for one day. We, as New Democrats, would have had more testimony, but we were thwarted. I cannot say what happened at in camera meetings, but I can say that Liberals approached me through the leader's office about having more hearings. I cannot say whether I have that support at committee anymore, but unfortunately we only had one day of hearings, which left the pensioners out.

What is really important is that a Canadian company, Certicom, that was based in Canada and bought by RIM in Canada, staying in Canada, had the sale reviewed by the United States government. Meanwhile, in Canada, LTE technology, a fourth-generation technology, is going to move ahead of BlackBerry and other devices through the Internet and exchange of information has been dismissed outright. That was disappointing.

I would like to see the government reverse its position, examine the national security clause and make sure this review is going to take place, because we have so many workers at risk. Canadians have subsidized this research, development and technology, and it needs a thorough review before we give this Canadian technology away.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1925)

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to note the hon. member talking about the budget bill and the lack of debate. We do debate budget bills in the House. It was during the debate of that budget bill that I believe the NDP member for Hamilton Mountain said, "Every single important piece the people in the community were looking for is mentioned". She said this before she promptly voted against the bill. I am not sure I understand the rationale there, but we did debate it in the House.

I am pleased to rise to respond to the concerns expressed by the member for Windsor West about the ongoing court-supervised process being undergone by Nortel. In our economic action plan, "Advantage Canada" and in budget 2007, the federal government committed to undertake a review of Canada's competition policies and its framework for foreign investment policy.

To deliver on these commitments, in July 2007, the government created an expert panel, chaired by Mr. Lynton Ronald Wilson. The panel conducted extensive consultation and in June 2008 released its final report and recommendations aimed at raising Canada's overall economic performance, through greater competition, to provide Canadians with a higher standard of living.

One of the panel's key recommendations was that we narrow the scope for intervention on economic grounds under the Investment Canada Act. The panel also found that it would be in Canada's best interest in a post-9/11 world to incorporate a national security test into the act. Of course the hon. member referred to that. We moved very quickly to address these and other key recommendations in the report. Last winter, the Budget Implementation Act brought about reforms to the Investment Canada Act, including a national security review mechanism.

Before the passage of this legislation, Canada was the only major developed country in the world that did not have the legislative authority to review foreign investments on the basis of national security concerns, but now we do. With respect to the acquisition of Nortel's CDMA and LTE assets by Ericsson, the government did examine the national security implications of this transaction. The Minister of Industry consulted with the Minister of Public Safety and based on all of the information presented to the Minister of Industry, there are no grounds to believe that this transaction could be injurious to Canada's national security.

It is worth noting that Ericsson has had operations in Canada for over 56 years. It has invested over \$2 billion in research and development in Canada over the past 10 years and it employs over 1,900 Canadians. Further, Ericsson has guaranteed that it will maintain employment levels in Canada. In point of fact, as of today, all but four of Ottawa-based Nortel employees have signed on with Ericsson. Further, Ericsson plans to hire 100 new employees for the Ottawa facility in the near future.

The member opposite wants the government to ignore the law and invoke arbitrary protectionism. If we did this, foreign investors would quickly lose confidence in Canadian law and leave Canada behind. Foreign investment is an important driver of economic success. It stimulates job creation, technological development and economic growth. We must therefore be cognizant of sending the strongest possible signal to investors around the world that Canada is a safe and stable place to do business.

• (1930)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, the reality is we did have a Canadian champion in RIM. This is a testimony from Mr. Lazaridis from RIM. He talks about the national security element and the situation with LTE technology. He says:

Without question, it is important to understand how important security technology is. The technology that we use, of course, is public key elliptic curve technology. We've been using it for years, and it's been one of the core competitive advantages we've had in the BlackBerry and why it's so widespread in government use, military use, and law enforcement use.

That comes from experts that transform and encrypt information across this globe. It is information that is used by a number of different governments around the world and by military organizations and civil society groups as well. We have given out the breakthrough technology and patents that will come forward to another country.

What is really important is the home area of the company is often where the research and development of technology takes place. That is why RIM would have been a much better match and a lease on examination for our research and development.

Mr. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member uses words in the past tense. RIM was the champion in terms of technology. I believe RIM is still a champion in terms of technology. It did have the opportunity to bid on these assets and for whatever reason decided not to do that.

However, in terms of competition, and I think that is the key issue when we talk about the Investment Canada Act and the changes that we have made, I note the World Economic Forum has said that because of the measures this government has taken Canada will be one of only two developed countries in the world to come out of this recession in a better competitive place than we were in before.

I think that is what is important to Canadians at this crucial global economic time.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:32 p.m.)

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