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Monday, December 7, 2009

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 7, 2009

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should designate 2010 as The Year of the British Home Child across Canada.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to share with my colleagues a story that few Canadians know anything about. It is the story about courage, strength and perseverance. It is a story of Canada's British home children.

Like almost four million Canadians, my family can relate to this story. My uncle, Kenneth Bickerton, was a British home child. Born in 1916, my uncle was orphaned by the time he was 11 years old. Like most children in Britain, who suffered this fate, he spent time in an orphanage before being shipped off to Canada.

He was 14 years old when he arrived in Quebec City. After being met by an immigration official, he and about two dozen other boys were transferred to Brantford, Ontario, to work on area farms.

Between 1869 and 1948, over 100,000 British children, like my uncle, were sent to Canada from Great Britain, many of them to work as farm labourers and domestic servants. These were the British home children: boys and girls, anywhere from 6 months to 18 years of age. They were a part of the child emigration movement. Most of them came from orphanages or other institutions that could no longer afford to look after them.

For a variety of reasons, the children were sent to Canada, as we were a growing economy and in need of labourers.

Most of the children were transported by British religious and charitable organizations. For the most part, these organizations believed that they were doing a good and noble thing for the children, who were worse off living in poverty in the UK. One such organization was the Fegan Homes of England.

One of my constituents is a descendant of a British home child who came to Canada through this organization. At the age of 11,

Percival Victor Fry began working at an Ontario farm. His granddaughter, Adrienne Patterson told me that while her grandfather had to be moved several times due to inappropriate care he "was so grateful to have been afforded the chance at a life that he never would have had, back in that time, in England".

Like Adrienne's grandfather, many home children faced adversity. Most were able to overcome it, but it was by no means easy. The British home children faced considerable challenges and some experienced tremendous hardship. They were susceptible to mistreatment because their living conditions in Canada were not closely monitored. Some were malnourished and others emotionally starved. There was loneliness and sadness. Siblings were often separated upon their arrival and many never saw each other again. This is an important part of their story that deserves to be told.

However, their story does not end there. Due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children did endure, and most of them went on to lead healthy and productive lives.

My uncle, for example, married and had 4 children and 12 grandchildren. He made a good living for himself, while contributing to Canada's economy. He worked, first, in manufacturing, and then later as a cookware and typewriter salesman.

Home child Percival Victor Fry was an air raid warden in Toronto during the second world war. He married and, together, he and his wife had six children.

In the online story collection of Canada's Immigration Museum Pier 21, Jane Bartlett has written of her grandmother, home child Alice Smith, "My grandmother worked as a domestic in Saint John, New Brunswick. Later she met my grandfather and was married. The two ran a plumbing business in the North End of Saint John for many years and raised seven children".

• (1110)

There are thousands of stories like these.

In an email I recently received from Brighton, Ontario, Lynda Burke wrote, "Thank you for remembering the great contributions that approximately 100,000 child immigrants from the U.K. have given to Canada...my mother came from Scotland and despite adversity, became a nurse and a productive Canadian".

Private Members' Business

This is the other half of the story. While the British home children were underprivileged and suffered from unfortunate circumstances, they endured, and almost all of them who came to Canada remained in Canada. They grew up to raise families of their own. They contributed to our country's economic growth and prosperity. They helped to cultivate our country's values and defend our country's freedom. More than 10,000 of them fought for Canada in the first world war and approximately 1,000 lost their lives.

Canada's British home children are an integral part of our country's history. They are a part of our heritage. They represent a part of our past and their descendants represent a part of our future. Their stories are ones that need to be taught in our schools.

Today, it is estimated that 12% of Canada's population is made up of British home children and their descendants. That represents more than four million Canadians and the number continues to grow. Yet, there are many Canadians who still do not know the story of the home children. They are not aware of the hardships that were suffered and the sacrifices that were made.

However, we as parliamentarians have the opportunity to change that. We can help tell the story. We can proclaim 2010 the year of the British home child across Canada. We can give Canadians an opportunity to learn about their past and to collectively recognize the contributions of Canada's British home children and their descendants.

I have received many emails and letters from across this country in support of this motion. Home child organizations, like the Middlemore Atlantic Society, have also received letters. In fact, it recently received one from the leader of the Bloc Québécois, who wrote:

As you know, many Quebeckers are the descendants of these children, who left the United Kingdom between 1869 and 1930, and went on to help build the society we know today. My maternal grandfather was a British Home Child. The Bloc Québécois members will recognize and show their respect for British Home Children by voting in favour of the motion to declare 2010 the Year of the British Home Child.

I am grateful for that support and the non-partisan approach that is apparent in the House. I want to thank all parties for their support of this motion and for their agreement to pass this motion by unanimous consent. I would also like to thank the seconder of this motion, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and member for St. Catharines.

Before I conclude today, I want to acknowledge the efforts and work of the many home child organizations across the country. In particular, I would like to thank the Middlemore Atlantic Society and the Nova Scotia Home Children and Descendants Association for their part in helping to bring this story forward.

I would also like to acknowledge the province of New Brunswick where 2009 was declared the year of the British home child and the province of Nova Scotia where the month of October was dedicated to the home child.

In 2010, Canada Post will issue a stamp commemorating home children and the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism plans to include recognition of their story in citizenship ceremonies.

I encourage my fellow parliamentarians to add to these wonderful initiatives and to join me in officially recognizing 2010 as the year of the British home child across Canada.

• (1115)

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating the member for his motion. All of us in the House were very moved by the comments he made, especially about his ancestors.

For a person who thrives on history, I not only want to tell him that he can look forward to my support but I think we should take it a step further. We should not declare 2010 the year of British home child but perhaps collectively we can talk to our provincial members, who are responsible for the education curriculum, to ensure they teach this part of our Canadian history.

Would he perhaps consider that collectively we should make this effort to tell our provincial counterparts that this is part of our country and history, and that they should put it in the curriculum? Would he consider doing that?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his wonderful suggestion. Certainly, there will be initiatives. This is part of the reason for bringing this forward, that the advocates are strong for the British home children in this country. We would love to see it as part of the curriculum. I appreciate the suggestion. The answer, quite frankly, is yes. We will begin advocacy on every possible way to educate Canadians about this very important group to the heritage of our country.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for bringing forward this motion.

As a first generation Canadian, and I say that with a great deal of respect, as someone who grew up in Glasgow and whose fellow Glaswegians were home children, indeed, I commend the hon. member on behalf of all of those, as I call, my fellows, my lads and my lassies who grew up with me, on recognizing those folks who came here.

The Welland Museum just recently had an exhibit about the home children. It was poignant to see a steamer trunk no bigger than the desks we sit in. That is how small these little ones were when they first came, and to see the shoes of that young person, no bigger than a four-year-old's, that little child could not have been more than four years old.

To see all of that memorabilia intact, all of it, of that child who came to this country all those years ago, and to now see this motion come forward to recognize those young people who came here and to actually say to them, "We thank you for the contributions you made to this country". But we also want to recognize the hardships that they did suffer, that they did endure, and the things that went wrong to ensure that we never actually see that again.

I commend the member, and I, too, will stand in my place to support the motion. I would ask the member to comment on those little ones who came and the kind of suffering they may have endured.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, all of the people who have written to me and who have sent emails have pointed out the hardships and some of the mistreatment of British home children when they did arrive. That is part of the story that needs to be told and that we need to recognize. We also need to look at their descendants and how important this is for their descendants, that we do this as a country. I appreciate the member's sentiments. Some of the people who have made themselves aware to me fall into the category of the people who are out there and who want this story told. I believe we should tell it through this motion. I appreciate the member's support.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. I just want to congratulate the member for the work he has done on this motion.

It is good to hear, from across the floor, regardless of parties, support for this particular motion and what it will mean for 2010. Again, the member for Brant may not have been here for a long time, but he is obviously having an impact on behalf of the residents in his riding.

I would like the member to comment briefly on the impact he believes this will have on the hundreds of thousands of people whose forefathers are part of this. If he could just comment on that briefly, I would appreciate it.

• (1120)

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, I believe the numbers speak for themselves. About 12% of Canada's population are descendants of British home children. Many do not know, perhaps, that they are the descendants of home children. I, myself, was able to find out so much about my uncle and his ancestry. I appreciate the fact that we will pass this motion unanimously. That is my expectation and that we will be able to tell more stories of the Kenneth Bickertons of the world.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House and dedicate my words to our children all over our country who deserve to live in peace and harmony, and who need to be nurtured with love, understanding and compassion.

My hope today is to speak words of encouragement to inspire them to fulfill their destiny, to expand their vision and to find the courage to overcome challenges and accomplish their dreams and aspirations.

Each day for our children should be a day of purpose, one where they experience joy and happiness and pursue their goals with integrity and passion and make a meaningful contribution to their communities, our country and indeed our world.

Our children's lives should be an expression or manifestation of creativity and a source of inspiration for us all. Their sense of curiosity and their free spirit, unencumbered by preconceived notions of reality, should liberate them to create a new and better world, a world of expanded opportunities where all things work for the betterment of our society, where we stretch to get beyond our comfort zone and grow, where we stretch to build greater strength and surpass previous levels of achievement and fulfilment.

Our children need to know that they have our support in choosing hope over fear and in seeking thriving over surviving, success over failure and love over hate. Children need to know that they can count on us to be there for them and that we can be a guiding light for them during their life's journey.

Today, however, the motion we are debating reminds us of a dark chapter in our nation's history. As we reflect on this motion, we are also reminded of other past injustices, moments we regret and are not very proud of, such as the *Komagata Maru* incident of 1914, the Chinese head tax, the immigration rules that prohibited Jewish people from entering Canada, or the internment of Italian Canadians.

Today this motion to designate 2010 the Year of the British Home Child across Canada is a motion I fully support, a motion that the Liberal Party of Canada supports and I hope every single member of Parliament on both sides of the House will support.

Between 1869 and the 1930s, over 100,000 British children, the majority of them under the age of 14, were brought to Canada by British religious charitable agencies and placed with Canadian families as labourers and domestic servants. Many of these children had been in British orphanages or other institutions, often not because they were orphans but because their families lacked the economic means to care for them. They were simply too poor.

Their living conditions in Canada were not closely monitored. They were often vulnerable to mistreatment and abuse. By some accounts as many as four million Canadians are descendants of home children. Their story is a sad story. It is a story of abuse, exploitation, displacement and abandonment, but it is also a story of courage, character, integrity and inner fortitude. Their young lives were emotionally, psychologically and physically painful.

• (1125)

In some cases, they became prisoners of their experiences, of the recorded images inculcated in their minds, images of betrayal, images that brought incredible sadness and pain and in some cases, unfortunately, a sense of learned helplessness. These children began to view the world as a dark uncaring place where no one could be trusted, where every person they met could be another exploiter, another abuser. Their memories were memories of lost childhoods and humiliation, memories that for far too many, broke their spirit. Their memories were filled with images of people and betrayals by people they thought they could actually trust. That lack of trust for people, institutions and, in some cases, themselves eroded their sense of well-being. In some cases, it also broke their self-confidence and instilled fear and self-doubt.

Private Members' Business

However, the vast majority looked within themselves and found the inner strength to overcome these very serious obstacles. In this House, in these comfortable surroundings, it is almost unimaginable to think of the great pain these individuals felt and how impressive it is now to look back and see the great contribution they have made to the growth of this country, the great contribution they have made economically, culturally and, in some cases, spiritually to the growth of Canada. It is hard imagining how these young children, the children who were abandoned, the children who were essentially given away, not because their parents did not love them but because they did not have the means to take care of them, would come to a country like Canada and put that past away, although it is always within their spirit, and bring about the type of positive change to their lives and those of their communities in making an incredible contribution to our country.

For that reason I want to congratulate the member for bringing this to the attention of the House. As I have said to him personally, I support him in a very strong and unequivocal way because children are very special. When I read their stories, I was deeply touched and moved by the reality they had to deal with, the adversity and challenges they had to overcome, to get to where they eventually arrived, the great place called Canada. However, as we debate the motion, which embodies what the very best of Canadian citizenship is truly all about, that we understand that when mistakes are made we apologize for them in many ways, we should never forget that these individuals are truly special people.

I want to leave the House with a final comment, a quote from Martin Luther King Jr. who once said:

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, they were between 6 months and 18 years of age. They were still children: girls filled with dreams and boys filled with energy. Little ones just starting their lives who looked to the future with innocence and genuine hope. They had their whole lives ahead of them. The life they left was perhaps not ideal—many were poor or lived in orphanages—but it was their life. Yet that life would change dramatically overnight.

From 1869 to 1948, Great Britain deported more than 150,000 children in order to populate its colonies. They were loaded by the dozen onto boats bound for Australia, New Zealand and Canada. These children had no idea what awaited them. They had been promised a better life and painted a rosy picture of what lay in store. But when they reached their destination, reality would shatter any dreams they had left.

These thousands of children, some of whom were taken away from their families, travelled across oceans. When they arrived in Canada, the British home children, as they are known today, were used as cheap labour.

Certainly, many of them were mistreated or sexually abused. That is a sad fact, but it is part of Canada's and Quebec's history, and we must acknowledge it today.

That history is also my family's history. My mother's name is H el ene Rowley, and her father was John James Rowley. Of Irish origin, he was born in 1890 in Soho, which was not the radical chic neighbourhood it is today, but one of the poor parts of London depicted in Dickens' novels.

For 10 years, my maternal grandparents lived with us. We celebrated my grandfather's birthday every year on September 6, only to learn when he was in his sixties that he had been born on June 3. Moreover, he died on September 6, 1971, which is a bit ironic.

He never talked about that part of his life. From what I have learned, many home children did not talk about it because they wanted to forget. Many did not talk about it because they were ashamed. Yet they had no reason to be ashamed. Others had reason to be ashamed, but not the victims.

The father of one of my colleagues is also a home child. She does not want to talk about it. There is a code of silence, as in the case of concentration camp survivors who refused for many years to talk about their experience, because they wanted to forget what had happened to them.

I did not know. After I was elected, I was telling my story during an interview, and I explained how my grandfather had come to live here, but I did not know about home children. The association came to see me and told me that my grandfather was more than likely a home child. There are many who do not even know it.

However, I can say that my grandfather was not mistreated. He was taken in by the Leduc family of Saint-Beno t du lac des Deux Montagnes. He had a happy childhood, then met Marie-Joseph Pilon of Rigaud. They had four children, including my mother, H el ene. He was a happy man, a warm man who did not talk about that part of his life. He had forgotten it, or wanted to.

This part of our history is not widely understood. However, British home children and their descendants now represent 12% of the population, some 4 million people. We owe it to them to remember. We must recognize the injustice, the abuse and the suffering, as well as the work these people have done and their contributions to our communities. After all these years, we have to acknowledge their true story, which is also ours.

The shame here is in the wrongdoing, not in the apology. What is shameful is the fact that we tolerated this situation for so long, for nearly a century, that we tacitly accepted this insidious form of slavery. What is shameful here is not having opened our eyes any sooner.

• (1135)

Now it is time to face the facts. The voice of history is loud and clear, and we must respond. We must stand up and apologize to the victims for the tragedy they experienced.

It is not hard to apologize. The Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, apologized during a ceremony in Canberra. The British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, also announced plans for an official apology on behalf of the United Kingdom.

But in Canada, where the majority of British home children were sent, the government is still refusing to recognize the evidence and apologize properly.

We will support this motion. We thank the member for moving it, but more must be done. The government must accept its responsibilities immediately and not only honour the memory of British home children, but also apologize. It is the right thing to do.

[English]

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, loneliness, betrayal, exploitation and loss of love was the plight of over 100,000 home children shipped from England to Canada between 1860 and 1939. Two-thirds of these children were under 14 years of age and two-thirds of them were abused. Some who came were as young as four years old.

Ada Allan, a British home child, said:

All those years, I didn't know what it was to be loved. In those times when they hired you, it was to work. I didn't sit at the table with them...I ate by myself. I was a servant. This grew on me. I felt very inferior even though I knew I was an honest person.

There was also documentation of sexual and physical mistreatment, as well as widespread flouting of regulations that required farmers to pay children's wages into trust accounts. Many of the children did not get any of that money. Then, as the leader of the Bloc said, there is the shame.

Another home child from the Ottawa Valley said:

I was one [a home child]...and a most unhappy and degrading period of my life it was. I don't even want to think about it and I haven't even told my children about it... Nothing except the Grace of God can dim the memory of that terrible period of my life.

The New Democratic Party of Canada supports the motion in front of us to name 2010 as the year of the British home child and the establishment of a commemorative stamp, but it is not enough.

As I said in my letter to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism two weeks ago, the 10,000 British home children and their descendants need a formal apology from Parliament. These home children are now in their nineties and Parliament must give them the honour and recognition they deserve. Canada willingly participated in taking in these children, using them as free child labour. We willingly exploited them and offered no services and no protection to them. More needs to be done.

John Hennessey, a former child migrant, described why Canada accepted 100,000 of these children. On arrival in Fremantle, he and the other children were greeted by a senior clergyman who said, "We need white stock. We need this country to be populated by white stock because we are terrified of the Asian hordes".

We must remember that Canada's immigration policy was quite racist at that time. It inflicted a Chinese head tax, and later the Chinese Exclusion Act, on the Chinese who helped build the railroad. Their children were not able to come to Canada. They too were separated from their families, just as the British children were separated from their families in England.

Hennessey said:

There was no understanding back then of the inner life of a human being. The draconian trauma of being sent across the sea, the loneliness of being placed on

isolated farms, the lack of parental understanding, the treatment and discrimination that they faced because of their cockney accents, all these made it a terrible burden.

There are two more lessons that we can learn from this. First, we should not let our immigration policy be influenced purely and solely by our labour needs and we should not look just for cheap labour in our immigration policy. Second, we must remember that every child is precious and needs his or her parents. Whatever policy we have, whether it is our present live-in caregiver or temporary foreign workers program, we should not separate families.

I am proud as a New Democrat to tell the House that one of the most vocal critics at that time was Major James Coldwell, an early leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, the CCF, which eventually became the New Democratic Party. Major Coldwell was very much opposed to this policy.

Britain continued to ship kids abroad for decades. The home children program came to an end in 1939; however the last batch of home children came to Canada in 1948.

• (1140)

We should be proud of these young men and women, because the British home children helped build this country. An amazing 12% of Canada's population is descended from these British home children. That translates into nearly four million people, or to put it another way, one in every eight Canadians.

We thank all of the British home children for their contribution. They helped build our country. They helped define Canada. Through their perseverance and determination they contributed to Canada. We apologize for the treatment they received.

Let us dedicate ourselves to educate future generations of Canadians so that we understand the history. Let us work together on a formal apology to the 100,000 home children who came to Canada.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to this motion. It is a very important topic, given the number of people involved. As the previous speakers have indicated, between 1870 and 1940, more than 50 child care organizations transported 100,000 allegedly orphaned, abandoned, illegitimate and impoverished children to Canada, supposedly to provide them with better lives than they would have in England. Thousands of children six to fifteen years of age were transported without their parents' knowledge or consent to work as indentured farm labourers and domestic servants until they were 18 years of age. When they turned 16, they were supposed to get some sort of salary, but I do not know that it was very well monitored.

Currently there is an estimated four million descendants of British home children, many of whom are desperately seeking their unknown 20 million British relatives. They are not alone. Millions of Americans and Australians, possibly comprising 10% of their populations, are also unaware of the existence of family members in the United Kingdom.

Private Members' Business

There has been a lot of activity going on, thanks to the member who introduced the motion. The problem I have is that a government member has introduced the motion, and it is certainly a very good step, but I believe that the government has to offer an apology to the home children.

As I understand it so far, the citizenship and immigration minister has absolutely no plans to apologize to the home children. I do not know why that would be. He said he would support the private member's motion, recognizing 2010 as the year of the British home child, and he was prepared to issue a commemorative stamp. Given that this motion appears to have the full support of all 308 members of Parliament, it is just a logical extension from there that an apology should be in order. I would hope that the member who introduced the motion would agree with me on that, but once again, I am not sure why the government is not prepared to do that.

There was a very good letter sent out to government representatives in Nova Scotia. I want to read a couple of parts of it because it is a very well-written letter. The letter says that from 1869 to 1948, institutions in England and Scotland, such as Middlemoor Home and others sent children as young as a few months to 18 years of age to Canada. Industrial cities in the British Isles were overcrowded and Canada needed the workers, so an agreement was struck between these organizations and the British and Canadian governments to settle these children in Canada and later in Australia. I do not know whether a formal agreement was signed or what sort of agreement it was, but at least the letter does talk about an agreement.

The children were to work as farm hands or domestics. The letter goes on to say that some were lucky enough to be adopted. A prospective employer had to make an application for a child, and usually specified the sex and age required. The child was to work for room and board and clothing until the age of 16, when the child would be given a wage. There were to be yearly inspections by a representative of the sending agency and reports were supposed to be filed. The letter says that sometimes this worked, but most often it did not. Many children were not fed or clothed properly. They were beaten. They were forced to live in a barn, cellar or even with the family's dog. Some died from the abuse. The ones who survived were often emotionally scarred.

In later years, not many would talk about their experience, not even telling the truth about where they were from or how they came to Canada. Some did not even know who they were because their names were changed and they were so young when it happened, they did not remember their birth names or who their natural parents were. Yet most overcame these adversities to marry, raise children and become productive citizens. They contributed much to Canada.

● (1145)

Many young men enlisted in the armed forces and fought in the First World War, some repeated this unselfish act by signing up during the Second World War. The immigration scheme was well intentioned and credit must be given to those who tried to save these children for surely a large number of them might have died living in squalor as they did. But now the British and Canadian governments seem to want to sweep it all under the rug. Records are not always readily available and when they are, they can cost 60 to 75 pounds sterling.

They go on to say:

We, the second, third and fourth generations are discovering our ancestors' stories and we want to have them acknowledged. These children were real heroes even

though they were not aware of it and they deserve to be recognized and rewarded for that heroism.

Other pieces of information I had in my file indicated that people were held back from gathering information when they tried to get it from these organizations. Even some of the home children themselves were ignored and were denied information when they tried to look for their relatives. It seemed to be a deliberate attempt to thwart giving information on behalf of the organizations that were involved in sending the children.

This is an extremely important story. Many people are not aware of this. The member for Welland stood up earlier and asked a question of the member who introduced the motion. It is extremely important and interesting that he has a display in the Welland Museum.

It has been a long time since this started to happen and not too many people know about it. Only through activities such as the member introducing motions like this and the letters from which I just read, requesting that members from the Nova Scotia legislature pass a similar motion, are people finding out. If we make a concerted effort then I cannot see why we would not be able to put some pressure on the government to offer the apology about which our member talked.

● (1150)

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we look at this and reflect on what happened, many members have raised the issue of the treatment of young children as they came here and what happened to them, based on the circumstances they faced in their home countries before they left.

As a young boy, I travelled to this country with my parents in 1963. It was a land we did not know and a place where we had no relatives or friends. I think back to those days of being a youngster. I was the eldest of a brother, two sisters and a subsequent brother who was born here. I felt lonely when I came here, but I had my parents, my brother and my two sisters.

I think of what it must have felt like for those very young children. As I described earlier, there was a little one who had a steamer trunk and those tiny shoes. I think about the sort of feelings that little one must have had, as those children travelled all those miles. In those days, they would have travelled by sea. They did not fly over the great ocean like I did, on what was then the 707 Boeing jetliner, which was the largest in the world. It seemed like a celebration.

Yet when I arrived on these shores, I felt lonely for my grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, extended family and friends with whom I had grown up as a child. In my heart, I knew I would probably never see them again. However, thanks to technology and the way certain circumstances unfolded, I did get to see my grandparents and some closer relatives again, but I did not see many others. My great grandfather was alive when I left. I was able to see him one more time before he died at the ripe old age of 94. It left a great hole in my life and indeed a hole in my heart.

For those youngsters who never saw their families again for the rest of their lives, and many did not, knowing they had family must have left big holes in their hearts. They would have remembered the families they had left, even if they were taken away from their home country by family. They travelled such great distances in the early part of the 20th century, knowing for certain they would never see them again. Perhaps they were in untoward circumstances, not to lay the blame today.

I thank the member for bringing the motion forward. The organizations really had great intentions. Unfortunately, the reality did not meet the intentions in a lot of cases. Again, let us celebrate the place where those were met with welcoming families, as the leader of the Bloc said earlier about his grandfather. He was with a family who was joyous to receive him and welcomed him into its home. The family helped him flourish and nourished him, not only from a physical perspective, but from a spiritual one and in a holistic way so he grew to be the man that the leader of the Bloc understood as his grandfather, a great human being. Yet he still did not want to talk about those days and the great piece of them gone missing.

We talked about the 12% of Canadians derived from the stock of those home children. The dilemma is that it is a huge piece of this society, but it is a huge story left untold because of the unnecessary shame they felt. Those youngsters should never have felt shame. They should have simply moved on and said that their stories were important and should be continued.

Therefore, I thank the member and congratulate him. I will surely stand in my place for that.

The Deputy Speaker: There being no other members rising, I will go to the member for Brant for his five minute right of reply.

• (1155)

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank all my colleagues in the House of Commons for expressing their views. By bringing the motion forward, we are not trying to sweep this under the carpet. We want acknowledgement and recognition of the fact that this chapter of Canada's history needs to be told.

Many of these orphans and others who came here contributed to the base core values of our country. They made huge contributions. In the case of my family, I can think of the descendants now, my cousins and second cousins who are now part of the Bickerton family, and how much they have contributed to our country and the well-being of it. Theirs is just one of the many stories to be told.

I respectfully ask the Speaker to bring this to closure, by asking for the unanimous consent of the House to pass the motion?

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is there unanimous consent of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Deputy Speaker: Since private members' business started at 11:06 a.m., the House will suspend until 12:06 p.m.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:56 a.m.)

Privilege

• (1205)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12:05 p.m.)

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair has notice of a question of privilege by the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster and I will hear the member now.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

SEVENTH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today, as you mentioned, on a question of privilege. I am hoping this will not take an inordinate amount of time.

A few days ago the Standing Committee on International Trade presented to the House its seventh report. There is a clear factual inaccuracy in the text of the report, which misrepresents the committee's vote that led to its adoption and, subsequently, leads to an inaccurate or misleading report that has been presented in the House.

The report is based on a motion that I brought to committee, which I indicated to the Speaker of the House in my letter. The evidence of the November 17 meeting of the Standing Committee on International Trade clearly shows that the majority of its members voted in support of the motion that I had brought forward. My vote, it should be noted, was the deciding vote on this matter.

The motion that was passed by the committee urges the government to support the marketing of Canadian cattle and beef exports to a level that establishes a level playing field with Canada's main competitors. There was an additional amendment to the motion, which was then adopted as amended. It constitutes the basis of the seventh report of the Standing Committee on International Trade.

The amendment brought forward by the Liberal Party proposed the following addition to the text, "furthermore, that the Committee urge the government to move quickly to negotiate additional free trade agreements that reduce tariffs and improve market access for Canadian products" after the word "House". Of course, this is non-reportable.

The transcript provides clear evidence that the amendment proposed at that time by the member for Kings—Hants was presented and voted upon as a non-reportable motion, in addition to the reportable text of the motion I had submitted to be inserted after the last sentence in my motion, which expressed the following: "that the committee report this to the House".

Therefore, the Liberal amendment that came after the reportable language in the first part of the motion should not have been included in the committee's report to the House. It was non-reportable.

I submit that the seventh report of the Standing Committee on International Trade should read as follows:

Government Orders

That the Committee urge the government to support the marketing of Canadian cattle and beef exports by increasing the government's promotional budget for Canadian beef, which is currently underfunded, to a level that establishes an equal playing field with Canada's main competitors, including Australia and the United States and that the Committee report this to the House.

I submit that the change to that text, which distorts my and the committee's vote, breaches my privilege. The text of the report, as it currently stands, does not truthfully reflect my November 17 vote in committee and breaches my privilege. I ask that this be allowed to go before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, and at that time I will be seeking a remedy. This is an important precedent that cannot be allowed to stand.

I would like to add that the excellent recent edition by Madam O'Brien and Monsieur Bosc of the *House of Commons Practice and Procedure* states very clearly as precedents the following forms of contempt found by the 1999 report of the United Kingdom Joint Committee on Parliamentary Privilege: deliberately publishing a false or misleading report of the proceedings of the House or a committee; or deliberately altering, suppressing, concealing or destroying a paper required to be produced for the House or a committee. As you know, Mr. Speaker, our parliamentary privilege is founded to a significant extent on traditions and precedents that have been established in the United Kingdom.

I should also note that in the same upgraded edition of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, the excellent edition published this year, there is a very clear precedent that occurred in the year 2000, when Speaker Parent ruled that the premature release by a member of a draft report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration was a prima facie matter that should be debated by the House.

● (1210)

Mr. Speaker, because the report adopted by the committee was not the same report presented in the House, one can say very clearly in this case that either the issue of a change to a committee report or the fact that the committee was never even asked to review the report before it was brought directly to the House is a prima facie case for you to consider.

Mr. Speaker, if you find a prima facie case, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion. I have it here in my hands. I hope you will move to a rapid ruling on this case.

I thank you and the other members of the House for your consideration of this important matter.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster for raising this question of privilege. I understand there were some similar questions raised last week on matters arising from committee.

I should note that the Speaker has consistently encouraged committees to resolve matters within their control, and the question raised by the hon. member today is clearly an issue that has arisen from committee proceedings and certainly falls within the realm of action by the committee.

The international trade committee could, for instance, decide to modify the report presented to the House. Furthermore, as indicated

in the second edition of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 1050:

Ordinarily, presentation of a report to the House is a prerequisite for any question of privilege arising from the proceedings of a committee.

Unlike the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, with its 14th report that it presented to the House on November 26, the international trade committee did not present a report that would bring the attention of the House to a possible breach of privilege.

Accordingly, the Chair is not able to find that a prima facie matter of privilege exists in this case, but I do wish to thank the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster for his intervention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

DISPOSITION OF AN ACT TO AMEND THE EXCISE TAX ACT

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the consideration of the motion under government orders, Government Business No. 8, I move:

That the debate be not further adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places so the Chair will have some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

Given the great degree of interest, I will ask members to keep their questions and responses to about one minute, and we will move through this as orderly as possible.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has moved a motion that the debate on the HST, the harmonized sales tax for Ontario and British Columbia, be not further adjourned.

It is well known that the people of British Columbia and Ontario do not want the HST, as it will create another tax on many things that are not currently taxed, for example, heating and many other things.

I wonder why we have Parliament in this country. That is the question I want to ask the Leader of the Conservative Party. The Conservatives want to ram the bill through without a real debate, where we would take time to debate it and then send it to committee. The government is just ramming the bill through and not giving elected members of Parliament an opportunity to debate it.

The government is saying it is the provinces that asked for it. The provinces asked for it but at the same time the federal government has to take responsibility and allow debate on the bill and allow democracy to take place. I would like to know what the leader—

● (1215)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Government Orders

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite will have to be satisfied with the Minister of Finance, and not the leader, on this question. I am sorry to disappoint.

This is a matter of provincial jurisdiction. Back in the 1990s three provinces chose to harmonize their provincial sales taxes with the federal GST. I might add that these provinces now have governments of various political stripes.

The Liberal Government of Ontario and the Liberal Government of British Columbia are choosing to exercise their autonomous option. They do have jurisdiction. They have tax jurisdiction in their own areas and it is not for the federal Parliament, in our view, to interfere with these autonomous decisions being debated and made in the legislative assemblies of British Columbia and Ontario.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister relates to the proceedings at committee. In paragraph 2, the government motion indicates that “not more than four hours following adoption of the second reading motion, any proceedings before the Committee to which the bill stands referred shall be interrupted”, and then the committee has to report back by 11 p.m.

Then we have the issue of report stage motions. The minister will know that members who do not participate in the committee have the opportunity to issue report stage motions, but cannot do so on matters already dealt with at committee. Since there is no time for the House to report, it means that any members who are serious about considering report stage motions will also actually have to be at the committee to determine what is there in order to ask their question.

I wonder if the Minister of Finance believes that maybe the committee process, or the review of the bill under those proceedings, would effectively render them inconsequential.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Not at all, Mr. Speaker. Any member can attend the committee and I am sure that members who wish to do so will do so, as it is part of their duty and job as parliamentarians.

This is technical framework legislation federally. This is not a revenue issue for the Government of Canada. The revenues of the Government of Canada do not change—

Mr. Peter Julian: Why are you ramming this motion through?

Hon. Jim Flaherty: I hear someone opposite asking why we are doing this now. They need some certainty in the Province of Ontario and the Province of British Columbia. They are planning to do this on July 1.

I would think the NDP would care about people's jobs. This affects people's jobs. Those who work in the revenue departments of British Columbia and Ontario are entitled to some certainty in their lives. Even though the NDP does not care about them, we do and we think they are entitled to some certainty with respect to their jobs.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I will ask hon. members to allow the person who is speaking to do so without interruption.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we do realize the urgency of this. As the minister has said, we need to get

this through for some certainty, not only for the provinces but also for the businesses that operate there.

I would like to read a quote to the minister from Dwight Duncan, our minister's colleague in Ontario. He said:

Ontarians have a great track record of success when we work together to build a better future for our children.

Our goal is a better future powered by a stronger economy. The next step we must take to get there is tax reform.

Specifically, today we propose three significant tax changes.

First, a single value-added sales tax for Ontario.

Second, permanent personal tax relief and three direct payments to Ontarians as we transition to a single sales tax.

Third, comprehensive corporate tax reforms to permanently and significantly reduce business taxes for large and small enterprises across the province.

I ask the finance minister if that indeed is what he has heard from his colleague in Ontario as being very important to them?

• (1220)

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, that is what we have heard not only from the Government of Ontario but also from the Government of British Columbia. They would like to have certainty. They would like to know whether in fact they are going to be harmonizing their taxes within their area of jurisdiction.

This is a minority Parliament. The question that I discussed with members opposite last week was a very simple one: Is this Parliament going to support the decisions being made by those governments in those provinces, supported by votes in their legislative assemblies; or is it not?

It is important that they be respected and be given certainty by this Parliament, one way or the other. I look forward to the votes, one way or the other.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think the question Canadians might have for the finance minister is why ram this through with such speed now? It was only introduced Friday, with no time for people to have any kind of conscious debate.

It is a deeply unpopular tax move. It is the worst tax at the worst possible time for Ontario and British Columbia. It shifts taxes off corporations onto individuals, and we have been hearing from thousands and thousands of British Columbians and Ontarians who are upset and furious because the government has no mandate to do this.

My hon. colleague is so craven to the idea that this is a provincial issue, why did he offer up almost \$6 billion in bribe money that could have been used for something else? Why ram this through now? It is because he knows that this is deeply politically unpopular for his members from British Columbia and Ontario.

Government Orders

Why will he not simply face the truth that we need a debate in the House and recognize that this closure is fundamentally undemocratic?

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley used a term which I find unparliamentary. He may wish to withdraw the term “bribe money”, as something that would impugn the motive of a member.

Therefore, I will invite him to withdraw the remark and then I will go to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it was an unsolicited incentive, using taxpayer dollars to raise taxes on taxpayers. I hope that corrects—

The Deputy Speaker: I will take that as a withdrawal.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, what is fundamentally undemocratic is what the member opposite has proposed, and that is he and his party would substitute their view for the views of the democratically elected members of the legislatures of Ontario and British Columbia. This is solely within their area of tax jurisdiction. It is their decision to make. This is technical framework legislation in the Parliament of Canada, and we should respect the choices that are being made by the provinces.

With respect to the transition funding by the federal government, as it was in the 1990s so it is now. This is done based on a percentage, 1.5%, of the particular province's GST. This is framework legislation can be used in the future if other provinces, in their own autonomous way, make a decision to harmonize.

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask a couple of questions of my hon. colleague from Whitby—Oshawa, the Minister of Finance. As a member from British Columbia, from Kelowna—Lake Country, many of my constituents are seniors and they are concerned about what has happened with their taxes. I am very proud that our government lowered the GST from 7%, to 6%, to 5%, and that we continue to lower taxes across the country.

We have heard from previous speakers about the need to continue to lower taxes to stay competitive. A news release came out of Premier Campbell's office in which he said, “This is the single biggest thing we can do to improve B.C.'s economy”. Also, the Minister of Finance indicated that the PST was an outdated, inefficient and costly tax, some of which was hidden in the price of goods and services and passed on and paid by consumers.

My question for my hon. colleague is twofold. The fact is this request for the HST was at the request of the province not at the request of the federal government, and the federal government does not benefit from the HST.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, on the second part of the question, there is no change in federal government revenues one way or the other as a result of a province, in its own jurisdiction, deciding to harmonize its provincial sales tax with the goods and services tax federally.

Again, as the hon. member has suggested, he is absolutely correct. This is a decision-making process by a particular provincial

government, in this case, the provincial governments of British Columbia and Ontario. They have fulsome debate in their own legislatures and their members vote, as they should, in their own area of constitutional jurisdiction relating to taxation.

What the federal government is called upon to do is to create the technical framework so their decision making can be enabled.

• (1225)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister will know that members of his own party in the legislature of Ontario have been holding up the legislature. They vehemently oppose this. Also, in the two elections that took place in B.C. and Ontario, neither of those governments raised the point of an increase in taxation to people.

I was on a tour this summer and I went to about 17 communities in B.C. and Ontario. I never found one senior who spoke in favour of an HST. In fact, in Elliot Lake, one woman told me her hydro bill was \$2,100 a year and she wondered where she would get the extra 160-odd dollars. She had no place to turn.

The minister says that it will not affect the federal revenues, and I take him at his word. However, spending \$6 billion is going to affect the bottom line, \$6 billion as an incentive for people to sign on to this. I think it is repugnant.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, unlike the member who just spoke, I respect the decision making by elected members of the Ontario legislative assembly and by elected members of the British Columbia legislature.

This is within their constitutional jurisdiction, provincial sales taxes, and what they do with them. Unlike the hon. member, I would not substitute my view as an elected member of the federal parliament for an area in which the province has jurisdiction. I gather he would substitute his view for the duly elected members of the legislative assembly of Ontario.

With respect to the formula, it is in the pattern used in the 1990s. Why he would suggest that the federal government should discriminate against Ontario and British Columbia in the formula and not follow along with what was done in the 1990s for New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia, I do not know. I do not know why he wants to discriminate against British Columbia and Ontario.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, coming from the North, I still do not understand why the government wants to continue pushing this so quickly without having proper debate on it.

Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee stated that it had a population of approximately 52,000 people within 42 first nations communities in Ontario. Most other first nations people in Ontario have treaty and aboriginal rights to a tax exemption. The HST, as proposed, does not provide for point of sale exemption for their people.

Government Orders

I would remind the government that there is an obligation by government to consult and engage first nations prior to significant tax changes, such as tax exemptions. Will the minister or the government commit to doing that prior to pushing this HST?

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, the federal government does not change its way of administering the GST with respect to first nations. The provincial government makes that decision with respect to its provincial sales tax. This is not a matter that concerns the federal Parliament.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians who may be watching this debate today or at least following this story as it unravels are wondering why we, as a federal Parliament, have to take any steps at all to introduce legislation when in fact this is primarily almost entirely a provincial jurisdictional matter.

The Minister of Finance has spoken on a couple of occasions about the technical aspects of the legislation we are bringing forward today. Could the minister perhaps put in more layman language exactly what the federal government is attempting to do today that would facilitate the provincial governments' desire to harmonize their provincial tax with the GST?

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns the provinces of British Columbia and Ontario have, as the Atlantic provinces did when they chose to make these decisions 10 years or so ago, is to make it easier for businesses to do business, so there are not two collectors of tax, at the provincial and at the federal level.

One thing we deal with in framework legislation, which will apply in the future as well, is the collection of the tax by the Government of Canada so there is only one set of paperwork, one set of forms, which is of assistance to small, medium and large businesses in Canada.

• (1230)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister is simply wrong. One party has stood up for ordinary Canadians right across the Canada, and that is the NDP.

In Saskatchewan, when the Conservatives brought in the HST, the Romanow government promptly stopped it. Manitoba has refused to put in place the HST. Darrell Dexter, the new premier of Nova Scotia, is reducing it now on all those family essentials after years of seeing Nova Scotian families gouged. One party is standing up for ordinary Canadians, ordinary British Columbians and ordinary Ontarian families.

The reason why the government is bringing in this bludgeoning of closure is because it is running scared. More and more Canadians, people in Ontario and British Columbia, are becoming aware that \$2,000 for a family of four is going to be ripped out of their pockets in this massive tax shift to help big corporations.

The reason why the government is running scared and is invoking closure is because it knows that 80% of the people in British Columbia are opposed and 80% of the people in Ontario are opposed.

The reason why the Conservatives are running scared is because they lost in New Westminster—Coquitlam, a massive shift in vote, and they know if they run on the HST, they are going to be soundly defeated.

Why such contempt for ordinary British Columbian families, ordinary Ontarian families? Why does the government not allow a debate in the House—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I thought the hon. member were actually sincere in his protestations, I would be concerned. I do thank him and his caucus members for supporting the government in September so we could bring this bill forward in the House.

The relatively newly elected Government of Nova Scotia, which is a New Democratic Party government, has chosen to maintain harmonization in that province.

Mr. Peter Julian: They are cutting it. You know that.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Again, it is passing strange to hear an NDP criticizing a newly elected government in the province of Nova Scotia. He does not really believe a word he says.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member asked the question and then he did not listen to the response. He was not giving the member a chance to answer the question. The Speaker is not going to be recognizing people who ask questions while somebody else is trying to answer the question. They might want to keep that in mind when they are listening to the answers.

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has known about this issue for months. It basically has left this issue deliberately until the last couple of days before Christmas, when people are not paying attention. It is trying to sneak it through.

The whole process is a travesty. The government dumped this motion on us at the last minute. What we are seeing is an absolutely undemocratic approach taken by the government. Next July, Canadians in B.C. and Ontario will face huge tax increases on things they did not pay tax on before. The government is running scared on the issue and that is why it is acting in a very cowardly fashion right now.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, I always like the references to the cowardly lion in *The Wizard of Oz*. I always liked that character. I will probably watch it over the Christmas season.

What is undemocratic is members of the New Democratic Party in the federal House wanting to substitute its views for duly elected members of the legislatures in Ontario and British Columbia. That is undemocratic. They have the responsibility for this, not the members who are elected to the federal House.

Government Orders

There will be three full days of debate. We introduced a notice of ways and means motion some time ago, which has already been voted on in the House. The bill itself has been available to members since Friday, when it was introduced in the House. I know those members do not like to work too hard, but if they want to get the job done, they want to work hard, they want to read the bill, they want further briefings, we will get it for them, if they want to work that hard and if they are serious and sincere in what they have said, which I doubt.

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister just asked us whether we are serious and sincere. I should ask the same thing of the minister himself, a man who would get himself all worked up at Queen's Park every time something did not go his way, a man who has always lectured everyone, saying that our primary role here was to oversee public spending.

How can he stand here in good conscience today as he forces everyone to keep quiet with a procedural guillotine? How can he stand here in good conscience as he imposes a new 8% tax on heating oil in northern Ontario? How can he live with imposing a new tax that will be the culmination of the biggest transfer of corporate taxes to ordinary citizens?

And lastly, how can a man who thinks he can give lessons on honesty to others, when he has always conspired with the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Industry, the whole Mike Harris bench, a man who is now being attacked by Hudak and the other Conservatives from Toronto at Queen's Park, how can he live with himself and his own political party, especially considering what he has said in the past?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that I know several members of the Ontario legislature very well, one in particular. I am really quite fond of her as well, for many years now. We do not always agree and that is part of modern life. We are in a democracy and it is a good thing.

What I will not do is what the hon. member wants to do, and that is purport to substitute my opinion as a federal member for the opinions of the duly elected members of the legislature of the province of Ontario, and the same thing for the elected members of the legislature of the province of British Columbia.

It is not our place to tell them what decisions they should make in their own area of autonomous jurisdiction. I am shocked that an NDP member from Quebec would advocate that we should interfere like that in provincial matters.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask the minister a couple of questions.

I want to begin by assuring him that New Democrats all across the country are profoundly concerned about taxes that are being downloaded onto consumers in order to give yet more tax breaks to multinational and profitable corporations.

My question has to do with the secrecy surrounding this HST. When did the federal government begin its negotiations with the provinces and what consultations were undertaken with the public? Very clearly it is the public that is profoundly upset by the apparent new tax and the effect it will have on them.

Would the minister please explain, if he is so concerned about democracy, why he did not consult the public?

Hon. Jim Flaherty: On the second point, Mr. Speaker, the provinces are responsible for consulting with their populations when they bring forward tax legislation in their area of jurisdiction, which is what they have done, as I understand it, in the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia.

With respect to so-called secrecy, at some point after the last election in Ontario, some discussions began with respect to possible harmonization at the request of the province. It was after the provincial election most recently in the province of British Columbia that discussions began between the minister of finance and me on this subject vis-à-vis British Columbia.

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will keep this very brief. I just want to clear up any possible misperceptions by the viewing public at home because of some of the nonsense coming from the fourth party in the chamber. The finance minister has already indicated in his remarks that the NDP has said that we somehow are not going to allow debate on this. I would like the finance minister to perhaps elaborate a bit more on this.

This is an extremely technical bill that is really all about respecting provincial autonomy to take control of their own—

• (1240)

Mr. Peter Julian: It is closure, and Canadians would not understand, right? And British Columbia would not understand? Shame on you.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Pipe down.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The Speaker has asked hon. members to allow the person either putting a question or answering a question the chance to do so without being interrupted.

I will go back to the government House leader and hopefully I will be able to hear him finish his question.

Hon. Jay Hill: Well, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, due to the shouting and heckling of the member for Burnaby—Douglas I will have to go on a bit further to finish my question.

People should know that after the vote in a few minutes—

An hon. member: Point of order, point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: I see the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas. I assume he is rising to point out the mistake in riding names that was made. The government House leader said Burnaby—Douglas but he may have been referring to another member.

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I will apologize. It was the member for Burnaby—New Westminster who was heckling and shouting and making a nuisance of himself and not his colleague. Sometimes it is hard to tell them apart.

Government Orders

The reality is that we will have a lot of debate today, until 8 p.m. tonight, according to the procedural motion. We will have debate tomorrow on the bill itself at second reading. The bill will then go to committee, as is the usual process. On Wednesday we will have debate at third reading. There is going to be a lot of debate on this highly technical bill that respects provincial jurisdiction.

Far from cutting off debate on this issue, we are going to have a substantial amount of debate. I would like the finance minister to remark on the amount of debate that we are going to have over the next three days on this issue.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, we are going to have substantial debate, as the government House leader has suggested. If members opposite want to actually debate what is in the federal bill, as opposed to what is in the legislation that has been introduced in Ontario which deals with the substance, then we should talk about the provisions in the technical bill. If they need to understand it better, I could certainly make senior officials at the Department of Finance available to take them through it clause by clause.

This federal legislation is not that complicated. It is a technical piece of legislation that would enable the provincial governments to act in their own area of jurisdiction.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is most troubling for Canadians as they watch this debate today is the contempt and the smirks from members of the Conservative Party. The Conservatives are showing their complete disregard for the issue at hand. They do not want to hear the voices of senior citizens of Ontario and British Columbia. They do not want to hear from the people who are going to be most affected by this. These people are calling us and asking us to have their voices heard. The minister and other Conservative members are showing contempt for the senior citizens of Ontario.

The Conservatives say this bill is too technical. They do not want to hear from the people who are going to be affected. They are going to shut down the voices of the people who will be paying extra for their home heating fuel, who will be paying extra when they try to get their RRSP savings.

These people have a right to be heard. That is our job as members of Parliament. The Conservatives can ridicule us all they want, but we are representing our people. The minister and his gang are working with Dalton McGuinty to shut down the voices of people who are going to be paying the hardest for this regressive tax. The minister should at least be honest and say that he does not want to hear from senior citizens because he knows what they are going to say.

That is why the Conservatives are shutting down the debate. That is why we are moving to closure now.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, it is a question of respect for Parliament and respect for our federation. As the member opposite knows or should know, the provinces have sole jurisdiction with respect to areas of provincial taxation. That includes provincial sales taxes.

Ten years or so ago, certain provinces decided to harmonize their provincial sales tax with the federal GST. Two more are in the process of taking that decision. They debate in their own legislatures.

They have their own public consultations. They ask us to help with respect to the collection and framework so they can do it. It is not a revenue question for the Government of Canada or for the Parliament of Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty now to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion that the debate be not further adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 145*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Andrews
Ashfield
Bains
Bélanger
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Byrne
Calandra
Carrie
Clarke
Coady
Cotler
Cummins
D'Amours
Del Mastro
Dosanjh
Dryden
Dykstra
Fast
Flaherty
Folco
Galipeau
Garneau
Glover

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anderson
Armstrong
Bagnell
Baird
Bennett
Bernier
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brison
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Cadman
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Casson
Clement
Coderre
Crombie
Cuzner
Davidson
Dhalla
Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Eyking
Finley
Fletcher
Foote
Gallant
Généreux
Goldring

Government Orders

Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guarnieri	Guergis
Hall Findlay	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoeppner	Holder
Jean	Jennings
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Komarnicki
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKenzie
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Mendes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Pacetti
Paradis	Payne
Pearson	Petit
Poillievre	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Russell	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger
Shea	ShIPLEY
Shory	Silva
Simms	Simson
Smith	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Szabo	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Tonks	Trost
Trudeau	Tweed
Uppal	Valeriotte
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Wallace	Warawa
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NAYS*Members*

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Bevington
Blais	Bouchard
Brunelle	Charlton
Chow	Comartin
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Deschamps	Dewar
Donnelly	Duceppe
Dufour	Faillie
Gagnon	Godin
Gravelle	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	Hughes
Hyer	Julian
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Layton
Lemay	Lévesque
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)

Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Mathysen
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Paillé (Louis-Hébert)	Rafferty
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PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.*[English]***The Speaker:** The House resumed consideration of the motion.

When the matter was last before the House, the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain had the floor for questions and comments consequent upon her speech. There are five minutes remaining in the time allotted for questions and comments for the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

I recognize the hon. member for Mississauga South on questions and comments.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the member's speech she expressed her views, which is always important for the House to hear. I am curious as to whether the member is aware of the fiscal circumstances of the province of Ontario leading into this discussion and whether she is aware if this is tax neutral or in fact a tax drain on the province of Ontario's finances.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really welcome this question because it speaks to the heart of what we have been saying in the House. The federal government, at a time that it has a deficit of \$56 billion, is nonetheless spending \$4.3 billion to bribe Ontarians with their own tax money, so that it can raise their taxes further.

The member is absolutely right. Nobody's personal finances in this economic recession are in the kind of shape where they can afford this additional tax burden. That is absolutely why we are opposing the imposition of the HST. I am really surprised that the member for Mississauga South would not stand up for his constituents, who are as vociferously opposed to this tax as we are. I cannot believe he just voted for closure on this debate. As every Ontario member knows, this tax is going to hurt hard-working families and seniors.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, given that we just had a vote on closure in the House, which essentially shuts down any kind of meaningful public participation, I wonder if the member could comment on the fact that first nations from coast to coast as well as Ontario and British Columbia have not been consulted.

We note, particularly in Ontario, that the point-of-sale tax exemption is a very key issue regarding first nations and their ability to actually manage their own finances. In British Columbia, we know that the first nations have passed a unanimous resolution calling on the government to appropriately consult in regard to taxation policy.

I wonder if the member could comment on the fact that we just voted on closure, which limits that kind of participation.

Government Orders

●(1330)

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, first, let me commend the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, who has been a tireless advocate for first nations, not just when it comes to the HST but with respect to all of the issues that the House should be dealing with in much more detail than we ever are. It is only her voice that is being heard in the House to champion the rights and legislation that should impact first nations. I really want to commend her for her work.

She is absolutely right. First nations need to be heard in this debate. The government espouses the rhetoric of wanting to deal government to government, yet when it comes to things like the HST, it is completely shutting out the aboriginal community. I commend her for speaking out on this issue, as have other members in the House, such as the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing and the member for Churchill. They have all taken up this cause.

It is not just aboriginal communities. Everybody needs to have the opportunity to have input in something that is going to impact their bottom lines so negatively. We need to hear from seniors. We need to hear from hard-working families. We do need to hear from aboriginal Canadians. As I mentioned in my speech earlier, I had the privilege of reading dozens of comments that I have received by email into the record. However, that is just the tip of the iceberg.

We need to have a full debate. We need to give Ontarians an opportunity to be heard on this issue. I think the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan is absolutely right. Closure is disgraceful in this place. This issue deserves a full debate.

The Deputy Speaker: I can take a 30 second question and a 30 second response. The hon. member for Welland.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the finance minister, the provinces want this. In May 2006 he said:

The Government invites all provinces that have not yet done so to engage in discussions on the harmonization of their provincial retail sales taxes with the federal GST.

In light of this quotation, could the member for Hamilton Mountain please tell us what she feels is really behind this closure when it comes to the government and the federal complicity in the HST?

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no doubt that the federal government has had a huge role to play in this. In fact, if the federal government had no role, we would not be debating this issue in the House at this time.

When the member raises questions about the Minister of Finance, I must say that I share his concern. I wonder what his conversations are like at home. As members here will know, his wife is a member of the provincial Conservative caucus that is pretending in Ontario that it is opposed. Yet, they are banging their heads against the majority government when the fight ought to be here.

It is here and I am ashamed to say that the New Democratic Party is the only party that is opposing the HST. I hope people at home realize that. The Liberals and the Bloc have joined forces with the Conservatives in the axis of taxes, which—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity. This is my first experience here with closure.

I have followed politics quite carefully and closely for a long period of time. I remember when the Liberal government used to invoke closure, the Conservatives were up in arms, screaming like banshees about it. I certainly did not get that sense today, that they were outraged by putting that forward.

The interesting thing is that the HST, plainly put, is the wrong tax at the wrong time. I want to give a couple of examples from my riding, people I have talked to, but I also want to debunk a couple of things that the government is saying, along with the McGuinty government in Ontario, is good for the HST.

The government is saying this is really good for small businesses. It is good for small businesses because they are going to be able to get all their inputs back. The fact of the matter in Ontario is that most small- and medium sized businesses have very few inputs that have PST on them right now. So the argument is false.

To presume from that, that it is going to create, and I think the quote has been from the Premier of Ontario, 600,000 new jobs is just the opposite. I have a small business. I know many people and have talked to many people who have small businesses, and not one of them has said that they are going to be hiring somebody because of HST. In fact, it is just the opposite.

Before I get too much further, I would like to say that I will be splitting my time with the member for Vancouver East. I forgot to say that at the beginning, and I hope that it is still acceptable.

I want to give a couple of examples. I will give an example of a gentleman in my riding, and I will not use his name, who says that this tax is certainly going to put him under. This kind of tax at this time, in a recessionary time, means that those who spend most or all of their income every month to survive are no longer going to be able to even survive month to month. That is a real problem.

I spoke to an elderly gentleman in Atikokan, which is right in the middle of my riding. The riding has had its share of troubles over the years since the mines closed in the early 1980s. He came to me and said he could not pay his electricity bill. Keep in mind, he is in his mid-80s or so. He worked all his life. He raised his family. His children are gone and his wife has passed away. He owned his house about 30 years ago or so and he is on a fixed income.

He says, “I cannot pay my electricity bill, and I do not know what to do”. If he cannot pay his electricity bill, what is he going to do when he gets another 8% on his electricity bill, when he gets another 8% on his home heating fuel, or when he gets another 8% on his gasoline purchase? I do not think he drives anymore, so that is not an issue.

He also told me, “I do not know why I cannot pay my electricity bill now because I have one light bulb in my house. I use one light bulb in my house, and every three or four days I turn my refrigerator off and then on again. That is all the electricity I use”.

Government Orders

Now, there is a combination of reasons for that, that do not concern the government, and it happens to be things that Mr. McGuinty has done, smart metres and a couple of other things have started to put daily expenses out of reach for this gentleman, but he is not the only one. I have talked to plenty of seniors and other people on fixed incomes who are having real trouble with HST.

I will give another example. In Emo, in the west end of my riding, we have a number of people who depend on the tourism industry. They have resorts. In this particular case, a gentleman from Emo and his family have run this resort for 35 years. I believe it was his father's before him. The way resorts work, the way the business works, and I am sure everyone in the House will agree with me, is they plow that money back into the business every year to build that business. They do not think about retirement. The only retirement they think about, when they are in the resort tourism business, is that someday they are going to be able to sell that resort, and that is going to be their retirement.

• (1335)

He came to me in Fort Frances and said that he cannot sell his resort; there is no one around who wants to buy it. He said his business is down 50%. There are a combination of factors, and I will briefly describe them.

Two years ago the Ontario government made him get a professional survey for his out-camp. He has a regular resort and then he has an out-camp hundreds of kilometres further north, where he takes people fishing. He had to get a professional survey at his own expense. He did that. The next year he was charged property tax.

That was really tough for him, because he was paying property tax on an out-camp. Why do we pay property tax? It is because we get services. When his place burns down, I am not sure who is going to put the fire out in that out-camp. He does not get any services, so he has been hit again. This time he is going to be hit with 8% HST. There will be some more percentage points on each bed he has.

Let us not always think about 8%, because at this time that flight from his resort to his out-camp has no tax on it at all. He will be charging 13% to tourists, most of them American, to send them to those camps, and his business is down 50%.

He said he would have to go down to Iowa this winter, set up his table and try to get business at the trade shows. Right beside him is going to be a resort owner from Manitoba. The fish in Manitoba and northern Ontario are not that much different. He said he would be standing beside a fellow from Manitoba who will be able to undersell him by \$1,100 to \$1,500 for any package he can offer. He fully expects that in 2010 business will be down another 50%.

Members will remember my opening comments. Resort owners who deal with tourists plow every cent back into their businesses, as do owners of many small businesses and many medium-sized businesses. They look to retirement when they can sell their resort; that becomes their retirement nest egg. Mr. Speaker, this gentleman is not going to have that retirement nest egg because he is being priced right out of business in northwestern Ontario, and HST is just the latest.

There are couple of other interesting things that the Conservative government and the Ontario government talk about when they say that the HST is going to be good for us. One is that they say it is good for investment. That is an interesting statement. If we compare a tax on profits, which would be the normal way of doing things, and this kind of value-added tax, I am not sure we are going to see any investment; we have high unemployment, and more than 50% of the people in Ontario are not even figured into the unemployment figures because either they have given up or moved, or their benefits have lapsed.

The most heinous thing about HST and the government is that they are borrowing \$4.3 billion. This is not money the government has. It is borrowing \$4.3 billion, and the cost of that extra over the next 10 years may be double. It may be \$9 billion or \$10 billion. They are borrowing \$4.3 billion to bribe Ontario into bringing HST in. Ontario is going to send one-time cheques to everyone, cheques of \$350 for single people and \$900 or \$1,000 to families. People in Ontario are going to be bribed with their own money, but it is not even their own money; it is money that the government must borrow to make HST happen.

It is also interesting that although Conservatives talk about money going back into the coffers, the Ontario Minister of Finance said that we will lose on this tax. We will not even make anything on this tax. My goodness, why is it coming here in the first place?

• (1340)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going to have a lot of time to debate this, but I wanted to raise one aspect of this issue.

Currently, provincial sales tax is applied at every stage of the process of a product. There is PST on extracting a raw material. There is PST paid on that again when it is manufactured, and it cascades, so that ultimately, when the consumer purchases a finished product, provincial sales tax has been applied as a tax on a tax on a tax. It cascades through the system.

What that means is that the end product has an extraordinary amount of provincial sales tax incorporated into it. Under the harmonized system with the input tax credits, businesses are in fact going to get a substantial reduction in the cost of the end product being sold to the ultimate consumer.

This is the issue, and the member may have a comment about it: if businesses are going to save all this tax that they have been paying along the line, how are they going to reflect that savings in cash flow with respect to the ultimate price to consumers?

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Speaker, the member is dealing with a couple of falsities to begin with.

The first is that we are going to have a long time for this debate. Apparently we are not going to have a long time for this debate; it is going to be finished today, and that is most unfortunate.

As I said, small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario right now do not get charged PST on most of their inputs. They do not have that particular tax right now. They do have GST, and we know that there is a system of recovering that GST.

Government Orders

Let me give an example to the member of how really disastrous it is for those small businesses, particularly those that are close to the line, close to the profit margin, or just struggling to stay alive.

Many people do not know that the Prairies start in my riding, but they do, and in the west end of my riding there are a lot of cattle farmers. Cattle change hands three, four, maybe five times before they go to the end user, before they go to the market. Cattle farmers in my part of northern Ontario are this close to the line, and if they are putting out money, they cannot wait three or four months to get it back in, because they will not survive.

• (1345)

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River has done a really good job of describing the overall problems while particularly focusing on northwestern Ontario, and I thank him for that.

I have two questions and ideas for the hon. member to help us pass along to those who implement this act.

First, the hon. member did a really good job of talking about the burden on tourism. The tourism industry used to get rebates for its non-Canadian tourism customers, who got a rebate on much of their GST inputs. That has been done away with. I would like to ask him whether he thinks it would be a good idea to reimplement that rebate to the tourism clients.

An even bigger question and idea is this: given the depressed state of rural areas such as northwestern Ontario, which to date has had no help at all for the forest industry from the current government, what does he think of the idea of a tax holiday for areas where the forest industry is down? We have areas that desperately need a tax holiday until they are on their feet again.

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Speaker, my friend from Thunder Bay—Superior North is absolutely right. If the current government and the Ontario government are determined, with the help of the Liberals here, to make this tax a reality in Ontario, I would like to see northern Ontario set aside as an HST-free zone. That would be fair. It is something that needs to be considered and looked at.

Mr. Ed Fast: How about northern B.C.? How about Abbotsford?

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Speaker, it should include northern B.C., for that matter. My goodness, that is an important part of it.

The hon. member also brought up another interesting point, which is that tourists in Ontario will no longer be able to get that tax back when they leave the province, or at least that is my indication. That will stifle tourism. That is another 13% for every tourist who comes into this province.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know that we have only very limited time for this debate, which is very unfortunate. I have to say that on days like this, one feels a sense of shame about what is taking place. The motion that we had in this House a few minutes ago, which is now placing a limit and a closure on debate on the HST, is truly shameful.

As a British Columbian and as someone who has heard not only from so many of my constituents but also from people all across B. C. and indeed other parts of Canada, I feel incredibly disappointed that there are Liberal and Conservative members of this House who

are going along with this proposal to ram through this legislation before Christmas when there is absolutely no reason to do so.

We had the leader of the B.C. NDP here today in Ottawa. In a press conference she held with our leader, she made it clear that in British Columbia they are not even looking at the legislation on the provincial side until spring, so why is the government, aided and abetted by the Liberals, now trying to ram this through?

We come to Parliament to represent our constituents. We all understand that one of the most important issues that we represent in that debate, and why we come here, is the debate over taxation. We in this party, I am proud to say, stand for a fair and progressive taxation system. We believe that taxes should be paid; they produce the services and the programs that can help bring about a sense of equity in our society, whether it is for housing, pensions, social programs, help for veterans or help for the unemployed. We understand that the importance of the taxation system is fundamental to who we are as parliamentarians in the role of government.

However, what we are debating and what is being rammed through here today is legislation that is inherently regressive for people on low and moderate incomes.

I spent all of Saturday in my riding in east Vancouver at the Kingsgate Mall and at the Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House at what we call travelling community offices. I did not raise this subject, but every single constituent I met asked me about the HST, why it was being rammed through here in Ottawa and why that had to happen. I had to say it was because members of Parliament from B.C., other than New Democrats, are refusing to stand up and speak out in favour of their constituents to ensure that in this country we will have a fair and progressive taxation policy and program that will not hit people on low incomes or people who are poor.

I feel very ashamed today that we are having this debate on closure and that we are going to be voting tonight at 8 p.m. Because the Liberals and the Conservatives have worked together to bring forward this closure motion that we voted on a little while ago, this debate will now be eliminated at 8 p.m. tonight. Then this bill will be rammed through tomorrow and the day after, when it did not need to happen. Shame on those members.

One of the constituents I met was someone who was working full time washing dishes in a very popular and fairly expensive restaurant. He showed me his take-home pay stub. His net take-home pay every month was \$890.00, and that constituent is trying to support his wife and his family. He just got moved out of a social housing program. Luckily, he was able to find something else. However, a large percentage of his income is going on rent. To meet constituents one by one, to meet the people who are going to be hard hit by this legislation, is not something to be taken lightly. It is not something that can be brushed off by our being told that in the long run this is going to be good for us.

Government Orders

I can tell members that in B.C. people know intrinsically, they know inside their hearts, they know inside their guts, they know from their chequebooks that this is a bad tax, that it is the wrong tax at the wrong time, that it is being delivered by the wrong people, that it is regressive, that they are going to be hurt by it and that they are going to be paying more money every day for very basic essentials in daily life, whether those are haircuts, vitamins, a taxicab or even a funeral.

I feel very proud that we New Democrats in this House have done everything we can to point out the inequities of this proposal being rammed through by the government.

● (1350)

We have stood up time and time again and said to the government that this is absolutely the wrong course of action to take. It took months for the government even to acknowledge and admit that it had anything to do with it.

We heard from the finance minister and still today Conservatives are saying that this is not really them, that it is the provinces. I can hear them now. They want to duck their responsibility.

The people of B.C. understand that it is the Conservative federal government and the Liberal provincial government that are foisting this on the people of B.C. There is incredibly widespread opposition to this tax. It goes right across the political spectrum. We can see it in the emails. We can see it in the letters to the editor. We can see it in the rallies that have been held. We can see it in the petitions that have been collected all around British Columbia.

We are here today as a very united voice in our party to say that we 100% oppose this regressive tax that will so unfairly hit people particularly during an economic recession.

I think members of the House need to reflect on what is taking place here today and ask themselves why it is that this is being done at this moment. Why does this legislation have to go through before the House recesses on December 12? Why do we have a motion today, which is going to be approved, that will set out debate for two days and the bill will be before the finance committee for a mere four hours?

We can see there has been a gathering of ideological forces between the two major parties. They are determined to try to thwart public opinion, to try to duck their responsibility and to get this out of the way as fast as they can.

We have news for those members who think that by getting the bill through before the House recesses the issue will go away. It is still going to be a major issue in British Columbia. People are still going to be talking about it. They are still going to be signing petitions. They are still going to be raising this issue both in the federal arena and in the provincial arena. They will do everything they can to ensure that the legislation does not go through.

Today as we approach this time limit we should really be thinking about what our responsibilities are as members of Parliament. Our responsibility is to listen to our constituents and to understand the impact of legislation, whether it is this kind of legislation or other legislation. Obviously there is other legislation but at this particular

time it is this piece of legislation that we are talking about and to understand the reality of how it is going to impact people.

We believe that the legislation is ill-conceived and should be scrapped. As we go through this debate, maybe some members will change their minds. I would like the members from B.C. who are supporting it to come into the House and tell us why they are supporting the bill and why they are going against the wishes of their constituents after all that they have heard and after all of the opposition in B.C.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to move an amendment to the motion. I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after paragraph 1 and substituting the following:

“upon the adoption of second reading motion, the Standing Committee on Finance shall undertake public hearings in which opinions of Canadians on this legislation shall be heard; the choices of witnesses to be heard in this process will be made by the Committee; in relation to its study of the Bill, members of the Committee be authorized to travel in Ontario and British Columbia, and that the necessary staff do accompany the Committee; and the Committee shall report these Canadians' views back to this House before February 28, 2010”.

● (1355)

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair will take the amendment under advisement as to whether or not it is in order.

We have a short amount of time for questions and comments before question period. The Chair will come back to the House with a ruling on the admissibility of this amendment after question period.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Vancouver East for enlightening us on what is going to happen with the HST.

The HST is going to apply to a lot of items. I would like the member to comment on some of the things that are going to be taxed, for example, gasoline, utilities, heating, hydro, natural gas. These all concern me but one that concerns me a lot is adult footwear under \$30. Only the poor buy footwear under \$30. I would like the hon. member to comment on the tax on \$30 footwear.

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, I am very glad the member raised this issue, because it does illustrate how hard hit people will be. That is precisely why we moved the amendment, to try to ensure that at least the finance committee will hold public hearings in Ontario and in British Columbia so we can actually hear from people about the impact of this legislation on things like footwear, vitamins, haircuts or other daily provisions that are being hit by this. What we hope to achieve with the amendment is that hearings will be held.

● (1400)

The Deputy Speaker: There will be three minutes left for questions and comments after question period, but now we will move on to statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CANADA-PALESTINE FRIENDSHIP GROUP REPORT

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week I raised a point of order concerning a document circulated to members of the House.

I objected to the failure to identify the document as a product of the Canada-Palestine friendship group. Instead, it was presented with the House of Commons identification on the cover, followed by “A Report of the Parliamentary Delegation to the West Bank and Gaza”. But the members were not delegated by the House nor are they a parliamentary association, which implies taxpayer funding.

More troubling than the misrepresentation of the origin and authors of the report is the one-sided presentation of a complex and multifaceted conflict.

These members toured UNRWA camps. Did they notice that school books depict only one state called Palestine? These members toured illegal tunnels. Did they notice the smell of gunpowder and rocket fuel? Did the members suggest to their hosts that calling for the destruction of a neighbouring state and launching rockets into civilian areas are not landmarks on a path to peace? Finally, did the members take note that a complete Israeli withdrawal that displaced 7,000 settlers from Gaza did not produce an ounce of peace or hope for Israelis or Palestinians caught in the conflict?

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women is a call to action.

[English]

It calls on us to: establish a national action plan on violence against women; establish an inquiry into the over 500 disappeared aboriginal women; maintain the long gun registry as an antidote to domestic violence; replicate the Yukon domestic violence tribunal; enhance protection for victims of trafficking as we combat this global scourge; protect women in armed conflict; ensure affordable, safe housing for women at risk; enact a comprehensive early learning and child care program; protect access to justice through restoration of the court challenges program and secured legal aid; and finally, combat gender inequality, including legislation, with respect to equal pay for work of equal value.

That is a national action plan.

* * *

[Translation]

NEUROLOGICAL DISEASES

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 1934, Dr. Wilder Penfield had the idea of creating a place where medicine and research could be combined in order to improve the quality of care given to people with neurological diseases. This led to

Statements by Members

the creation of the Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital. This world-class medical centre is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year.

Since the beginning, this university medical centre has adopted a multidisciplinary approach to fundamental research into the nervous system, pursuing Dr. Penfield's early work, in order to better understand the causes of neurological diseases. A wealth of accumulated knowledge is contributing to our understanding of these kinds of diseases and bringing hope to the people who suffer from them, as well as to their loved ones.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to commend the efforts of the researchers and doctors who work hard every day to advance science and improve the lives of our fellow citizens.

* * *

[English]

POVERTY

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—KapusKasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, poverty is on the rise. For many, their need has never been greater as we head into the holiday season. Thankfully, there are people on the ground willing to do the hard work needed to help ease the sting of poverty and to make their communities a better place to live.

People like Natalie and Dave Timeriski of Elliot Lake, who organized this year's annual fire services food drive, exemplify the true spirit of giving. Mr. Timeriski, who is also a volunteer firefighter, makes the food drive fun for the volunteers by getting them to work in teams or with their families.

But for those in need, there is little that is fun about the extra challenges at this time of year, especially those with children. In Elliot Lake, food bank use for families with children has risen 69.7% over last year's levels.

In Algoma—Manitoulin—KapusKasing there are countless local campaigns that are raising both awareness and relief in their communities: the Express Père Noël program in Hearst; the Moonbeam Volunteer Firefighters food drive; the Kinsmen Club of Kapuskasing's Santa Claus Fund; or radio station CKAP's food drive. The Elks Lodge of Espanola raised \$8,000 in one day with the help of a radiothon with Moose FM.

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CHALK RIVER LABORATORIES

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize those individuals as well as other interested stakeholders who answered my call to develop my vision of the future for the Chalk River laboratories. That call resulted in the forming of the Chalk River employees ad hoc task force for a national laboratory, known as CREATE.

Statements by Members

I would like to thank doctors Blair Bromley, Rob DeAbreu, Archie Robertson, John Hilborn, Zin Tun, Daniel Banks, Jeremy Whitlock, and CRTT union president Gordon Tapp for all their hard work.

That outward focus includes leading diverse research programs beyond nuclear energy, partnering broadly with universities, industries and government, commercializing knowledge, and spinning off research into business to deliver enduring value to all Canadians.

The centrepiece of this national laboratory will be a new multi-purpose research reactor that the report by the Expert Review Panel on Medical Isotope Production recommended.

Canada will maintain its 60-plus years of leadership that gave it the Nobel prize in physics in 1994.

* * *

•(1405)

GRADUATION CONGRATULATIONS

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour a young man from my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's, who did post-secondary education in the United States and finished at the top of his class.

Brandon Organ is from the small fishing community of Isle aux Morts, which has a population of 813. He completed a bachelor of science and a doctorate of chiropractic at Palmer College of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa.

Brandon finished at the top of his class of 143, with a perfect 4.0 grade point average. He was chosen as class valedictorian after an impressive stay at the college that saw him on the dean's list every year. As well, Brandon has served as president of the Honour's Society.

Brandon is testament to the fact that even the smallest of school systems can produce impressive scholars. He has made his family, friends and home town proud. Brandon intends to return to Newfoundland to work as a chiropractor.

I ask all members to join me in applauding this young man and wishing him all the best in the future.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we Conservatives are delivering real results for our farmers. Last week the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food re-opened China to Canadian pork, and this week Hong Kong is open to Canadian beef.

As we Conservatives work day in and day out to represent our country's hard-working farmers, the Liberal critic for agriculture has decided to go on strike, according to a recent article in *The Western Producer*. When asked why he had not been asking any agriculture questions during question period, the member for Malpeque answered, "Why bother?" He then went on to say of farm leaders, "I am not prepared to fight their fight for better policy and better treatment by the government if they are not prepared to support me".

This is a shocking statement. The member for Malpeque thinks it is all about him, "If you don't support me, I won't support you". I say to him that his job is to support farmers. It is not the job of farmers to support him and the Liberal Party.

As I continue to work diligently for the farmers of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and across Canada, I would like to extend my best wishes to them for a merry Christmas and a prosperous new year. For the Liberal ag critic, I say get back to work.

* * *

[Translation]

RIO TINTO ALCAN

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Rio Tinto Alcan recently announced that it will permanently close its payroll office in Jonquière and transfer operations to Montreal. In the words of union president Alain Gagnon this is nothing less than a slap in the face to the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region.

Rio Tinto, which has recently acquired Quebec's Alcan aluminum company, is continuing to downsize its workforce, thereby disturbing the balance between what it gets out of the region and what it gives back in employment.

The Conservatives, in particular the minister responsible for the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region, are partly responsible for this situation. By not putting any conditions on the acquisition of Alcan, such as the obligation to maintain a certain number of jobs, Rio Tinto Alcan can do whatever it wants and move our jobs to other regions while reaping great benefits from our natural resources. The Conservatives in my region should be ashamed of themselves today.

* * *

[English]

BATTLE OF HONG KONG

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week marks a sombre anniversary for Canadian veterans. It was 68 years ago this week that imperial Japan engaged Canadian troops in Hong Kong. "C Force", as they were known, provided much of the Commonwealth forces in the Battle of Hong Kong that lasted 17 gruelling days.

This weekend the Prime Minister paid tribute to the sacrifice of young Canadians who never returned from the Battle of Hong Kong by laying a wreath at the Sai Wan War Cemetery. The ceremony was also attended by Patricia Osborn, daughter of company Sergeant-Major John Osborn, a Canadian hero who died in combat in Hong Kong. He received a posthumous Victoria Cross for his actions in protecting his fellow troops, Canada's first in World War II.

Canadians today remain proud defenders of freedom, democracy and justice around the world. I agree with the Prime Minister's remarks, "It is the men and women of the Canadian Forces who defend our way of life and keep Canada, the true north strong and free".

Statements by Members

●(1410)

KAIROS

Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, KAIROS assists the world's poorest countries and is recognized as one of Canada's most respected and important charitable organizations. After nearly 40 years of funding from successive Liberal and Progressive Conservative governments, KAIROS has had its funding cut off because its programs do not "fit" with Reform-Conservative priorities.

As recently noted in media reports, this is money that would have been used to help resettle people who had lost their homes and livelihoods because of rising sea levels, or to help a legal clinic in the Congo that assists rape victims, among other crucial projects. These cuts are unconscionable and are nothing less than a censure against a Canadian multi-faith organization for speaking out against regressive Conservative policies on climate change, overseas mining operations, aboriginal rights, immigration and international trade.

The government must continue to fund KAIROS so it may continue its invaluable work in helping the world's poor.

* * *

[Translation]

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals should be ashamed of themselves for delaying bills to protect the health and safety of families.

Earlier this year, our Conservative government introduced the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act. Protecting Canadians and Quebecers from dangerous products is something we take very seriously.

The bill was passed by the House in June, but has been blocked in the Senate by the Liberals ever since. They are proposing amendments that will considerably weaken the bill and not in any way better protect the health and safety of Quebecers and Canadians.

The Leader of the Opposition is not even capable of telling his Liberal colleagues in the Senate to stop dragging their feet and pass this bill.

Let us restore this bill to its original form and pass it now. We are talking about the health and protection of Quebecers and Canadians, especially our children.

* * *

[English]

KAIROS

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for years, the faith-based Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiative KAIROS has helped Canada work for justice internationally and at home. Now KAIROS, which unites 11 Canadian churches and organizations, representing millions of Christians, is itself threatened by CIDA's decision to end funding.

At risk is human rights and development work, such as: in the Congo, where KAIROS helped fight rape as a weapon of war; in

Indonesia, where it aided those who disappeared and victims of violence; and in Colombia, where it nurtures a grassroots organization running 22 women's centres. A woman in Sault Ste. Marie reminds me how KAIROS brought a Sudanese refugee to area schools. She wonders how else any teenager in the Sault would otherwise actually know about the real Sudan refugee story.

KAIROS and other non-profits should not foot the bill for stimulus funding. Why bankrupt such a respected organization? I urge the government to restore CIDA funding to KAIROS.

* * *

TRADE

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's recent visits to China and India are delivering results for Canadians. Approved destination status will bring millions of Chinese tourist dollars to Canadian businesses. Canadian pork and canola producers will benefit from bigger and better access to the Chinese market. Our nuclear co-operation agreement with India will provide tremendous opportunities for Canada's civilian nuclear industry.

In 13 years the Liberals signed a paltry three free trade agreements and caused long-term damage to our relationship with India. The Liberals are even helping the NDP hold up our trade agreement with Colombia. In less than four years, our Conservative government has concluded five new free trade agreements with eight countries. We have launched historic negotiations with the European Union and India, two of the world's largest markets.

The facts speak for themselves. When it comes to opposing protectionism and promoting free trade, our government is leading by example.

* * *

[Translation]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first nations chiefs are meeting in Ottawa this week for their first Special Chiefs Assembly under the leadership of their new national chief, Shawn Atleo.

In July, I could feel the excitement during the election and the final vote, the results of which were revealed at 7 a.m. Those hours before the results were revealed were a perfect opportunity for the chiefs to discuss issues affecting first nations. They are urging the government to respect them by adopting the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and to invest heavily in access to education for aboriginal peoples, which is one of the government's responsibilities.

I urge all parliamentarians to attend the reception this evening and to participate in the many discussion sessions and talks that are going on all week.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I welcome the chiefs and their delegation, and I wish them a good week of reflection.

Oral Questions

•(1415)
[English]

GERALD YETMAN

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, November 27, Cape Breton and Canada lost a leader and dedicated public servant in Gerald Yetman.

A veteran of the merchant marine in World War II, Mr. Yetman moved to North Sydney and became a strong voice for labour in Cape Breton. He served as the president of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, a national representative of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and president of the Cape Breton District Labour Council. He was also a councillor and the deputy warden for Victoria County.

Gerald Yetman was honoured with a medal in 1993 for his dedication to public service on the 125th anniversary of Confederation. A great orator and strong defender of the worker, Mr. Yetman was much loved, especially by his family. A man of great passion, he would go out of his way to help people whether he knew them or not.

I therefore ask all members of the House to recognize the contribution of Mr. Yetman to his community, his country and his family.

* * *

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government will always put the health and safety of Canadians first. It takes the issue of protecting everyone, especially children, from dangerous products very seriously.

That is why we introduced Bill C-6 to protect Canadians from dangerous products. This House passed Bill C-6 in June and the Liberal leader's senators have held the bill up in the Senate since. Now they are trying to gut it.

The Liberal leader must recognize the need for this important legislation, which would make it easier to recall a product as soon as inspectors determined it was a danger. If the Liberal leader will not make the health and safety of Canadians a priority, it is no wonder there are Liberals whispering in lounges across Ottawa.

The Liberal leader needs to tell his senators that this is an important bill. The new tools would help protect Canadian families. If the Liberal leader will not take action, he is only proving what we said before. He is not in it for Canadians; he is just in it for himself.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for months now, the Minister of National Defence has been claiming that there is no evidence that Afghan prisoners transferred by the Canadian Forces were tortured. However, the sworn testimony of Canadian officials is contradicting the minister.

Obviously, the minister has misled Canadians. Will he admit it and finally tell the truth?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the story the Leader of the Opposition raises is one that was raised in this House more than two and a half years ago.

The Vice Chief of Defence Staff, now the CDS, issued a statement over two and a half years ago stating that the Afghan in question was not detained, was not captured and was not transferred by the Canadian Forces.

I hope the member opposite will stand in this place and apologize to the men and women in uniform.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the point is that the Canadian Forces did their job; the question is whether the government did its job.

The issue here is that the minister says one thing, but a Canadian field officer's diary and sworn testimony say another. I would prefer to believe the testimony of the officer and not the minister opposite.

Can he give me a reason to believe anything he says?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for more than three years, we have seen the Liberal Party and the members opposite smear our brave men and women in uniform.

The Chief of Defence Staff, a man who has bravely worn the Canadian uniform for decades, has been abundantly clear. He issued a statement more than two and a half years ago, stating that the Afghan in question was not detained, was not captured and was not transferred by the Canadian Forces.

The Leader of the Opposition should be up on his feet commending the work of our troops and the contribution they have been making under difficult circumstances, and stop this fearmongering.

•(1420)

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is precisely a case where the Canadian Forces did their job. They saw someone being beaten, his face covered in blood, and they did the right thing. This side of the House did the right thing.

For a year the government had credible evidence this had occurred and it did nothing. What kind of government, what kind of Canadian government, refuses to act on credible accusations of torture, evidence of torture and in this case evidence provided by Canadian Forces?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be as clear as I can. When Canadian Forces personnel, when Canadian officials, are presented with clear and substantiated evidence, they have always acted.

Let us be very clear on another point. The Afghan in question was not a Canadian detainee, and our men and women in uniform did the right thing. They should be honoured for that contribution, honoured for their sacrifice. The member opposite should apologize to those men and women in uniform.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2007, the Conservatives said they wanted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50 megatonnes by 2010. They said it was essential to meeting their 2020 target.

Since then, we have seen no regulations, no price on carbon, no credit trading system and no plan.

By how many megatonnes have large industrial emitters reduced their emissions since the Conservatives were elected in 2006?

[English]

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our target is clear. Our policy is clear. Canadians support it, and the hon. member knows that.

The important issue right now is that today is the first day of the Copenhagen conference. Canada wants to see an international agreement arrived at in Copenhagen. It is very much in our interest to have an agreement negotiated in Copenhagen.

Our country is prepared to shoulder its fair share of responsibility under that agreement. Moreover, we are prepared at the table, having the finest minds in the world on climate change sitting as Canada's negotiators at the table.

I encourage the hon. member, knowing that he will be at Copenhagen, and hope that he will work with us constructively in the best interests of Canada.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts.

After declining in absolute terms between 2003 and 2006, Canada's emissions grew by 29 megatonnes in 2007, the single largest increase since 1990, making Canada the worst performer in the G8.

The United States and all of Europe have credible plans. They support international emissions trading. They have tabled or passed regulations for their entire economies. Canada has none of this.

These Reform-Conservatives are lurching from denial to damage control, isolating Canada, risking our environmental and economic future. Why?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to reiterate, our target is clear. Our plan and policy is clear and Canadians support it.

Now I do not want to be completely disparaging of the Liberals in the House, but at Kyoto they were excited: they had a target but they had no plan. Now they are enthused about Copenhagen, but they have a plan and they do not have a target. This could only be said to be progress in the way that Churchill described progress for Liberals, which is lurching from failure to failure with enthusiasm.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government reiterated that it will be speaking with only one voice in Copenhagen. However, not only does Canada's position contradict that of Quebec, it is harmful to Quebec. Its position is

contrary to that of the National Assembly and Quebec's environmentalists and businesspeople. The Minister of the Environment even had the nerve to say that his position was not negotiable. And today, Canada was given the fossil award in Copenhagen.

How can the government say to us that its position on climate change is in Quebec's interest when Quebec is unanimously against it?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is the first day of the Copenhagen summit. We want an agreement and Canada will participate actively. Canada will assume its fair share of the responsibility for reaching an agreement. We are delighted that Quebec is part of the delegation. It is unprecedented. Quebec will be participating proactively as part of the Canadian delegation.

● (1425)

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that Quebec is not represented by this government in Copenhagen because the Canadian government's position goes against Quebec's interests. It could not be clearer. Just look at the position of this government, which is supported by the oil companies and defends Alberta to the detriment of Quebec.

How can token Quebecers tell us the opposite in this House?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not up to the leader of a sovereignist party to tell us how to make the Canadian federation work. That does not make sense.

Having said that, I will remind the House that we are working with targets. At present, the American targets, those of the Obama administration, are comparable to ours. They should stop trying to divide the country. We are taking an industry-by-industry approach and not trying to pit one province against another. That is something the sovereignist leader will never say because Quebec does play an active role, Quebec has taken action and Quebec will be compensated.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment justifies his greenhouse gas emission targets by saying that if Canada did more than the United States, there would be economic impact without any real environmental improvement, and that if we do less, there could be some economic retaliation.

Does the minister realize that with reduction targets that are lower than those in Europe, Quebec companies, the primary exporters to that market, could be the first victims of potential "retaliatory tariffs"?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a simple plan. We want to reach an agreement in principle in Copenhagen, which will serve as a basis for a new international treaty. We also want a binding agreement on all the major emitters. We will have harmonized targets and regulations with the United States. President Obama already announced yesterday that his country has a reduction target of 17%. That is almost the same as the Canadian target. We must continue to coordinate our efforts in the fight against climate change.

Oral Questions

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have learned that since 1996 no fewer than 1,570 lobbyists paid by industrialists, and in particular by the oil companies in the west, have intervened to convince the government to do as little as possible to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Will the Minister of the Environment acknowledge that his cautious greenhouse gas reduction policy is nothing more than a policy dictated by the oil companies and their lobbyists?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I consulted extensively with everyone involved and with all the provinces leading up to Copenhagen. I invited the provinces to join the official Canadian delegation. That is a first in our country's history. In Copenhagen, the provincial representatives will have considerable support. However, Canada will speak with a single voice in Copenhagen, and that will be the voice of the federal government.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the whole world is demanding action on climate change. That is exactly what the NDP asked for and proposed in its Bill C-311.

Yet the Conservatives are treating Copenhagen the same way the Liberals signed Kyoto: as a big public relations stunt, nothing more. We need action, but the government does not have a plan, nor is it taking concrete action.

When will this government show real environmental leadership for Canada?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government, our minister and our Prime Minister will continue to work very hard to produce a solid agreement in Copenhagen. Canada will do its part. We will continue to work with the provinces, with industry and with non-governmental groups to come up with an agreement that will really benefit our environment.

[*English*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they are calling us a corrupt petro-state and the dirty old man of the climate world. Our international reputation is at an all-time low because our emissions are growing faster than those of practically any other country in the world, and that is a result of successive government policies.

The government has no plan and no regulations in place. In fact it is making it up as it goes along. It just recently abandoned its foolish intensity targets, and has nothing to replace those with.

When are we going to see some real leadership from this government on climate change? That is what the world wants at Copenhagen.

• (1430)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I say very directly to my friend, the leader of the NDP, that not a single tonne of carbon is reduced when he runs down Canada and repeats those mischaracterizations of the position of the Canadian government or the actions of our country.

We are committed to working with the Obama administration. We are committed to working with our partners at the UNFCCC in Copenhagen to get a strong, effective agreement that delivers the goods for Canada, that delivers the goods for the environment.

Canada, as a rich country, is prepared to do its part and we are looking forward to a successful negotiation in Copenhagen.

* * *

DISABILITY AND HEALTH BENEFITS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government often speaks of working together. Here is an opportunity, because last week, my colleague, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, presented Bill C-487, which would address the situation of long-term disabled workers.

These are workers who are left out in the cold when a company goes bankrupt. It is very tough for them to find alternative work. It is probably not likely for many of them and they are literally left without hope. Here is an opportunity, because it really is our responsibility as legislators to make sure they are in a situation where they can be protected. It is our responsibility.

Will the minister undertake today to support the bill that we put before the House and work with us to get it passed?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think all of us know that long-tenured workers have had difficulty transitioning into new jobs and often need more long-term training.

We have made unprecedented investments in training, including training specifically for long-tenured workers, to help get Canadians back to work. We have made unprecedented investments to help those who, through no fault of their own, have fallen on hard times and lost their jobs.

The minister will continue to work with all members and all Canadians on achieving real results for these Canadians who need help.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in January 2008, Brigadier General Deschamps confirmed under oath that in December of 2006, a Canadian detainee who was turned over to Afghan police was severely beaten.

The Minister of National Defence has claimed repeatedly that there has not been a single proven allegation of detainee abuse. Brigadier General Deschamps and Colonel Noonan are no Taliban dupes.

Will the minister now apologize for misleading the House? Will the government now provide the complete, uncensored documents regarding abuse of Taliban detainees?

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this story is about two and a half years old. It was discussed in the House two and a half years ago. It is not a story about transferring detainees to the prison system; it is a story about a mission in the field.

Oral Questions

The patrol was with the Afghan forces. The Afghans took control of the individual. They proceeded to abuse him. Canadian soldiers stepped in and did the right thing, and we should be proud of that.

What it points out is that everyone, from the Prime Minister to the soldier in the field, is doing the right job and will continue to do that.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a story about Brigadier General Joseph Deschamps, who was the chief of staff for operations in Canada's expeditionary forces in January 2008. He said, under oath, that the government was not telling the truth.

The evidence given by Brigadier General Deschamps and Colonel Noonan proves beyond a doubt that there were proven reported incidents of abuse of Canadian-transferred detainees.

Would the Minister of National Defence now apologize for misleading the House and provide complete uncensored documents regarding detainee abuse?

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this was not a Canadian-transferred detainee. This was a person taken control of by the Afghan authorities.

If anybody should apologize, it should be that member, who has called senior officers of the Canadian Forces legally flimsy, negligent, liars, war criminals, and morally weak. I think if anybody should apologize, it is that hon. member.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is the one saying that these two soldiers are not telling the truth.

During his testimony, Richard Colvin, another of the people it is attacking, stated that his briefing notes included allegations of torture. However, in the heavily-censored documents, these allegations suddenly seem to have been blacked out. It is now clear that the minister himself played a significant role in censoring these documents.

Can the minister explain to Canadians why he tried to hide the truth by censoring these documents?

• (1435)

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a bunch of nonsense. I hope the hon. member will get on her feet and apologize to the Minister of National Defence.

There is a three-part test in determining whether information should be withheld from the public on the grounds of international relations, national defence or national security. The test is applied by government officials with subject matter expertise. It is not applied by the minister or the political staff.

The hon. member should get on her feet and apologize right now to this House.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the government apologizes for using

the military the way it has, as props for its cover-up, that is the day that the sun will rise and descend on the same day. It is nonsense.

Last week, the bureaucrats claimed the government, the minister, had a role in the redaction of documents. Now the government and that minister are claiming they do not. Who is telling the truth?

The minister knew about the allegations. He tried to cover up. He should explain to Canadians why he continues to hide the truth. Why does he not fess up? His fingerprints are all over those documents.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has been caught out with that outrageous claim before. She has not done the right thing which is to apologize to the Minister of National Defence. She should get up and pay homage to those individuals, those experts within the public service, who have no other interest but the best interest of this country, and protecting men and women in this country. That is who does the redacting. She should get up on her feet and apologize to this House.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence maintains that there is no evidence that Afghan detainees were tortured. Yet Canadian officers have admitted under oath that at least one detainee transferred by Canada was severely beaten by the Afghan police in June 2006. The testimony given by Colonel Noonan and Brigadier General Deschamps clearly contradicts the minister.

Will the Minister of National Defence acknowledge that he misled the House by claiming that the detainees handed over to Afghan authorities were not tortured?

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the member is saying is completely false.

[*English*]

We have already addressed that. It was addressed in the House two and a half years ago. The simple fact is it was not a detainee transferred by Canadian Forces. It was an Afghan picked up in the process of the joint patrol by Canadian Forces and Afghan forces. When the Canadian soldiers realized that the Afghan detainee was being abused by the Afghan national police, they took action, as we would expect them to. They took the same kind of action that officials at all levels have taken when they have seen that action is necessary.

Canadian Forces members, governments, everybody along the line, has done the proper thing at the proper time.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the army did what it had to do.

The Minister of National Defence is trying to shirk his responsibilities. He said he denied the existence of torture in Afghanistan based on advice he received from his generals and senior officials. After claiming that opposition members were somehow dupes of the Taliban, now the minister has another excuse: Canadian Forces personnel are to blame.

Oral Questions

Instead of trying to find a scapegoat, why will the minister not simply tell the truth?

[English]

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have never said this is the military's fault. The military has been acting in good faith with the agreements that have been in place, just as the government has been acting in good faith, and frankly, just as the previous government acted in good faith on the arrangements that were in place at the time.

This is not a new story. Members opposite are hashing this out like it is some kind of revelation. This is an old story that was talked about in this House almost three years ago. This is absolute nonsense. They are trying to pick fly droppings out of pepper to build a story around, and it will just not work.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we were dismayed to learn that the Minister of International Cooperation is getting ready to cut funding for two NGOs: KAIROS and Alternatives. KAIROS has been working with CIDA for 35 years, and Alternatives is a major NGO in Quebec that has been active in international cooperation since 1994.

Can the minister tell us why she wants to cut funding for these NGOs, which work in the areas of human rights, social justice, democracy and poverty reduction? Could it be because of their progressive ideas?

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's question gives me an opportunity to re-articulate our government's commitment to effective international development and aid.

We want to make sure we are making a difference. That is why we are supporting strengthening justice systems, human rights commissions and ombudsmen. We are also ensuring that people on the ground are getting access to education and better health care.

These efforts are really making a difference in the lives of those living in poverty.

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has funded these NGOs for many years, because of the important services they provide and the values they promote.

Why does the Minister of International Cooperation want to prevent them from continuing their work, if not to punish them for the positions they are taking in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we have articulated, we want to ensure that our

international efforts are effective. This means that tough decisions will have to be made.

However, it also means we will continue to support the Primate's World Relief, which is working in Bangladesh, Mozambique and Tanzania improving the health care for women and working on HIV-AIDS; the Catholic Agency for International Aid and Development, because it is supporting national literacy; the Mennonite Central Committee, because it is providing food security and income generation; the United Church of Canada, because it is also providing support for increased—

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

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week we learned that KAIROS, a respected Christian NGO, was being cut. It represents one of the largest churches in Canada. Its only sin, apparently, was speaking out against the government's dismal human rights record and environmental record. It appears that anyone criticizing this government will be cut.

After 36 years, what other explanation can this minister give for cutting KAIROS funding with no advance warning?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Scarborough—Guildwood for the question because it was his bill that our government supported which firmly entrenches poverty reduction that underlines CIDA's work.

As I reported to the House, there are now over a billion people living in extreme poverty. That is why we will continue to support work that provides better health care, improved literacy, food security, water and sanitation facilities. That is why we continue to support the Primate's World Relief, the Catholic Agency for International Aid and Development, the Mennonite Central Committee and the United Church of Canada.

As the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca has said, tough choices will have to be made—

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

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is ridiculous. The Anglican Church of Canada, the Mennonite Central Committee, the Presbyterian Church, the Catholic Church, the Lutherans, Development and Peace, and Quakers, are all being branded as subversive because they have the temerity to criticize this Conservative government.

Will the minister immediately restore funding to KAIROS to ensure that Canada's aid dollars are being spent in accordance with Bill C-293 just as these organizations want it done?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just indicated, we support the Primate's World Relief from the Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church, the United Church, and World Vision, all of those church-based faiths.

The projects they are working on are actually making a difference, as I just said, with regard to health care, literacy, food security, water and sanitation.

Oral Questions

In fact, it was a member of his party who said, “Tough choices will have to be made. You can't be all things to all people”. Right now Canada wants to make a real difference.

* * *

[Translation]

POSTAL SERVICE

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2006, more than 55,000 Canadians living in rural areas have lost the right to home mail delivery. More than 40 post offices have been closed.

Many Canadian seniors, like 86-year-old Elsie Bédard, now have to travel long distances to pick up their mail.

All Canadians should have the right to the same service, no matter where they live. The Liberal Party does not want a Canada where rural regions are penalized for the benefit of urban centres.

Why has the government done nothing to stop 55,000 Canadians from being deprived of home mail delivery?

• (1445)

[English]

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely false. When it comes to rural delivery, this government has put in a charter that actually guarantees a universal, effective and economically viable postal system right across the country.

That is a charter, which is an agreement between Canada Post and the people of Canada. On top of that charter there is a moratorium on any closures of post offices. We are acting and Canada Post is delivering.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if there were an agreement between the people of Canada and Canada Post, people would not be after federal MPs to change things.

[English]

Arlene Parks and other seniors of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, are losing their rural mail service and will now have to walk long distances or drive to get their mail. There are examples of this all across this country.

Regardless of where Canadians live, they have a right to an equal quality of service. The Liberal Party does not support a Canada in which rural Canada has a lower level of service than urban Canada.

Why has the government done nothing to ensure that rural Canadians have the same rights to have the same service? Tell us why.

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely false. In fact, we put it in a charter to make sure there is a universal, effective and economically viable postal system right across the country.

Rural delivery will take place. The charter says: two days for local delivery, three days for national delivery and four days for international delivery.

That is what the charter says. Canada Post is guaranteeing that the mail is getting through. That is what is happening and we are making sure that it can do it.

* * *

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal senators, led by the Liberal leader, amended our consumer protection bill last week. These changes significantly weaken the bill and actually make it easier to protect animals than our own children.

Clearly, the Liberal leader has a complete disregard for the health and welfare of Canadians.

Could the hon. Minister of Health please tell us why it is so important to pass the bill as it was passed by the House without these damaging amendments?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week under the direction of the Liberal leader, Liberal senators voted together to gut our consumer protection bill. These amendments are weak and contrary to the intent of the bill that was passed unanimously by members of the House.

They will cause confusion and uncertainty for industry, but more importantly will weaken the protection afforded by the original bill to those who will be purchasing gifts over the holiday season.

One death is one death too many. The Liberal leader, who has now admitted that he does not like the amendments, should share his reasons why with the senators and order them to vote down the amendments.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the *Globe and Mail* has just published sworn testimony by senior Canadian military officers and uncensored evidence that contradicts the repeated claims of the Minister of National Defence.

In this House, on nine separate occasions, the defence minister has said that no proof exists of even a single case of a Canadian-transferred detainee abused by Afghan security forces. We now know that this is not true.

Will the minister apologize for misleading the House and Canadian people, and will he finally commit to a full and independent public inquiry?

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again this is absolutely false. It is apples and oranges. We are talking about an issue that arose in the House two and a half or three years ago. It was discussed at that time.

It is not an issue of a Canadian transfer into the prison system. It is an issue or a situation of an operation in the field that was conducted, and when Canadian soldiers saw that something was going inappropriately, they took action.

Oral Questions

There has never been a single proven allegation of abuse of a Canadian-transferred detainee into the prison system in Afghanistan. They are definitely clutching at straws, and it is just not going to work, because Canadians can see through this.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is not what the eye witnesses say, the Canadian military officers and soldiers who testified and wrote notes at the time.

With every passing day there comes a new revelation of this massive government cover-up of transfer to torture. With every passing day we get a new excuse from the Minister of National Defence.

Now that we know he misled the House, he has decided to blame generals by saying he relied on the advice they gave him. It is totally unacceptable to be passing the buck and trying to blame our dedicated military leaders or public servants.

When will the minister finally admit that the responsibility is his as Minister of National Defence?

• (1450)

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is simply outrageous. We have never blamed the military. We have supported the decisions made in the field by the military under very difficult circumstances in very good faith, just as the government has acted in very good faith.

We supported the military decisions then. We support the military decisions today, and we will support the military decisions tomorrow.

The member is incorrect.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government seems incapable of implementing employment insurance measures that meet the real needs of workers in Quebec.

While the government's temporary program to encourage the training of older workers is supposed to apply to 50,000 workers, we learn that barely 6,000 workers—again, barely 6,000—have used it because the eligibility conditions are too restrictive.

What is the minister waiting for to acknowledge her mistake and ease the eligibility criteria in order to meet the needs of the unemployed?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our transition assistance program allows those who have lost their employment to get employment insurance while receiving training for two years.

We are working together with the provinces since this is a provincial jurisdiction. We invite the Government of Quebec and the other provinces to promote this program in order for more workers or people who have lost their jobs to benefit from it.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the employment insurance benefits extension is based on the same thinking as the temporary labour training program. Since both programs are based on the same thinking and since the forestry workers have gone through too many periods of unemployment to be eligible for either program, only a fraction of the 190,000 claimants targeted by the government will benefit from an extension of employment insurance benefits.

What is the minister waiting for to ease the eligibility criteria in order to help the unemployed?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the transition assistance envelope is \$500 million. We are offering this program to the provinces so that long-tenured workers who have lost their jobs and want to get new training, or make a transition, can benefit from employment insurance during that period.

I repeat: this is a provincial jurisdiction, but we are making money available to the provinces to help workers who lose their jobs. We invite the Government of Quebec and the other provinces to promote this program among workers who have lost their employment.

* * *

MUSEUMS

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to ignore the labour dispute between the war and civilization museum workers and their employer. If the dispute drags on, planning for summer camps, which allow our school children to discover our rich heritage, will not be completed.

How will the Conservatives explain to those children and their parents that their summer camp has been cancelled?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we were working with both parties even before the strike began. It is always difficult for workers to choose to go on strike. It is a legal strike. We could appoint an arbitrator but both sides must agree. In this case, one side did not and therefore arbitration cannot be considered.

[*English*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the labour minister cannot impose binding arbitration unless both parties agree to it. However, the museum's management is accountable to the heritage minister.

When will he finally direct the museum's director to start negotiating in good faith with its employees so that an honourable accord can be reached?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with both parties since before the strike began. It is always a very difficult decision for workers to make when they do go on strike, but this is a legal strike.

As the member knows, we could appoint an arbitrator, but we do need both sides to agree to that, and at this point we do not have agreement from both parties. Recently the union overwhelmingly rejected the employer's offer.

We continue to ask both parties to return to the table as soon as possible.

* * *

• (1455)

[Translation]

TAX HARMONIZATION

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, implementing the HST is a bad idea for consumers, who will have to pay more taxes on everyday goods.

The HST is also bad for citizens of northern Ontario, who must travel great distances by car and who will be paying more taxes on gasoline. What is very worrisome is that the aboriginal peoples of Ontario will lose basic rights with the HST.

Why is this government intent on attacking consumers' wallets and violating aboriginal rights?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has framework legislation before Parliament now because we respect the autonomy of the provinces and their areas of exclusive jurisdiction, like provincial sales tax. As it was for New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia ten years or so ago, so it is now for two other provinces.

We on this side of the House do not think we ought to discriminate between provinces and their areas of jurisdiction, nor do we, unlike the NDP, think Parliament ought to.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the HST is hugely unpopular in B.C., but that political problem should not be an excuse for the Conservatives to ram the HST through the House at all costs. They are denying British Columbians a chance to be heard. There will be no committee hearings, no public consultation, no debate, none in B.C. The Conservatives have become the distant, uncaring, tax-hiking government they used to rail against.

What is the hurry? Why are the Conservatives in such a mad rush to deny British Columbians a say on the HST?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, British Columbians have had their say when it comes to taxes and they voted for a government that believes in lowering taxes.

The NDP in the province of British Columbia stepped forward twice in a row and Carole James, the provincial NDP leader, was rejected twice in a row by the people of British Columbia.

British Columbians know that it is Conservatives who believe in lower taxes and it is members of the NDP who believe in higher taxes. That is the simple fact of the matter. We have lowered the GST and income taxes. We have lowered taxes across the board for Canadians.

British Columbians understand that if they want high taxes they will vote for the NDP. If they want low taxes, they will vote for the Conservatives.

Oral Questions

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government continues to invest in vital infrastructure across Canada in order to stimulate the economy and create jobs for Canadians.

I agree with the Prime Minister that we need to increase trade and not protectionism during these tough economic times, especially in my region, which was hit hard by the recent downturn.

Could the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities tell the House about the new developments with respect to the Detroit River international crossing and its significance to Canadians?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the member for Essex for all his work on infrastructure in both Essex and in the City of Windsor.

Last week the Detroit River international crossing project received the necessary federal environmental assessment approval. This is a huge step forward to a new bridge that would be a bridge for trade, a bridge for jobs, and a bridge for southwestern Ontario. This is another example of this government stepping up with billions of dollars of support, even when projects are not in a Conservative riding.

When this project goes ahead, it will create literally thousands of jobs in Windsor and Essex, and they are in this country, which really needs a shot in the arm.

* * *

UNITED STATES STEEL CORPORATION

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2007, U.S. Steel took over Stelco, a company which has Canadian roots going back over 200 years.

As a condition of its purchase, U.S. Steel committed to maintaining 3,000 jobs. Unfortunately, U.S. Steel has not kept that commitment. It has closed its production in Nanticoke, laying off hundreds.

Where is the government? Why has it failed to maintain these jobs? Why is the government absent on this file?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a curious question, because this government is in court against U.S. Steel. For the first time in the history of the legislation, we are suing its butt off.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Suzanne Laplante-Edward, mother of Anne-Marie Edward, who was killed when just 21 years old in the École Polytechnique massacre, deplors the fact that the Conservative government is perversely dismantling the firearms registry. By relaxing firearms controls, the Conservatives are attacking, and I quote, “the monument erected in memory of our young women.”

When will this government acknowledge that the firearms registry helps prevent violence against women?

● (1500)

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC): Mr. Speaker, any suggestion that any member in this House would not want to see an end to violence against women is not only wrong, it is hateful. The ineffective Liberal gun registry has done absolutely nothing to protect Canadians and it has done nothing to make Canadian women safer. The hon. member will know this if he looks deep inside himself.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL AID

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the last few days the government announced it is cutting funding for renowned faith-based Canadian foreign aid group KAIROS and for Alternatives. These groups advocate for human rights, clean drinking water, democratic governance and social justice in developing countries that have been ripped apart by decades of war and corruption. Canada used to have a history of fighting world poverty. Now that is not a government priority.

Why is the government cutting funding to KAIROS and Alternatives instead of applauding and supporting their good international work just when it is needed the most?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear. This government supports and will continue to support the good work of religious and church-based organizations. In fact we work with the Adventists Development and Relief Agency, the Canadian Baptist Ministries, the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, Canadian Lutheran World Relief, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Evangelical Mission Church of Canada, the Mennonite Central Committee, the Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, the Presbyterian World Service and Development, the Anglican Church, the United Church, the Salvation Army, World—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our nation has always been proud of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Historically the spouses of those who sacrificed their lives in both world wars as well as Korea were given

priority placement in the public service. Can the President of the Treasury Board tell the House how we have updated this practice?

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, military families have always been a priority for our government. That is why I am pleased to tell the House that the Public Service Commission has been working with government departments on some important changes to help military families. These proposed regulations will give priority for externally advertised public service positions to surviving spouses or common-law partners of persons employed in the public service, members of the Canadian Forces and members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Any form of assistance that helps these families deal with injury and loss is the least that we can do for our men and women in uniform.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Order, please. I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Michael Murphy, Attorney General and Minister of Justice and Consumer Affairs for New Brunswick.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth and fifth reports of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. The fourth report is in relation to Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and other Acts, and the fifth report is on the statutory review of the Sex Offender Information Registration Act.

● (1505)

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in relation to supplementary estimates (B), 2009-10.

[Translation]

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology in relation to its study on supplementary estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates with respect to the supplementary estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

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CANADA ACT

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-488, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act (disclosure of undertakings and demands).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce in the House private member's Bill C-488, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act (disclosure of undertakings and demands). When a foreign company takes over a Canadian company, it often must first make undertakings to Industry Canada to ensure that the acquisition will be a net benefit to the country. Currently, these undertakings are confidential under the Investment Canada Act. I believe Canadians have the right to know what commitments a foreign company has made when it takes over a Canadian company, especially when it concerns our natural resources.

The bill would allow any Canadian citizen the right to request that these undertakings be made public. With recent events with Xstrata, Vale Inco and U.S. Steel, it is time for Parliament to introduce transparency and accountability to foreign takeover agreements.

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

* * *

INCO LIMITED ACQUISITION ACT

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-489, An Act respecting the acquisition of Inco Limited by CVRD Canada Inc.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce in the House a private member's bill, an act respecting the acquisition of Inco Limited by CVRD Canada Inc. Vale, formerly CVRD, acquired Canada-owned mining company Inco in October 2006. At that time, the company made a commitment to Industry Canada to not lay off any of its Canadian workers for a period of three years.

Despite this commitment, Vale Inco has made a series of layoff announcements this year. I have made requests to have these undertakings made public by the Minister of Industry, Vale Inco and the House of Commons and through the Access to Information Act and have repeatedly been denied.

I therefore present this legislation, which would release the details of the Vale Inco agreement along with any correspondence between the minister and the company and its enforcement.

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

● (1510)

[Translation]

FALCONBRIDGE LIMITED ACQUISITION ACT

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-490, An Act respecting the acquisition of Falconbridge Limited by Xstrata PLC.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce a private member's bill respecting the acquisition of Falconbridge by Xstrata PLC.

Xstrata acquired Canadian mining company Falconbridge in July 2006. At the time, Xstrata promised Industry Canada that it would not lay off any Canadian workers for three years, but that did not prevent it from firing 686 employees. In the House of Commons, I asked the Minister of Industry to make the agreements in question public, and I also asked the government under the Access to Information Act, but have so far received no response.

I am therefore introducing this bill to publish the details of the agreement signed with Xstrata and all correspondence exchanged between the minister and the company about enforcement of that agreement.

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

* * *

[English]

OLYMPIC FLAME TORCHBEARERS

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been extensive consultations among all parties and if you were to seek it, I think you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, at 2 p.m. on Thursday, December 10, 2009, the House resolve itself into committee of the whole in order to welcome torchbearers carrying the Olympic flame; that the Speaker be permitted to preside over the committee of the whole and make welcoming remarks on behalf of the House; and, when the proceedings of the committee have concluded or at 2:20 p.m., whichever comes first, the committee shall rise and the House shall resume its business as though it were 2 p.m., provided that the time taken for the proceedings be added to the time provided for government orders on that day.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

DARFUR

Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present a petition signed by numerous residents of my constituency in Guelph.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners seek federal action to expedite the end of the atrocities in Darfur. Specifically, they call upon the Government of Canada to help end the attacks by militias on the ethnic Darfur people and continue humanitarian aid to the Darfur-Chad refugee camps.

I present this petition on behalf of my constituents.

INTERNATIONAL AID

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition entitled Canadian Grandmothers for Africa, a national advocacy network, undersigned by many Canadians across the country.

The residents of Canada petition the House of Commons to ensure that Canada sets a timetable to meet by 2015 its 40 year old promise to contribute 0.7% of our gross national product to development assistance, as well as to contribute its fair share to the global fight against AIDS, TB and malaria, that is 5% of the funding needed for the next five years, and make legislative changes necessary for Canada's Access to Medicine Regime to facilitate the immediate and sustainable flow of lower cost generic medicines to developing countries.

[*Translation*]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with the Copenhagen climate change conference opening today, I have the honour to present a petition signed by 10,000 people from the Quebec City and Chaudière-Appalaches regions. The petitioners are calling for Canada to implement significant greenhouse gas reductions of at least 25% by 2020, using 1990 as the reference year. They also want concrete solutions before an ambitious agreement is signed in Copenhagen.

I thank all of the individuals and groups who helped make this extensive operation possible, including Équiterre, the Conseil régional de l'environnement de la Capitale nationale, and Nature Québec.

The Conservative government reminded us once again this morning that it does not plan to make any new concessions during negotiations in Copenhagen, and that it will adopt a take it or leave it approach. This petition urges the Prime Minister to change his climate change policy and to consider the disastrous economic, social, human and environmental consequences climate change can have.

• (1515)

[*English*]

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a number of petitions.

The first petition calls for the Government of Canada to support a universal declaration on animal welfare. This petition, signed by a number of Ontario residents, acknowledges that animals often feel pain and suffer. It also acknowledges the significant role animals play in our lives. This effort would help prevent animal cruelty and reduce animal suffering.

PENSIONS

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to present 10 petitions from Canadians.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to make changes to the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act and the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. These changes will help to protect the rights of all Canadian employees and to ensure that employees receiving pensions or long-term disability benefits laid off by a company undergoing bankruptcy proceedings will obtain preferred creditor status over other unsecured creditors.

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present.

The first petition concerns rural post offices. One of the things we know about public post offices is they connect communities throughout this vast land, helping us to overcome differences and distances. Public post offices play a key role in our social and economic lives by providing the infrastructure that healthy communities need to thrive and for businesses to grow.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to instruct Canada Post to maintain and improve its network of public post offices and to consult with the public, their elected representatives, postal unions and other major stakeholders to develop a uniform and democratic process for making changes to this network.

Rural post offices are very important to Nanaimo—Cowichan.

SALMON FISHERY

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition calls for the judicial inquiry on the salmon crisis. We know the judicial inquiry has been called, but we also know the length of time, up until 2011, is simply too long for interim action.

The petitioners urgently call upon the government to establish an independent judicial inquiry under the Federal Inquiry Act to fully explore all the facts, consult with scientists and stakeholders to determine what went wrong with this year's sockeye run and to present a public report with binding solutions within six months.

I would also urge the government to include first nations throughout the province in the judicial inquiry. They have an important role to play in looking at what went wrong with the fisheries.

PENSIONS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 and as certified by the Clerk of Petitions, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of pensioners and retirees, particularly those on long-term disability benefits, pursuant to plans of companies like Nortel.

The petitioners from my riding of Mississauga South call upon Parliament to amend the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act and the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to protect the rights of all Canadians and to ensure that employees who receive pensions or long-term disability benefits and who are laid off by a company during bankruptcy proceedings obtain preferred creditor status over other unsecured creditors. They also ask that the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act be amended to ensure that employee-related claims are paid from proceeds of Canadian asset sales before funds are permitted to leave the country.

I believe this is an important petition and I hope the government will heed the pleadings of these petitioners.

AVIATION SAFETY

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have here petitions that are signed by hundreds of Canadians from every province in the Confederation, from British Columbia through Ontario, Quebec, the Prairies and right through to Atlantic Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador.

The petitioners are concerned about the government's implementation of the so-called safety management systems, or self-serve safety. They are concerned about financial considerations outweighing safety. They are concerned about Canada losing its safety record and that we may no longer even be compliant with our obligations to the International Civil Aviation Organization.

On behalf of these petitioners, I would like to table this petition. They call upon the government to initiate a commission of inquiry that would conduct a judicial review into Canada's state of aviation safety. They are concerned about our safety, and they have right to be.

• (1520)

SALMON FISHERY

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to present a petition with many hundreds of names on it, calling for the inquiry, which the federal government eventually relented to, on the collapse of the sockeye fishery on the west coast.

What is important about this petition effort is New Democrats have been receiving names and signatures from people right across British Columbia, and in fact across Canada, imploring the government to act with some sort of responsible management over our fishery. It has proven itself to be a fruitful exercise. Canadians, when they wrote this petition, signed it and talked about it with their friends. They were able to force the government to do something it said was not necessary.

I remember the Conservative candidate in the recent byelection said that it would be a witch hunt and that we did not even need it. The Conservatives were out of touch with British Columbians.

These Canadians who signed this petition calling for this inquiry saw the right path forward. Through pressure like this, they were able to make the Conservative government act like a proper government and force this inquiry to happen.

Routine Proceedings

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my petition is signed by dozens of Manitobans and calls for equal employment insurance benefits for adoptive parents.

Canadians realize that adoption is important and compassionate in a just society. The current EI program provides adoptive parents with only 35 weeks of paid leave, followed by a further 15 weeks of unpaid leave. The biological mother is given both the first 35 weeks and the latter 15 weeks of paid leave.

We all know that adoptions are expensive, lengthy and stressful to the adoptive parents and their families. Recent studies have shown that the additional 15 weeks of paid leave will help these parents to support their adopted children and help them through a very difficult period.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to support Bill C-413, tabled by the MP for Burnaby—New Westminster, which would amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code to ensure that an adoptive parent would be entitled to the same number of weeks of paid leave as the biological mother of a newborn child.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition, signed by well over 100 of my constituents. The petitioners recognize that over a billion people worldwide rely on animals for their livelihoods and for companionship.

They call upon the government to support a universal declaration of animal welfare.

AVIATION SAFETY

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to table a petition that calls for a commission of inquiry into safety aviation.

The petitioners are concerned by the fact that Transport Canada is reducing traditional oversight and inspection methods and is delegating its responsibilities to aviation companies via a safety management system. They also are concerned with the fact that the Government of Canada has sought amendments to the Aeronautics Act that continue secrecy provisions and do not effectively protect whistleblowers. Other concerns are with regard to Canadian aviation regulations, financial considerations versus safety, lack of investigations from the Transport Safety Board, as well as a few other pertinent concerns.

As previously mentioned, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to initiate a commission of inquiry, headed by a Superior Court judge, to conduct a judicial review into Canada's state of national aviation safety and government oversight of the aviation industry.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present, signed by Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners ask the Government of Canada to initiate a commission of inquiry to conduct a judicial review into Canada's state of national aviation safety.

These are the voices of Canadians who are concerned about the government's wish to recede from the role that it should play in ensuring that our aviation systems are safe. As someone who has survived a plane crash and represents many communities where travelling by air is the only way one is going to get out, we know air safety is nothing to be played around with. These Canadians know. We want the government to act.

TRANSPORT

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions.

The first petitioner is from a group of cyclists in my riding. They even ride bicycles in the winter. Right now, they are concerned that there are no side guards on trucks.

They call upon the Government of Canada to introduce a regulation under the Motor Vehicle Safety Act requiring side under run guards for large trucks and trailers to prevent cyclists and pedestrians from being pulled under the wheels of these vehicles. They note that in European countries this is already in place. They also note that, according to 1993 coroner reports on the death of cyclists, 37% of collisions resulting in cyclist fatalities involved large trucks. These side guards can save lives.

Therefore, they ask the federal government to take action.

• (1525)

CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition regarding people who work abroad and what is going to happen to their children.

Prime ministers have been in different countries encouraging trade. We have noticed that, as of April 17, 2009, children and grandchildren of Canadian ex-pat and adoptive families have had their citizenships downgraded, or worse, stripped away. These families, which recently were able to pass on their Canadian citizenship for their born-abroad children, have had such rights stripped away.

They call upon the Government of Canada to adopt NDP Bill C-397, which would restore equality among all Canadians no matter where they are born and ensure that the citizenship status of the children and grandchildren of Canadian families that work overseas and government diplomats would not be downgraded or stripped away outright. That would cause statelessness in some born-abroad children. They ask that we remain in compliance with Canada's ratification of the 1961 convention on the reduction of statelessness, et cetera.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my last petition is a large one. It concerns a universal declaration on animal welfare.

Given the recent controversy around the Toronto Humane Society and that animals can feel pain and suffer, we should make all efforts

to prevent animal cruelty and reduce animal suffering. Over a billion people around the world rely on animals for their livelihoods. Many others rely on animals for companionship. Half of Canadians have a pet.

Therefore, they petition the Government of Canada to support a universal declaration on animal welfare.

The Speaker: The time for presenting petitions has expired. We will proceed with questions on the order paper. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 474, 477, 478, 479, 485, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 507, 508, 509, 511, 512, 515, 518, 519, 520, 522, 523, 524, 525, 528, 530, 531, 532, 537, 543, 544, 545, 546, 554, 555, 556, 557, 563, 577, 578 and 579.

[Text]

Question No. 474—**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:**

With regard to the mission in Afghanistan: (a) what contingencies have been developed in the event that the Canadian military mission is extended beyond 2011; (b) what ministerial resources have been devoted to this effort; (c) what major material purchases have been acquired to facilitate such contingency; and (d) what measures have been taken to prepare our human resources in the Armed Forces for the contingency of extension?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), the Chief of the Defence Staff has issued direction to redeploy Canadian Forces from Afghanistan in accordance with the parliamentary motion on Afghanistan of March 13, 2008. The Department of National Defence has not developed contingencies for the extension of the Canadian military mission in Afghanistan beyond 2011.

In response to (b), the Department of National Defence has not devoted any ministerial resources to planning for an extension of the Canadian military mission in Afghanistan beyond 2011 as the Chief of the Defence Staff has issued direction to redeploy Canadian Forces from Afghanistan in accordance with the parliamentary motion on Afghanistan of March 13, 2008.

In response to (c), the Department of National Defence has not acquired major materials to facilitate any contingency for an extension of the Canadian military mission in Afghanistan beyond 2011 as the Chief of the Defence Staff has issued direction to redeploy Canadian Forces from Afghanistan in accordance with the parliamentary motion on Afghanistan of March 13, 2008.

Routine Proceedings

In response to (d), the Canadian Forces continues to prepare and train high-readiness forces for use in domestic or international missions as directed by the Government of Canada. However, the Department of National Defence has not taken any specific measures to prepare human resources in the Canadian Forces for an extension of the Canadian military mission in Afghanistan beyond 2011 as the Chief of the Defence Staff has issued direction to redeploy Canadian forces from Afghanistan in accordance with the parliamentary motion on Afghanistan of March 13, 2008.

Question No. 477—**Hon. John McCallum:**

With respect to section 3.7 of the Treasury Board's Policies and Guidelines for Ministers' Offices, between October 19, 2007 and October 19, 2009 what is the total amount of funds dispersed from the Consolidated Revenue Fund to pay for: (a) severance pay for departing exempt staff of the combined Cabinet including the Prime Minister's Office, all Ministers' offices and all Ministers of States' offices; and (b) separation pay for departing exempt staff of the combined Cabinet including the Prime Minister's Office, all Ministers' offices and all Ministers of States' offices?

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, between October 19, 2007 and October 19, 2009 the total amounts of funds dispersed from the consolidated revenue fund to pay for severance and separation pay for departing exempt staff of the combined cabinet including the Prime Minister's Office, all ministers' offices and all ministers of states' offices were (a) \$2,013,300, and (b) \$4,907,032 respectively.

Question No. 478—**Hon. Irwin Cotler:**

With respect to the prosecution, under the Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act, of alleged perpetrators of such crimes, does the government intend: (a) to improve the rate of war crimes prosecution in Canada; and (b) to double the budget of the Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Program of the Department of Justice, in order to facilitate increased prosecutions thereunder?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), the government is committed to prosecuting individuals involved in crimes against humanity, war crimes, or genocide. The government is committed to ensuring that Canada will not be a safe haven for anyone involved in crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide.

In response to (b), the government is considering future funding options for the program.

Question No. 479—**Hon. Irwin Cotler:**

With respect to the Iranian leadership's comments concerning Israel and Jews, does the government: (a) recognize that Iran has committed the crime of incitement to genocide under international legal instruments; (b) intend to act to combat Iranian incitement to genocide; (c) intend to refer Iran to the United Nations Security Council for discussion and action regarding its state-sanctioned incitement to genocide; and (d) intend to initiate before the International Court of Justice an interstate complaint against Iran?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, in response to (a) and (b), in September 2009, the Minister of Foreign Affairs led the Canadian delegation in walking out of the United Nations General Assembly as President Ahmadinejad was delivering his speech. This action was taken in order to protest his repugnant statements against Israel and his continual denial of the Holocaust, as well as Iran's blatant disregard for the basic human rights of its citizens and foreign nationals, including Canadian Zahra Kazemi, whose death remains unexplained. We were followed by many like-minded members of the international community, including the United States and most

European countries. Our actions demonstrated Canada's leadership and commitment to taking a clear position on Iran's unacceptable behaviour.

Canada has long been outspoken in the UN and elsewhere about the unacceptable undemocratic practices and deplorable human rights record of the Government of Iran. We are deeply concerned that the human rights situation in Iran has deteriorated significantly in 2009, especially following the June 12 presidential elections. As part of its ongoing efforts to focus the international community's attention on the human rights situation in Iran, Canada, along with 41 co-sponsors, tabled a resolution on the human rights situation in Iran on October 29, 2009, at the third committee of the United Nations General Assembly, UNGA, for the seventh consecutive year. The resolution was adopted by the third committee of the UNGA on November 20, 2009. It expresses particular concern about the human rights violations committed by the Government of Iran following the June 12, 2009, presidential election. The resolution calls on the Government of Iran to fully respect its human rights obligations and implement previous resolutions and to cooperate with international human rights mechanisms by redressing its inadequate record of co-operation with international human rights mechanisms. It also encourages Iran to "continue exploring cooperation on human rights and justice reform with the United Nations, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights". The adoption of the Canada-led resolution is another clear signal of the international community's concern for the human rights of people in Iran. It sends a message of hope to the victims of violations, and to the human rights defenders who seek to effect positive change in Iran.

The international community has a responsibility to address egregious violations of human rights. Canada, along with much of the international community, believes it is important that we continue to exert pressure on the Iranian regime to improve the current situation for the people of Iran.

In response to (c), if Canada were to refer Iran to the UNSC regarding its remarks calling for the eradication of the State of Israel, it is unlikely that the UNSC would take any action, thereby handing Iran an undesirable political victory. Instead, as outlined in the 2009 UN resolution on the human rights situation in Iran, Canada will continue to press the Iranian government to grant access to the special rapporteurs on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; and on the situation of human rights defenders access to Iran; as well as the working group on arbitrary detention and the working group on enforced or involuntary disappearances; in order to monitor human rights violations writ large.

In response to (d), it is unclear whether the International Court of Justice would be able to take jurisdiction in this case. An unsuccessful attempt at pursuing Iran in this forum would hand the regime an undesirable political victory. Moreover, Israel, as the state party most concerned with this matter, has not brought an action before the ICJ.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 485—Ms. Siobhan Coady:**

With regards to government advertising, how much money has the government spent on television and radio advertising since August 15, 2008, giving particulars of (i) how much has been spent by each department or agency of government, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 485 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 490—Hon. Scott Brison:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between September 1 and 30, 2006 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 490 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

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government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 491—Hon. Scott Brison:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between August 1 and 31 2006 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 491 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 492—Hon. Scott Brison:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between July 1 and 31, 2006 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 492 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

Routine Proceedings

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgscc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 493—Hon. Scott Brison:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between June 1 and 30, 2006 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 493 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgscc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 494—Mr. Rodger Cuzner:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between May 1 and 31, 2006 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 494 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgscc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 495—Mr. Rodger Cuzner:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between April 1 and 30, 2006 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 495 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

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These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgscc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 496—Mr. Rodger Cuzner:**

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between March 1 and 31, 2006 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 496 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

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Question No. 497—Mr. Rodger Cuzner:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between February 1 and 28, 2006 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 497 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage

government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 507—Ms. Megan Leslie:

With regard to the recommendations contained in the report entitled "Spiralling out of Control, Lessons Learned from a Boy in Trouble—Report of the Nunn Commission of Inquiry", released in December 2006 by the Minister of Justice, what is the current status of any action that the government has taken to meet these recommendations?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Nova Scotia shared with the Government of Canada the 2006 report of the Nunn commission entitled "Spiralling out of Control, Lessons Learned from a Boy in Trouble" in which recommendations were directed to the provincial government. Many of those recommendations stressed the need for improved services for at-risk youth, and urged improvements to the administration of justice for youth. A few called upon the provincial government to lobby the federal government for changes to the federal Youth Criminal Justice Act, particularly in the area of the pretrial detention and release.

While the provision of programs for at-risk youth is largely a provincial responsibility, significant federal crime prevention resources directed at high-risk youth have gone to Nova Scotia. These programs include: building crime prevention knowledge in Atlantic Canada, \$331,838 over three years to the Atlantic Coordinating Committee for Crime Prevention and Community Safety; Youth advocate program, \$1.9 million over four years to the Halifax regional municipality; and Saint Mary's University Pals program, \$342,000 from 2007 to Saint Mary's University.

The Government of Canada took issues raised by the Nunn commission and others about issues with pretrial detention and release in the youth justice systems very seriously. A consultation paper on pretrial detention and release, which included issues raised in the Nunn commission report, was shared in the spring of 2007 and feedback was received.

On November 19, 2007, Bill C-25, An Act to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act was introduced. Among other provisions, it proposed amendments to the pretrial detention sections of the federal youth justice legislation. This bill was supported by the Attorney General of Nova Scotia.

Over the past year, the government conducted a comprehensive review of the Youth Criminal Justice Act to hear what Canadians have to say on youth justice. The review brought forward valuable input for the government to consider as we work to improve our youth criminal justice system.

Although Bill C-25, An Act to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act died with the dissolution of Parliament in September 2008, the Government remains committed to introducing amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act that will strengthen the youth criminal justice system, including pretrial detention and release provisions.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 508—Mr. Michael Savage:**

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between February 1 and 28, 2007 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 508 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 509—Mr. Michael Savage:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between March 1 and 31, 2007 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 509 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage

government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 511—Hon. Geoff Regan:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between October 1 and 31, 2006 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 511 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 512—Hon. Geoff Regan:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between November 1 and 30, 2006 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 512 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

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The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

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Question No. 515—Mr. Francis Valeriotte:

With regard to the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario): (a) what is the date that FedDev Ontario was created through order in council; (b) what is the total amount of money to be allocated from the Agency's 2009-2010 funds for the Agency's 2009-2010 operating expenses, and how much has been spent to date; (c) what happens to funds allocated either to programs or operating expenses that were not spent by the Agency during the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010; (d) on what dates did the Agency, and each of FedDev Ontario's regional offices in Ottawa, Toronto, Kitchener, Peterborough and Stratford begin incurring operating expenses; (e) what is the number of staff hired to date and expected to be hired in 2009-2010 for each of FedDev Ontario's offices in Ottawa, Toronto, Kitchener, Peterborough and Stratford; (f) what dollar amount of the Agency's operating expenses in fiscal year 2009-2010 will be spent on staff salaries for those staff employed at each of the Ottawa, Toronto, Peterborough, Kitchener, and Stratford offices; (g) what is the number of staff hired in 2009-2010 for FedDev Ontario's call centre in Toronto; (h) what total dollar amount of the Agency's operating expenses will be paid to staff in salary for FedDev Ontario's call centre in Toronto; (i) what is the total operating expense for FedDev Ontario's call centre in Toronto; (j) what is the median annual income of an Agency employee; (k) what is the annual income of the Agency's president; and (l) what is the annual income of the Agency's vice president-infrastructure.

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, FedDev Ontario, in response to (a), FedDev Ontario was created through order in council on August 13, 2009.

In response to (b), regarding the total amount of money to be allocated from the agency's 2009-10 funds for the agency's 2009-10 operating expenses, and how much has been spent to date, 2009-10 is a transition year from Industry Canada to the agency. As such, the agency continues to work closely with Industry Canada through established memoranda of understanding for the provision of certain services. Costing for these services has not yet been charged to the agency. A full accounting of agency expenditures will be available in the 2009-10 public accounts.

In response to (c), regarding what happens to funds allocated either to programs or operating expenses that were not spent by the agency during the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010, the agency is delivering programs that are beneficial to southern Ontario while respecting fiscal prudence and proper accountability. Funds allocated to the agency are intended to be spent by March 31, 2009.

In response to (d), the agency, and each of FedDev Ontario's regional offices in Ottawa, Toronto, Kitchener, Peterborough and Stratford began incurred operating expenses on August 13, 2009.

In response to (e), regarding the number of staff hired to date and expected to be hired in 2009-10 for each of FedDev Ontario's offices in Ottawa, Toronto, Kitchener, Peterborough and Stratford, the staff complement as of October 21, 2009, including students and personnel from temporary help services, was 103. The agency will continue to staff in order to meet its needs over the course of the fiscal year. A substantial number of new employees being hired will be located in Kitchener.

In response to (f), what dollar amount of the agency's operating expenses in fiscal year 2009-10 will be spent on staff salaries for those staff employed at each of the Ottawa, Toronto, Peterborough, Kitchener, and Stratford offices, actual expenditures for 2009-10 will be available in the 2009-10 public accounts.

In response to (g), what is the number of staff hired in 2009-10 for FedDev Ontario's call centre in Toronto, FedDev Ontario has entered into an agreement for services with the Canada Ontario Business Service Centre to provide the service of a call centre for FedDev Ontario. As a result, FedDev Ontario has not hired any staff for this function.

In response to (h), what total dollar amount of the agency's operating expenses will be paid to staff in salary for FedDev Ontario's call centre in Toronto, FedDev Ontario does not have any staff for the call centre.

In response to (i), what is the total operating expense for FedDev Ontario's call centre in Toronto, as expenses continue to be incurred, this information will be available after the end of the current fiscal year.

In response to (j), what is the median annual income of an agency employee, as the agency is still staffing toward its full complement, this information will be available after the end of the current fiscal year.

In response to (k), what is the annual income of the agency's president, the exact earnings of individuals is considered to be their personal information and therefore protected from disclosure by virtue of the Privacy Act. The annual income for this position is between \$206,700 and \$243,200.

In response to (l), what is the annual income of the agency's vice-president, infrastructure, the exact earnings of individuals is considered to be their personal information and therefore protected from disclosure by virtue of the Privacy Act. The annual income for the agency vice-president, infrastructure is between \$145,600 and \$171,300.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 518—Mr. Francis Valeriote:**

With regard to the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario): (a) what is the government's long term strategy for the development and distribution of funds from the Agency's Southern Ontario Development Program; (b) which Southern Ontario business associations, not for profit organizations, post-secondary institutions and municipalities were consulted in advance of the Agency's launch in August 2009 to ensure its objectives, plans, and priorities were in line with Southern Ontario's economic needs, and on what dates; (c) what is the Minister's long term consultation strategy for the aforementioned Southern Ontario stakeholders; and (d) will the Agency employ any specific strategy or program to address those industries and regions of southern Ontario most impacted by the recession?

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Southern Ontario Development Agency, FedDev Ontario, in response to (a), what is the government's long-term strategy for the development and distribution of funds from the agency's southern Ontario development program, the current program parameters for southern Ontario development program were developed as a result of consultations with community leaders and economic development stakeholders throughout the southern Ontario region. The agency will continue to consult key stakeholders with the goal of hearing first-hand about the specific concerns of their communities, and to seek suggestions on the best approaches to foster enhanced productivity, innovation, commercialization, and diversification. In parallel, FedDev will continue to undertake economic and data analyses on the economic landscape of southern Ontario.

In response to (b), which southern Ontario business associations, not-for-profit organizations, post-secondary institutions and municipalities were consulted in advance of the agency's launch in August 2009 to ensure its objectives, plans, and priorities were in line with southern Ontario's economic needs, and on what dates, in advance of the agency's launch on August 13, 2009, a number of consultations were carried out. Between March 12 and May 14, 2009, Industry Canada consulted with: National Research Council/Industrial Research Assistance Program, NRC/IRAP; Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, NSERC; Queen's Technology Transfer, PARTEQ; University of Toronto; Business Development Bank of Canada, BDC; University of Ottawa; MaRS; Communitech Inc.; Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, CME, Ontario members; Ontario Bio-Auto Council; Regional Economic Development Officers for: Burlington; Canadian Consulate General, Detroit; City of Brampton; City of Brantford; City of Hamilton; City of Mississauga; City of Oshawa; City of Stratford; City of Woodstock; Cornwall Economic Development Corporation; Greater Peterborough Economic Development Corp.; Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance; Kingston Economic Development Council; London Economic Development Corporation; Niagara Economic Development Corporation; Northumberland County Economic Development & Tourism Nottawasaga Futures; Quinte Economic Development Council; Region of Durham; Regional Municipality of York; Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership; St. Thomas Economic Development Corporation; Windsor-Essex Development Commission.

In response to (c), what is the minister's long-term consultation strategy for the afore-mentioned southern Ontario stakeholders, the minister meets regularly with local officials and stakeholders to

ensure FedDev Ontario is responsive to the needs of southern Ontario.

In response to (d), will the agency employ any specific strategy or program to address those industries and regions of southern Ontario most impacted by the recession, the agency will continue to consult key stakeholders and undertake the necessary economic and data analyses on the economic landscape of southern Ontario to ensure that FedDev Ontario programming continues to address the specific needs of southern Ontario's hardest hit regions and industries.

Question No. 519—Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between January 1 and 31, 2007 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 519 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 520—Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between December 1 and 31, 2006 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 520 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

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The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

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These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwpsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 522—Hon. Shawn Murphy:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between July 1 and 31, 2007 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 522 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwpsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 523—Hon. Shawn Murphy:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between June 1 and 30, 2007 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 523 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwpsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 524—Hon. Shawn Murphy:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between May 1 and 31, 2007 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 524 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwpsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 525—Hon. Shawn Murphy:**

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between April 1 and 30, 2007 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 525 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

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Question No. 528—Ms. Joyce Murray:

With respect to the United Nations Climate Change Conference, in Copenhagen, occurring between December 7 and 18, 2009: (a) what government officials, including parliamentarians, will be attending the conference; (b) who has been invited to join the Canadian delegation; (c) who will be participating in the Canadian delegation; (d) what is the total cost to the government for participation in the conference, including but not limited to delegate fees, accommodation, travel, hospitality and per diems of the Minister, departmental staff, personal and political assistants and all other staff paid by the government; (e) how has the government met Canada's commitments under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol; and (f) has the government drafted a plan for addressing climate change and, if so, where can it be found?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), the Prime Minister will attend the conference in Copenhagen.

The Minister of the Environment will be the head of delegation for the ministerial segment of the meeting, scheduled for December 16 to 18, 2009. From December 7 to 16, 2009, Canada's chief negotiator for climate change, Mr. Michael Martin, will lead Canada's delegation, supported by a team of federal, provincial and territorial officials. Critics of the environment from each federal party will be invited to attend the conference as well.

In response to (b), provincial and territorial premiers, or designated representatives, have been invited to join the Canadian delegation. The delegation will also include a number of advisors representing a range of Canadian stakeholders.

In response to (c), federal officials and representatives from the provinces and territories will be part of the Canadian delegation, as well as a number of external advisers.

In response to (d), final decisions have yet to be made with respect to the exact number of federal officials that will need to participate on the Canadian delegation in Copenhagen. A final list of delegates will need to be approved by the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. However, based on experience at previous UNFCCC conference of the parties and estimated expected expenses, we are projecting a potential total cost of approximately \$1.7 million Canadian for the government participation at Copenhagen. This total includes the cost of accommodation, travel, per diems and delegation meeting rooms. There are no delegate fees associated with the meeting.

In response to (e), Canada signed the Kyoto protocol on April 29, 1998 and ratified it on December 17, 2002. The Kyoto protocol entered into force on February 16, 2005.

Canada's commitments in the UNFCCC and its Kyoto protocol are clear. Canada remains a party to the Kyoto protocol and is actively engaged in negotiations for the post-2012 period.

Canada's assigned reduction amount for the 2008 to 2012 commitment period is 2,791 million tonnes CO₂ eq. Similar to a number of other annex 1 parties with Kyoto protocol commitments, Canada's emissions in the 2008 to 2012 period are projected to exceed its assigned amount. The Kyoto protocol provides annex 1 parties with the right to acquire or transfer emission units. Canada meets all the eligibility criteria and became eligible to participate in all the flexibility mechanisms under the Kyoto protocol on June 16, 2008.

The compliance of annex 1 parties with their Kyoto commitments will be determined following the completion of an expert review of its 2012 emissions inventory, to be submitted by April 15 in 2014.

Going forward, Canada believes we should build on the experience gained through the implementation of the Kyoto protocol in developing a new agreement under the convention to strengthen the environmental effectiveness of the existing global climate change regime through binding commitments and actions by all major emitters.

In response to (f), in March 2008, the government published the Turning the Corner plan. Earlier this year, the government indicated that it was refining this approach to reflect the new realities of the global economic downturn and the opportunities represented by a new administration in the United States. The government publishes information on the implementation of its climate change programs annually through the climate change plans for the purposes of the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act. These documents can be found on Environment Canada's Web site, and are also available in hard copy by contacting the department.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 530—Hon. Judy Sgro:**

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between December 1 and 31, 2007 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 530 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

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Question No. 531—Hon. Judy Sgro:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between January 1 and 31, 2008 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 531 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

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government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

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Question No. 532—Hon. Judy Sgro:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between February 1 and 29, 2008 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 532 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 537—Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between March 1 and 31, 2008 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 537 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

Routine Proceedings

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 543—Mr. Mario Silva:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between July 1 and 31, 2008 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 543 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 544—Mr. Mario Silva:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between June 1 and 30, 2008 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 544 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 545—Mr. Mario Silva:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between May 1 and 31, 2008 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 545 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 546—Mr. Mario Silva:**

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between April 1 and 30, 2008 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 546 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

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Question No. 554—Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between April 1 and 30, 2009 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 554 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

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government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 555—Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between March 1 and 31, 2009 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 555 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 556—Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between February 1 and 28, 2009 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 556 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

Routine Proceedings

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwpsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 557—Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between January 1 and 31, 2009 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 557 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwpsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 563—Hon. John McCallum:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between October 1 and 26, 2009 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 563 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwpsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 577—Mr. Brian Murphy:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between May 1 and 31, 2009 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of the government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 577 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwpsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 578—Mr. Brian Murphy:**

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between December 1 and 31, 2008 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of the government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 578 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

Question No. 579—Mr. Brian Murphy:

With regard to government advertising, how much money did the government spend on television and radio advertising between November 1 and 30, 2008 inclusive, giving particulars of (i) how much each department or agency of the government spent on such advertising, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 579 is similar to 34 other questions.

The information requested in these questions was previously requested in Question No. 395, tabled on September 14, 2009, *Debates*, Volume 144, No. 080, page 4940. Breaking up that larger question into smaller questions does not alter the government's response to the original question.

The data required to adequately respond to these questions is contained on more than 27,000 pages of raw data. To answer these questions as posed would require a second level of sorting and a manual search through a combination of electronic and paper archives to attribute each purchase to a particular campaign. In addition, the data is available in the original language only and it is not possible to produce and translate this information in the time period required.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage

government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-fra.html>.

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[English]

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 Questions Nos. 467, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 475, 481, 484, 486, 499, 502, 505, 510, 514, 516, 517 and 526 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 467—Mr. Marcel Proulx:

With regard to the distribution of jobs in the government and all federal public agencies in the National Capital Region: (a) how many jobs were there in 2009 on the Quebec side of the National Capital Region; and (b) how many jobs were there in 2009 on the Ontario side of the National Capital Region?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 469—Mr. Marcel Proulx:

With regard to economic stimulus projects in the constituency of Hull—Aylmer: (a) what projects have been announced; (b) what amounts have been allocated; and (c) when did the projects begin?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 470—Mr. Marcel Proulx:

With regard to economic stimulus projects in the constituency of Gatineau: (a) what projects have been announced; (b) what amounts have been allocated; and (c) when did the projects begin?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 471—Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:

With regard to Afghan detainees: (a) when did the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of National Defence receive each of the following documents: KANDH-0029, KANDH-0032, KBGR-0118, KBGR-0121, KBGR-0160, KBGR-0258, KBGR-0263, KBGR-0265, KBGR-0267, KBGR-0269, KGBR-0271, KBGR-0274, KBGR-0275, KBGR-0291, KBGR-0292, KBGR-0302 and KBGR-0321; (b) what actions were taken or instructions given in response to these documents; (c) did the offices of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of National Defence receive copies of each of the listed documents and, if so, when; (d) what actions were taken or instructions given by the offices of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of National Defence in response to these documents; (e) were briefing notes prepared or was a briefing given for either Minister with regards to these documents and, if so, when; (f) did the Office of the Prime Minister or the Privy Council Office receive copies of these documents and, if so, when; and (g) were briefing notes prepared, or was a briefing given to the Prime Minister regarding the documents and, if so, when?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 472—Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:**

With regard to the withholding of information by the government under section 38 of the Evidence Act for reasons of national security: (a) what criteria or guidelines are used to determine whether a piece of information would have an impact on national security; (b) how does the government define “impact on national security”; (c) who in the government is responsible for determining which pieces of information will be subject to section 38; (d) do the Ministers of Justice, National Defence or Foreign Affairs or the Prime Minister or their offices have an input on what information will be withheld on national security grounds; (e) what role does the Department of Justice play in redacting or suppressing information under Section 38 of the Evidence Act; (f) what role does the Privy Council Office play in reviewing or further redacting information that could have an impact on national security; (g) what role does the Prime Minister’s Office play in the decision to withhold information on national security grounds; and (h) what role does the Prime Minister’s Office play in reviewing or further redacting information judged to be a risk to national security?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 473—Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:

With regard to reports that Canadian soldiers witnessed Afghan children being sexually abused by members of the Afghan National Police or the Afghan National Army: (a) were any complaints or reports filed with either the Canadian Forces, Military Police, Department of National Defence, or Department of Foreign Affairs alleging that children were being abused; (b) when were these complaints or reports filed; (c) what actions were taken to address these complaints or reports; (d) when was the Minister of National Defence or his office informed of the existence of these complaints or reports; (e) what instructions were given by the Minister of National Defence or his office with regard to these complaints or reports, and when; (f) when did the Minister of National Defence first receive a briefing on this issue; (g) when were briefing notes first written by either the Minister’s staff, the Department of National Defence, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Canadian Forces, or the Military Police; (h) were the Canadian Forces or Military Police ever instructed not to report incidents of child sexual abuse and, if so, when; (i) were the Canadian Forces or Military Police ever instructed not to intervene or prevent incidents of child sexual abuse if they witnessed them and, if so, when; and (j) when were the Canadian Forces and Military Police explicitly instructed to report or prevent such incidents?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 475—Hon. John McCallum:

With respect to the Department of Finance, for all contracts under \$10,000 signed between December 1, 2008 and October 19, 2009, what is the: (a) vendor name; (b) contract reference number; (c) contract date; (d) description of work; (e) delivery date; (f) original contract value; and (g) final contract value if different from the original?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 481—Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:

With respect to ministers’ office expenses within the National Capital Region: (a) what has been the total amount spent on taxis for each fiscal year from 2005-2006 up to and including the current fiscal year for each minister’s office; (b) how many employees at each minister’s office have access to taxi vouchers; and (c) what is the overtime cost for each minister’s driver for each fiscal year from 2005-2006 up to and including the current fiscal year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 484—Hon. Anita Neville:

With regard to the decommissioned Kapyong Barracks in Winnipeg, Manitoba: (a) how many homes are on the base; (b) how many homes are empty on the base; (c) how many of those empty homes are habitable; (d) how many of the homes are rented out; (e) how many members of the military occupy homes on the base; (f) how many RCMP officers occupy homes on the base; (g) how many military personnel occupy homes on the base; (h) how many contract workers have homes on the base; (i) who else occupies the homes on the base; (j) what are the annual approximate costs of repairs to the homes on the base; (k) what are the maintenance costs to the homes on the base; (l) what is the annual cost to maintain all the homes on the base and what is the cost of maintaining the empty homes on the base; (m) what is the maintenance cost of the other buildings on the site; (n) which buildings are occupied, who occupies them and for what purpose; (o) which buildings are empty; (p) has a

Treasury Board submission been developed for the transfer of the homes on the base to Canada Lands; and (q) has the government initiated a consultation process with affected First Nations regarding the transfer of the houses and, if so, who is conducting the consultations, what form are they taking, and with whom are the consultations taking place?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 486—Ms. Siobhan Coady:

With respect to the Treasury Board, for all contracts under \$10,000 signed between January 1 and October 21, 2009, what is: (a) the vendor name; (b) the contract reference number; (c) the contract date; (d) the description of work, (e) the delivery date; (f) the original contract value; and (g) the final contract value if different from the original contract value?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 499—Hon. Navdeep Bains:

With regards to Industry Canada’s use of contracts for each fiscal year, since 2004-2005: (a) what are the total number of contracts awarded, their value, contact persons and the names of those organizations that received contracts all broken down by both province and constituency, and whether the contracts are for goods or services; (b) in detail, what each contract was awarded for; (c) was the contract tendered or sole-sourced; (d) in the case of a sole-source contract was it approved by a minister and, if so, which minister approved it; and (e) in the case of a tendered contract, what are the number of tenders put forward and the length of the tender period?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 502—Hon. Joseph Volpe:

With respect to the case of Ms. Suaad Hagi Mohamad: (a) what are the details of every official communication held within the Government of Canada concerning this matter, itemized by the date and department of each initiated communication; and (b) what are the details of every communication held between the Government of Canada and the Government of Kenya?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 505—Hon. Joseph Volpe:

With respect to temporary resident permits (TRP), since January 2006, how many requests were granted and refused itemized according to (i) the month, (ii) the name of the representative that made the request, (iii) the country of origin of the intended TRP recipients, (iv) the current location and status of each TRP recipient?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 510—Mr. Michael Savage:

With respect to the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development, for all contracts under \$10,000 signed between December 1, 2008 and October 19, 2009, what is: (a) the vendor name; (b) the contract reference number; (c) the contract date; (d) the description of work, (e) the delivery date; (f) the original contract value; and (g) the final contract value if different from the original contract value?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 514—Hon. Geoff Regan:

With regard to the government’s Economic Action Plan, for each announcement in the constituency of Halifax West: (a) what was (i) the date of announcement, (ii) the amount of stimulus spending announced, (iii) the department which announced it; and (b) was there a public event associated with the announcement and, if so, what was the cost of that event and which elected officials, if any, were invited to appear?

(Return tabled)

Government Orders

Question No. 516—Mr. Francis Valeriote:

With regard to the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario): (a) what are the terms, cost, and length of the leases signed at each of the Agency's offices in Kitchener, Peterborough, and Stratford; (b) what is the total operating budget for each of FedDev Ontario's offices in Ottawa, Toronto, Kitchener, Peterborough and Stratford; (c) what is the total dollar amount from the Agency's 2009-2010 funds to be spent on the cost of administering the core Southern Ontario Development Program; (d) what role, if any, did the Agency play in administering each of the Community Adjustment Fund, the Recreational Infrastructure Canada Program, the Economic Development Initiative, the Community Futures Program, the Eastern Ontario Development Program, the Ontario Potable Water Program, the Building Canada Fund, the Canada-Ontario Infrastructure Program, the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Program, the Canada-Ontario Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund, the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund top up, in fiscal year 2009-2010, and at what total operating cost to the Agency; and (e) what is the current relationship between FedDev Ontario and all existing Economic Stimulus Programming, Industry Canada Programming, and Infrastructure Canada Programming for Ontario stated by FedDev Ontario to be transferred to the Agency with particular reference to the sharing of operating or administration costs for these programs, and will this relationship change in subsequent fiscal years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 517—Mr. Francis Valeriote:

With regard to the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario): (a) at which offices are the Agency's 2009-2010 Southern Ontario Development Program's applications being received and processed, and will this arrangement change in subsequent fiscal years; (b) was the \$50 million transferred to the Business Development Bank of Canada by FedDev Ontario this year administered by the Business Development Bank of Canada; (c) was the \$27.5 million transferred from FedDev Ontario to the National Research Industrial Assistance Program this year administered by the National Research Industrial Assistance Program; (d) what will be the Agency's total funding allocation to the Agency's core Southern Ontario Development Program in fiscal year 2010-2011, and each subsequent fiscal year according to the government's five year \$1 billion commitment to the Agency in budget 2009; (e) will all of the Agency's funding through the Southern Ontario Development program in 2010-2011 and each subsequent year be made available for applications; (f) what proportion of the operating or administrative costs will the Agency assume in administering each of the Community Adjustment Fund, the Recreational Infrastructure Canada Program, the Economic Development Initiative, the Community Futures Program, the Eastern Ontario Development Program, the Ontario Potable Water Program, the Building Canada Fund, the Canada-Ontario Infrastructure Program, the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Program, the Canada-Ontario Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund, the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund top up, in fiscal year 2010-2011, at what total operating cost to the Agency; and (g) what amount of the funds from the programs established before the Agency's creation but stated by FedDev Ontario to be administered by the Agency in the future as outlined in question (f), count toward the total of the government's five year \$1 billion commitment to the Agency in budget 2009?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 526—Ms. Joyce Murray:

With respect to the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games: (a) since fiscal year 2006-2007 and beyond, how much money has the federal government allocated to the games and what is the total amount; (b) to what entities has the federal government allocated funds and for what purpose; (c) in what amounts have those funds been distributed and on what dates; (d) how much money is being spent on the "Canada Pavilion" and to whom is its construction and preparation being contracted; (e) what are the requests for proposals that the government invited contractors to bid on; (f) who was invited to bid on government requests for proposals; (g) who submitted bids related to government requests for proposals; (h) who adjudicated the bids related to government requests for proposals and based on what criteria; (i) who successfully bid for government requests for proposals, for what amount were the contracts and what was the purpose of the contracts; (j) how much money has been allocated for promoting bilingualism and French translation, on what dates was it distributed and for what purposes; (k) what is the government's plan to address the H1N1 influenza pandemic before and during the games; (l) how much money is being spent in regard to an H1N1 plan at the games; (m) what is the lead department or agency in charge of overseeing and executing a plan related to

H1N1 influenza at the games; and (n) how much money has the government spent on including aboriginal communities in the games and for what initiatives?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1530)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I listened very closely to my hon. colleague, just as I did the other day. I still have not heard whether he has answered Question No. 537. Could he go through the list again and let us know? A number of my constituents have been writing letters, emailing and phoning me about Question No. 537.

The Speaker: It was on the list the parliamentary secretary read off. I followed along, and he did indicate Question No. 537. The member should be able to find the answer.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

DISPOSITION OF AN ACT TO AMEND THE EXCISE TAX ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The amendment moved by the hon. member for Vancouver East is in order. Therefore, the debate is on the amendment.

I believe the hon. member for Vancouver East has questions and comments consequent upon her speech. I therefore call for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Mississauga South.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during her speech, as I recall, the member made note that pursuant to the memorandums of agreement with both Ontario and British Columbia that the arrangement was to take effect for March 31, 2010.

That is true, however, I am not sure if she is aware that the province of Ontario has announced it will pass its legislation before Christmas. The reason for this is that part of the arrangement it is making is to introduce personal income tax cuts effective January 1, 2010, and it wants to have that legislation in place to provide these legislative tax changes to the citizens.

I want to advise the member that those are the facts, which the provincial revenue minister had indicated to us in a meeting last week. It would appear that at least the province of Ontario is anxious for the Government of Canada to provide the facility for it to proceed with its legislation.

Government Orders

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is too bad that the member has become such an apologist for ramming this bill through.

As he just heard, we moved an amendment to the motion that would at least require public hearings by our finance committee in the federal Parliament. I am astounded members could not agree that even holding hearings to hear from people in Ontario and B.C. is somehow too much for the House to deal with.

I listened to the hon. member. He has just bought, hook, line and sinker, the argument of his own government. I guess he wants to ram this through, too. We want to ensure people are heard. We want to ensure the bill is not rammed through over people's objections.

Why is the hon. member not supporting the need to have hearings in this Parliament at the finance committee so people in his province and my province can be heard on this question?

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this gives me a chance to answer the member's question, because I think all members of Parliament have received communications from their constituents on the harmonized sales tax question, which has a number of elements to it.

The member who just spoke is quite right. What the Conservative government is doing now is putting closure on the whole process of dealing with this bill. That is reflected in Motion No. 8, the matter that was first raised here, for which the member has now tabled her amendment.

I do not have the amendment. However, if one of the pages could get me a copy of the amendment that was tabled, it would be helpful.

My constituents have been trying to understand what exactly is the role of the federal government here and I have been trying to provide them with some detail. However, I thought it would be helpful for others if there were at least some recognition of what is happening here in the chamber and what is going to happen as we move forward with this bill.

The government has in fact tabled Bill C-62 in the House, the bill that would amend the Excise Tax Act and make all of the necessary changes to permit Ontario and B.C. to pursue harmonization of their sales taxes.

That bill is not before us yet. It has been tabled and printed and is here and members can look at it. They had better have a copy of the Excise Tax Act, because it will be very difficult for members to understand what this means without putting it in the context of the Excise Tax Act itself.

There has also now been an amendment made to change the process. However, the process before the House is such that we will only have one day to debate Bill C-62, when it is finally called. That will be before the end of second reading stage, and 15 minutes before expiry of the time provided for government orders on the day on which this bill is going to be called, we will have votes. We will vote on this bill at second reading, which is basically to provide approval in principle.

Normally, what we would do is to refer it to committee for committee hearings. However, Motion No. 8 goes on to say that the

committee is only going to have four hours. This is where the previous speaker decided to move an amendment. What it says in paragraph 2 is that:

not more than four hours following the adoption of the second reading motion, any proceedings before the Committee to which the bill stands referred shall be interrupted....

Hence, it basically says that the committee is going to have four hours.

I can tell members that there are a number of constituencies that are impacted by the potential imposition of an HST, but the discussion in committee will be four hours. It says that the committee has to report the bill back to the House by 11 o'clock that night.

The next part of Motion No. 8 has to do with report stage motions. I raised this earlier as question for a member who spoke. As a matter of fact, it was a question to the finance minister this morning, saying that members of Parliament who were not on the finance committee could attend and listen to a committee meeting, but without the unanimous consent of the members of the committee, they would not get a chance to ask any questions or speak.

Therefore, what is going to happen is that they are going to do their work and at the end of four hours, they are going to have to vote and send it back to the House. The next morning, what is going to happen is that any member who wants to make a report stage motion, i.e., to propose a change to that legislation, he or she will have to submit it by 3 a.m. There are some rules surrounding report stage motions, one of which is that if a matter has been disposed of or considered and negated in committee, it cannot be raised at report stage.

● (1535)

The question I raised with the minister was that it did not seem that members were going to have much of an opportunity to determine whether or not any other amendments would be admissible, simply from the standpoint that they would have to be advised first of exactly what was dealt with in committee. Theoretically, I guess 308 members would have to attend the finance committee meeting to determine what amendments they might be able to make.

Obviously, that is ludicrous. It is not going to happen, unless the meetings are held in West Block and members are provided at least some water while they do their work.

The deadline for getting to the report stage motion is 3 a.m. The bill is then going to proceed on the next sitting day at report stage, if there are any amendments. I suspect there may not be, but if there are, no more than one sitting day is going to be allowed for both report stage and third reading. I am not sure there is going to be a report stage motion. There may be some ingenious way of getting the amendments through, but it is very unlikely we will have an opportunity to debate them in a normal fashion.

My comment to the minister was that we are basically going through a charade. I really do not appreciate it, because the committee ought to be relied upon to carry out due diligence on a bill and to report to the House that it has looked at it and there are no problems.

Government Orders

There are also some stakeholders who may want to appear before the committee and they are not going to have the chance. In a four-hour meeting, after the presentations by the Finance officials on the various aspects of the bill, explaining why they are there and answering questions from members, et cetera, it is very unlikely there are going to be any witnesses.

Quite frankly, we are going through a process wherein we are really not going to be able to do much to change Bill C-62 as presented to us now. The motion before us pretty well shuts down all venues that members normally have to advocate for certain changes.

If we get to a point where the bill is not read a third time and passed by this coming Friday, the House will adjourn on Friday and reconvene on Saturday and we would here then to dispose of the remaining business related to third reading.

I know that many of the members do not like the idea of closure. It is another reason to oppose the bill for those who have a profound disagreement with the introduction of the harmonized sales tax in their province, whether it be B.C. or Ontario, or maybe another province that may ultimately decide to go forward with that.

I and a number of other people met with a provincial minister of revenue on this just to try to understand it a little better. One of the things I really had to understand was the agreement the Province of Ontario entered into with the Government of Canada. It is my province. I have not read the memorandum of agreement between B.C. and the federal government, but I took the opportunity to print it and look at it. There certainly is a lot of ministry involvement.

The memorandum of agreement is referred to in the debate as the MOA. We will also hear about the Canada-Ontario Comprehensive Integrated Tax Co-ordination Agreement, referred to as the CITCA. There is also the Canada Revenue Agency and a lot of people will talk about the CRA, as well as the Canada Border Services Agency, the CBSA, which will administer the Ontario value added tax, the OVAT. If people are not confused yet, they will get confused unless they have a glossary of terms and acronyms.

• (1540)

For this agreement negotiated by the Conservative Government of Canada with Ontario and B.C., the necessary legislative process and the signing of appropriate agreements have to take place before March 31, 2010, except where otherwise authorized by the MOA. Canada also undertakes to seek approval of the Governor in Council to enter into the agreement.

As for the implementation date, Canadians will probably know that the proposed date for the harmonization of sales taxes in the two additional provinces to be effective is Canada Day, July 1, 2010.

The transitional provisions are important. There is a provision under the provincial tax policy flexibility that, subject to reasonable notice, the province, in this case Ontario, could increase or decrease its value added tax rate two years after the date of implementation. So there is actually a freeze on this, and there is not going to be a change before the two years are up.

It is important that people understand in regard to the implementation of a value added tax and a harmonized sales tax that when taxation systems get too many exceptions and too many

details, they become very cumbersome to administer and, certainly, to apply, which causes an awful lot of difficulty. Therefore, the agreement stipulates that there will be a designated, limited number of OVAT point of sale rebates, that is, for the Ontario value added sales tax, not to exceed 5% of the aggregate. It means there will be a limit in place in the agreement on how many items can be exempted from the harmonized sales tax, and that is why there are a number of items that members have already noted do not currently attract a provincial sales tax. I think there is provincial sales tax on shoes of over \$30 in value, but not those under \$30. Now shoes are not even going to be exempt at all. It is not easy to say that we will now implement an 8% tax increase on shoes under \$30. A lot of these kinds of examples will come up, but we have to remain focused on what this chamber has been asked to do.

There are some other provisions with regard to input tax credits. I do not believe they have agreed yet, but there is an undertaking to agree on the rebate rates and thresholds for the MUSH sector. Members may recall the discussions with regard to municipalities, universities, schools, colleges and hospitals; and charities and qualifying housing NPOs. I am sure there will be significant discussions with those sectors because, currently under the GST, they do get some extra assistance with regard to rebates or input tax credits, for which they are eligible.

This whole agreement is based on a common tax base, and I should indicate that all of this information is available on the Ontario government website. There is no questions that if one took the GST collection system and the provincial system and combined them into one, then one would have a whole administration for collecting the taxes, processing the documents, doing investigations, fixing errors, et cetera. It is a tremendous cost. As a matter of fact, there are some provisions in the agreement whereby it is mutually agreed that the provincial tax policy flexibility provisions will be collected and administered at mutually agreed upon service and compliance levels by the Canada Revenue Agency and the Canada Border Services Agency at no cost or charge to Ontario.

• (1545)

In addition, Canada will be solely responsible for all the revenue agency and border services agency start-up and ongoing costs, including their development and systems costs, so there is a substantial savings in terms of eliminating costs at the provincial level. These costs will in fact be billed to the province on the basis of usage in terms of the processing involved with the provincial taxation component.

The agreement says, "Canada agrees to pay Ontario its revenue entitlements on a daily basis. For greater clarity, the allocation for a tax entitlement year will be paid to Ontario in estimated daily amounts determined using the revenue allocation framework beginning July 1, 2010".

There are some provisions with regard to the exchange of information agreement with regard to human resources. There are some other changes. During the transitional period, though, the province will be able to continue to operate the system so that a transitioning happens when things get sorted out. Whenever we have a change, there are always things that are going to come up, so they have made some transitional provisions.

Government Orders

I was not aware of this, but there is going to be an appointment of a panel. Both the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario have agreed to appoint a panel or an individual within six months following the implementation to review and make recommendations on possible improvements to the administrative and policy information available; the revenue allocation framework, such as replacement by a system that would provide distribution of revenue to Ontario, and harmonized sales tax provinces, based on actual sales of goods and services in such provinces; and finally the governance and organization structures of the various committees under the Canada-Ontario agreement.

Therefore it is anticipated that there will be ongoing fine tuning with regard to the agreement.

I encourage members to consider looking at the agreement. I understand that once we get through this procedural phase, it would appear there is not going to be much chance of amending Bill C-62. It is going to be presented to the House on probably the fastest track one can ever imagine.

What members probably should consider is the fact that Ontario and B.C. have made a judgment: in their judgment, this policy of harmonizing the taxes makes sense for their economies.

Having met with the Ontario Minister of Revenue last week and having seen the presentation on how this would work, I could see clearly that the Province of Ontario is hurting badly; in fact, its projected deficit for the current year is about \$24 billion. The job loss in Ontario is extraordinary.

Faced with the prospect of having this implemented now, people were saying it might make good policy sense, but the timing is not good because everything is so bad in the economy. However, both B. C. and Ontario have been arguing that it makes sense because it is going to provide an additional stimulus in their provinces to create jobs. In fact, about 591,000 jobs will be created in Ontario, according to Jack Mintz .

We might wonder where this money is coming from. Earlier I had an opportunity to pose a point to a member and ask for his comment. It had to do with the difference between this tax and what happens when GST is charged on a product.

As most Canadians know, GST is only paid once, and that is by the end user or consumer. For any GST paid by a wholesaler there is an input tax credit, so in the case of the GST only the 5% is ultimately paid.

The provincial sale tax is different. At every level of motion through the economy until it gets to the consumer, provincial sales tax is charged; then it is added to the input costs of the next buyer, and then it is charged again, and it cascades. That cascading of the provincial sales tax is really where it is coming out.

• (1550)

Canadians in Ontario can look forward to tax cuts on their personal income tax effective January 1, 2010, as well as a credit of up to \$1,000 to help with the transitioning. I hope they will have an opportunity to be well informed about the implications of this bill on the economy of Ontario.

• (1555)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague and I did not hear a word on the issue of closure or the fact that just a few weeks ago members of the Liberal Party were standing in the House telling the Prime Minister that his time was up.

At the end of his long soliloquy supporting the Conservative government, that member expects us to believe that 591,000 jobs, or maybe 592,000 jobs, would be miraculously created in Ontario if the tax burden were shifted onto senior citizens. We are supposed to accept that blather without being able, as politicians, to do due diligence, to hear from witnesses, to hear from senior citizens.

I have heard from senior citizens in my riding and from right across Ontario. They have spoken out consistently on this matter, but they are not getting the opportunity to speak here because they are being shut down.

I did not hear a single word about first nations people in Ontario, first nations people whose treaty rights are going to be erased at the stroke of a pen for the convenience of the Conservative Party and the greater convenience for the Liberal leader from Harvard, who simply wants this to go away.

If the member believes that this carbolic syrup is so good that it should be forced down the throats of Ontarians, why is he supporting the Conservatives in shutting down discussion that would allow witnesses to be brought forward so that they could speak to the reality of what this tax burden would—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Mississauga South.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, those who are going to be affected with regard to this tax in their province will have the opportunity at the provincial level to deal with its implementation. We are not dealing with it. As the member knows, we are only dealing with an agreement with the provinces. That is what we are debating. We are playing an enabling role, not a detailed role.

What this means to Ontario is the creation of 591,000 new jobs, an increase in capital investment of \$47 billion, and an increase in annual incomes of up to 8.8%, or \$29.4 billion.

The member also mentioned seniors, and we will learn more about this as we go through the process.

About 93% of Ontario taxpayers would get a permanent income tax cut. Eligible families earning less than \$160,000 would receive \$1,000, and individuals earning less than \$80,000 would get three payments totalling \$300 each. There would be new refundable sales tax credits, similar to the GST credit, that they would get at the provincial level. I can talk only for my own province, but 93% of people in Ontario would be better off under the harmonized tax system than they are today.

Those are the facts. We will get a chance to debate it a little further.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member should start practising his lines for next July 1, when taxes go up all over Ontario and people start paying tax on a lot of things that they did not have to pay tax on before.

Government Orders

The member is trying to have it both ways. He is following his caucus line here in supporting the Conservatives and the closure motion on the actual bill itself and trying to defend it. I do not think it is going to wash, because we have done enough surveys to know that 80% to 85% of the people are against this tax.

The minister is basically trying to drive this through the House just days before the Christmas holidays and pretending that somehow the devil made him do it and that he really did not want to do this, but we have numerous quotes that we can give in the House. One of them is from the 2006 federal budget. It says, "The government invites all provinces that have not yet done so to engage in discussions on the harmonization of their provincial retail sales taxes with the federal GST", yet the member is trying to pretend that this is all being driven by the provinces.

Manitoba had the good sense to say no. The throne speech given on November 30, just a few days ago, stated, "Manitoba is rejecting an invitation from the federal government to introduce a harmonized sales tax. As proposed, the HST would impose more than \$400 million in new sales tax costs on Manitoba families at a time of economic uncertainty".

Who is the member trying to kid?

• (1600)

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I am not afraid to stand up in the House and give my opinion to the member. I can tell the member that the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario entered into an agreement to move forward with this.

In my view, this has an awful lot to do with the economic recovery of the Province of Ontario with regard to creating jobs and increasing business investment. In fact, 93% of Ontario taxpayers will get a personal income tax cut, and in fact all Ontario taxpayers will see a 16.5% cut in the income tax rate on the first \$37,000 of their taxable incomes. That will be the lowest rate among all the provinces in Canada. Ontario families and individuals with incomes up to \$80,000 will get an average personal income tax cut of 10%.

These are the things that have to be taken into consideration. If I wanted to argue the other side of it, I would say it is increasing a tax here. However, if I put everything on the table and look at it carefully, I know that the vast majority, 93% of Canadians, will have more money in their pockets after this measure is implemented than they do now.

Mr. Greg Kerr (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering if the member, in doing his extensive research on this important topic, found out whether the NDP had contacted any of the provinces in Atlantic Canada that implemented this measure several years ago to find out how they have made out. As a matter of fact, I think the new NDP Government of Nova Scotia seems to be quite comfortable with this arrangement. It serves people very well.

I wonder if he might comment on that for us.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I can only speculate. I do not think that the members are looking for reasons for them to support this motion and the bill on the agreement.

I think the important thing here is to be honest with Canadians about what is happening and why. If we look at the circumstances that all our provinces are finding themselves in, the challenges of job creation, business investment and reducing personal taxes are all extremely important.

I could put it all on the table, look at it, and ask people if they would be prepared to take an income tax cut that on average, for most people in Ontario, would be a 10% cut. For those with lower incomes, it would be a 16.5% personal income tax cut. Would that be a good thing? What would people say if they had to pay a little bit more on a product because the government is trying to make the taxation system a little simpler, but they got the tax credits and the personal income tax cuts? If they looked in their pockets and found that they had more money in their pockets after government made this efficiency change in the tax systems of Canada, would that be okay?"

I have found that a lot of people did not know about that. That is what is happening now. The bill has not passed yet. The province has not yet passed its bill. I do not know on what basis people are being asked for their opinions, when the bill is not even before the Ontario legislature.

I believe members should be careful about what they say is going to happen, because it is not—

The Deputy Speaker: We have time for one more question or comment.

The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Mississauga South called this a charade. He is absolutely right, but the real problem here is that we have Liberals supporting this Conservative attempt to run completely roughshod over every democratic principle we have in Parliament. Parliament, dating back centuries, was established in order that there would not be the kind of taxation that these Conservatives are bringing in without the types of public hearings, representations, democratic votes, checks and balances and procedures that these Conservatives are destroying with this closure motion.

My question is very simple: why are the Liberals supporting this Conservative attempt to crush the opposition that comes from nearly half the country, including 74% of Ontarians and 83% of British Columbians? These Ontarians and British Columbians oppose this massive tax shift from big corporations to ordinary families, who are going to be paying \$500 to \$2,000 more a year. Why are they supporting this?

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the reason is quite simple. It is because the income tax cuts that the Province of Ontario is going to be extending to all taxpayers in Ontario are going to be effective January 1, 2010. That means that this House has to ratify the agreement and the bill to amend the Excise Tax Act.

This, to me, is part of the economic recovery for Ontario. If Ontario is doing better, Canada is doing better.

Government Orders

•(1605)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance introduced his budget in late January 2009. In it, he announced compensation for British Columbia and Ontario for harmonizing their sales taxes with the GST. Since then, the Bloc Québécois has asked I know not how many questions in the House about when the federal government plans to do the fair thing and compensate the Government of Quebec and the Province of Quebec for having harmonized its tax 18 years ago.

Quebec has been doing what others are doing now for 18 years and has never received compensation. In January, the government's Minister of Finance announced that he would provide billions of dollars in compensation to Ontario and British Columbia, but nothing has yet been done.

Today, we have before us a motion to hold the debate on the bill relating to compensation for British Columbia and Ontario in two days, but we have not even seen the bill yet. The government has started debating the motion before the bill has even been introduced in the House and before the Bloc Québécois has had a chance to speak to part of the motion. We voted on part 8 of the motion before even seeing the bill. Of course the Bloc Québécois members will vote against this motion. It is unacceptable for the government to ask us to agree to a debate on a bill that may—I have to say “may” because we have not seen it, so we do not know—have repercussions on potential harmonization and potential compensation paid by the federal government to the Government of Quebec. That is what the government wants.

We are being asked to accept that a bill be introduced, read and agreed to, all in just two days, when Quebec has been asking for \$2.6 billion in compensation for years now. Why should we concede so easily? It makes absolutely no sense, that is for sure. I said 18 years, but really it has been 17 years. Quebec harmonized its sales tax in 1992. Imposing a framework to deal with such a major and important issue, and expecting us to debate it for just a few hours makes no sense. We know that this will very likely affect Quebec, because the federal government cannot continue treating Quebec unfairly forever. We are sure of that. Sooner or later it will have to loosen its purse strings to compensate the Government of Quebec and the Quebec nation for harmonizing its tax several years ago. I will not keep on repeating the same arguments, but we cannot support this motion.

As I said earlier, the government harmonized its sales tax in the early 1990s. The GST had just come into effect. Quebec already occupied this tax field. The federal government agreed to allow Quebec to manage the GST within its own jurisdiction. That is still the case. We heard the Minister of Finance say last spring that Quebec did not really harmonize its sales tax, but that is false. It is merely a matter of perception and a point of contention for them. However, it really is not an issue, since it was all framed in an agreement.

•(1610)

Consequently, this is no reason for the federal government to deny Quebec the same compensation that it will pay to Ontario and British

Columbia and that it previously paid to the Maritimes. In 1997, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland harmonized their sales tax and received federal compensation.

That compensation exists because harmonization leads to loss of revenue for the provincial governments. That happened in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, and the federal government compensated them to make up for the losses these provinces were suffering in harmonizing their sales tax. The federal government plans to do the same thing for Ontario and British Columbia, but it has never compensated Quebec. It always has the same excuses. We have not even seen this bill, yet the government wants us to agree to pass it in two days. That is incredible, and it shows a lack of respect.

The Government of Quebec has demanded compensation from the federal government for harmonizing its sales tax, but the federal government has always refused, claiming that the Government of Quebec did not lose sufficient revenue because of harmonization to warrant compensation.

How can the government claim that Quebec lost less revenue than the other provinces? We have not seen any figures and have never heard any solid arguments.

It also said that neither Ontario nor British Columbia would be entitled to compensation in the event of harmonization because British Columbia and Ontario also, emphasis on “also”, did not meet the criteria used for the Maritimes.

In January, the Conservative government did an about-face on its rule for lost revenue and concluded an agreement with Ontario and British Columbia to harmonize their sales tax. This agreement included major harmonizations. In its budget, the government earmarked \$4.3 billion for Ontario, \$1.6 billion for British Columbia and still nothing for Quebec.

Now it is getting ready to introduce legislation to implement a framework for harmonization and compensation for both provinces. Before Parliament even had the chance to read the bill, the government tried to force us to adopt a motion for the bill to be fast-tracked before the holidays, but there was no argument to support such a motion.

It is the duty of the Bloc Québécois, and we are convinced of this, to examine the bill before voting on a time allocation motion. That is the crux of the argument for Quebecers and Quebec in order to ensure that this legislation does not obstruct negotiations with the Government of Quebec on the compensation plan it has been calling for for a number of years now. That is why the Bloc Québécois is against this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the Bloc's position on the overall issues of legislation and the harmonizing of taxes and the closure motion. I can say that the party has been very consistent on it.

Government Orders

What concerns me about the motion we are debating today is the fact that the House of Commons, where people are elected from every region of the country to bring forward their concerns, to carry out due diligence and to examine legislation, has been turned into some kind of rubber stamp charade show for the benefit of the Prime Minister's office and the Conservative war room.

We are being told that a major change in legislation that will affect millions of families across this country in terms of taxation has to be done quickly and painlessly for the Conservative Party and, by extension, for the pitiful state of the Liberal Party in the House, and that we as members are not to see the bill. We are supposed to simply rubber stamp it, regardless of the implications it will have.

This closure motion presents a profound threat to democracy and a complete undermining of our roles, which are to examine legislation and understand its implications for individuals, our constituents and our regions. We know where the Conservatives come from on these issues. They are rotten to the core. It is not surprising. The pitiful Liberal Party next to them has completely refused to carry out due diligence and act as any form of organized opposition.

I would like to ask the member why he thinks it is that the Liberal Party is in such a pitiful state going along as meek little brothers and sisters behind their big Conservative bully cousins.

•(1615)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Mr. Speaker, I totally agree with my colleague who has asked the question.

We, too, find that this is a threat to democracy. It is completely unacceptable that we are being presented with this type of motion.

I will reiterate what I just said. This motion asks us to adopt a framework to study a bill that we have not yet seen.

I have been a member of parliament for almost four years. I do not know if governments often present such motions. I hope not because it goes completely against what I believe in and my convictions.

I believe that if we want to establish a framework for debating a bill that is presented, it is imperative that all members of the House of Commons have had the opportunity to read the bill in question. They would be able to say that it should be studied more quickly for this or that reason. We have not even seen it yet. It is very clear that we will not be supporting this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I never thought I would see the day that a closure motion would be presented under these circumstances in the House. I recall in 1957 in the pipeline debate, the whole idea of bringing closure in the House at the end of the day meant the end of the government.

The government knew what it was going to be doing with this bill months ago. For several years it has been trying to pressure the provinces to sign on to the HST. To wait until these final days and then bring in a closure motion on top of that before we have even seen a bill and then to have the Liberals fall in line like sheep supporting this bill is a lot to take.

I noticed some of the Liberals running for cover and missing various votes. I am sure there is mass confusion in their camp right now as to what to do with this and how to come up with answers for the big tax shift that is going to occur next July.

As a matter of fact, there are some polling reports. An Ipsos Reid and Canwest News survey showed that 74% of Ontarians get this issue. They are opposed to it. The government is running scared already six months before the tax is going to come in. In B.C. 83% are against it.

We are into almost damage control now on the part of the government, with the Liberals running behind and supporting them.

•(1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say something. I did not hear many questions, but I will say that if some Liberal members were running for cover, they must have found a good hiding spot because we have not seen them.

It is very clear, once again, from comments made to me, that the NDP members would like to start a debate even before the bill is introduced. They want to debate its possible contents and its scope, when it is very clear that the Bloc Québécois is strongly opposed to this motion because we have not seen the bill that it deals with. It is very obvious that this is unacceptable and anti-democratic.

[*English*]

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member has been in the House of Commons for quite a long time. I am just wondering whether there have been any other occasions where we have not seen the bill. We do not know what is in this HST bill. We think it might be concerning the HST, but given that we have not even seen this bill, there is this motion to stop the debate and vote on it at 8 o'clock. That is anti-democratic. Has the member experienced such a mad rush to ram through an unseen bill?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Mr. Speaker, I would like to be able to answer my NDP colleague, but I was wondering the same thing myself. I have served in the House for four years. I know that there are members who have been here much longer than that. To my knowledge, in four years I have never seen a motion like this that asks us to vote on the length of debate on a bill that we have not seen. I completely agree that it is anti-democratic and unacceptable.

[*English*]

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Burnaby—Douglas.

I want to list a few things that are going to increase in price with this harmonized sales tax.

Government Orders

One area is gasoline prices. If we are paying \$1 for gasoline, we are now going to be paying \$1.08. Knowing how these oil companies operate, I would not be surprised to see the increase in gasoline prices go above the 8%. It could go as high as 10%, 12% or 15%, and they would just blame the government because that is how these companies operate.

Another area is utilities: heating, hydro and natural gas. These are essential for people in northern Ontario and northern B.C. In the economic recession that we are having now, this is certainly going to affect every citizen in northern Ontario.

Right now in northern Ontario, we have a company called Vale Inco where there is a strike. We have 3,200 people who are on strike. These people are having a hard time right now paying their bills, but with this harmonized sales tax, they will have to pay more for their heating, hydro and natural gas.

Other areas are Internet bills and prepared foods of \$4 or more. There is a real kicker: prepared foods of \$4 or more. That will exempt Timbits. I want to quote the senior vice-president of corporate affairs for Tim Hortons, Nick Javor, who said

The company is delighted the government recognizes consumers have become used to the PST exemption on low-cost meals. People are counting their nickels and dimes. Most people spend \$2.75 to \$3.25 at Tim Hortons...so the 8% that would have been there would have made a difference.

I would like to know, if I could ask him, what Mr. Javor thinks about the poor people who are paying extra for gasoline, something that is essential, and heating oil, something that is very essential in northern Ontario and northern British Columbia.

• (1625)

It is strange that he would make these comments about Timbits and Tim Hortons. I am really concerned about this.

Another thing that will be taxed is adult footwear under \$30. The people who buy footwear under \$30 are basically poor people, so now they are going to have to pay more. The poor people, people who do not have money are going to have to pay more for footwear.

Other things that will be taxed are veterinary care, personal services, professional services and mutual funds fees. A letter from one of my constituents was very upset about mutual funds. A lot of his clients have lost a lot of money in this recession with mutual funds and now they are going to have to pay 8% more for mutual fund fees.

Membership fees for a gym is an example where the government does not want Ontarians to be fit, so we are going to tax them. Real estate commissions, commercial property rentals, condo fees, landscaping and labour costs related to home renovations will also be taxed. The Conservative government is presently giving a rebate for home renovations, so now we are going to take it back with the HST. A really good plan.

Additional items include: vitamins, admission to live theatres, taxi fares, conferences and seminars, dry cleaning, and the list goes on and on, motor vehicle services, ice rink rentals, hotels, overnight summer camps, and domestic air travel. As if domestic air travel were not expensive enough at it is right now, we are going to add another 8% to it. Shame.

Domestic rail travel, bus tickets, and Christmas trees, the government is the grinch that stole Christmas. It is going to tax Christmas trees. Electrical and plumbing services are services we are giving a rebate for home renovations and now we are going to take that back. The government should be ashamed of itself.

The last one I want to mention is funeral costs. We are even going to tax dead people.

There are many people right now going bankrupt in northern Ontario. They are going to have to pay all of these taxes, so I want to quote from an article that was in our local newspaper:

Imagine someone taking a close look at your pay-cheque, monthly bills and expenses and telling you that you need—make that must—learn to manage money better. You are also told that your credit rating is gone. Your bank is now going to pay closer attention to all activity on your account. And those credit cards in your wallet: hand them over. You've had to declare personal bankruptcy. You're flat broke and swimming in a sea of debt. All you have left in most cases is your job and the clothes on your back. In the case of a business bankruptcy, you don't even have that.

These people are going to have to pay more taxes, the HST, because of the Conservatives and the Liberals. Do not forget that the Liberals are heavily involved in this.

I want to quote from another article in our newspaper which is about jobs. We have lost 600 jobs recently in Sudbury and the Nickel Belt:

The number of people working dropped from 77.5% to 76.9%—a loss of some 600 jobs. That continues a string of monthly job losses, including 400 in October, 600 in September and 1,000 in August.

Economics Professor David Robinson, in his monthly labour market analysis posted on the Institute of Northern Ontario Research and Development website reported that “6,200 jobs have been lost in the city in the past 12 months, or about one job in 13. In addition to the loss of jobs in November, 1,300 fewer Greater Sudburians were working or looking for work”.

• (1630)

Now we are going to tax these people even more. They do not have a job or they are bankrupt and now we are going to tax them even more.

I am going to read names of some of the people in my riding who have written to me about this tax. I wanted to know what they thought about the tax. They oppose the 8% HST tax increase being brought in by the Conservative government, along with the federal Liberals and the provincial Liberals.

Marie-René Levesque from Sturgeon Falls wrote to me. Jean-Paul Arbour of Lavigne also wrote to me about this tax. Their comments are always the same. They hate this tax and cannot understand why it is being brought in.

Claudio and Lisa Lenti of Sudbury, Chantal and Russ Edmunds of Sturgeon Falls, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Lachapelle of Sturgeon Falls, Lionel Sarazin of Sturgeon Falls, all of these people are going to have to pay an extra 8% HST on items that they are going to purchase.

The list goes on: Mandy Beaulieu from Sturgeon Falls, Mary Jean Samson from Sturgeon Falls, Bill and Gilberte Major from Sturgeon, Linda Caskanette from Crystal Falls are all going to be paying more on their purchases in the near future.

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Madeline Rancourt from Hanmer, Jacob Bailey from Sturgeon Falls, Ron Krajc from Crystal Falls who are all saying the same thing.

I see, Mr. Speaker, that you have indicated that I have one minute left, so I am going to stop reading names. I have a whole list of names.

What I want to do now is read a poem that was sent to me this weekend. It is called "Psalm 2009—First Book of Government":

McGuinty is the shepherd I did not want
 He leadeth me beside the still factories.
 He restoreth my faith in the Conservative party.
 He guideth me in the path of unemployment for his party's sake.
 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the bread line,
 I shall fear no hunger, for his bailouts are with me.
 He has anointed my income with taxes...HST being the latest
 My expenses runneth over.
 Surely, poverty and hard living will follow me all the days of my life,
 And I will live in a mortgaged home forever.
 I am glad to be a Canadian
 I am glad that I am free.
 But I wish I was a dog...
 And—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Questions and comments, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is we know that this issue is really being pushed by businesses, so that they can reduce their taxes and make it more efficient for businesses.

However, what it does is it transitions the tax over to the individual. It is a very efficient tax for the government and businesses of course likes it. The only people who do not like it are the consumers who are going to pay more on a whole range of items starting next July 1.

Former Saskatchewan premier Roy Romanow on CTV News on March 7, 1996, said, "The HST is basically twofold. First of all the shift away from taxation on business and two a taxation on consumers who are already heavily taxed. I think it might have some negatives as we have seen it is having negative implications on the economy. The less money in the hands of consumers, the less they can spend and the economic system suffers as a whole. I had said before that in Manitoba, just in the throne speech a few days ago it indicated that in the case of Manitoba with a million people in the province that the HST would impose more than \$400 million in new sales tax costs on Manitoba families at a time of economic uncertainty".

If we multiply that by the population of Ontario and B.C., we can extrapolate from that an enormous increase. I would like to ask the member to take some time and explain to the members on the government side, who are busy heckling, what the truth of this situation is.

•(1635)

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, the member referred to businesses that were in favour of this harmonized sales tax. I did not get a chance to get through all of the people who wrote me, but some of them who wrote me are business people. They are not in favour of this sales tax. They cannot see anything to benefit them with this

sales tax. They are against it. These are small-business owners. They are the ones who are going to get hurt, just like the working class families. They are the ones who are really going to get hurt with this sales tax.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier today we also talked about the impact on aboriginal communities.

First, I want to congratulate the member on his eloquent speech.

As I mentioned earlier today, Grand Council Chief from the Anishinabek Nation, Patrick Madahbee, had indicated the impact the implementation of the HST would have within first nation communities. He said that the impacts of the HST will hit their communities and citizens hard. He also acknowledged the fact that many of their people live in poverty, or close to it, and with the HST in place, as proposed, they will struggle even more. Their communities have been faced with significant challenges just to maintain or build up the standard of living and the HST works against this. They are worried not just about their own people. He said that impacts will be similar among non-first nations people, especially those on fixed incomes, lower- to middle-class families.

This will impact especially single women, as well.

Could my colleague perhaps elaborate on the impact on first nations in his community? I know that he does have some as well.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. I do have some first nation communities in my district. They are going to be affected seriously. Some of our first nation people are the poorest of the poor. They are going to have to pay this 8% sales tax again, but it is even going to affect them more because of the point of sales effect it is going to have on them.

I am meeting with some of my first nation communities Thursday night and I am sure this is going to be a topic of discussion.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this debate this afternoon on Motion No. 8, which is one of the most heinous kinds of motions that a government can bring before a Parliament.

There is no doubt that these kinds of time allocation motions do serve to limit the democratic process and limit the ability of members of Parliament and Canadians to participate in debate on legislation that comes before the House of Commons. When that is combined with the closure motion that the government brought forward this morning, it makes it all the worse.

It is unbelievable that the Conservative House leader, the member for Prince George—Peace River, stood in this place this morning and moved closure on debate on this time allocation motion. He has forced this debate to come to a close today with a vote this evening. His closure motion limits the ability of members of Parliament to challenge the government's process on the HST legislation. It is particularly galling that a member from British Columbia would do that when he knows how unpopular this measure is with British Columbians.

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I have a feeling that the people of Prince George—Peace River will have a thing or two to say to the House leader of the Conservative Party for bringing forward this kind of limitation on the ability of Parliament to discuss and debate an important piece of legislation, a tax measure no less.

I am sure that had this been several years ago when that member was in opposition, his head would be spinning at the thought of limiting debate on a tax measure before the House of Commons. It is absolutely incredible. People in Prince George will not be happy with the undertaking that the member moved today.

Limiting time on debate may be justified in certain situations. It may be justified if the government's ability to move its agenda forward is completely blocked or bogged down. In that situation an argument might be made for this kind of time allocation motion.

I say might because I do not believe that is generally the case. It is absolutely not the case in this circumstance. There is no evidence whatsoever that the government has been at all impeded in proceeding on this measure. I would like to believe that we could stop this measure, but the time allocation motion had not been brought before the House before the government moved to limit the time spent debating this measure. There is absolutely no evidence that the government's ability to move this through, to advance its program, was impeded.

Advancing the government's program is how the House of Commons manual on procedures refers to the kind of circumstance where time allocation might be engaged, but in this case there is no evidence whatsoever that is the case.

An argument might be made if there were an emergency that required this kind of time allocation, that required the government to advance everything about the legislative process to get something through the House.

What is the emergency in this case? There is no emergency surrounding the HST. There certainly is no emergency around it in British Columbia. The provincial legislature is not even planning on debating this issue until March or April of next year. The Conservatives, even if they get the go-ahead from the provinces and the House of Commons, are not planning on implementing this legislation until July 1 of next year. There is absolutely no emergency related to this bill.

There is absolutely no excuse for advancing the agenda using time allocation and closure, two of the most draconian measures available to a government, when there is no emergency.

Granted, the Conservatives have a very serious political problem on their hands. I am sure they would love the HST issue to be behind them so that they could enjoy their Christmas vacation, so that they could go on their holidays in the new year, so that they could come back to this place at the end of January knowing that it was not going to be around to bother them. We in the NDP and the people of British Columbia are going to make sure that it is still around to bother them.

There is no excuse for the government having moved on this just because it has a political problem and its provincial government friends in British Columbia have a political problem on their hands.

Eighty-three percent of British Columbians oppose the HST. We saw that in polls today done by Ipsos Reid and Canwest and Global National. That is an incredibly high figure. The Conservatives have a huge political problem.

• (1640)

I have noted that the Conservative Party members from British Columbia have been very slow to jump to their feet to defend these measures today in the House of Commons. They have been very slow to say anything in this debate whatsoever about what is going on with this and why. Where is the emergency that means we have to proceed on all of this so quickly? It is a very serious issue.

A tax measure deserves a full debate in the House of Commons. Perhaps a tax measure especially deserves a full debate. In the development of our democracy, we have often seen the call of no taxation without representation. Surely, that is what the government has put to the House today with Motion No. 8. For some reason, we have to limit the debate so severely that it really amounts to taxation without representation.

We have made it impossible for the Standing Committee on Finance to hold hearings on this measure. We have made it impossible for them to travel to British Columbia to hear from people and organizations in British Columbia about the HST. They are ramming it through in four hours of committee work. Four hours of committee work is miraculous progress for almost any piece of legislation that would come before the House of Commons. It is certainly miraculous and unheard of in this situation, where we have a tax measure that is resoundingly unpopular with the people on whom it is being imposed.

We need to make sure that the House of Commons and its members are able to do due diligence. Motion No. 8, which we are debating today, does not allow for that kind of diligence to happen in the consideration of this new tax measure. I am glad that the member for Vancouver East moved and that I was able to second an amendment to Motion No. 8 that calls for hearings in British Columbia and Ontario and that calls for a reasonable timeframe for this legislation, which would allow British Columbians and the people of Ontario to have their voices heard about this legislation.

I hope that members will consider that amendment, although given that the Conservatives and their Liberal friends have moved to squelch debate on this issue, I doubt that the amendment has much of a chance in this place. I think it is particularly outrageous that British Columbians do not get a chance to have their voices heard.

There was a time when Conservatives claimed that they were the big defenders of the voices of western Canadians. They said that they came here to Ottawa to make sure the voices of the west would be heard. The west wanted in. Here we are in a case where the west is firmly opposed to something that the Conservatives are bringing forward and they are not even allowing those people to have their voices heard or to have their say on this legislation.

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There will be no hearings in British Columbia. There will be no public consultations in British Columbia. The debate has been severely limited here in the House of Commons. None of that would have been acceptable to those people who came to this place saying that the west wanted in. The government has turned out to be just as distant and just as uncaring as those governments it railed against time and time again when it was in opposition. It is amazing how quickly it forgets its roots when it comes to this kind of issue and a taxation issue nonetheless.

I think it is very important that the government also take responsibility for its actions. We hear it stand time and time again, saying that this is a provincial issue and that it has nothing to do with it. If that is the case, why are we standing here having this debate today? Why is it having to bring in these draconian closure and time allocation measures? Why is there a piece of legislation called Bill C-62, amendments to the Excise Tax Act, on the agenda of the House of Commons if it has nothing to do with federal jurisdiction?

It does have something to do with federal jurisdiction. It requires the action of the House and it requires the action of that government to go forward. It should own up to the responsibility for the actions it is taking and own up to the consequences of those actions. British Columbians are going to be paying more in taxation. Every British Columbian is going to be faced with a higher tax bill in the coming weeks and months.

There is no emergency. There is no problem with advancing the government's agenda. There is a severe problem with the idea of no taxation without representation. It is a very sad day when the Conservatives turn their back on their own constituents in British Columbia and their own history of being a populist party that supports letting the western voices be heard here in the House of Commons.

• (1645)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think people back home see through this. If we look at a bill that will override first nations treaty rights, that will squeeze seniors citizens, that will attack the poor and the marginalized, we have to look no further than the Conservative Party. This is its baby.

I find it very shocking that the Conservatives have stood in the House day after day attempting to hide behind the provincial Liberal governments in B.C. and Ontario. If they read the budget of 2006, it said specifically that the government invited all provinces to engage in discussions on the harmonization of the provincial retail sales tax.

The finance minister, on April 10, 2006, said that the government was calling on the remaining provinces that had not harmonized their PST to work with it to accomplish that goal. The *National Post*, on March 26, said that the harmonization had long been a pet project of the present finance minister.

It is clear, this initiative comes from the Conservative Party and it will affect citizens across Ontario and British Columbia. The government is attempting to shut down the ability of members of Parliament to represent senior citizens, condo owners, first nations and first-time homeowners who will be affected by the finance minister's pet project.

Why does the Pinocchio nose of the Conservative Party continue to grow on the HST?

• (1650)

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, another great irony of this whole debate today is the fact that not only are the Conservatives bringing in this legislation against the will of the people of British Columbia, not only are they doing it in a way that belies some of their commitments of the past, some of their very strong and, we thought, deeply held convictions for more democracy in this place and better representation for people of western Canada, but they are doing it at the behest of a provincial government, led by Gordon Campbell, that lied to British Columbians in the last election. It bald-faced lied, saying it had no interest in a harmonized sales tax before the election. What did it do afterwards? It immediately moved to bring in that same HST, that same sales tax.

That kind of behaviour would have been good reason for the Conservatives of old, for the Reformers of old to disassociate themselves from the provincial government. However, no, the Conservative government takes up the challenge, leads the charge, enables that kind of government to bring forward this type of legislation.

That is a significant change in the way the government and the Conservative representatives from British Columbia have chosen to lead the way and to handle their representation of the people of British Columbia.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my understanding is the former Liberal government had pushed for the harmonization of the sales tax with the provinces. The Conservatives are picking up where the Liberals left off. Fortunately, some NDP provinces, like Manitoba, will not buy into it.

Am I correct in assuming that as far as this issue, this tax grab, the harmonized sales tax, is concerned, the Conservatives and the Liberals are working together to ram this bill through without our having a chance to listen to ordinary Canadians about the impact this tax grab is going to have on their lives?

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, this is a planned job by both the Conservatives and the Liberals. In British Columbia, the B. C. Liberals are right on board with this plan. Both of them are moving forward with this much-hated HST.

The irony is this is undoing a lot of the good work, certainly in the area of the environment. For 30 years, British Columbia has had a provincial sales tax exemption on bicycles, bicycle products and bicycle servicing. We know how important it is these days when the concern about the environment is so significant. We know it is very important when bicycles are among the fastest-growing means of transit in some of our cities. Certainly that is true in Vancouver and Victoria. Yet, the HST will apply now to bicycles.

There are all kinds of implications about this HST and the environment that we should be discussing. We are enabling this to go forward. We want British Columbians to have the opportunity to raise these kinds of concerns. The whole concern about ending the HST on energy star appliances is another issue of applying this new tax to those—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to a motion introduced last week by the Conservative government. This time allocation motion from the government has to do with the bill to harmonize sales taxes in British Columbia and Ontario with the federal sales tax, the goods and services tax.

In short, the federal government wants this bill, which has not yet been introduced in the House of Commons, to be voted on before it has been seen. That is rather unusual, as the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain pointed out.

The Conservative government has introduced this time allocation motion, and we have been forced to vote on it before even knowing the content and details of this sales tax harmonization bill. What is going on here in the House of Commons is not at all democratic, and I am very surprised to see the Liberals supporting this initiative.

That is why we opposed the motion we are debating, because we still believe it would be completely irresponsible for us to agree to time allocation without knowing the content of this tax harmonization bill or having had the time to study and analyze it.

The Bloc Québécois is a responsible party that always works solely to defend the interests of Quebecers. We will not hand a blank cheque to a government, especially this Conservative government, in which we have no confidence.

This government has repeatedly shown that it is out of touch with Quebecers' needs and interests. For example, in the midst of an economic crisis, this government refused to undertake a comprehensive reform of employment insurance in order to increase EI accessibility.

This government came up with a temporary, piecemeal reform that would benefit Ontario's industrial workers. But thousands of forestry workers in Quebec, as well as seasonal workers and young people, have no access to these employment insurance benefits. Moreover, we know that during the economic crisis in the 1990s, the Liberals made deep cuts in EI reforms.

We no longer have confidence in this Conservative government, which is refusing to eliminate the waiting period, thereby penalizing thousands of workers who are unfortunately losing their jobs, such as the people in my riding who lost their jobs after fires at Coloridé in Louiseville and Meubles JLM in Saint-Édouard-de-Maskinongé. The fires were not their fault, but as the holiday season approaches, these workers in my riding have had to endure an unwarranted two-week waiting period. This government does not care about their plight. I have sent a letter to the minister, asking her to waive the waiting period for these workers who have just lost their jobs because of a fire.

We cannot have confidence in this government, which is insisting on creating a single securities commission, despite the unanimous opposition of the National Assembly of Quebec and which is enabling big business to avoid paying billions of dollars of tax by

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using tax havens, when that money could be put to good use helping the unemployed and low-income seniors.

We see the position on greenhouse gas reductions taken by this government in Copenhagen, to the detriment of Quebec, a position that does not even reflect the will of the House of Commons.

The same is true of the matter before us today. We have asked many questions here in the House regarding the federal government's stubborn refusal to provide Quebec with fair and just compensation for harmonizing its sales tax.

● (1655)

In 1992, Quebec was the first jurisdiction to harmonize its sales tax with the GST.

It is also important to remember that the Bloc Québécois voted in favour of this way and means notice—which prepares the way for the introduction of the bill on the framework for harmonizing Ontario's and British Columbia's sales taxes with the federal GST—because we wanted to study this bill much more carefully.

As the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain pointed out, Quebec is still waiting to receive compensation for harmonizing its sales tax, which it did 17 years ago. We have been asking for compensation since that time, but the Conservative government ignores our requests.

The government moved a motion for time allocation before we even saw the bill. We cannot agree with a motion that limits the amount time we have to study the bill we are discussing. The fact that the Conservative government, supported by the Liberals, moved a motion like this is undemocratic and unjustified.

For Quebec, fair and just compensation for having harmonized its sales tax is crucial and important. For several years now, we have been asking this government to act fairly towards Quebec by compensating it for having harmonized its sales tax with the GST, as is the case for Ontario, British Columbia and the Maritimes.

It is important to remind all the members of this House, especially the Conservative and Liberal members from Quebec who were elected to represent the interests of that province, that the federal government's refusal goes against the clear, unanimous position of the Quebec National Assembly.

It is shameful that members who run for election in Quebec and are elected to defend the interests of Quebecers should act against a unanimous resolution of the National Assembly. That is a dishonest thing to do to voters.

All members from Quebec should listen to me carefully. I would like to again read the resolution that was unanimously passed by the Quebec National Assembly on March 31, 2009:

WHEREAS Québec was the first province to harmonize with the Federal goods and services tax (GST) in the early 1990s;

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WHEREAS since then, three Atlantic provinces have harmonized with the GST in 1997 and have received compensation for this from the Federal Government totalling close to 1 billion dollars;

WHEREAS the Government of Ontario announced that it would harmonize its sales tax with the GST beginning on 1 July 2010;

WHEREAS the Federal Government will grant a 4.3 billion dollar compensation to Ontario for this harmonization, an amount that is justified in the Canada-Ontario memorandum of understanding particularly owing to the desire to stimulate economic growth and job creation, and the Federal Government will administer this new provincial tax free of charge on behalf of Ontario;

WHEREAS the Ontario sales tax will be very similar to the Québec sales tax (QST) since certain goods, such as books, will not be subject to the provincial tax and that input tax refunds in Ontario may be identical to those agreed to by Québec for an 8-year period;

WHEREAS Ontario is the fourth province to receive compensation from the Federal Government as part of the harmonization of the provincial and federal sales taxes, while Québec has not received any compensation to this day even though it was the first province to harmonize its sales tax;

● (1700)

BE IT RESOLVED THAT [I urge MPs from Quebec to listen carefully] the National Assembly ask the Federal Government to treat Québec justly and equitably, by granting compensation that is comparable to that offered to Ontario for the harmonization of its sales tax with the GST, which would represent an amount of 2.6 billion dollars for Québec.

This was passed unanimously by all parties in the National Assembly, including the ADQ and the Liberals of Quebec. We know that the federal Liberals want to get closer to the Liberals of Quebec, but here in the House, they are still voting against the interests of Quebec. Naturally, the Parti Québécois voted in favour of the motion.

Contrary to the Conservative and Liberal MPs from Quebec, the elected members of the Bloc Québécois speak for the consensus in Quebec and the interests of Quebec without compromise.

It is with this motion in mind that we intend to follow the debates on this matter and the bill to harmonize sales tax in British Columbia and Ontario with the federal sales tax on goods and services.

Let us not forget in all of this that Quebec was the first to harmonize its sales tax with the new GST in the early 1990s, as I was saying earlier.

At that time, under an agreement with Ottawa, Quebec took on responsibility for the collection of federal tax in its territory.

In 1997, the federal government came to an agreement with three Atlantic provinces over compensation to encourage them to harmonize their provincial sales taxes with the federal GST.

Since then, the three Atlantic provinces have received the equivalent of about \$1 billion in compensation.

In light of this, it was completely natural for the Government of Quebec to ask the federal government for compensation, since it had harmonized before the Atlantic provinces. But there is nothing for Quebec. This Conservative government tries to win over Quebec during elections. However, when it is time to vote in the House of Commons, when it is time to present a budget to support the Quebec economy, it never follows through. However, it is always there for its supporters in western Canada, especially those in Alberta and Saskatchewan. As we know the oil industry is very big in those provinces.

An MP from Quebec, Paul Martin, who was the federal finance minister at the time, refused outright to compensate Quebec stating that only those provinces that would lose more than 5% of their sales taxes would be compensated.

It is now clear that the 5% rule invented by the Liberals is no longer valid.

It is clear that Ontario and British Columbia will lose less than 5% of their revenue once they harmonize their sales taxes with the GST, and yet they will be compensated.

It is only right that Quebec should receive adequate compensation. It is only right that all Quebec members sitting in this House of Commons support the unanimous position of the National Assembly, which I read earlier.

We, the members of the Bloc Québécois, will not hesitate to defend this position.

Members should note that Ontario will receive \$4.3 billion and British Columbia \$1.6 billion in compensation. Only Quebec, the first province to harmonize its sales tax with the GST, has still not been compensated for harmonizing its sales tax with the GST.

● (1705)

The Conservatives still want to hear nothing of it; they turn a deaf ear and find false pretexts to avoid responding to Quebec's demands.

In fact, now that the 5% rule no longer applies, the Conservative government requires that a single tax be collected in Quebec from now on. In other words, it wants us to stop collecting the tax on a tax. It is unbelievable to see the Conservatives interfering in the Quebec nation's areas of jurisdiction like this.

Furthermore, the government is asking Quebec to turn over management of the GST and QST to the federal government, so that it can manage it on behalf of Quebec. It is hard to understand and accept this interference in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction. It is time for us to become sovereign and manage our own taxes, collect our own taxes and sign all of our own international treaties.

The Government of Quebec unanimously agrees that it does not want to turn over management of the taxes to the federal government. It is clear that the Conservative government has not been honest with Quebec, and I cannot believe that elected members from Quebec support the federal government's decision.

As I already said, we will thoroughly study this bill to harmonize provincial sales taxes in Ontario and British Columbia with the GST. We want to ensure that this legislative framework includes provisions that will help negotiations between the Government of Quebec and the federal government result in a solution that is fair to Quebec.

The Bloc Québécois is here to defend Quebecers' interests. That is why we want to find a fair solution by making sure that the legislative framework to be proposed will provide the necessary flexibility to ensure that Quebec's choices in terms of taxation are permitted and respected. That does not seem to be what the Conservative government and the Liberals want at the moment.

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We also have to make sure that the framework will enable Quebec to keep collecting its own sales tax, the QST, and the federal tax, the GST, within its boundaries, which it has been doing since the mid-1990s.

Finally, we want to make sure that compensation offered to Quebec will be the same as that to be provided to Ontario and British Columbia and that already given to the Atlantic provinces. We are not asking for more. We simply want to receive fair and just treatment, which is not currently the case.

We expect the federal government to come up with a proposal that will be fair to Quebeckers. We want it to be just and fair to the Quebec nation and to all of the other Canadian provinces that want to harmonize their taxes.

To summarize, we want the federal government to treat Quebec fairly by providing compensation for having harmonized the provincial sales tax with the GST.

That is why we will oppose the government's time allocation motion to speed up the process to pass a bill that we have not even seen. That is fundamentally undemocratic.

I am ready to answer questions now.

• (1710)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know the HST will hurt residents and organizations alike in B.C. and Ontario. In fact, Adam Hayduk, the executive director of the Vancouver Thunderbirds Minor Hockey Association, was quoted as saying:

We estimate that if the HST was to be introduced, it would cost the Vancouver Thunderbirds Minor Hockey Association an additional \$30,000 directly related to the purchase of ice for the youth in our community registered in our hockey program.

If we replicate across the whole province of B.C. and the province of Ontario, we are talking about a huge amount of money that is going to hurt people who do not have a lot of money in the first place.

Now I want to deal with the Liberals because they are the most confusing component of this whole debate. The Liberal finance critic has been quoted as saying, "absolutely what the doctor ordered for the economy". He is 100% in support of the government bringing in the HST. The former premier of B.C., now a Liberal member of Parliament, is quoted as saying, "It is absolutely horrendous and it's criminal on the part of the Conservative government to be pushing this policy in a time of deep economic recession". Two very high ranking members of the Liberal Party are totally at odds with another, when we can clearly see this will hurt people and organizations in those two provinces.

Would the member to comment on that situation?

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André: Mr. Speaker, I did not understand my colleague's question very well. But he is saying that some Liberals are at odds with each other. I do not think that is anything new.

In my opinion, and in the opinion of the Bloc Québécois, it is very difficult to run Canada. That is why we want to be sovereign. We want to be able to control our own taxes and negotiate our own treaties. We see what futile debates we have now in the House with the Liberals and the Conservatives. When the Liberals are in power, they run the country and carry out their policies; when they are in opposition, they complain about decisions that were not taken.

To come back to this bill, we are opposed to this motion to limit debate on a bill we have not seen, because it is undemocratic. That is the position we have taken after discussing this issue among ourselves.

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Timmins—James Bay.

There are a couple of issues I want to raise in the course of this debate. First of all, we are debating right now a motion on time allocation. Earlier today we saw a shameful vote in this House on closure, which has actually shut off our ability to have a fulsome discussion on this particular piece of legislation, Bill C-62. Once the procedural motion is voted on this evening, we will be forced into a very limited debate on Bill C-62.

Even though this only applies in Ontario and British Columbia at this time, there are British Columbians and Ontarians who live and travel across this country, and what we are consistently hearing from them is that they do not like this HST. In fact, one of my constituents called it the "hated sales tax".

What we do know is that in the normal course of events, we would have an opportunity at committee to call witnesses from across this country and be able to give people an opportunity to have their say on what they see as both the benefits and problems of the sales tax. Of course, that discussion is now excluded. We are not going to be able to hear from Canadians because we only have four hours at committee, and that is it.

What we have also heard in this House, of course, is that this is a provincial matter. If this is solely a provincial matter, why are we debating it in the House, as the member for Burnaby—Douglas rightly pointed out? Why are we going to be debating Bill C-62 tomorrow or the day after in this House?

The other matter of course has to do with first nations. Clearly the federal government has a responsibility in first nations jurisdictions, because of its fiduciary responsibility. There is an honour of the Crown responsibility that is acknowledged here.

The member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing has talked a number of times about the point of sales tax exemption in Ontario. In British Columbia, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs wrote a letter to the minister on December 2, which states:

HST affects First Nations' ability to earn a moderate livelihood, and it adversely affects our Aboriginal economic rights.... Vague assurances and tax bulletins are insufficient to accommodate.

Your actions to date are not honourable and represent a failure to treat First Nations as equals in a Government-to-Government relationship. We demand a distinct process; public tax bulletins will be a failure to consult and accommodate.

Government Orders

I do not think I could have said it any better. First nations in British Columbia have clearly outlined the fact that they expect to be consulted when we are talking about taxation. There are other pieces of government legislation that give first nations the ability to tax or to be tax exempt, and we would expect the federal government to honour its fiduciary and honour of the Crown responsibilities in that context.

Now I want to talk about British Columbia. In British Columbia, as a number of members have noted, the Ipsos Reid poll for the Canwest News Service and *Global National* last week indicated that 82% of British Columbians oppose the harmonized sales tax, and 56% of B.C. respondents say they think the HST will hurt the provincial economy.

In case members think it is just New Democrats who are talking about this, I want to turn to a couple of the associations that represent businesses in British Columbia.

Butchart Gardens has put together a study on the impact of the HST on tourism, and I just want to quote a couple of their primary concerns. They clearly lay out in their study the benefits to British Columbia from tourism. They acknowledge that in Canada, tourism is the fourth largest economic driver. One would think that an economic driver of that significance would be consulted when a sales tax is put together. The Butchart Gardens study says that:

Implementing a large new tax on a significant portion of B.C.'s economy will impact consumer confidence and spending levels, and therefore hurts businesses at the end of the supply chain who are labour-based or do not have enough input tax credits to off-set the new tax burden.

This negative 'new tax' effect is greatly amplified due to current economic conditions...

...price elasticity calculations indicate that passing the tax on to our battered consumers will decrease business revenues and thereby reduce government tax revenues generated by impacted sectors...

Considering current economic conditions, what is the cost and scope of risk as measured against predicted HST benefit? Where is this data? Where is this study?

● (1720)

Again, this is what could have been brought up at committee. However, people like The Butchart Gardens, a large tourism attraction in Victoria, have been shut out of any avenue to have their voices heard on the impact on their and other tourism-related businesses.

The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, in an open letter, talks about a recent survey of members in British Columbia. It states that 91% of its members said that a harmonized sales tax will have a negative impact on their businesses; 90% of respondents said their customers will cut back on spending; and 71% said they will have to cut back on staff or staff hours. Those are the restaurants, another key economic driver in British Columbia.

Because we do not have an opportunity to hear from Canadians other than in this very short debate, I want to read some of the emails I have been getting. I have been getting tons of emails on the impact of this harmonized sales tax.

In a letter to the editor of the *Nanaimo News Bulletin*, Rosina Schmidt wrote:

The HST will have a negative impact on rental housing quality and affordability, especially in Nanaimo.

It will increase most rental housing industry costs, such as property management, repairs and maintenance contracts by seven per cent next year.

The overall costs to operate rental buildings will increase by up to three per cent as a result. That's about \$300 per rental unit per year.

We know that many people in rental units are already being squeezed, as are the property owners.

I received an email from Gabriola Island that says:

Please on behalf of the restaurant industry and my own family restaurant... do what you can to prevent the HST from happening. Such an increase in tax will stop a hesitant clientele from coming out to eat in this economically difficult time, especially on a ferry dependent island.

From Nanaimo, Bridget said:

I find myself struggling to make ends meet as the cost of housing, food and transportation has skyrocketed in BC over the past ten years while my wage has stagnated. I have a degree and a "middle class" job and still spend 75% of my income on taxes, rent, utility bills, medical expenses and transportation. Half of my co-workers were laid off recently. I'm trying to save a bit of money to have some financial security in case my job disappears too. I'm worried the HST will push my shoestring budget into the red.

Sean writes that:

My family, that is my Wife and our yet unborn child... will suffer if this tax goes through. We both work, but as the minimum wage is so low...we're having trouble getting by.

The ever-widening margin between wealthy and poor is appalling.

Carol states:

I am a resident on Gabriola Island, a realtor, and a landlord...

Please voice your opposition to the HST legislation, and halt the implementation....

The HST will have a negative impact on rental housing quality and affordability.

Susan says:

...in Nanaimo, I am concerned that the HST will increase most rental housing industry costs such as repairs and maintenance by approximately 7% next year.

Again, we see that a \$300 increase in costs per rental unit will have an impact on the affordability of rental units.

Bruce, from Victoria, states:

The introduction of the HST will hit the poor hardest and benefit only big business. It has been said that the savings to business will be passed on to the consumers. If you believe that, I have some property I'd like to sell you in the Florida Everglades.

Peter, from Duncan, comments:

Please know as a senior on a fixed income that I am vehemently opposed to the Harmonised sales tax. It is another erosion of my small income that makes life very difficult.

Harriet remarks that:

my income is less than \$11,000.00 per year, not enough to pay taxes...

this province has the second lowest minimum wage in Canada with one of the highest costs of living....

...the cost of food has greatly increased....

the number of people using our local foodbank has increased 30% in the past year...

healthcare will become even more unavailable because therapists will increase their fees...over the counter medications will cost more....

education will be farther from my grasp because all aspects of getting to classes...

both the tourism and real estate business are speaking against this tax because they are very aware of the negative impact of an additional 7% on their transactions....

Government Orders

...the ...government said it would not increase taxes. the general public is not so gullible as all these politicians believe, we know the hst is just another cash grab at the expense of those that can least afford it.

Deanna, from Ladysmith, writes:

I am against harmonization of the federal and provincial sales taxes. Please, vote against it.

Deanna, do not worry. I will.

Pat, from Nanaimo, says:

Having been retired for 15 years now, pensions are being eroded daily and many of the 'few' extras we now enjoy will be further out of reach with the implementation of the HST. Further, we are now finding we can no longer afford to stay in the home we worked so hard to build for retirement....

....consider the plight of many in this province who just cannot afford yet another increase in tax load.

● (1725)

Doug, from British Columbia, says:

What is the logic of introducing a new tax in mid recession? How will it help economic recovery when it will discourage consumer spending?

I work in the restaurant industry which claims the tax will cause a loss of up to \$750 Million in business and a loss of up to 10,000 jobs in B.C.

Robert, from Nanaimo, states:

I strongly oppose this tax on the basis that... it is being unfairly implemented in BC, and will place too great a burden on consumers struggling to cope with a recession.

From Karen, we have the following:

As a person on disability I cannot afford a tax hike of any amount. Also my adult children can't feed and clothe themselves as it is!

Another constituent wrote:

I feel bad about it... as I am a senior I can't afford all my prescriptions or my needs. I feel we need to get [the premier of British Columbia] out.... I know you will do your best.

Someone else wrote:

I was outraged and still am outraged. If a party can say anything to get elected then integrity, honesty and our democratic process have all been bypassed.

Of course, what the person was referring to there was the fact that in British Columbia, the provincial Liberals indicated in the provincial election that they would not put in a harmonized sales tax or HST, and as soon as the election was over, they announced a harmonized sales tax. Of course, we are hearing from many of our constituents who are not only enraged about what is happening in the federal House, but also about what is happening in the Victoria legislature as well.

Grace said:

I live in a leaky condo situation—have to pay double unit entitlement on top of that for all new construction done which is very unfair. This tax will certainly cut down my spending!!

Anybody from British Columbia knows full well that people with leaky condominiums have been fighting a long, hard fight to get some justice. Now there will be an additional 7% tax on any construction they need to do to repair their leaky condos. This is a group that is already reeling under the impact of the leaky condo situation.

Another writer says:

This tax hurts the lower income the most!

Another person writes:

Please do your best and make the HST disappear. It'll destroy us.

I have letter after letter, phone call after phone call, telling us this is the wrong tax at the wrong time. If this is such a great opportunity, why will the Conservatives not allow us to hold full committee hearings, so we can hear from the public and business owners and can understand the impact on both consumers and businesses? This tax shift is simply unfair.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Madam Speaker, the speech my colleague just made is quite impressive and really speaks to the heart of the matter of how people are not very pleased with the HST and how much it is going to cost them.

The point of sale issue for aboriginals is extremely important because most aboriginals actually live in poverty and an increase in taxes is not good for them.

A self-employed business person in my area, a hairdresser who has a business called Envy Hair Studio & Day Spa and whose name is Debbie Furoy, she said that if the HST is implemented, she is going to lose business because people are already having a hard time paying for haircuts given the economic times.

Maybe my colleague could speak about small businesses and how this is going to impact them.

● (1730)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing for that good question and her very good work on the point of sale tax exemption for first nations in Ontario. That is an absolutely critical issue and a treaty right.

I heard the members opposite yelling that this is provincial jurisdiction. I still say that if it is provincial jurisdiction, why are we debating it in the House of Commons? Why is Bill C-62 before the House? If the federal government has no role in this, we would not be having this debate.

When it comes to small business, we know from the Butchart Gardens study that a lot of labour-intensive businesses will not have the same kinds of throughputs that other industries have. They are very concerned about the impact on their businesses.

Hairdressers say that most people go in for haircuts every six weeks and they are expecting people to start putting them off for eight weeks because people in British Columbia cannot afford that extra 7% and in Ontario that 8%. That is an additional 7% or 8% on these services. For many small businesses, their profit margins are very narrow, so they simply cannot afford this additional tax.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, we all know that this Conservative HST deal with B.C. is unfair. It shifts the tax burden onto families and consumers. We also know that it shifts the taxes from big corporations to everyday families. In fact, an average family of four is going to have to pay an extra \$1,500 per year.

Government Orders

We also know that B.C. is basically being bribed by the government. It is being given \$1.6 billion to sign on to this regressive deal. The real bad news today for the government is this new poll out by Ipsos Reid and Canwest News which indicates that a whopping 83% of the people are against this measure. That is without them even knowing what kind of closure motions the government is bringing down on the House.

Would the member like to comment on what is developing here?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan has a minute to respond.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, the member for Elmwood—Transcona is absolutely right. In British Columbia, we have an overwhelming opposition to this harmonized sales tax, which is why we call it the hated sales tax. We have an attempt by the government to shut down any opportunity for people to voice their concerns and talk about how it will impact their families, low-income people, seniors and businesses.

In my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, we have a number of small communities that have small businesses. Those small businesses are the lifeblood of our communities. We need those small businesses to stay active and healthy in order to keep our local economies going. In this time of economic recession, they are very concerned about their ability to keep their doors open. Why are we imposing this wrong-headed tax at this particular time?

I talked about this earlier. If the Conservatives think this is such a great idea, why do they not have the courage of their convictions and allow a full, open debate? I am hopeful that the members in the House will support the amendment that was put forward by the member for Vancouver East and allow those committee hearings by the finance committee in both Ontario and British Columbia.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very proud as always to rise in the House representing the people of Timmins—James Bay and to rise in a place that is called the House of Commons. It is called the House of Commons because Parliament was set up to have a voice for the common people, so that the lords and the cronies and their pals could not simply lord over fundamental issues, one of them being taxation, taxation without representation. It was made up of common people who represented various regions.

People watching this back home see the New Democratic Party as being the one party in the House to speak about the issue before us, which is the Conservative government's attempt to take an unwanted tax out of the hide of senior citizens and people on fixed income.

The government does not have the guts nor the willingness to hear from senior citizens nor to hear from small business, so it brought forward a closure motion. We are not even debating the issue of the unwanted HST today. We are debating the fact that the Conservative government is shutting down debate on a bill that the public has not even seen.

Then we look at the Liberals' position. Well I could look at the Liberals, but they are all off at their Christmas eggnog parties. The Liberals say they cannot represent this issue in the House because if they do, the government might make them stay for the weekend and they are off to the beaches of Cuba.

The Liberals and the Conservatives both have one thing in common. Both parties think that by deep-sixing debate they can escape the sensor of the people of Ontario and British Columbia. This speaks to a deep malaise that exists in both the Liberal and Conservative Party. They think that the common people do not need to be heard.

I would like to quote an article in the *Toronto Sun* from the other day that actually spoke about this. It said :

The July 1 imposition of an unwanted Harmonized Sales Tax on millions of Canadians, which took another step forward on Parliament Hill yesterday, is a symbol of a growing malaise in Canadian politics. It's the increasing disconnection of Canada's political elite, both in the nation's capital and in the provinces, regardless of whether they are Conservatives or Liberals, from the people they are supposed to serve.

Conservative backbenchers think they are going to escape the judgment of average citizens on this issue because they are hiding behind this pathetic fig leaf, saying it is the provinces. It is not the provinces. This comes from the Mike Harris gang. This is the agenda of the finance minister. As the *National Post* said in early March of this year, "It was a pet project of the finance minister".

People in Ontario will remember that gang and what the Mike Harris crew did. They were the ones who laughed when people were not able to feed their kids. They were the ones who told them to buy dented cans of tuna if they wanted to feed their families. They were the ones who demonized the poor. A woman who was nine months pregnant, who had received overpayments on her student loans, was considered such a criminal that she was put under house arrest and left to die. We heard nothing from that gang about what they were doing to the poor and to seniors. That is the Mike Harris gang.

That same gang is now in Ottawa. They are trying to pretend that the provinces are doing this, and yet in budget 2006 the finance minister said:

The Government invites all provinces that have not yet done so to engage in discussions on the harmonization of their provincial retail sales taxes with the federal GST.

On April 10, 2008, the finance minister, who was the right hand of Mike Harris, said:

—we're also calling on the remaining provinces that have not harmonized their PST with the GST to work with us to accomplish that goal of harmonization.

The *National Post* refers to this as being "the pet project of the finance minister".

Just recently, members of the wonderful New Democratic government in Manitoba, who did not mind staying up late at night to debate a motion that affected their citizens, said that Manitoba was rejecting an invitation from the federal government to introduce a harmonized sales tax because, as proposed, the HST would impose more than \$400 million in new sales tax costs on Manitoba families at a time of economic uncertainty.

Mr. Jim Maloway: One million people.

Mr. Charlie Angus: On one million people, Madam Speaker.

Government Orders

• (1735)

People back home are certainly going to be wondering why the official opposition, the Liberal Party, is not opposing anything but are going meekly along, held by the chain of the Conservative Party, to get through this because they do not want to deal with the political fallout of their actions. Well, they have to address the political fallout of their actions because they will be profound.

We see seniors organizations, CARP is speaking out, that want to be heard. The Conservatives do not want to let them speak. We have talked to the real estate agents and the real estate organizations that are saying that first-time homeowners are going to be denied the chance to buy a home. This is in a time of a struggling economy. The Conservatives and the Liberals are shutting down those voices from coming forward.

We have spoken with the people who are in financial planning, who are trying to help people make their savings, who are saying the additional 13% in Ontario and 12% in British Columbia will have devastating effects. In fact, we even hear Liberal members standing and saying that this is an issue that has to be addressed.

Yet, the Liberal leader and the Conservative leader are saying that such issues of effects of a major shift in the tax burden from the corporations to senior citizens, to those on fixed incomes, that is something that the House of Commons is not going to debate. I say it is pitiful of the Liberal Party members. If they are not going to do the job they are paid to do, they should just leave early and head off to the beaches of Cuba now. People paid them to come and stand up to this gang of Mike Harris cronies and the former reform party.

This is a serious issue. We are talking about a massive shift in the tax burden. The Conservatives are trying to move it through quickly. They do not want to have people review what is in this legislation. They do not want to have witnesses.

I would like to ask anyone from the Liberal or the Conservative benches to have the guts to stand up in this House and tell us whether or not they have crunched the numbers on what it is going to cost at the gas pumps? I know they have. They know what it is going to cost. They do not want the public to know. They do not want the public to know what it is going to cost. They do not want the public to know what it is going to cost to seniors who are living in downtown condos on fixed incomes.

They want this to go through because they think the public is stupid. They think the public can be spun off with their cheap ten percenter attack ads and their wedge issues and their mailings, accusing people of being anti-Semitic. They think they can create these sideshows so that people will lose sight of the fundamental fact of what is happening here in the House of Commons, which is that we have a Conservative Party, aided by its very weak colleagues in the Liberal Party, putting political expediency above the interests of senior citizens.

I read the newspapers all weekend. I watched television. I was on Google every 20 minutes. I wanted to know what action was being taken to respond to the concerns of citizens. We are getting hundreds of calls. We are getting thousands of letters. We know this is a serious issue.

The premier of Ontario said that he had never heard a single complaint. I find that hard to believe. The backbench Conservatives have said that it does not really affect them even though it was their idea in the first place. Then we looked at what the federal Liberals were talking about. Well, they were all meeting at the Château Laurier with Yon Brutus from York Centre, making their plan to get rid of the visitor from Harvard.

Let us think about it, what is up with this party that it is always the average people who can sit and wait until they finish their treats. It is like watching the last days of the Roman Empire with the Liberals in their togas, sitting at the Château Laurier saying, "I think I should, as a young Liberal, be chosen as the right hand of whoever is going to take out the present Liberal Leader".

These were the shenanigans they were doing this weekend, when they should have saying, "How do we stop the HST? How do we actually deal with the fact the government is bringing closure on a bill on taxation that will silence the voice of members of Parliament from representing their constituents, their senior citizens, their first nations whose treaty rights are being abrogated across the board?"

No, they were all over at the Château Laurier saying, "I can get this post, and you can have that post, if we just get rid of the latest Liberal figurehead". Meanwhile, the Conservative juggernaut moves on. I find it an appalling abdication of their fundamental responsibility to fight back against this right-wing agenda.

• (1740)

We talk about the growing malaise in the House of Commons. We saw young people risking their lives today on the roof of the Parliament Buildings to remind the government about its failure on the tar sands, and who supports the Conservative government? It is the Liberal Party. It is shameful.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is no question that Canadians in Ontario and British Columbia are in need of a fair bit of information about exactly what is being proposed. I do not believe that either province has put out its legislation yet to get the details. It is very likely that people's impressions are based simply on the information they are getting from those who are making statements now.

Interestingly enough, if we said "tax grab", describing the HST in Ontario and then we asked people in Ontario how they felt about a tax grab, they would say they do not like it. All of a sudden there would be a very large number of people who do not like it, even though there is not a piece of legislation out there.

If a person were to go to the Ontario government website, in which it lays out the framework of it, the representation is that the Government of Ontario will actually have reduced revenue under the harmonized system. It will go down. Its deficit will be some \$24 billion. This initiative is a job creator and a business investment creator.

Would the member care to admit whether or not he has seen the Ontario or the B.C. legislation? If not, how can he assess what the impact will be on people?

Government Orders

• (1745)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I am actually thunderstruck. I am at a loss for words. The member said that we need more information, but what is he doing? He is supporting a closure motion to prevent debate on this issue. This is pitiful.

Then he does the classic, “You little people do not know”. He said that maybe people get confused and upset and if only they went to the Liberal Party website, they would learn better things.

Paul Bailey, president of the Police Pensioners Association spoke very clearly and coherently about this. He asked why seniors were being targeted. Gerald Gibson, who represents 4,000 condominium owners, spoke of the effect it will have on seniors. We hear from the president of the Ontario Real Estate Association that this will price first-time home buyers out of the market.

Yet my Liberal colleague seems to think that if only these people went to the Liberal website, they would not be so confused, that it is very easy to get all hot and bothered about a bill on taxation.

I would ask the hon. member, why is he being so gutless and why is he allowing this closure motion to go through without information?

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Madam Speaker, we talked about point of sale throughout the day. I was just wondering if my colleague was aware that the point of sale does not only impact first nations, but it actually impacts farmers as well.

Currently farmers in Ontario have to show their farm organization card and they get the point of sale tax rebate right away. However, they will not be able to do that.

Given that farmers have been having a very difficult time for quite a few years under the former Liberal government and the current Conservative government, maybe he would like to speak to the impact of the HST on farmers.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, what cattle owners in my riding are getting paid for culled cows now is what they were getting paid in the 1980s, yet what are their input costs? Compare the price of diesel in the 1980s to today, and the price of food and then this tax is added.

The government shows no interest in farmers. It will crush them with this tax. I would also like to mention first nations. First nation treaty rights are a federal obligation, and the Liberal Party members seem to think that they can walk away on that and the federal Conservatives think they can walk away on it. In a region like mine, where we have cattle farmers, where we almost lost our pork industry, where we have lots of first nations, these people will be taking it right on the chin for the political expediency of the Prime Minister and the Liberal leader from Harvard.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North who has been championing the fight against the HST in this place. I am really honoured to have the opportunity to share some time with that good gentleman.

I am going to start with some history. It is kind of appropriate. We all know that Prime Minister Mulroney was the father of the GST. I

guess we would have to say that Mr. Chrétien was the handmaiden who delivered the GST ultimately. I was in the 1993 election when we fought against the GST. I recall very clearly the Liberal Party of the day taking the position that it would oppose the GST. Then what did we have? We had the GST.

Later on we can recall that Sheila Copps was the member for Hamilton East at the time. She was a fighter who kept her word in this place. She had given her word that if the GST went forward, she would resign her seat. Ms. Copps did that. She resigned her seat in 1996. I was the person who came second to her in that fight. I will say one thing about the good people of Hamilton East. When they returned Sheila Copps to this place, they did not return her because they were endorsing the GST. They returned her because of her sense of honour and the fact that she had kept her word and resigned. The people respected that.

I want to bring us to the current Conservative government. It is following the tradition. There are two Liberal governments, one in Ontario and one in B.C., pushing ahead with the HST. The government will go down in history as another relative of value added taxes.

Think of it this way. We hear the people on the government side in particular saying that it is not our jurisdiction. If it is not our jurisdiction, if the bill were to be defeated and it did not go ahead, there would not be an HST in B.C. or Ontario. Therefore, it is our responsibility in this place.

I have heard members of the NDP in this place calling across the chamber to people on the government side and the Liberals asking them to join with us in this fight.

In 2005 and 2006 when I ran in the election, one of the things that I said to the good folks in my riding, and I have repeated it here many times because I am proud of it, was that I was going to represent the people to the government instead of representing the government to the people. I say to the members here today, if they are honest about the needs and wants of their constituents, they will know that a high percentage of their constituents do not want the HST.

There is no way to pass this off or hand it to someone else. This is a reality. The government of the day is putting forward \$2 billion for B.C. and I understand about \$6 billion for Ontario to facilitate this HST move.

We know from information that was given to us earlier today that they were talking about the HST a year ago, prior to both the B.C. and Ontario elections. It is ironic that the Liberal governments that were elected in both of those provinces decided not to share with the people voting for them that they were going to implement the HST.

Why in the world would they not want to share that during an election campaign? The reason might be that they would lose if they had told people that.

If we look at the polls in the province of B.C. today, and if that election were held today, the Liberals in that province who decided to withhold that information from people would be turfed.

Government Orders

I want to get to a more current time. In the summer I was crossing the country talking to seniors, listening to their problems. I recall one place in Hubbards, Nova Scotia where there was a gathering of probably 150 seniors who were out for a good time. There was music playing. People were playing bingo and having a wonderful time at Hubbards barn. We started chatting with them about the problems they were having. Of course taxation was one of their big concerns.

Then I went to B.C. The whole dialogue started to change. There people were completely focused on the HST and the damage it would cause.

In this place, because my critic area is seniors and pensions, I have talked at length about those seniors in Canada who live in poverty. A little under 300,000 people cannot make it through the month now. A majority of them live in B.C. and Ontario. They live in the metropolitan areas and that is where there is the biggest problem.

● (1750)

When I was in Elliot Lake, a woman told me about her hydro bill. It is one of the prime examples I use. This woman was sitting quietly in the gathering and she put up her hand timidly and said, “My hydro bill is \$2,100 a year. What am I going to do? Where am I going to get the \$160 it will take?” To people in many places who are fully employed, \$160 is not a huge amount, but for people who are on fixed incomes, whether it is a pension or long-term disability, they are going to have severe problems because of this change.

In my community of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek a lot of small businesses are very concerned. The Hamilton area has lost tens of thousands of jobs in manufacturing over the last 20 years. Many of those displaced workers are people who are willing to work. They went out and started small businesses in the hope that they could regain the future they felt they lost when they lost their employment. Now they are facing the fear that the small margin their businesses have is going to be eroded by this very unwanted tax.

Prior to coming to this place, I was on the Hamilton Tourism Board. We were in a panic about what impact the changes to the passport legislation in the United States would have particularly in the province of Ontario. A member talked about the tourist industry and hunters who would come to northern Ontario close to the Manitoba border. A person in Ontario might entice people to come to Canada but the neighbouring province of Manitoba does not have the HST. The person in Ontario who is trying to get by all of a sudden has an 8% liability which the people in Manitoba, where there is a good NDP government, do not have to face.

I am very concerned about this. I have been hearing from people in my hometown and other places.

Bob and Nancy live in Hamilton and have a very simple message. They said to please add their names to the list of people objecting to the proposed HST. They said that as seniors, the added tax on heat and hydro alone will be enough to push them over the edge of poverty. I received that message today at 12:58 p.m.

I received one from a young lady named Chantal at 2:22 p.m. today. People are just starting to understand what can happen to them. She said that she and many others do not agree with the 8% increase on taxes. She is a single mother to a beautiful five-year old daughter. Every week she gets paid she only has \$20 extra for the

week. In referring to this place, she said, “You are making it very difficult to survive in this world. Please, please do not increase the taxes. I don't know what will happen if you do”.

I am sure members from every other party, if they checked with their staff, are receiving emails, letters and telephone calls on this situation and how terribly negative it will be for people. I plead with members to take the time to look at this issue properly and give it consideration for those people on fixed incomes who will not only be damaged, but they will be seriously hurt by the HST.

I call on all members here to do as I mentioned at the outset, to represent their constituents to the government instead of representing the government to their constituents.

● (1755)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is very important for members to reflect the mood of the people. After listening to a number of speeches, the fact is that nobody in this place has seen the legislation from the province of Ontario or the province of B.C. Ontario's legislation is going to be passed by Christmas. The B.C. legislation probably will not be passed until March. It will be a while before the final deal.

I wonder if the member has seen the memorandum of agreement between the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia. Could he indicate to the House what specific provisions there are with regard to the enactment of the bill?

● (1800)

Mr. Wayne Marston: Madam Speaker, I have not seen that document personally. However, we in the province of Ontario have not had the opportunity to see the document either. As a representative from Hamilton in the province of Ontario, I am very concerned that we have to make a decision in this place without having the pertinent information before us.

That is why we called for an extended debate. That is why we proposed an amendment to take this to committee and allow people to understand clearly and fully what they have been asked to accept.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, in his speech, the member for Timmins—James Bay talked about how Manitoba had reported in its November 30 throne speech that the harmonized sales tax in Manitoba, which has slightly over one million people, would impose more than \$400 million in new sales tax costs.

If one does the math and calculates what it would cost for Ontario, I think it would be a spectacular result to throw out to the member for Mississauga South. The reality is the public is already opposed to this legislation. Regardless of what could be in the Ontario memorandum, the fact is a whopping 74% of people in Ontario are opposed to this legislation, without even being aware of the kind of time allocation and closure procedures in which the member for Mississauga South and his Liberal Party are involved. They are aiding and abetting the Conservatives.

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We have a good head start. We have the government on the run and we want to keep it on the run.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Madam Speaker, I do not have a calculator with me and I will not try to do those figures in my head. This summer, when I went through Ontario and British Columbia, I talked to hundreds of seniors and listened to them. Not a single senior said that he or she wanted an HST. None said that they wanted to have the corporate taxes lowered in their province so they could pay more.

Beyond that and worse than that, seniors are fearful. They are frightened. People need to pause in this place. Tens of thousands of people across the country are terrified of this HST.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, as the member indicated, they are terrified of something they have not seen. It could very well be that they are being given misinformation. In fact, the revenue of the province of Ontario will go down, but the details are at the provincial level.

Nothing we vote on here will have anything to do with what is taxed and what is not taxed. The member should admit it. That is the issue. He should not be misleading people into thinking that there is something we can do here. It is a deal between the federal government and the province.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Madam Speaker, I recommend that the member visit www.blockthehst.ca, look at the calculator, see what will happen when he puts in his normal expenditures and then try to relate that to seniors. It is a value-added tax and value-added taxes penalize the poor.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am speaking today against the harmonized sales tax and the way it is being rammed down our throats.

Northern Ontarians will be punished more than anyone else in Ontario under the yoke of this tax because we in the far frozen north already pay more for gas, home heating and transportation than people from the sunny south. This new tax will only widen the cost of living gap between north and south Ontario.

It is supposed to increase our competitiveness and productivity according to the Conservatives, but to do that, it shifts the tax burden from big businesses to families. That is the wrong way to balance our books, and the middle of the deepest recession in decades is the wrong time to do it.

This tax is inherently regressive. It hits those who have no choice but to spend large portions of their income and it favours those with income to save. Those with the lowest income have no choice but to pay it and sacrifice elsewhere. This HST will hit those hardest who can least afford it overall.

An average family of four will have to pay about \$1,500 per year more in my riding. The number of items they will see tax hikes on is astounding. I will not read the whole list, but here is a sampling: gasoline, Internet bills, mobile phone bills, hydro, home heating oil and gas, mutual fund investments, snow removal, ice rink rentals, taxi fees, kids' hockey for goodness' sake, air fare, train and bus tickets, new homes, dry cleaning, carpet cleaning, haircuts, home renovations, commercial property rights, campgrounds, vitamins, gym fees, green fees, accounting fees, legal fees, landscaping, postage, veterinary fees, motor vehicle services such as towing,

magazines, and the list goes on. Even our funerals will cost 8% more.

Why on earth are we even considering this bad idea? The government says that it is supposed to help business, and maybe it will help some of its big business friends, maybe that is true, but many small businesses have written to me saying that they are opposed, no matter what the corporate elites in the Ontario Chamber of Commerce say.

I would like to quote the Canadian Federation of Independent Business survey of 105,000 of its members. Fully 75% of its members fear the HST will be a big negative. Their customers, facing such a high tax on local products and services, will be driven to the underground economy, to online foreign suppliers, or simply not make that purchase at all.

CFIB's Ontario director said, "Governments have clearly dropped the ball in their handling of this critical tax reform initiative". He went on to say, "the decision to finalize the terms and conditions of the HST, without public consultation, has generated mixed reviews and serious concerns within Ontario's small business community".

Voters have long enough memories to remember the GST. The auditor general found, when the GST was introduced, that many people took their activities underground to avoid paying the tax. With the way the HST is structured, there will be a lot more attempts at tax avoidance and a lot of out-shopping.

Does the government really think it is good fiscal policy to bribe the Ontario and B.C. governments with over \$6 billion of taxpayer money, borrowed on the open market, to raise our taxes? This, at a time when it is running an astronomical debt.

Here is an idea for the Minister of Finance, who claims to be helping small business. Instead of raising taxes on ordinary people, why does the Minister of Finance not cut small business taxes instead? That is a much better way to increase our competitiveness and productivity on a similar scale, plus it has the added bonus of increasing innovation in our economy, something the HST will not do.

There is also the question of how this tax is being rammed down our throats in the most undemocratic way imaginable. Suspending democracy in this way to ram legislation through in mere hours might be expected in war time or in the case of a national emergency. However, this extraordinary measure is being used to impose the tax on Ontarians and British Columbians without consultation. Really the minimum we can do here is to hear from ordinary Ontarians and British Columbians about the HST. We need some public participation and co-operation here. This will impact their lives in so many ways.

I myself find the fact that committee only has four hours to study the bill when we see it, and until 3 a.m., to be ridiculous. Is the committee actually supposed to do its due diligence under such conditions?

The Liberals should be joining us to demand transparency and accountability from the government instead of once again giving it a blank cheque. Instead, the Conservative government, supported by the Liberals, has pushed Motion No. 8 to limit democracy.

•(1805)

People across my riding and across northern Ontario have written to me on the HST, including many first nations, wanting to know why we would not be consulting with them, asking if there were not treaty rights on taxation to be considered. In fact, residents of my riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North, whether members of first nations or not, would like to be consulted on the HST before it is imposed on them.

The Liberals and Conservatives, supported by the Bloc, in their HST coalition, and we remember coalitions here, apparently do not want to hear from them or from other Ontarians or British Columbians. Residents of northern Ontario will be astounded at the actions of the Conservative MP for Kenora and the Liberal MP for Nipissing—Timiskaming, who have both voted to impose the HST and betrayed their own constituents.

They must know that we were sent here to Ottawa to represent our constituents. I know their constituents overwhelmingly reject this tax grab. They are not standing up for those constituents. Instead they are voting to ram the HST through with no consultation, no chance for committee study and a severely constrained debate.

Apparently they are fine suspending democracy to do it. They are fine with not even being able to see the bill we will be voting on until literally the last minute. I guess I should not really be surprised by this. This is really just more of the same regressive policies of Conservative and Liberal governments.

It is another tax grab in the grand old tradition of the GST, that other Conservative tax. Remember when the Liberals promised to scrap it and then did not when they got in. There is not much light between the Liberals the Conservatives on this issue or many others. They boost returns for corporate elites on the lame excuse that they will use those returns to benefit the rest of us. Do they seriously expect us to believe that the oil companies will pass the savings on to us at the gas pumps?

The Conservatives also claim this is a provincial decision, another yam Canadians do not believe. If this is purely a provincial decision, why is the finance minister on record selling this tax to the provinces? Why is his signature on agreements with Ontario and B. C.? Why are we voting for it, in just a few hours, here in Ottawa and not in Toronto?

I am proud that the NDP was the only party to have consistently fought the GST, which was a Conservative tax grab that became a Liberal legacy. The HST was also a Liberal idea and now it is a Conservative plan. My party, once again, has been the only one that consistently opposes it as well.

I am proud to stand today with New Democrats to once again fight the HST in Ontario and British Columbia.

•(1810)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think by now those who might be viewing the debates are probably

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totally confused about who is implementing the tax. It is the provinces. It is the province of Ontario and the province of B.C.

What the federal Parliament is doing now is looking at amendments to the Excise Tax Act to permit the agreements that were signed between the Government of Canada and the provinces to harmonize their taxes.

The member was using the words “tax grab”, but he knows the truth is that Ontario's revenues will go down over this. They are not going up. It is not a tax grab. They know its deficit is going to be some \$24 billion. They know that it will create over 500,000 new jobs for people who do not have jobs today. They know it will create capital investment of \$47 billion, which is necessary to sustain those jobs and help our economy to recover. They know the income tax cuts of 16.5% for the majority of Canadians, means that 93% of Canadians will be better off, will offset any additional cost if they reduce the number of exemptions.

It is easy to come up with a list that there is going to be a little more here, but not one of those members said in his or her speeches, not one of them yet admitted that there would be income tax reductions commencing on January 1, 2010, even though the HST does not come in until July 1, 2010. Why is the member not prepared to tell all—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would like to give the hon. member an opportunity to answer.

The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North.

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Madam Speaker, this will be very brief. If the hon. member believes that drivel, he is really on the wrong side of the floor.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member for Mississauga South addressing some of the realities that relate to the bill, in spite of the fact that the NDP members seem to live in their own world on this.

I find it rather interesting that the member just said the NDP was proud of the fact it opposed the GST. It is interesting to me that when our government reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, every one of those members opposed those reductions.

Would the member tell us when the NDP has ever reduced a tax?

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Madam Speaker, the very fine NDP government in Manitoba, over the last 10 years, has reduced tax on small business on the first \$500,000 of net income from 11% to 1% and it will go to zero per cent next year. It has been a huge economic multiplier. The NDP is the party that cares about small business rather than big business, and we look forward to working to be sure that we truly take the load off.

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I would like to make a prediction. I will predict that due to the fact that the Conservatives gave their big business friends \$50 billion or \$60 billion in tax cuts, we will soon see the GST increased back up to 7% to provide for the revenue that we are going to need nationally to balance the books.

• (1815)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, when the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River spoke a little earlier, he talked about how tourist camp operators in northwestern Ontario are going to be losing business to the same types of operations in Manitoba because it is going to be cheaper to do business there. There is also the issue of air fares now being cheaper in travel agencies in Winnipeg and border communities in Ontario are going to be hurt by this.

Does the member have any observations on that potential problem?

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Madam Speaker, I share the concern of the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River. He is very correct in that we are going to continue to drive tourists away from Canada at a time when we should be growing tourism rather than driving it away.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to a motion that would limit the time for debate in this House on the very important issue of harmonizing the sales tax with the GST. We are currently debating a time allocation motion, moved by the government, regarding the bill to harmonize the British Columbia and Ontario sales taxes with the federal GST, the goods and services tax.

I will explain why we will vote against this government motion. I think it is important to understand that we are in favour of having the government prepare a bill on the framework for harmonizing the Ontario and British Columbia sales taxes with the federal GST, but we are opposed to the fact that it wants to limit the amount of time spent debating it.

This bill is extremely important to us. I do not understand why the government would want to limit the amount of time we need to do all the work required on important issues like this one. I remind members that at the start of the debate on this motion, we did not have a copy of the bill in hand. The government wanted parliamentarians to debate here, in this House, before the bill had even officially been introduced. We should have never been put in that kind of situation. It makes no sense. In his speech last Thursday, the member for Joliette spoke about this situation at length.

The Bloc Québécois will give the government bill the attention it deserves. We must ensure that the bill does not interfere with negotiations between Quebec and Ottawa regarding the \$2.6 billion in compensation for harmonization. The government is trying to ram through this bill by moving a time allocation motion. That is not what we want. We believe it is our duty to examine the bill before we vote on such a motion.

Quebec has been demanding compensation for more than 10 years now. It is unacceptable that this issue still has not been resolved. We have a unanimous motion by the National Assembly of Quebec asking the federal government to treat Quebec justly and equitably,

by granting compensation that is comparable to that offered to Ontario for the harmonization of its sales tax with the GST, which would represent an amount of \$2.6 billion for Quebec.

We intend to study this bill thoroughly. It is our responsibility to do so. We will not agree to the government's proposal that we not look carefully at all the details of this bill. The federal government cannot think that we are going to hand it a blank cheque. I can assure the House that we will not.

Quebec was the first province to harmonize its tax, and we want the federal government to come up with a solution that is fair to Quebec. That is not what is happening. In the past, the federal government had a habit of announcing bills that seemed quite fine at first blush. But we unfortunately would find out after a few hours of debate that they contained poison pills. Now, we are being asked to pass a bill after two days of debate. This is unthinkable, for the reasons I have just explained.

The Bloc Québécois will take the necessary steps to study this bill in detail, in order to detect the injustices to Quebec. The finance minister's 2006 statement penalizes Quebec. I am talking about the statement on page 68 of his 2006 budget. Under the heading Competitiveness and Efficiency of the Canadian Economic Union: Furthering Provincial Sales Tax Harmonization, we read the following:

Harmonized sales taxes are now in place in Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Quebec administers a provincial value-added tax, as well as collecting the GST on behalf of the federal government. However, separate provincial retail sales taxes continue to be collected in five provinces. The existence of provincial retail sales taxes substantially increases the effective tax rate on investment by taxing business capital goods and intermediate materials, thereby impairing the competitiveness of our tax system. Having to comply with different sales tax systems also greatly increases the complexity and the cost of doing business. The Government invites all provinces that have not yet done so to engage in discussions on the harmonization of their provincial retail sales taxes with the federal GST.

In this excerpt from the 2006 budget, the Minister of Finance never mentions anything about retroactive compensation for Quebec. That is what we are asking for. The Bloc Québécois wants the federal government to fully recognize retroactive compensation for Quebec. I would point out that over the past ten years, several finance ministers have recognized that Quebec has harmonized its sales tax with the GST.

• (1820)

To date, every province that has agreed to harmonize its sales tax with the GST has been compensated, except Quebec. Quebec will probably never be compensated as long as this government fails to recognize the principle of retroactivity. This government's failure to recognize the first government that harmonized these taxes is very worrisome and unfair.

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As for the Government of Quebec, the letter from the finance minister of the day, Monique Jérôme-Forget, was quite clear. I am referring to her letter dated March 27, 2009, which my colleague, the hon. member for Joliette, read in part during his speech last Thursday. The current minister, Minister Bachand, has reiterated the Government of Quebec's expectations.

I have a little time left to remind the House of the nature of the dispute between Quebec and Ottawa over compensation. It is crucial that the members of all the other parties acknowledge Quebec's situation and the injustice it faces regarding compensation, which should have been paid long ago. Over ten years have gone by, and this issue remains unresolved. It is not fair.

In 1990, the Government of Quebec signed an agreement with the federal government to harmonize the GST and the QST. It provided for a gradual harmonization over two years.

In July 1992, Quebec finished harmonizing its sales tax with the federal tax.

In addition to harmonization, Quebec also negotiated an agreement to manage the GST for the federal government. As a result, the Government of Quebec collects and administers the GST within Quebec. In exchange, the government pays Quebec every year for providing this service.

On April 23, 1996, the federal government and the governments of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador signed memorandums of understanding to harmonize the GST with the three provincial taxes.

Six months later, the parties signed detailed agreements under which a new HST of 15% would be introduced in the three provinces on April 1, 1997.

Under those agreements, the federal government undertook to pay the three provinces \$961 million over four years—\$349 million in each of the first two years, \$175 million in the third year, and \$88 million in the fourth year—to offset half of the revenue loss caused by harmonization.

To induce the provinces to adopt the HST at a rate of 15% in the Atlantic provinces and 14% elsewhere in Canada, the federal government had offered to pay such compensation if the loss of revenue exceeded 5%. This “adjustment assistance” was based on a formula that applied to all Canadian provinces and covered all of the difference for the first two years, 50% in the third year, and 25% in the fourth year.

According to this formula, Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia would not see their revenues from their respective sales taxes reduced by more than 5% under a harmonized system of 14% or 15%. As a result, they would not have been entitled to assistance if they had agreed to harmonization under the memorandum of understanding of April 23, 1996.

The arrival of the Conservative government changed things. While harmonization of sales tax seemed to have stalled, the Conservatives, in their first budget, relaunched the idea by opening the door to new negotiations on harmonization. We might have expected the situation in Quebec to be resolved, but that did not happen.

I read an excerpt from the 2006 budget at the beginning of my speech. It is the passage where the government excludes Quebec from the compensation it is entitled to, which is at the heart of the dispute between Quebec and Ottawa.

In the meantime, the Conservatives have reiterated their intention to keep talking about harmonization in every budget and subsequent economic statement.

When the Government of Ontario brought down its budget on March 27, 2009, it announced it was receiving \$4.3 billion from the federal government for harmonizing its sales tax.

On March 30, the Minister of Finance announced he would be open to compensation for Quebec if Quebec completely harmonized its tax with the federal government.

On March 31, the National Assembly of Quebec unanimously adopted a motion on tax harmonization and fair compensation from the federal government.

On April 1, the former finance minister announced that she would completely harmonize the provincial tax with the federal tax by creating a credit for inputs of large businesses. She wrote to the Minister of Finance to share her intentions.

● (1825)

In response to the Quebec finance minister's letter, the federal finance minister set even more new conditions for payment of compensation to Quebec.

First, the federal minister stated that from that point forward only one tax would be collected. In other words, we would stop collecting a tax on a tax. He added that Quebec would have to have to hand over responsibility for collecting the GST and the QST to the federal government, which would then administer the tax on behalf of Quebec.

For the Government of Quebec, giving up the administration of taxes to the federal government is out of the question.

To add insult to injury, the federal government announced in May that it intended to provide \$1.6 billion in compensation to British Columbia for harmonizing its sales tax. Thus, it broke its own rules on harmonizing the sales tax and offered generous compensation to Ontario and British Columbia while stubbornly refusing to offer Quebec fair and equitable compensation.

That is why we must always study this type of bill carefully.

I would like to summarize the Bloc Québécois position.

In the matter before us, there is a disagreement, a dispute between the Government of Quebec and the federal government. I acknowledge that. I am anticipating my colleague's question on Parliament's responsibility to deal with the matter.

In the current situation, the government and citizens of Quebec are penalized. We will not ignore this injustice.

The government moved a closure motion for a bill that had not yet been introduced in the House. That is the first dispute.

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The government began debating this motion even before the bill was introduced in the House. We will deal with the bill tomorrow in the House but, last Thursday, when the motion was moved, the bill was not yet in our hands.

The Bloc Québécois had to speak to the motion even before having studied and analyzed the tax harmonization bill in detail. We must be prudent and take the time to examine all the details of this bill.

The Bloc Québécois, on principle, will never give the government a blank cheque.

On principle, the Bloc Québécois is also opposed to closure motions on such an important matter that has an impact on Quebec's finances.

For all the reasons given, the Bloc Québécois is opposed to this motion.

• (1830)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member is a very persuasive member. She does her homework and argues her case well.

With regard to the closure motion, which is the issue before us now, the member probably is aware that the province of Ontario has indicated that it wants to have its legislation in place and passed before Christmas, so that it can start delivering income tax cuts to Ontario residents on January 1 even though the HST would not come in until July 1.

I would suggest to the member that there is probably a reason why the federal government, in terms of its arrangements with Ontario, has acceded to moving this now even though the enabling legislation, amendments to the Excise Tax Act, is not necessary until March 31 according to the memorandum of agreement. That certainly is one reason for the closure motion. In my own view, if this is going to help economic recovery in any province or any territory in Canada, it is an important consideration.

My question for the member has to do specifically with the Quebec situation. She indicated that the discussions were around more fully harmonizing the tax systems in Quebec. I am not sure that I fully understand what is not there yet. It would appear that there is still some disagreement as to whether or not there is full harmonization. I wonder if the member would care to elaborate a bit further.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Meili Faille: Madam Speaker, Ms. Jérôme-Forget's letter indeed identifies one element that seems to explain the government's reason for compensating Ontario, that is, how the government calculates input tax refunds. This seemed to be a disputed issue, which, according to the Minister of Finance, is what led the federal government to transfer money to the Government of Ontario.

The Quebec minister made a point of writing to the Minister of Finance to indicate that we agreed to work towards that. So, if we are doing more or less the same work as Ontario, we should of course receive the same compensation.

I appreciate my colleague's questions. He knows that I work very hard and that I examine all issues carefully. The harmonization issue is crucial. Quebec is also concerned about economic recovery and compensation would be completely legitimate. The Government of Quebec's request for compensation is completely legitimate, probably for the same reason that the Government of Ontario is requesting it, namely, to stimulate each province's economy.

However, we must also trust this House. If this measure is as important as the government claims, and there are no bones of contention or poison pills, as I explained earlier, I believe this House is responsible and it will be capable of getting this bill through quickly, for the well being of the citizens of the other provinces.

I think everyone will agree that, in principle, the idea of limiting the debate on such an important issue is unacceptable.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the member's comments regarding the closure motion. I only wish the Liberals would show the same concern. Traditionally, I would not have expected them, in this situation anyway, to be jumping onboard with the government as fast as they have.

The member for Vancouver East introduced an amendment calling for the Standing Committee on Finance to undertake public hearings, which would gather opinions of Canadians on this legislation. Witnesses would be called, members of the committee would be authorized to travel to Ontario and British Columbia along with the necessary staff and the committee would report back with Canadians' views before February 28, 2010.

We have noted that there is no emergency. The emergency is that the government is concerned that somehow it is getting into trouble with the public. Public opinion polls show that 80% of people are against this measure.

Would the member support the idea that we should not rush to judgment on this issue but have public hearings, have the committee report back by February 28, and then proceed in the normal fashion we usually do on a regular bill?

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Meili Faille: Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, what would happen normally is that this bill would be examined in committee. Out of respect for all of the members who serve on the Standing Committee on Finance and for the work that they do, I believe that the Standing Committee on Finance is the most appropriate committee to examine the bill or do any additional work that is required. The process in the House allows us to refer the bill to a committee, so that it can do its job.

I believe that the committee has the power to make decisions regarding how it will conduct its affairs.

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened to the speech by my colleague from Vaudreuil-Soulanges with a great deal of interest. I would even say I hung on her every word. In my opinion, she did a marvellous job of putting the dilemma or the debate in context, because it is a bit of a hodgepodge.

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I will not ask her to give me a laundry list of reasons why we disagree with the approach the government is proposing. I understand that we are defending the principle that before such measures are taken, we must at least be able to take the necessary time and act responsibly, even if some would have us believe the bill is urgent.

We feel that this bill is not urgent. But perhaps the member could tell us more about the principle that we must be able to act democratically.

Ms. Meili Faille: Madam Speaker, I could tell my colleague that I think that, at this point, given all the debate surrounding this issue, there have probably been 5,237 people listening to this discussion. Quebecers feel personally affected by this injustice.

I went into some detail earlier. The general debate on this motion seems to have acquired a certain tone and drifted into more detailed issues that the Standing Committee on Finance can examine thoroughly. It is quite a hodgepodge, as my colleague said.

However, this is an issue that affects Quebec, particularly when it comes to financial compensation.

For Quebec, the issue is just that we want the federal government to recognize that Quebec was the first province to harmonize the taxes, and that it should receive fair compensation, the same as provinces that began harmonizing their taxes later.

If this is an urgent matter, I think it is up to the government to make that case and give this House a chance to deal with the bill at whatever speed it deems necessary.

If the bill can be passed quickly, fine. However, at this point, I would not want to shorten the time we spend debating an issue that is so important to Quebec.

● (1840)

[*English*]

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Madam Speaker, tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock or thereabouts, the House of Commons will be debating Bill C-62, the harmonized sales tax bill. If it is passed, the federal government will give permission to the British Columbia and Ontario governments to proceed with the HST starting in July 2010. It would also permit the \$6 billion transfer.

Normally, a closure motion comes after many days, weeks or months of debate on an issue or a bill. What is odd and absurd about the situation before us is there has been no debate on the HST bill, none, because the debate has not even started yet. There has been no debate on the HST bill, because it does not start until tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, I also want to say that I am splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Welland.

Here we are, debating a motion to limit the second and third readings and committee study. This bill is normally something that would take three, four or five months to pass through Parliament and the Senate. We are debating a motion that would stop the debate in two days, meaning that all of that work will be done in two days. It is unbelievable.

There will be no time for much study, no time to exchange points of view and no time for hearing from Canadians and small businesses. The Conservatives and Liberals will try to rush through

this HST bill by this Thursday night so they can start their winter holidays.

We have a motion for hearings. We have an amendment. I am curious how many Liberals from the Greater Toronto Area will vote against hearing from the public, because I know that many of the people, not just in Trinity—Spadina and Toronto, but also in the greater Toronto region, are very much against this tax.

I find this mad rush to ram this bill through very anti-democratic. It is unacceptable and outrageous. We are supposed to be a House of Commons. When the commons, i.e., ordinary Canadians, are not allowed to be heard, then how can we call ourselves a democratic country?

The HST could actually stand for hated sales tax, horrific sales tax, hobbling sales tax or horrible sales tax. Since we are not going to hear much from my constituents in Trinity—Spadina, I thought I would read some of the comments they have sent to me by mail, email and telephone.

First, Matthew said:

No more taxes please, life is hard enough already.

Genevieve said:

I am particularly angry that his additional 8% tax will be applied to my natural gas bill for heating and hot water. Heating our homes is a must in Canada - not discretionary. Landlords will pass on this additional expense to their tenants rents. Furthermore, if this tax is implemented, it will be there forever, long after any rebates or income tax reductions are finished. I also don't expect small businesses to pass on their savings in the form of lower prices to consumers. They will simply keep the savings esp. if their business is struggling.

Liz wrote in to say:

I am retired on an investment income which has been severely reduced by the drops in the market. I don't know how I will be able to afford the 8% on utilities.

Cynthia said:

With 10% unemployment in ON, how can people manage to pay an 8% tax increase. People are suffering and no one seems to care.

Halina said:

I barely get by now as a daycare worker and no work pension to depend on. Help.

● (1845)

Darren, a student, said:

I'm a Toronto citizen returning to university so that I can attain a new job. With tuition and now the proposed HST I am going to have more difficulty than ever before to support myself.

Lolito said:

HST will not only hurt the travellers that will visit Ontario and expecting a rebate, for me this is a plain discouragement for all the visitors who plans to come here. Definitely it will only hurt our tourism within our own province and it is indeed not a good thing to do....

Another constituent said:

This.... tax grab is not only going to hurt travellers... it's also going to hurt tourism....

Luz said:

Government Orders

I am opposed to... (HST) being used as a solution to the current government's deficit. As a self-employed business owner, the HST will cost me more than I will save. The government's implementation of the HST during this time of economic recession recovery is completely irresponsible. Many sectors of our economy have just begun to feel the effects of the recession—this is the case for my business. Not only will the HST have a negative effect to small business owners, the cost to implement the HST does not make financial sense.

Bob said:

Unless I'm missing something, I do not understand the need for the HST. If eliminating the PST on intermediate inputs is going to have such wonderful impact on business and employment why does the PST have to be extended to goods and services that are currently exempt?

Another constituent said:

Something which most people aren't realizing is the HST is going to really hurt self-employed people like me. As a musician with a GST number, come April 2011 I will have to remit 13% of my income to the government instead of 5%.

This is really going to hurt self-employed people all over the map. What can be done to stop this bill!? Are all the Liberal MPs going to vote for it, or can some cross the party lines to vote against it?

We will see what will happen later on.

A senior said:

I will incur a higher tax on hydro, and many more things that are necessary for me and my son, like HOUSING, car insurance etc..... in this country when it's very cold in the winter, i can't afford to live without hot water and electricity.

Josefina said:

Please stop this HST tax. How much more can we be taxed!!!

Another senior, Larry, a CARP member, said:

As a Senior I am totally against the proposed HST. I cannot see how this will benefit anyone let alone Seniors. I would like you and all MP's to vote this proposal down [please]. Thank you!

Agnes said—and this is interesting—

For families struggling with the recession a new 8 per cent tax on everything from home heating to Christmas trees is kicking them when they're down.

It is not just Christmas trees and home heating fees, but it is new bikes and vitamins. It is when one takes a pet to the vet, when one surfs the net and when someone tries try to manage or buy mutual funds, or when one buys a house and real estate fees go up. Sports fees, gym memberships, even funerals, all are going to cost 8% more. It is also going to affect our seniors.

The Ontario Long Term Care Association said some 360 seniors' homes, affecting 40,000 seniors, are going to take a big hit. As a result, these homes are going to have to lay off a large number of staff. That means seniors will have less care and will have to wait longer for a bath or to eat a meal.

This is the kind of negative impact that we will see because of the harmonized sales tax.

Last, the reason for such a rush to adopt this bill is obvious: people hate this tax. The Liberals and the Conservatives are worried that if people go to the website, www.blockthehst.ca, they will use the calculators there to find out how much more they will have to pay and what kind of impact this tax grab will have, and they will fight hard.

● (1850)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Madam Speaker, I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practices of the House, during the debate tonight on the Motion to concur in the Eighth Report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (amendments to the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization Convention), the Chair shall not receive any quorum calls, dilatory motions, or requests for unanimous consent; at the end of the time remaining for the debate, or when no member rises to speak, the motion to concur in the Eighth report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (amendments to the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization Convention) be deemed put and a recorded division be deemed requested.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

DISPOSITION OF AN ACT TO AMEND THE EXCISE TAX ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am not sure if the member is aware, but she may want to comment on the following. The law in the Province of Ontario is that the government of the day cannot spend money on advertising its legislation until after that legislation has been passed.

As a consequence, the Government of Ontario is seeking to pass its bill to harmonize the provincial tax and the GST by Christmas so that it can start to lay out for the residents the details of the bill, including that 93% of Ontario taxpayers will get a permanent income tax cut of some 16.5%, as well as a \$1,000 tax credit and a new refundable sales tax credit on the increase in taxes.

Those are a couple of the items it has to undertake. It will take some time, but it is more of the story of getting significant income tax cuts, even though there will be additional taxes on certain individual items.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Madam Speaker, the member is saying is that we should allow the government to waste more taxpayer dollars to advertise why this tax grab is great for us. If this tax grab will be so wonderful for Ontarians, why is the Liberal Party joining with the Conservatives to ram this through before Christmas, especially if it is so confident that when the advertising hits, people will see the light and will love this tax grab?

Government Orders

If that is the case, do not be afraid. Have this debate, have it go public and have public hearings and allow people to decide whether they want it or not. Instead, they will hide behind some motion to ram the bill through in two days, which is unheard of. It is anti-democratic and very much a Mike Harris style closure motion.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to my hon. friend and just about every comment she made was a provincial comment. It was related to details of a bill that is the responsibility of the provincial government of Ontario.

Jack Mintz talked about the savings and creation of 591,000 net new jobs. He talked about exempting educational services, groceries, basic health, prescription drugs and child care. The HST would not be applicable to those.

What I find interesting is that the member is having a debate here in the House of Commons when it is enabling legislation. Does she not think maybe she should be in Toronto arguing the other side of this?

Ms. Olivia Chow: Madam Speaker, what I do know is that we are debating the bill before the House of Commons. Every penny of the \$6 billion federal dollars comes from the federal income tax. It is a transfer of federal dollars to the provincial government. If there is no transfer of this \$6 billion, the HST would not be happening. If we did not have Bill C-62 before us, the HST would not go through in Ontario or B.C.

So stop hiding behind the provincial governments. The Conservatives should stand up for what they believe in and justify why they are ramming this tax grab into the people of Ontario and British Columbia.,

• (1855)

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Madam Speaker, to my namesake across the way, the member for Tobique—Mactaquac, let me tell him what Ontario MPP Leona Dombrowsky said. I know the member is from New Brunswick but he needs to hear these things a little west of his province. She said, "I think it's important to remember that the federal government is a partner in this initiative," when she spoke about the HST while huckstering around the province trying to get support.

On Ontario MPP, a member of the Liberal government, said that the Ontario Liberal government's partner at the federal level is indeed the member's very own Conservative government. It is interesting to hear the government disavow this and say that it has nothing to do with federal Conservatives and yet the Liberals in Ontario, in my province, are saying quite the opposite. They are saying that their hands are linked intrinsically together. I would say that they both have their hands in our pockets simultaneously trying to shake us for every dime and every penny they can.

It is quite clear that the Conservatives are saying something that rings hollow. They are saying it has nothing to do with them, that they are not talking to the Ontario Liberals and they are not really talking to them, yet the member from the Ontario legislature says that indeed they are partners in this initiative. This leads me to believe that only one of them is telling us the truth or perhaps not.

Mr. Mike Allen: I hope you're not saying an Allen would tell a lie.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Of course, I would never suggest that about my namesake. But he is from New Brunswick and perhaps he does not quite understand what happens in Ontario.

To talk about what we are doing here, this opinion piece comes from the *Intelligencer*, no friend of the New Democrats. To summarize it, it says that the provincial Liberals, supported by the federal Conservatives, want to bring in a new tax to help business. Clearly, there is a linkage between the two. It goes on to say that thanks to the NDP which has kept its traditional stance, NDP leader Andrea Horwath, our leader in the province of Ontario, has slammed the tax recently saying it makes no sense for the province to be handing billions of dollars to large corporations while creating a new 8% tax for the residents of the province of Ontario.

Thank goodness Madam Horwath is working on behalf of the ordinary people of Ontario because clearly the premier of the province is not. With the help of the federal Conservative government he is finding a way to take money out of people's pockets.

One of my constituents sent me a letter. She had written the premier of Ontario because she is very upset about what the HST was going to mean to her and her husband. They are both on pensions. I will be very careful with what I say because I know the language could be unparliamentary if I were to repeat it verbatim. In talking about a letter that came from Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario, she said, "This letter is 100% bulls—. I hope you and your MP friends can do something about this pile of," and the word begins with a "c" and is referred to as manure in more pleasant circumstances. I quote the premier, "I would like to take this opportunity to tell you why we are making these important changes together" and he goes on to say together with whom. What is the federal government opinion of this b.s. idea? Clearly we now know that the federal government is in total agreement with the harmonized sales tax.

In fact, the Conservatives are so much in agreement with the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia they have used the draconian measure of closure, not after the bill was put before us. Perhaps they were concerned that things were being delayed unduly and it would go back to committee, as has happened with other bills. We did not get up in arms when the Conservatives with their Liberal friends took the decision to send Bill C-311 back to committee. But this is a bill we have not seen yet and they want to use closure.

• (1900)

It seems really unfortunate that before we even get a chance to debate it, there is a decision to limit debate, which is not what the residents in my constituency sent me here to do. They sent me here to debate measures important to them. No measure that has come before this House since it convened last year is more important to my constituents and other residents in the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia than this dreaded HST.

Government Orders

Far and away, the greatest return to me personally, as far as calling me, emailing me and indeed taking pen to paper and writing personal letters, is this one seminal issue, yet the government is saying, "We cannot talk about it for very long. We want to move it along. The province is doing likewise. Let us get it over with by Christmas".

I know I cannot refer to the hon. Prime Minister by name but some would refer to the HST as his tax. Some might call it the "happy sales tax" as we head toward Christmas, except that would be an undue measure on the folks in my riding who are struggling. People are having a great deal of trouble trying to work through these deplorable times when their incomes have been cut by 40% or 50%, in some cases by 100% because their EI has run out. Now they are drawing on what little equity they may have and what little value they have left in their homes or any other things before they apply for social assistance.

It really is reprehensible that we are about to embark upon a major decision in this House without taking the time to have proper debate, without taking into consideration that nearly 80% of Ontarians and British Columbians say no to the HST. Those are the indicators that all of us in the House are getting. I am sure my colleagues on the other side are getting similar responses from their constituents as well.

In fact, the Conservative MPP for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound stayed in the legislature in Toronto, along with a fellow member of the Conservative Party. I know the MP from that riding as well has said on other occasions that he thinks it is the wrong tax. Unfortunately he has not decided to vote against it on behalf of his constituents. I guess that is a decision one always has to make.

I have heard my hon. colleague from Mississauga most of the day say numerous things about the tax package that is before the Ontario Parliament. On a couple of occasions he has actually mentioned that the tax revenue in the province of Ontario will go down. I would remind him that the deficit in Ontario is approaching \$25 billion. If this tax were such a great tax that drives revenue down, which I am not so sure that I buy, but if indeed it does, which government in its right mind would impose a tax regime that would decrease its revenue at a time when it cannot afford to pay the bills as it is?

That would be the same as saying that I would like my mortgage to be \$100 a month but I only want to make \$85 a month so that I cannot pay it. I do not think anybody around here would do that. In fact I am sure the government would scold us and say that we do not understand how to balance our chequebooks. Clearly the member from Mississauga does not understand how to balance a chequebook if he is saying the revenue stream is going to go below what is needed to actually balance the budget. It makes no sense.

There is the debate on the other side. There is the yin and yang of this debate. We are told, "Trust us. It will create jobs and prosperity". I heard that in the 1980s, and it was called the free trade agreement. What did we get as workers? We got jobs that disappeared by the thousands and now the hundreds of thousands and wages that either went down or stagnated. If the government is going to create prosperity the same way as was done with the free trade agreement, then I am afraid it is a sham.

It is a sham on the constituents that I represent, on Ontarians and British Columbians, perpetrated by a government that basically is going to take those poor taxpayers to the cleaners. I use the word "poor" purposely because indeed they are poor. The constituents in my riding are poorer today than they were 20 years ago. For members to stand in this House and suggest that somehow we will be better off because of this is utter nonsense. It is about time they learned tax policy and economics. I am guessing that a lot of them did not pass economics 101.

● (1905)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for an excellent speech and for his insight into the situation before us.

This is all about supporting corporations and Bay Street which are basically in control of the Conservative government and the Liberals, the so-called official opposition. The HST is going to shift taxes away from the big corporations and onto everyday families. The average family of four is going to be stuck with paying an extra \$1,500 every year.

The federal finance minister has been pressuring the provinces in the last four federal budgets to sign on to this. He has given them a \$4.3 billion incentive—some would say it is a bribe, but I will call it an incentive—to sign on for this new tax hike. We are going to have new taxes on coffee, donuts, newspapers, funerals, hydro, home heating, and on and on.

The NDP has moved an amendment proposing that there be no rush to judgment here. We have the time. We should treat the bill the way we do all other bills and have public hearings. We should send the finance committee to hear from the Canadian public with a report back to—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Welland.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Madam Speaker, in one word, yes, I think it is a great idea.

Let me point out what I have heard before about how we are going to get \$1,000 as part of a rebate package, as part of a scheme of economics in the province of Ontario. We are not going to get it forever. We are going to get it once. I am not going to argue about borrowing money and what that costs and all the rest of that. I will leave that to the others who do it so eloquently.

The tax does not stop after a year. The HST continues. The rebate occurs once. What happens in subsequent years when we do not get the rebate to offset it? Some will say not to worry, that the price of things we buy will go down. And I have swamp land in Florida that I will sell to them.

The bottom line is that the multinationals are about to get a big tax break. When free trade was brought in, they said it would create wealth and jobs for Canadian workers. It did not, nor did it create wealth. They took the jobs elsewhere.

Government Orders

When those corporations get their tax break, we should ask them where they will invest. Will they invest in what they perceive to be the high-wage economy of Ontario, or will they head south to Mexico, or will they head west to China with their money? No one has said, in this package, that when they get the tax break, they have to create jobs and create wealth. It is just—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Mississauga South.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the member is going to debate it, he better include all the facts.

In addition, there is a permanent income tax cut of 16.5%. The \$1,000 rebate is for the first year. There is also the GST credit that Canadians get now on their tax returns. Ninety-three per cent of Ontarians are going to be better off under this system.

I do not know why the member would say that there is only the \$1,000 rebate, without including the fact that there is a permanent 16.5% reduction in personal income taxes which is there year after year. If the member is going to debate it, he should put all the facts on the table. He should not be coy. It is okay to tell the truth.

• (1910)

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Madam Speaker, my hon. friend from Mississauga South is absolutely right about telling the truth. Let me tell him the truth about Welland. Welland used to have the second highest income per capita in the province of Ontario and it is now the lowest. I do not know how much income tax he intends to get out of folks whose income is diminished by nearly 50%.

The bottom line is those who were basically told the same thing on free trade have seen their income either frozen or go down, which means the income tax stream shrinks. As the member quite ably pointed out, there is going to be a reduction in the income tax but it does no good for those who do not have a job. It does no good for those on social assistance, the very folks who live in my riding and who live in Windsor. The member ought to go and see them. Perhaps in Toronto it is a little bit different.

Let me tell the hon. member that when the income stream declines, we cannot get more money out of a stone. I learned that a long time ago. At the end of the day, by his own words, the revenue stream is declining in the province of Ontario. I would ask him to answer in all truthfulness, how do they intend to balance the books in Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be addressing all my points to Motion No. 8, which is before the House at this time. Motion No. 8 drastically and undemocratically reduces the ability of members of the House to deal with a very important issue contained in Bill C-62. We are faced with a motion that is rarely used in the House, rightfully so and quite frankly should not be used this evening and for the next couple of days.

Madam Speaker, I am splitting my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Sudbury.

The motion is rarely used. It is rarely used and it should not be used at all because it is so Draconian. This is what it is going to do.

At the end of the day today, at eight o'clock this evening or around that time, we are going to have a vote on two matters before the House: an amendment to Motion No. 8 and Motion No. 8 itself.

If Motion No. 8 passes, we are in effect going to be limited to the entire legislative process in this House over the next two days. After second reading, we are going to have a maximum of four hours of committee deliberations on a bill that is some 32 pages long. It is quite complex. It is a tax bill. We are supposed to digest that as members of Parliament. We are supposed to somehow communicate to our constituents what is in the bill and the details of it, and do that in four hours in committee. Then it comes back to the House for one more day which will be a short day because it will be Wednesday and then it is over. We have a final vote at report stage and third reading, and it is done.

If we add up the hours, there are very few hours for what is a very important bill in terms of the consequences. It is a bill that huge swaths of Ontario and B.C., where it will apply, are overwhelmingly opposed to it. In the last two opinion polls 80% were opposed to it in British Columbia and 75% plus in Ontario were opposed to it.

There is a simple question that we ask. Why is the government doing this and why is it being supported by the Liberal Party? Those percentage numbers in the polls tell us why. We are getting close to the end of the year, to the break, and this is clearly designed to limit the debate so that the Canadians do not get any opportunity to express their opposition.

We, doing our job, as elected representatives are being denied any ability of any realistic kind to represent them in the overwhelming opposition to the bill.

My colleague, the member for Vancouver East, earlier today moved an amendment. That amendment would in fact allow us to put the bill over to the new year and by no later than the end of February we would have hearings that would allow those Canadians, and I would say this, I keep an open mind on this bill, who both are opposed, as we already know in overwhelming numbers, and those in support to come before the finance committee of the House of Commons and tell us what their positions are. Educate us perhaps, as opposed to having to take from the government verbatim what it wants to do.

Who would we expect to hear from? I will tell the House who I would like to hear from. I would like to hear from the first nations. We saw again today the finance minister standing just before question period and there was this big debate over who was responsible as to whether the first nations were entitled to exemptions from this legislation on the HST. He pointed the finger at the provinces. At the end of last week ministers in both B.C. and Ontario were pointing the finger at the federal government.

Government Orders

I would like to hear from the first nations on what their position is. I would like to hear what kind of consultations went on because we are hearing none. What I would like then to do is get some experts in to tell us, as members of Parliament, who is right. Who is supposed to deal with this issue for the first nations? They are one group I would like to hear from.

•(1915)

I would like to hear from retired persons because they are on fixed incomes and because of this legislation they are going to take one of the biggest hits.

I would like to hear from that lady in northern Ontario who wrote to one of my colleagues about the impact the HST is going to have on her home heating bill. She does not have other revenue coming in that would offset the \$200 a year it is going to cost her just for her home heating fuel. Members of Parliament should hear from her.

I would like to hear from athletic groups in the country and other associations that are going to be negatively impacted by this tax. How many teams are we going to lose because they will not be able to afford playing any more? We need to hear about that.

I would like to hear from the tourism industry, which has been quite vocal up to this point in an organized way about its opposition to this tax. The industry knows the difficult economic situation it will face. Members of the House should hear what an additional 8% tax on its services would do to the industry. We are not going to hear from this industry in any kind of meaningful way with only four hours of hearings probably late in the afternoon tomorrow or early evening, if this motion goes through.

I would like to hear from those groups in our society that are economically vulnerable because they, like retired persons on fixed incomes, are going to take the biggest hit as far as we can see at this point.

I would like to hear from labour groups. A number of interesting positions have been taken by various federations of labour in terms of the impact this tax would have on their individual economic sectors. They are taking a significantly different position on the impact of the HST than the business community. We need to hear from both of these communities as to how this tax would impact them. If we are going to do our job as parliamentarians, if we are going to make an informed decision, then we need to hear from these groups.

I would like to hear from economists. We are hearing all sorts of things. The member for Mississauga South and members on the government side are touting the same thing, about how this is going to impact the economy, of the savings the business community would get.

We are hearing a different story from other economists. We heard from one business group that this tax would cost Ontario alone 50,000 to 60,000 to as many as 100,000 jobs. This tax would not make jobs. People would lose jobs.

We need to hear all of that information so we can make an informed decision.

When I hear some of the economic arguments, I think back to when the GST was originally brought in by the Conservatives in the Mulroney period. I remember it being a net revenue source for the government. The old manufacturers tax would be replaced with the GST and it would balance itself out. The manufacturing side would give us all those savings. That did not happen. We had a net revenue of about the same amount on the GST side. Within the first two years of the GST, several billion dollars more came in from manufacturers and it has just grown exponentially.

I would like to hear from economists who could give us an analysis, bring us up to date as to what happened when the GST came in, and what is likely to happen if the HST is brought in, in both Ontario and British Columbia.

We are not going to get any of that. We are back to the question: Why are we dealing with this motion? Why are we going to be denied the ability to do our job, the ability to make informed decisions? It is as simple as this. Both the Conservatives and the Liberals are running from the electorate. They are so afraid of what the impact is going to be if the electorate gets even more information on how negative the tax is going to be that they want to bury it as quickly as possible. That is a shame. It is not the way this Parliament or any Parliament should function.

•(1920)

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member talked about how the Liberals are running away from this. I am not going to speak on behalf of the new Conservative government but I will speak on behalf of my Liberal team.

I want to make it clear that we are not running away from anything. What I and my colleagues are simply saying is that the democratically elected, majority government of the province of Ontario has decided, rightly or wrongly, good or bad, to implement this harmonization tax. Who am I to stop what the democratically elected, majority government of Ontario wants? It wants this policy and the federal Conservative government is accommodating it. That is the simple answer I give to my constituents.

Let the people judge accordingly at the polls. I believe in democracy and I know that member does as well. Does he not believe that we should just leave it as such and let the provinces make their own decisions?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Democracy operates at various levels, Madam Speaker. When we look at what is going on in Ontario right now, it is doing the same thing there as the Conservatives are trying to do here in co-operation with the Liberals, which is to shut down any informed debate on this. There is one day of hearings, all of which had to be held in Toronto at Queen's Park.

When we talk about democracy, we talk about informing the electorate and letting them decide at election time what their position is. What happened? I know since I was involved in the provincial election in Ontario. The HST never came up. It certainly was not in the Liberal platform. It was never mentioned once. In B.C. where it was raised, there was a commitment from the Liberal premier of B. C. at the time that in fact he would not pursue the HST.

Government Orders

I want to make one final point about democracy. It is interesting to watch the shift here of Liberals doing the same as the Conservatives and pointing it back to Ontario. The reality is both the premier of Ontario and the Ontario finance minister, who sits in the same riding I do, have both made it clear that if they were not being offered \$4.2 billion this would not be going ahead. That is not—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh put it very well when he talked about the democratic aspects of this.

It seems there is a contempt for democracy when we see a party trump the idea of direct democracy, “We are going to make sure everyone gets a say, we are going to make sure that constituents are heard”. What we are seeing in the House right now with this motion is a clamp down on democracy.

I would like to hear from my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh. What does he think happened to the whole notion of constituents being heard, that there is a value for democracy and an innovation in democracy? All we have seen—

An hon. member: That was Preston Manning.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Preston Manning's corpse right now, in terms of a metaphor, is heaped over there rotting. I wonder what my friend from Windsor—Tecumseh thinks of that.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, I must admit that imagery is a little difficult to take.

As to democracy and the role that the Reform Party and then the Alliance played in the House when they were in opposition, it was really quite sad when they trumpeted how they were going to implement a meaningful democracy as opposed to what we had been seeing at that point from the Liberals. Shortly after they got into power, that all went by the wayside.

What it comes down to is this. The Conservative government does not believe in government at all. It would be quite happy to shrink the federal government down to a very small percentage of what it is and this type of tax approach is the way to do it. It very much takes any responsibility off the back of the corporate world, which that party is very much associated with, much as the Liberals were when they were in power, and dumps it onto the average person in Canada, particularly consumers.

That is what it is really all about. It is about shrinking government, when it comes right down to it. It is being accomplished if this bill goes through.

• (1925)

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Madam Speaker, Bill C-62 is the HST bill. My colleague from Trinity—Spadina has called it the hobbling sales tax or the hated sales tax. There are so many names for it. Sometime in the next 24 hours, it will be presented in the House of Commons. If passed, the federal government will give permission to the governments in B.C. and Ontario to proceed with merging the GST and PST into the HST in July 2010.

A bill normally takes months to pass through Parliament and the Senate. Instead, the Liberals and Conservatives are trying to do this

in two days. Two days does not allow for debate on such an important subject. This is why we need to talk about this issue at this point. In this economic downturn, this is the wrong tax in the wrong hands at the wrong time. It is an unfair tax grab.

It continues the pattern, under successive federal Conservative and Liberal governments, of pursuing policies that boost returns to a privileged corporate elite on the flimsy excuse that they will use those returns to benefit the rest of us. Three decades of growing income inequality in the country proves those promises are false.

However, what is the HST? I am getting a lot of calls from my constituents. They know it is going to cost them more, but they really and truly do not understand what it is all about. The HST is blending the provincial sales tax with the federal GST. It applies to a much broader range of goods and services than provincial sales tax normally covers. The provinces are permitted to exclude certain items from the tax. We have heard that Ontario is going to be excluding coffee and donuts, but not home heating fuel.

As I said, the provinces are allowed to exclude these from the tax, but exemptions cannot exceed 5% of the tax base. What will be taxed? The goods and services I am about to outline were not taxed under the provincial sales tax, known as the retail sales tax in Ontario, but will be subject to the HST, making them 8% more expensive.

I need to clear my throat, because there is quite a list here. Included are gasoline and utilities, so heating, hydro and natural gas. In my great riding of Sudbury, throughout northern Ontario and right across our great country, many people have to heat their homes. Their costs are going up, especially in Ontario and B.C., where we are proposing this.

Also included are Internet bills, adult footwear under \$30, admissions under \$4 to the pools, veterinary care, personal services like haircuts and massage, professional services like legal services, accountants and mutual fund fees and membership fees to the gym. We are trying to promote a healthier lifestyle across our country and now we are going to tax people to go to the gym.

Also included are new homes over \$400,000 and real estate commissions, especially if people sell homes over \$400,000. They will be taxed on that commission. Also included are commercial property rentals, landscaping, vitamins, postal stamps and courier fees. This is my favourite, labour costs related to home renovation are also included. Here is a home renovation tax credit. A person can save \$1,350, but guess what? They are going to be taxed on it with this new HST in Ontario and British Columbia.

Dry cleaning, carpet cleaning, funeral costs, motor vehicle service, including towing and car washing and ice rink rentals are also included. Hockey, our national game, will be taxed more. The tax on overnight summer camps is rising from 3% to 8%. Kids going to summer camp will be taxed. Campgrounds and domestic air, rail and commercial bus tickets are also included. I could sit here for the 10 minutes I am allotted just outlining all the things that are going to be increasing.

Government Orders

Finally, unlike the PST, businesses get a refund of their HST payments through the HST tax credit, administered by the federal government. This leaves business inputs free of tax, greatly reducing the corporate tax burden. Businesses add the HST to their sales and revenue. Canada collects the resulting revenue.

● (1930)

Last week, the Conservative government began the first step toward allowing provincial governments to adopt the harmonized sales tax, or the hated sales tax, or the hobbling sales tax. The government has taken the unusual step of declaring this is not a confidence matter.

● (1935)

In March the federal government signed agreements with British Columbia and Ontario to harmonize their provincial sales tax with the federal GST. The Ontario government introduced legislation last week. British Columbia has yet to do so. Therefore, there still is hope.

Federal legislation would also be necessary in order to transfer \$4.3 billion to Ontario and roughly \$1.6 billion to B.C. to cover transitional costs, as was promised by the federal government in the agreements. What would happen if these two amounts, the \$4.3 billion and the \$1.6 billion, were not there? We would not even be having this debate, because they would not be moving forward with the HST in these two provinces.

This massive tax shift from corporations to families is unfair. The tax is inherently regressive. It hits those who have no choice but to spend all, or a large part, of their income. It favours those with income to save, but taxes their savings if they are investing in mutual funds or RRSPs. This is doubly true in a recession where less than 50% of the unemployed qualify for EI, where social assistance rates are well below the poverty line and the cost of essentials loom all the larger.

We have heard a few times now that there is going to be a 16% personal income tax break. For most families I know that are struggling to get by, I do not know how a single mother could look to her children at the kitchen table and say that she was sorry she did not have enough money to buy milk this time because her costs were increasing everywhere else, but in May, when she received her tax return, she would have a little more dollars then. It is just not making sense.

The HST extends the sales tax to essentials previously uncovered by the PST and apart from those items exempted, and those differ from province to province, those with the lowest income have no choice but to pay it and sacrifice consumption elsewhere. The HST is hitting those who can least afford it harder than anyone else. The tax is quite simply unfair.

Without significant compensating measures, like the rebate, or significant exemptions of our essential goods and services for low and moderate-income families, the tax remains unfair. Our experience with social support programs does not reassure us. Governments that have demonstrated a callous disregard for the plight of low and moderate-income households cannot be trusted to apply the HST fairly.

If, as argued, a sales tax is bad for investment, compared with a tax on profits, then why is the removal of sales from inputs not matched by an increase in corporate income taxes? In fact, the opposite is true. The HST is accompanied by corporate income tax cuts at both the federal and provincial levels. In other words, the HST is part of a general and indiscriminate shift in the tax burden from corporations to individuals and families without adequate compensation.

Progressive economists argue that if we want to use the tax system to encourage investment, across-the-board cuts are an inefficient way to proceed.

With the economy operating at a two-third capacity, increasing profits by lowering taxes through the HST is not as likely to foster new investment as it might when the economy is booming. The timing of this tax is again wrong.

New Democrats are calling on Liberal and Conservative MPs from Ontario and B.C. to stand up for their constituents.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: What a great idea.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Yes, it is a great idea.

The NDP is the only party that has been crystal clear on the proposed HST. This is the wrong tax at the wrong time. However, it is not just the New Democrats. Let me quote a few people:

The Government invites all provinces that have not yet done so to engage in discussions on the harmonization of their provincial retail sales taxes with the federal GST.

That was the federal finance minister promoting that, wanting others to get involved with the HST.

I feel I just started my comments, but I understand I only have 17 seconds remaining.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member can perhaps add some comments in response to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I crave some clarity and some objectivity in this debate. I hear references to a new tax, and the member can comment on this.

First, it is not a new tax. The GST is still there and the PST in Ontario is still there. This is a harmonized tax base, so it is not a new tax.

Second, the \$4.3 billion has been called a bribe. What actually happens when there is a transition in taxation like this is all the little pieces of tax that were taxed as PST, for example in Ontario, get added into the price of the product and the manufacturer will send those tax payments to the government. In this case the tax payments will not be sent because under the harmonized sales tax these are called input tax credits. What the manufacturer would have sent in as tax, he or she will simply credit against what is owed, what is received as a credit.

Government Orders

Therefore, all that taxation gets stuck, buried down inside the price of the goods and it is the consumer at the end who will pay the tax, and then it is remitted. Somebody has to cover off the cost of running government over the interim. In large measure, that is what the \$4.3 billion is for, to cover off the huge drop in revenue that the provinces will experience in the front end of this new tax.

Last, those members call it a new tax, but the government will to end up collecting less taxes. They should figure that one out.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Madam Speaker, the hon. member gives me another opportunity to talk about what we are going to be taxed on.

He says that it is not a new tax, but we are implementing the HST on things that never had a tax before, or a provincial sales tax. I did not have the opportunity to read all things earlier, but I will continue.

Conferences and seminars, taxi fares and most admissions to live theatres will be taxed. For those of us who golf, green fees will be taxed. Did I say carpet cleaning? Hotel tax is rising from 5% to 8%. This is a new tax. It is actually implementing taxes on items that we have not paid taxes on before.

I keep hearing the income tax piece. As I mentioned before, and as my colleague from Welland mentioned earlier, we cannot get blood from a stone. If people have to pay more at the till, they will not have anything at the end of the month when they have to pay their other bills.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, this debate is between the New Democrats and the Conservative Party because the Liberals are upset they cannot go out for their banana daiquiris on the beach while we debate this.

In terms of credibility about fighting for little people, about being credible on the economy, I would give the member one word, "Mulroney". Mulroney brought in the GST and Mulroney was thrown out by the people of Canada. Does he not think the ghost of Mulroney hangs over that same lot?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Madam Speaker, it is déjà vu all over again. Instead of "G", it is now "H". Once we have "H", I think we will be going with the IST very soon. They are just going down the alphabet, another way to implement a tax that keeps hammering away at Canadian families.

• (1940)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Ottawa Centre.

There is some irony in the debate that we are seeing today coming from the Conservative government. Actually the very Conservative member, the House leader who comes from British Columbia, was the one who moved this closure debate, the one who said that we do not need any discussion around this and that we do not need to talk to Canadians about it. This is from a party that in the province of British Columbia, where I come from, mentioned this not at all in the most recent election or the one before that or the one before that, but that somehow magically believes itself to have a mandate suddenly to raise taxes and do all the things my good friend from Sudbury just listed.

Such an undemocratic process comes from the so-called House leader of the Conservatives from Prince George, where we know this tax is hated and despised because we get the letters in my office. We get the letters because his office will not return any of the calls and letters anymore.

The Conservatives are deeply conflicted about this, and we can see the discomfort, time and time again, when we talk about this issue, because they know their base does not like this. For this very reason, for the very reason that they have no mandate, for the very reason that it goes against their political mores, apparently, these folks want to sweep this thing under the carpet and get it out just before Christmas.

What a Christmas gift for folks living in Ontario and British Columbia. It is a new tax that they did not vote for and did not have a say in, and the whole debate is going to be rammed through so that no one gets a chance to look at it and find out what the consequences actually mean in their lives.

The government spent \$45 million talking about its stimulus package, buying signs and renting press halls all over the place. We know that when the Conservatives have something they think they like, it is \$45 million spent on a little prop seen across the country, but this time, when they have something that they know is unpopular, what are they doing? They are slipping it through and hoping folks do not notice.

They are not going to spend \$45 million promoting this anywhere. They are not going to spend 45¢ promoting it, because they know it is toxic. They know that for the Canadian economy and the Canadian people, this is the worst tax at the worst possible time. They sought no mandate from the electorate on this. They are acting in the most reprehensible way.

I can only imagine when these cats were still sitting in opposition. They railed against these types of procedures when the Liberals were in power. They got up on their hind legs, talking about the arrogance of the Liberal Party in ramming it through Parliament and not listening to the will of the House.

We all remember it. The idea that this place is a democratic institution and should be respected as such might have been the one principle they had that one could agree with. Now, lo and behold, a couple of years have gone by, and they have got a little used to the trough. Suddenly they are thinking that they do not have to care if Canadians did not ask for this, that they do not have to care if four out of five Canadians who are affected in Ontario and British Columbia are saying that they do not want it. It does not matter to this Conservative Party.

The Conservatives think there is no consequence. The rules that they are bending, breaking and making up allow them to do this in this place, but there is another rule of law that applies. That is when the next election comes and the members from Ontario and British Columbia have to go out and pretend that they had nothing to do with this. They will have to pretend that the \$6 billion manifested itself from some imaginary place, that Ontario and British Columbia both said that without that \$6 billion in hush money, they would not be implementing the HST. If the government had not put that \$6 billion into the budget, this would not be happening.

Government Orders

To then say that this is an orphaned child and has nothing to do with them—that it is just McGuinty and Campbell doing this—is an outright fiction. It cannot be, because the evidence points so clearly in the opposite way.

The process obviously stinks, but the actual substance of what we are talking about tonight is even worse, because as my friend from Sudbury and others from the NDP have described throughout this short, circumscribed debate, this hits people who can least afford it. The folks who are paying more for all those services, for all those goods, are paying more at a time when they can least afford to do so.

In the northwest of British Columbia, we have been hard hit over the last decade or more. We are starting to see the first faint hopes of an industry that can get started again, and what do taxpayers get to see? They see increased taxes, and this from a government that just spent all of its time, money and oxygen pretending it was going to lower taxes and in fact is now raising them.

A question has to be raised: who does this help, and who does this hinder? Who is benefited by this? Clearly the few corporations that are rolling in the dough suddenly get to have taxes taken away from them. They get fewer taxes put upon their goods, regardless of how profitable they are. There is this myth that they are going to magically pass all those savings down in some benevolent St. Nick way to the consumer, that they are going to have a line item in their budget that says they saved this much on HST this year, so they have lowered prices by this much.

• (1945)

That is an absolute fabrication of reality. There is nothing close to the result. It is the same argument they used on the GST when Conservatives in a previous incarnation brought that in, and the NDP voted against that as well. The government has to realize that when it does a tax shift from those who can afford it to those who cannot, the NDP is always going to stand up in this place and resist it every single time.

We have heard about this provincial choice, but the Conservative government must take ownership for something. If it is proud of this, then it should run on this issue in the next campaign. The \$6 billion could have been used for other things. One has to imagine the list of other things this country could be doing with \$6 billion at this moment, rather than raising taxes: affordable child care, a national housing strategy, something to get more Canadians back to work, an employment insurance program that actually worked, a pension plan that actually let seniors live in dignity. All these things are on the list of options for the government to do, but instead the government is using the \$6 billion as bribe money, hush money, to encourage, entice and seduce the provinces of British Columbia and Ontario into raising their taxes and doing something that both of those provinces know is deeply unpopular as well.

This is about accountability. By resisting this draconian measure by the government, the NDP is forcing it to take some small measure of accountability to its constituents, to the Canadian population and to the people in British Columbia and Ontario.

If it can get away with this, it will be looking for more. It is going to do more. Whether it comes to issues around climate change, issues around poverty or issues around the war, if the government feels that

this place does not matter and thinks it can push around the Liberals, who are out searching for new leaders, it seems, every second week, then it will take advantage of that weakness. It will take advantage to hammer through things that it deeply believes in. It is time for this to end.

My last point is in terms of this provincial authority that these guys keep talking about.

This measure actually limits the provinces' ability to make up tax policy. One of the most fundamental and important tools the government has is its choice of what to tax and what not to tax. This agreement signed by Ontario and British Columbia no longer allows them to make those choices.

Where will the choices be made? They will be made here. They will be made in the federal Parliament, not in those provincial legislatures. Therefore, let the government end the tired rhetoric that this is the provinces' authority and that we will let them make these decisions, when we know for a fact that written into the bill is the reality that indeed the provinces will have less power to run their provinces. The provinces will have less ability to set the course of their own lives. The decisions that will be made here will be draconian, undemocratic and fatally flawed. This bill should go nowhere.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to commend the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for his fantastic speech.

One of the things that we both agree on adamantly is how the implementation of the HST is going to affect low-income earners and even middle-income families. Families are going to have less disposable income because they will have to spend more on the essentials. They will have to spend more more on things like haircuts and shoes under \$30.

I do not know many families that can actually buy shoes that are over \$30 if they have four kids. What we are doing is attacking families that have children.

I would like to hear the member's comments on implementing a new tax that is actually going to affect low-income and medium-income families.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, I am no longer an authority on haircuts, so I will leave what that impact will be to other folks.

However, when it comes to families that can no longer afford to make ends meet, they are in my office. I imagine they are in many of our offices every single week, talking about how difficult it has become just to keep the lights on and to pay all the bills, particularly if they have kids. Things have got worse. Now we hear that summer camp programs will be taxed. We hear getting into little league is going to be taxed. They are asking when it will be enough. They can no longer afford to do what the folks in Ottawa think they can do. This tax comes at the worst possible time.

Government Orders

In northwestern British Columbia we are hard hit right now. We are struggling economically. People need a hand up. They need a little bit of help. What do they have instead? They have a government that has closed its ears, closed its mind and heart to the people who need help. Instead it is opening up to the people on Bay Street, who hardly need any handouts from the government, although it is always loath to turn them down for anything.

• (1950)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member has certainly laid out some examples of some new items that will be taxed and that are presently not taxed, but as the member knows, when we eliminate the cascading of the provincial sales tax, we all of a sudden have a lower cost base to pass on to the ultimate consumer. Theoretically, in a competitive environment it may not be a perfect translation to an 8% increase, but if it translates perfectly, in fact there should be no increase in the actual cost.

The other thing that the member may want to comment on is whether or not he believes that the 16.5% cut to the personal income taxes effective January 1 should also be taken into account, since it is a permanent income tax decrease for Ontarians.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, a lot of what we are talking about on this issue is around the idea of enabling legislation. I have come to view the Liberal Party as an enabling party: Liberals spend their time here enabling the Conservative government to run its agenda. The Leader of the Opposition has to consider moving out of the free accommodation he gets, because he no longer functions in any form under any definition of opposition whatsoever. It is left up to the New Democrats to oppose bad ideas.

The member used an important word when he said that theoretically the savings will be passed down from businesses. Families who are struggling to get by as it is cannot rely on a business theory that did not work when the GST was implemented, did not work with Reagan trickle-down economics and will not work with the HST. This stuff does not work. We have proven it time and time again. He can live in that fictional reality, that theoretical reality, if he would like, but the fact of the matter is that poor Canadians are going to be on the hook, middle-class Canadians will be on the hook and the rich cats will get away again.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Madam Speaker, with regard to this enabling legislation, there is no consultation, there are no committee hearings and there is no opportunity to hear from consumers. I would like to hear an answer from my colleague with regard to why, although we are supposed to be living in a democratic society, this does not appear to be one.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, first nations have not been consulted on this matter whatsoever, which is a constitutional mandate of this place. It has been designed under a federal legislature, and we have received petitions from the AFN and other first nations groups saying that once again Canada is ignoring its duty to first nations people. Here it goes again; the government pretends to care about first nations when it is going to hit them with another new tax.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I guess I am the last speaker on this issue tonight.

I hear cheering from across the way from a party that used to care about democracy. It was called the Reform Party and it was founded because its members were tired of the west being shut out and not being heard. It is astonishing to witness tonight the final nail in the coffin of any sense of reform, any sense of democratic input, any sense of direct democracy. It is dead. Its corpse is lying in front of us. It has given up. It is a funeral tonight not only for democracy but for a political movement that has died. It is no more. It has ceased to exist. It does not have a voice.

As one of my friends has said, the fat cats are back. The cats are eating up everything they can find. They are joined by the other cats down the way. Those cats are willing to do whatever they can to feed their fat cat friends.

The tax we are talking about will apply to people's funerals, haircuts, shoes, camps. Families whose kids play hockey in my community will be affected. They find it very difficult to make ends meet now and they will pay a tax on that activity, thanks to the Conservative Party.

This tax will creep into everywhere. It will find every single cent in people's pockets. People will not be able to escape this tax. This tax will apply on things where the PST did not.

I am very upset with our friends down the way, the other cats. Remember those cats? They are the Liberal cats. They said this was a hated sales tax. They used the Prime Minister's last name when referring to the HST. They were going to fight it. That seems like minutes ago in politics, but now we see that they have joined the Conservatives to enable the legislation to go through.

The legislation will apply an 8% tax which people have not had to pay before. How can those members in good conscience say that this is not something they are doing to the people of Ontario and B.C.? Where is the idea of representation taxation? It is gone from the Conservative Party. It does not exist as of tonight.

It is not only about the tax. Let us look at what is happening. Tonight is all about closure. We know what that means. The government is ramming a bill down Parliament's throat.

The body politic of this place will not be able to speak to this legislation to the degree it should. Why? I guess it is that the Conservatives understand that their base does not want this tax. They have been clear. In fact, their cousins in Ontario even decided to have a sit-in. I do not know if they talk to their cousins in Ontario any more, but they should pick up the phone, or in some cases talk over the breakfast table, and ask why it is they hate this tax. Their friends in Ontario might tell them it is regressive and it hurts people in the midst of a recession.

Government Orders

The finance minister tells us time and time again that we have not seen a worldwide recession like this one since the Great Depression. What does the government do for this worldwide recession in Ontario and B.C.? They ding people with an 8% tax. If people are paying 8% more on things they need every day of their lives, it makes their lives more difficult.

What we get from the government is a total reversal on raising taxes and on democracy. When that party sat on this side of the House, every time closure was imposed upon Parliament, it railed and raged against the machine. What is it doing now? Just put the oil on the wheels and let her rip. The Conservatives have been joined by their friends down the way. We see that Tweedledum and Tweedledee are back at it again, making sure that the people of Ontario and B.C. are basically financially and democratically screwed because of this legislation.

● (1955)

What is next? Is this an emergency? Is this enabling legislation a national emergency? For the Conservatives I suppose it is a political emergency. They need to get this thing out very fast to make sure that no one sees this bait and switch. They actually think that the people of Ontario and B.C. will believe that this enabling legislation, using closure, has nothing to do with the Conservatives, that the \$6 billion that will be leaving the coffers to go to B.C. and Ontario has nothing to do with them.

The people of Ontario never got to vote on this proposition, and the people of B.C. not only did not get to vote on this proposition but their premier basically lied to them about the fact that he wanted to get a run on this. They never got to vote on it. It was a bait and switch scheme in B.C. and Ontario. People are not stupid. The people of Ontario and B.C. will make sure that this night is not forgotten. The night that the Conservatives put the final nail in the coffin of any notion of democratic reform from the Conservative Party will not be forgotten. To do it, the Conservatives made sure that we would not be able to debate a motion that would have an effect on them.

If this proposition goes through the way the government wants it to go through, it will have undermined any notion of democratic reform from that party. It will undermine the financial viability of everyday people. It will also be saying to Canadians that in this Parliament, two major parties, the fat cats I talked about at the beginning of my speech, put their interests ahead of the interests of everyday people.

I see that some of my friends across the way are laughing. They think it is funny to raise taxes by 8%. They think it is funny to be hypocrites. They fought closure when they were in opposition.

It is not a happy night. It is not a great night. Democracy tonight is on the wane. Democracy tonight has been shut down. Democracy tonight has no voice on the government benches and no voice on the official opposition benches. Democracy tonight will have to be carried on by the NDP benches. We will continue on that fight.

● (2000)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): It being 8 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

[*English*]

May I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion and amendment to House*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

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

And the bells having rung:

● (2025)

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the amendment. May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion and amendment to House*]

● (2035)

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

(*Division No. 146*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Ashton
Bevington
Chow
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dewar
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Gravelle
Hughes
Julian
Maloway

Angus
Atamanenko
Charlton
Comartin
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Donnelly
Godin
Harris (St. John's East)
Hyer
Layton
Marston

Government Orders

Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Mulcair
Savoie
Stoffler
Wasylycia-Leis— 35

Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
Rafferty
Siksay
Thibeault

Murray
Nicholson
O'Connor
Obhrai
Oliphant
Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Patry
Pearson
Prentice
Proulx
Rajotte
Rathgeber
Reid
Richardson
Rota
Russell
Scarpaleggia
Shea
Shory
Simms
Smith
Stanton
Strahl
Szabo
Tilson
Tonks
Trudeau
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Vincent
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (Saint John)
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

Neville
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Oda
Pacetti
Paradis
Payne
Petit
Preston
Raiitt
Ratansi
Regan
Richards
Rickford
Roy
Savage
Schellenberger
Shipley
Silva
Simson
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Thompson
Toews
Trost
Tweed
Valeriotte
Van Loan
Verner
Volpe
Warawa
Watson
Woodworth
Yelich
Zarac— 212

NAYS**Members**

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Andrews
Bagnell
Baird
Bennett
Bernier
Bezan
Blais
Block
Boucher
Braid
Brison
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Byrne
Calandra
Cannis
Carrie
Clarke
Coady
Cotler
Cummins
D'Amours
Del Mastro
Dhalla
Dosanjh
Dryden
Dufour
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Eyking
Fast
Flaherty
Folco
Gagnon
Gallant
Gaudet
Glover
Goodale
Gourde
Guarnieri
Guergis
Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Hall Findlay
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Komarnicki
Laframboise
Lalonde
Lebel
Lee
Lemieux
Lobb
Lunn
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Mayes
McColeman
McLeod
Mendes
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
André
Armstrong
Bains
Bélanger
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Blackburn
Blaney
Bouchard
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Brunelle
Cadman
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casson
Clement
Coderre
Crombie
Cuzner
Davidson
Deschamps
Dion
Dreesen
Duceppe
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra
Faille
Finley
Fletcher
Foote
Galipeau
Garneau
Généreux
Goldring
Goodyear
Grewal
Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les

Hawn
Hill
Hoepfner
Holland
Jennings
Kania
Kerr
Laforest
Lake
Lauzon
LeBlanc
Lemay
Lévesque
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malo
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Ménard
Menzies
Miller
Murphy (Charlottetown)

PAIRED**Members**

Ashfield
Calkins
Day
Dechert
Dorion
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lavallée
Mark
Nadeau
Paillé (Hochelaga)
Plamondon
Pomerleau
Saxton
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Wong— 28

Bachand
Chong
DeBellefeuille
Devolin
Freeman
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lessard
Mourani
Ouellet
Paquette
Poilievre
Ritz
St-Cyr

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

The question is now on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

Government Orders

● (2040)

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

(Division No. 147)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Armstrong	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Bélanger	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinoooge
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannis	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Clarke	Clement
Coady	Coderre
Cotler	Crombie
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Del Mastro	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Dreeshen	Dryden
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Foote
Galipeau	Gallant
Garneau	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guarnieri	Guergis
Hall Findlay	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoeppner	Holder
Holland	Jean
Jennings	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kania	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Mendes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Pearson
Petit	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Raitt	Rajotte
Ratansi	Rathgeber

Regan
Richards
Rickford
Russell
Scarpaleggia
Shea
Shory
Simms
Smith
Stanton
Strahl
Szabo
Tilson
Tonks
Trudeau
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Volpe
Warawa
Watson
Woodworth
Yelich
Zarac — 189

Reid
Richardson
Rota
Savage
Schellenberger
Shipley
Silva
Simson
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Thompson
Toews
Trost
Tweed
Valeriote
Van Loan
Verner
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (Saint John)
Wrzesniewskij
Young

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Bevington
Blais	Bouchard
Brunelle	Charlton
Chow	Comartin
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Deschamps	Dewar
Donnelly	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Faille	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godin
Gravelle	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	Hughes
Hyer	Julian
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Layton
Lemay	Lévesque
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Ménard
Mulcair	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Rafferty	Roy
Savoie	Siksay
Stoffer	Thibeault
Vincent	Wasylcia-Leis — 58

PAIRED

Members

Ashfield	Bachand
Calkins	Chong
Day	DeBellefeuille
Dechert	Devolin
Dorion	Freeman
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lavallée	Lessard
Mark	Mourani
Nadeau	Ouellet
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paquette
Plamondon	Poilièvre
Pomerleau	Ritz
Saxton	St-Cyr
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Wong — 28	

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[Translation]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

The House resumed from November 23 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I can see that this issue has generated a lot of interest. Nobody seems to want to leave the room. They all want to hear my speech. I will try to give them their money's worth.

It might be a good idea to review the issue at hand. We are talking about a treaty, a nice little document that, in 2007, made it possible for the Fisheries and Oceans people and people from a dozen other countries to negotiate a comprehensive Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) agreement. Decisions needed to be made about how to proceed should problems arise and how to exploit the fisheries resource throughout such a vast territory. A lot of people, a lot of fishers have earned a good living off the area's plentiful resources, but those resources, cod in particular, disappeared quickly.

NAFO was in place, and the cod fishery enabled fishers and whole communities, particularly in Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador, to prosper. I represent Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands, but members from other ridings know exactly what I am talking about.

However, foreign vessels—and I am sorry, but I have to name names—from Spain, Portugal and Russia, freely fished outside of our so-called protected zone, the 200-mile zone, and even inside that zone. NAFO tried to protect our resources, particularly cod, to prevent the resources from being ravaged and the seas from being pillaged. I will not go so far as to call it a massacre.

History finally repeated itself, in a way. For some 300 to 400 years, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Gaspé, the Magdalen Islands and other coastal areas made a good living fishing cod. That was a long time. But then all it took was 30 or 40 years of carelessness, and the resource nearly disappeared.

One of the harshest criticisms levelled against NAFO has been the virtual disappearance of cod in these fishing zones. People realized that the organization's performance was lacking, as the cod issue clearly shows.

A number of people started to wonder if it would be better to leave NAFO entirely and to have some kind of free-for-all. Canada could protect resources over this large area with the Canadian navy, or with the help of countries that share our vision. I said "large" area, but that hardly describes it. It is a huge area.

If the countries that are interested in this fishing zone do not work together or hold each other accountable, we will quickly lose control. It could even turn into a third world war over the marine resources in this fishing zone. If the countries do not work together to control things, there will be almost no other way to verify it all and to protect these resources. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador will likely be interested in what I am going to say. We must protect this

area and offer a better future to the coastal communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

● (2045)

NAFO was unfortunately a failure when it came to the cod fishery. Could we say that it was a big enough failure to justify getting rid of NAFO? Not necessarily, for the reasons I just mentioned, mainly that there is no other way.

Even if NAFO has proven to be very ineffective for managing cod resources, we are better off with an ineffective organization than with no organization at all, which would mean that any resources left in that fishing zone could be cleaned out, could disappear virtually overnight. We know very well that ships do not operate the way they did in the past. It is no longer the same situation. Logically, we need an organization that does its job and that has the tools to do so.

In recent years, 2007 in particular, some amendments to the Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries have been negotiated. The members of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans have gone through this entire file and we finally realized that there had been negotiations with 12 or 13 member countries of the organization in question. Nonetheless, testimony from witnesses indicated that these negotiations resulted in third-rate agreements. What I mean by third-rate can be explained in a number of ways. I have a hard time accepting the fact that such poor agreements were negotiated in a matter as important as this one. I can see why there are days when it is tempting to be rid of NAFO. However, as I was saying, we need to have an organization, even if it is relatively weak. We need it to ensure that there is at least some management of the fisheries in this vast area.

Nonetheless, there is a big difference between that and showing up for negotiations, letting things slide and encroaching on the terrain of your neighbours, the Europeans, who, in recent years have not been very sympathetic when it comes to our affairs. I am referring to the seal hunt. We see that they did not listen very closely or productively. The European Union decided to boycott seal products. This was decided in the month of June, on the pretext that the hunt was a massacre. The seal hunt is far from being a massacre, the proof being that the seal population is on the rise. If it were a massacre, if the species were in danger, the numbers would prove it. I am certain that biologists and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans cannot be that wrong. What is more, they personally had the opportunity to be present at a seal hunt. It is as plain as day. The species is not in danger. The birth rate is on the rise and we will see that in the 2009 figures.

Routine Proceedings

Regarding recent decisions, Europe taught us to be extremely vigilant. Was the negotiating team not vigilant? I would not go that far. I have no doubt these people wanted to act responsibly. However, that depends on the mandate they are given. The negotiating team's mandate was to negotiate, at nearly any cost, maintaining NAFO, however weak it may be. That is what I realized about the testimony we heard. That is what I realized when I read the documents. Upon careful examination of the documents, one might wonder if NAFO was strengthened in terms of what should be done when a country behaves improperly.

• (2050)

No, NAFO was in no way strengthened in relation to such situations. We are talking about a scientific council and procedures, but ultimately, while we are talking about procedures, when the damage is done, it is done. The resource disappears.

I am not necessarily a fan of Danny Williams, the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador. I am not one of his greatest admirers, but I must say, despite all his grandstanding, he is definitely a straight shooter. He was a straight shooter when it came to NAFO. He wrote to us, as well as to the premiers of all the provinces involved, and said right out that something suspicious was going on, that what was happening was not right and that we definitely needed to maintain our sovereignty. As a Quebec sovereigntist, hon. members will understand my attachment to that word as well as my interest in sovereignty.

I believe strongly in maritime or Atlantic sovereignty. Not only do I believe in it, but I think it must be defended. It must also be promoted. Indeed, upon reading the documents, one might wonder if we are doing enough to defend it.

Furthermore, I am not just taking Danny Williams' word for it because, I will repeat, I am not really one of his admirers. Nevertheless, I think he did some good things. He is capable of good things as well as not-so-good things. In this case, I think he sounded the alarm. He also sounded the alarm because he was convinced by people with a great deal of experience in fisheries and negotiations, people who worked with the department at some point. I am thinking of Mr. Applebaum and others who testified before the committee. I think they were very convincing because they told us that, unfortunately, the results of the 2007 negotiations were far from satisfactory.

As for the gentlemen in question—I call them that because they deserve to be called that—they came to testify in order to give us all the facts in this matter and not because they take pleasure in criticizing people. I think they testified because they have a special interest in the matter.

When you have been a senior official in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, you do not take pleasure in appearing before the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans and stating that the agreement negotiated is not a good one and that it does not make much sense to accept them for such and such reasons.

I take my hat, my sealskin hat, off to them and thank them. Thank you for opening Danny Williams' eyes and thank you for opening the committee members' eyes. My hope is that my speech and those of others will bring the Conservatives to their senses and make them

understand that it is very dangerous to let things get to the point where, as a result of negotiations, any amendments will require a two-thirds majority rather than 50% plus one. If it is already difficult to get 50% plus one of our partner's support, imagine what it will take to get two-thirds. That is also part of the problem. It is a magic number, one that may be difficult to obtain.

• (2055)

We may think that the Europeans will understand our intentions and that the resource will be well protected, but between you, me and the bedpost, I do not trust them that much. I can negotiate respectfully and I can discuss, argue and debate, but I am not prepared to trust them. We have already paid once, in the case of cod. We should not have to pay again for all the remaining resources, such as crab and especially shrimp.

That is why it is important that we agree to and adopt a motion that does not necessarily set everything aside, but that says that the results of the negotiation, with the proposed amendments, are not satisfactory. We could eventually put this issue in the hands of another negotiating team. The negotiations took place in 2007, and it is almost 2010. Another departmental negotiating team will certainly be taking part in the negotiations, with the help of the Department of Foreign Affairs and other departments. There is nothing to keep us from putting a stop to this.

I believe that we have to learn from history and stop getting into situations where we close our eyes and, under a document written and signed by us, signed by the Government of Canada, we let things get to the point where the other marine resources are endangered. We have to think about our sovereignty, but we also have to think about the resource. The economy of our coastal communities is at stake. All the coastal communities are taking an interest in this issue. I understand that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are making a big deal about it, but with good reason. They are more than a little affected.

Should the other provinces be as concerned? Yes, in my opinion. On the other hand, are we not here also to defend the interests of each of our provinces? Members from New Brunswick even chair our meetings and proudly represent the people of New Brunswick. There are other members from New Brunswick on the committee as well. There are members from Nova Scotia, and even from Alberta, if you can believe it. It makes for a nice little group.

I believe that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is a department that operates from sea to sea, from coast to coast. That is why the results of the negotiations that we have in front of us are far from satisfactory. When I see that they are unsatisfactory and I am not convinced that conditions could improve in the future, I must speak up and vote accordingly, demanding that we halt proceedings and let those involved know that this makes no sense and that we need to stop it.

Routine Proceedings

The documents in question, which we have received, talk about the presence of the 2007 team. The leader of this team, the former minister and member from Newfoundland and Labrador, Loyola Hearn, even appeared before us. He was rather convincing when he appeared before us, enthusiastically pushing us to sign and support the document.

At the same time, I understand that a minister who led the negotiations will not come and tell us that he failed or did not succeed, especially since he had promised. He had promised to improve the system. He realized, like me, that the system was limited and had many weaknesses.

Did we expect the former minister to candidly tell us that he had failed, that the negotiations were not successful and that he encouraged us to reconsider what was signed? No, I was expecting those kinds of comments, and that is what we heard.

• (2100)

The other committee members may have heard the same thing.

This concludes my speech; I invite all the committee members and all members of Parliament to pay close attention to the future of the fisheries in the northwest Atlantic.

• (2105)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his speech.

It is very important for us. It is very important for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as for Quebeckers. It is a question of sovereignty. It is important not only for the east coast of Quebec, the east coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Maritimes; it is important for the entire country. It is very important for Canada, for all of us.

[*English*]

Therefore, I want to ask him about the situation the Conservatives have put themselves in by bringing this forward in the House, to vet this particular agreement or these particular amendments.

Yet the result of this may prove to be very little; much ado about nothing, unfortunately. The will of the House, we hope, will dictate that this agreement is not good for Canadian sovereignty. Yet the charade by the government has been to put this into the House of Commons despite what happens.

We have been through this now for two and a half years and we finally have a vote here in the House of Commons.

I want to congratulate my colleagues, as I have done for my colleague from the Bloc. Félicitations, indeed. I would like to congratulate my colleague, the hon. member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, for bringing it here.

That being said, with the result of this particular vote, does the hon. member feel that the Conservatives have let down not only the côte est du Québec et Terre-Neuve aussi, but also this particular House and its will to do what is right for sovereignty in this country, not just for the fishermen but for this country and its sovereignty?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question and comments. I will add some myself for the people of Quebec. We did not see any grand gestures by Premier Jean Charest or even the minister responsible for fisheries when it comes to this file, but not because no one is interested.

As I was saying earlier, I represent a riding in Quebec and even though I might not represent the entire province of Quebec, when I appear before members of the committee or when I speak here, I am speaking on behalf of Quebeckers. What we have on the table is far from satisfactory and it may harm the fishing industry and Quebec fishers.

What is the Conservative government's interest in pressing the matter? It is simple common sense. How can a Conservative government renounce a former Conservative minister who says that what he did was well done, that the result is good and we have to ratify it? I believe that this is purely a matter of solidarity, but solidarity also has to rest on principles. We do not stand in solidarity for just anything. If we did, we would accept the new version just because people tell us it was relatively well done.

I recognize that a lot of work has been done, but it is time to go back to the drawing board.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): My colleague has referred to industry in Quebec. I know he has an interest in standing up for the fishing industry, and certainly in his own province. I know he is interested in these issues when they come before committee.

I am curious to know what he thinks the motivation of industry representatives from the province most affected, Newfoundland and Labrador, would be if they supported these amendments. What would be their motivation for coming before committee?

The member is giving the impression that it is just the ones who went and negotiated this and that they have some obligation to support this because they negotiated it. Let me just remind him of some of the testimony that we heard at committee.

For example, Patrick McGuinness, president of the Fisheries Council of Canada, told the standing committee:

—in terms of what we're looking at now, from the Fisheries Council of Canada's point of view we do not see any tangible negatives in the document. But we do see specific improvements with respect to the current NAFO regime.

He went on to say, "Our recommendation to Parliament will be to ratify the document as presented".

Bruce Chapman, Groundfish Enterprise Allocation Council, told the committee, "In our view, it is in our interest to ratify this new convention".

Now this is industry speaking. Does he recall those and why he—

• (2110)

The Deputy Speaker: I will just stop the member there to allow more questions.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

The hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

Mr. Raynald Blais: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans for his question, because it gives me an opportunity to raise another point that I did not have a chance to mention in my speech.

I heard those comments. But at the same time, I did not necessarily hear everything about how people in the industry see what we have. I remember that I said I was willing to hear everyone who was involved in the issue. I felt that the people who appeared before the committee at the invitation of the NDP, the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party were their best argument. But we have to be careful when someone comes to testify and gives us their opinion, because it is only one opinion among many. Just because a group of industry representatives or a single industry member tells us that the document is fine or that they could live with it, that does not mean that we should automatically take it as gospel. There are questions that need to be asked of the people concerned, and we asked those questions. Unfortunately, the answers were somewhat evasive.

Did the people who testified have a vested interest? I am not doubting their sincerity, but I believe that the testimony we heard and especially the answers to our questions were unsatisfactory because they were not detailed enough.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, would the member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, as an experienced member of this House and certainly the fisheries committee, like to comment on the fact that we have had four very senior former officials of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, a deputy minister, Bill Rowat, an ADM, Scott Parsons, a director general of International Relations Bob Applebaum and Earl Wiseman, another director general of International Affairs, between them 45 years of experience at that senior level of the department, all came out and resoundingly urged the committee and Parliament to reject the document?

Does he find that surprising? Does that tell us anything about this situation?

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, that did surprise me because I had questions about it from the start, questions about whether the agreement in question, which was negotiated in 2007, might be a bad thing. In fact, I agreed that this organization, which I did not think had proven its worth, could be improved. I found that possibility interesting. When I first heard about those people's testimony, with all of their experience, I realized that something was up, that there was no smoke without fire and that we had to look into things.

I was really very interested in hearing what they had to say, and they were extremely convincing. Fishers from Newfoundland and Labrador, who told us the same thing, were also convincing. That is why, when people have worked in a department and held positions as senior as they did, nobody insists that they swear on the Bible. I think those people were all very sincere and convincing.

●(2115)

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity this evening to speak in the continuation of this debate, a debate which was shut down the other day by the government for some mysterious reason. I guess it did not want the people listening to it to hear the full debate on the issue of the ratification of the amendments to the NAFO convention.

We are in a concurrence debate. In other words, a motion from the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans is before the House. The committee recommends that the government not ratify these amendments to the NAFO agreement and that it notify NAFO of its objection to the amendments, as per an article of the convention. That would effectively shut down these changes, which are regarded by most people in Newfoundland and Labrador, and many others who appeared before not only the fisheries and oceans committee but also before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, it being an international convention, as wrong. The objections brought forward were substantial and important.

At the outset, this is a very sad story. We are dealing with is an example of a failure and an unwillingness by Canada, as a nation, to take decisive action in an international area for the sake of conservation and protection of our fish stocks and, indeed, a continuation of our own sovereignty. This goes back to the operation of NAFO over many years.

There was an attempt to control outside of the 200 mile limit the action of nations and to protect the fish stocks and have a regime that offered the protection of the stocks but, at the same time, an enforcement of the rules among the nations. It was highly unsuccessful to the point there was continuous overfishing, there was a failure to report catches, there were bycatches being caught on more species under moratorium, essentially, directed fishing of moratorium species under the guise of bycatch.

Some will remember, and those in Newfoundland and Labrador certainly will remember, the turbot war of the mid-1990s and the arrest of the *Estai* by the Government of Canada, which led to an international incident, the bringing of the ship into Canada and the arrest of that ship and charges. That eventually led to some changes in NAFO, but the changes came at a cost because Canada had to give up turbot quota in order to get greater enforcement mechanisms. That has been the story of NAFO over the years.

Canada is a coastal state, the one that suffers the most from many activities that go on, particularly overfishing in the offshore. Yet in order for us to build a regime that protects the stocks, we end up having to give away quota.

The response to all of the negative things in NAFO was the development of a concept called custodial management. That was debated for a number of years, starting in Newfoundland and Labrador, but later adopted unanimously, in 2005, by the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans of the House, which travelled all over the Atlantic and heard from a large number of witnesses, and came back with a unanimous report to the House.

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My colleague, the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, was a member of the committee. I believe the member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte was a member of the committee as well. In fact, the former minister of fisheries, Loyola Hearn, was a member of the committee. They came forth with the unanimous recommendation that we should have custodial management.

This was a part of the plan and promises of the Conservative Party when it sought to be elected and then was elected in 2006.

The expectation then was that Canada would proceed to develop the concept of custodial management, which I think is a very simple concept. The custodial state, Canada, would manage the stock for the benefit of the stock itself and for all parties that had an historical interest in that stock. That would respect the rights of other nations. At the same time, it would put in place a regime, and this is an advancement of international law.

• (2120)

Those who are rather conservative in their thinking would say that we cannot do things like that, but we actually can. International law is something that changes and advances with time, particularly in areas such as environmental protection and conservation, and Canada should have pursued that course.

Instead, what the government and the minister did was pursue the old notion of incremental changes to NAFO. If all they did was break another promise, fail to take decisive and significant action, that would be sad enough, but they have gone the other way and in fact made things worse. That is the opinion not just of me, but of many people who testified before the committee and were active in the industry.

I have, for example, a letter from Ray Johnson, the chairperson of the Community Linkages Concept Committee. He who wrote the minister recently complaining about the amendments and asking the government not to support them.

We heard from the Fisheries Community Alliance, a group from Newfoundland and Labrador, headed by Gus Etchegary and others who have very strong views and a lot of knowledge and experience in the fisheries. They are very forceful in their objections to this treaty.

We know the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has stated strong objections having heard the arguments at a certain point. This is true to say. I see the parliamentary secretary looking through his papers to find a letter to read out in a few minutes. There was a point when the Newfoundland government supported the negotiations, but not after hearing the arguments, in particular the arguments made by the very senior former officials.

It is almost unheard of for officials to say that they think this is a backward step for Canada, conservation and the whole approach to fisheries management on the offshore. A former deputy minister, a former assistant deputy minister of fisheries and oceans with 20 years experience, two directors general for international affairs, one who negotiated the original NAFO, are extremely senior people. It is almost unheard of for them to actively participate in an objection process such as this.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador said in a press release in September:

I am convinced that the proposed amendments could be detrimental to the ability of our country to protect and conserve our fishery resources inside of our own 200-mile limit...Despite assurances by the Federal Government that the amendment proposed would never be used, we simply cannot as a sovereign nation agree to any wording that opens the door for such action. I am at a loss to understand why Canada would agree to an amendment that was drafted by EU officials to be allowed to proceed. Particularly in these times when Canada is dealing with issues of Arctic sovereignty, we cannot as a country in any way allow for the potential of other nations to make decisions about what happens inside of our 200-mile limit.

We heard from officials from Newfoundland and Labrador, former minister of fisheries, Tom Hedderson, who was recently replaced by Clyde Jackman. He has since written the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans in the last few days reiterating opposition to these amendments.

There are two most objectionable things. The first is the one that allows NAFO nations to make decisions about what goes on inside the 200 mile limit and carry out enforcement. That is with the request and consent of Canada. That is the provision. Nevertheless, it allows for this eventuality. The second provision is where they changed the voting pattern from 50% plus one up to two-thirds in order to make changes. This could include amendments to the convention itself, particularly quotas.

In the post-negotiated period, one of the first actions was the countries voted, including Canada, to reject the scientific evidence and for a quota larger than that which was recommended for strict conservation purposes. We are concerned about this because it is a backward step, one that will be very difficult to fix.

As has been said by the objectors, we will have to live for decades with the consequences of this. One witness said that it would take perhaps 20 or 30 years to try to undo the damage that is being done here. This is an opportunity to reject the ratification of this treaty.

• (2125)

The ratification process is very straightforward. Countries negotiate an agreement and then they have an opportunity to ratify it or not. What is this ratification process for? It is for the country as a whole and for its parliament to have what might be called sober second thought, to look at what was negotiated, to see whether it fits the desires and aspirations of that country, and decide whether to ratify it or not.

We have the right to object. If we object, the amendments are dead. It is as simple as that. We are seeking to have the government exercise that power, to go back to the drawing board, and try to get something better.

Why is it there? Let me put it hypothetically. Many people are interested in the Arctic, including the Europeans. European countries do not have any space in the Arctic. They are very interested as well. What if Canada had sent negotiators off to talk about Arctic sovereignty and negotiate with other people interested in the Arctic, and in some kind of global love-in, decided that we should have a global view of the Arctic, and not only that, that there be a provision that if Canada so desired, the Northwest Passage, which Canada claims to be its own, could be managed by a group of countries under the guidance of some new circumpolar convention?

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If those negotiators came back to Canada with that deal, what would the reaction be? I would suggest that any government of Canada would send those negotiators packing as quickly as possible, probably even this government. It would say, "No, we cannot have that. We are not prepared to do it. This is a longstanding position of Canada that we have sovereignty over the Arctic waters and the Northwest Passage. It is not an international passage. It is part of Canada's internal waters". The negotiators would be rejected. That treaty would never be ratified and that is what we are suggesting here.

How did it get there? Someone said it was in another treaty so we put it in this one. Who suggested it? It was not Canada. It was the EU that suggested it and Canada eventually agreed. It agreed to do something that was a backward step when it comes to custodial management.

Bob Applebaum suggested that if they had even done it the other way and suggested that if the other nations agreed, Canada could manage the stocks outside of the 200-mile limit in the interests of all the parties because we are a coastal state. That would be a step toward custodial management. That would lay the groundwork for Canada to be the protector of these fish stocks because we are the ones with the biggest interest in protecting them and we would be in a position then to take positive steps, but that is not what happened. In fact, we have taken a backward step.

Other people who testified before the committee included Les Dean, a former deputy minister of fisheries and aquaculture for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and David Vardy, another former deputy minister of fisheries and aquaculture for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. These were very compelling and persuasive witnesses who have a storehouse of knowledge about what has happened in NAFO and how it has affected Newfoundland and Labrador in particular. They gave a lot of evidence about the nature of custodial management and how it would work. They are very distinguished public servants from Newfoundland and Labrador.

We did have witnesses on the other side. There is no question about that. The government negotiators came forward. The committee had people from the Department of Justice talk about this, and Foreign Affairs in particular, but their arguments were these father knows best arguments, I would call them, that "Everything is all right. Just because that provision is there about interfering with our sovereignty, we would never use it. We just put it in there. These countries are now changed. The whole world has changed".

Between 2003 and 2008, the quotas for turbot were exceeded by an average of 30% each and every year, and now all of a sudden these countries have changed and there is now a much greater interest in conservation.

I do not know who got saved or who got religion about this because it was not happening two, three or four years ago, and the provisions for enforcement here are really no greater than they were before. If parties object to a quota being set, they still have the ability to continue to fish the quota set by themselves until the end of that fishing season, and there is really no significant penalty for anybody failing to abide by the provisions and the quotas that are set by NAFO.

● (2130)

This is a pretty important treaty when it comes to the interests of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a treaty which can hurt over the next number of years by failing to ensure that we have the kind of regime that we need. We will not have the means and the mechanisms any more to insist on the proper protection of the stocks. We are not going to have the kind of protection that we actually need.

Let me read from a letter to the Prime Minister from these four individuals: Bill Rowat, Scott Parsons, Bob Applebaum and Earl Wiseman, the officials in question. It says:

We agree the existing NAFO Convention is out of date and should be amended to strengthen its provisions to make the organization more effective in achieving its conservation objectives and to reflect current international law. However, we believe the current set of amendments fall far short in this respect, while creating substantial new problems which will, in fact, weaken the organization and also undermine Canada's ability to maintain sole control over fisheries management in the Canadian 200-mile zone.

They say further on in the letter:

We agree with Premier Williams that the proposed amendments are flawed. Further, in the long run they will not only weaken Canada's position in NAFO but more importantly Canada's position in any future arbitration or in any future reference to the Law of the Sea Tribunal.

That is an extremely important point because the provisions that are in the NAFO treaty will override other more liberal provisions that would protect Canada and allow Canada to act under the Law of the Sea with the NAFO convention with its more restrictive provisions prevailing.

What we have seen is a government that set out with good intentions. I will grant that. The promises that were made were ones that we supported in Newfoundland and Labrador. They reflected the all-party consensus in the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans before 2005. There was some very positive feeling in Newfoundland and Labrador that at long last Canada was taking this issue seriously and someone was going to take the bull by the horns and act in the interests of Canadian sovereignty, in the interests of international stocks off our coast, and to provide some protection instead of having the stocks depleted continuously.

We know what the experience of that is in Newfoundland and Labrador. Since 1992, there has been a moratorium on one of the largest, hugest biomasses in the world in terms of the codfish. The protein that was able to be produced on an ongoing sustainable basis from that biomass of cod was a gift to the world, a world that is starving for protein. That was destroyed by a failure to properly manage it. We see the same concerns being raised about what is happening outside the 200-mile limit.

This was an opportunity for Canada to take some leadership in the international field and act to protect those stocks, to act in the interests of Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada to ensure that there was a possibility for these communities, that for hundreds and hundreds of years not only in Newfoundland and Labrador but as we have heard in Îles de la Madeleine, eastern Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, to continue their rural existence to fish and to continue that way of life.

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That is put at risk. We ask and urge the government to reject this treaty. We will wait for a vote in the House and hope it will succeed, and that the government will listen to the will of the House and reject this treaty, file an objection, go back to the drawing board, and see if we can get a better deal.

• (2135)

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hearings that we held on NAFO were interesting. There were many tremendous witnesses on both sides and I thought they gave some very compelling arguments. When Phillip Saunders, dean of law at Dalhousie University, was talking about the 200-mile limit, he had a concern. He said:

I've tried to work through the scenarios in which it would become a real problem, and I find they mostly require an awful lot of steps to take place before something really bad could happen. Because the Canadian government holds complete control.

That was stated by a number of other witnesses who came before the committee as well. They said that nobody could come inside those limits unless they are actually invited by the Canadian government. Nobody could think of a scenario, unless someone was talking about science, for example, needing help. Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to. I agree with the hon. member that there were many very interesting witnesses who came forward to this committee. However, one of the scientific principles talked about in conservation was the precautionary principle. I would suggest that the precautionary principle of science in terms of conservation be applied to the activity of this particular convention as well.

We should err on the side of caution. I understand that the professor could not find a scenario, but perhaps he is not as involved in the practical aspects of international trade and the kind of thing that can go on. It will start to go on very quickly, the management of particular resources to a certain degree of sustainability, so as to get access to the European market, for example, and who will make the decisions about what standard applies? The people who are going to make those decisions are the Europeans. They are going to say what standard applies and what can come into their countries. They can use that as a lever to get the kind of control—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Questions and comments, the hon. member for Avalon.

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague from St. John's East a straightforward and pretty simple question. I am wondering if he could reflect on Art May's comments and report that NAFO, at the end of the day, will not work.

Does he see any reason for us to even continue staying within NAFO at the end of the day? Does it work? Will it work? Recently, a decision was made on the Greenland halibut, where the NAFO members accepted a TAC approximately 82% greater than their own scientific council. They are going to have a scientific council making a recommendation to them, but they are not going to listen to the scientific council. Why would it work at all?

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, the issue is really how we get from here to there if we are talking about custodial management. NAFO is not going to work. It has not worked in the past, but we

have to take a position that is very forceful at the beginning and, in a sense, lay down the law as to what is to be expected and happen.

I do not think that NAFO would work in the long run, but we did hear from Les Dean and David Vardy from Newfoundland and Labrador. They talked about how that process would take several years and probably a few failed attempts to make progress before custodial management would be put in place.

However, this is considered a backward step. In fact, it has been suggested that if we go down this road, it could be 20 or 30 years before we ever get out of this kind of agreement.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two questions for the member. He talked about the issue of debate being shut down by the government. I would like him to comment further on that. The government side seems to think the member is chirping from his seat. The government is getting used to issues like closure, which it is doing to us today on the HST question. I would like him to comment on that whole issue of why the government would try to shut down the debate.

Second, I would like to ask the member a question about the concept of custodial management. Can he give us some of the elements of that, but also tell us why the government is resisting it?

• (2140)

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, frankly, I was ready to speak on this when the motion was brought forward after the committee passed it. Everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador knew the debate was going to take place; it was all over the radio and in news reports. The member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte and the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor spoke. Then the parliamentary secretary spoke and then sought to shut down debate after three speakers.

Why? The government must have been afraid that too many people would be watching and knew the debate was taking place. It did not make any sense at all for the government to do that.

Custodial management is where the coastal states take on management for the benefit of the stock and the resource while guaranteeing and honouring the historical rights of the people who are entitled to a share. If the other states were not prepared to do so, Canada and the coastal states would do it and enforce it.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are quite a few inaccuracies in the comments made by my colleague from St. John's East. Perhaps when some of my colleagues get to speak, they will correct some of those.

The member makes the concept of custodial management sound simple. I know he was not at committee, and so he did not hear the testimony. This is a subject that we actually investigated with international experts. The dean of Dalhousie Law School said that custodial management is a term that has no definition in international law because it is not an accepted concept. He said:

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Whether it is a government policy or it's been stated—and I did read the previous testimony of the minister—I can say from an analyst's point of view that if custodial management is what it was said to be by the Senate committee previously, by this committee at one point, and by the legislative committee in Newfoundland in the early 2000s, then no, we haven't achieved that, and we can't.

I am just wondering if the member could point to some kind of international legal precedent he is using to indicate that—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for St. John's East.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, I suppose the dean of the law school would have told us 10 or 15 years ago there was no right to intervene in a sovereign state for humanitarian reasons. That has now changed, and it has changed because international law has changed and has developed based on new concepts and ideas of protection of other countries.

The law of the sea in this particular case does not prevent a custodial state from ensuring that an international resource will be protected. The very problem is that the regime that was there was ineffective; it was not working to protect the stocks and someone had to do something about it. That is where custodial management comes from.

No, it did not exist 10 years ago, but it is something that has to be developed and put into place.

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked a lot about custodial management and, of course, as we know, the Conservative Party made an election promise that it would offer custodial management.

I wonder if my hon. colleague could comment on why they did not enforce in the amendments made to NAFO any of the provisions currently available under some international laws. Why did they not take extra caution in some of the amendments they were making to the NAFO agreement and look at some of the provisions that are available under international law?

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, I cannot say for sure why they did not. We were told by some people that there seemed to be a lot of pressure to come back with a deal or with something. One cannot get a deal, of course, unless the people one is working with are prepared to agree. Apparently they were only prepared to agree with something that said, we would like to go inside your 200 mile limit under certain circumstances, with your permission, as part of our regime. They wanted changes made. The enforcement mechanism was not fully enforceable, and is still not enforceable voluntarily. They just could not agree. The negotiators wanted to come back with something and this is what they came back with.

● (2145)

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Saint John.

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this evening I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

The Government of Canada understands the importance of ensuring the sustainability of fish stocks in the northwest Atlantic, in particular, for the benefit of the many Canadians and entire communities whose livelihood and economy depend on these resources.

Given that these fish stocks extend to waters outside of Canada's jurisdiction, we cannot single-handedly and unilaterally ensure their conservation. In this context, international co-operation is necessary for the successful management of these fish stocks.

The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, better known as NAFO, was formed in 1979. A lot has changed since that time. The face of the fisheries has changed, the players have evolved and the organization was badly in need of tune-up, if not a complete rebuild.

Despite knowing the need for NAFO reform, the previous Liberal government did nothing for 13 years. It was only in 2005, in the dying days of their government, that the Liberals turned their attention to this serious problem. The Liberals did what they do best and held a big, showy, international conference in St. John's to discuss reforms. Canadians should know that while the Liberals are now fearmongering on these NAFO reforms, they were singing a very different tune in 2005.

At the conclusion of the St. John's conference, the member for Halifax West, then fisheries minister, felt very differently. In signing a declaration calling for the reform of NAFO and organizations like it, he proudly stated:

The Government of Canada considers the Conference as a positive step toward stronger international fisheries governance. We will continue to press for further progress to modernize fisheries management on the high seas.

Like so many other issues, the Liberals talked a good game, but did nothing to back up their empty words. It took this government, largely under the strong leadership of the former fisheries minister, Loyola Hearn, to deliver.

Our government pressed for action when Canadians voiced their desire for change in 2006 and NAFO members were forced to agree that it was time to modernize the organization. We know we have been forward looking and we need to give ourselves the modern decision-making tools required to deal with the problems we face. This package of reforms does that and has the broad support of those in the fishing industry today.

The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans has heard from numerous representatives of the Canadian fishing industry who are uniformly behind these changes.

Patrick McGuinness, for example, the president of the Fisheries Council of Canada, told the committee:

—in terms of what we're looking at now, from the Fisheries Council of Canada's point of view we do not see any tangible negatives in the document. But we do see specific improvements with respect to the current NAFO regime....Our recommendation to Parliament will be to ratify the document as presented.

Also Bruce Chapman, president of the Groundfish Enterprise Allocation Council and the executive director of the Canadian Association for Prawn Producers, told the committee, "In our view, it is in our interest to ratify this new convention".

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Ms. Rosalind Walsh, the executive director of the Northern Fisheries Coalition, took the time to write to the committee to express her organization's support for the good work done by our government, "In summary, the amended NAFO Convention is a positive development for Canada and the Canadian fishing industry, and one that is supported by the Northern Coalition".

There are more. Earle McCurdy, the president of the Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union, and hardly a frequent supporter of our government, also supports the convention because it will be good for his members in the processing sector.

In fact, we have yet to hear from anyone currently involved in the fishing industry who is opposed to the progress Canada has made at NAFO. This fact should be very telling.

We have heard some questions recently about whether Canada is effectively protecting its sovereign rights under this amended convention. The answer is very clear. The changes to the convention recognize and respect Canada's sovereignty over its 200 mile limit.

It is worth mentioning that the first paragraph of the amendment notes that coastal states have established exclusive economic zones consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, within which they exercise sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing living resources.

Nonetheless, the standing committee took the time to invite leading Canadian experts on the law of the sea and ocean governance to discuss the new amended convention. Both gentlemen agreed that the new convention represented real progress in the international management of the North Atlantic and both dismissed the conspiracy theories floated by the opposition.

• (2150)

Ted McDorman, a professor of law at the University of Victoria, told the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans:

By the standards of other organizations, there's actually been some significant progress made here with the NAFO amendments.

He went further and said:

I've looked mostly at the institutional structural issues, and I see there's a positive rather than negative.

Phillip Saunders, the dean of the law school at Dalhousie University, also came before our committee on that same day and stated:

I... tried to look for something that I would consider to be a deal breaker, and I don't think I found one.

He also told the committee that it was difficult to understand the apprehension of the opposition to article VI, paragraph 10, because the government maintains "complete control". I will quote him further:

I've tried to work through the scenarios in which it would become a real problem, and I find they mostly require an awful lot of steps to take place before something really bad could happen. Because the Canadian government holds complete control...

He went further and said:

I've also tried to think of a possible usefulness for it that the Canadian side might have wanted. One thing I can see is that Canada did want to push for, as an example, a protected area for fishing habitat that straddled the outer limit. This would provide a way of pressing that point and showing good faith, as we want this area, this habitat,

protected outside and we want it protected inside, and we're prepared to make it one measure.

Therefore, far from seeing the negatives in the contentious article VI, paragraph 10, leading Canadian experts actually see potential benefits. Indeed, under article VI, paragraph 10, NAFO measures will not be applied in waters under Canadian jurisdiction unless, and I want to be very specific about this, (a) Canada requests that they apply and (b) Canada votes in favour of such measures.

It is clear that the amended convention does not give NAFO the mandate to take management decisions within waters under Canadian jurisdiction, nor does it give foreign fishing vessels the right to fish in these waters.

Fundamentally, the amended convention provides for a more modern decision-making process that reflects the current challenges faced by NAFO. Canadian industry and provincial governments participated extensively in the negotiations on the amended convention and were supportive throughout the process. The amended NAFO convention explicitly maintains the sovereign right of Canada to take management decisions on fisheries within the 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone. To say otherwise would be incorrect.

We will continue to fight for changes at NAFO that are beneficial for Canada and for those Canadians who depend on the resources in the North Atlantic. These amendments will improve the NAFO convention and Canada's ratification will serve to consolidate our efforts to date to improve oceans and fisheries governance internationally.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that the member for Saint John and chair of the fisheries committee took the time to read the speech that was provided for him and written for him by the fisheries minister's office. I also want to say that I appreciate the fact he took the time just recently to sign the letter to the editor that was also prepared for him by the minister's office.

I am just wondering about something. The member agrees and said so in the letter to the editor of the St. John's newspaper, which reaches province-wide in Newfoundland and Labrador, that he agrees that the issue is far too complex for Parliament to resolve; that there are issues far outstanding and far exceeding the grasp of his side; and that he agrees that this should be put to an independent outside panel of experts to decide whether or not Canada should ratify the NAFO treaty, because he says that Canada does not have the expertise in this Parliament to be able to decide that, and he agrees that his party and his government does not have the expertise.

Will he commit to an outside independent panel to decide this, as he said he would? Yes or no?

Mr. Rodney Weston: Mr. Speaker, I am actually quite flattered that the member opposite has taken the time to listen so carefully to my speech here tonight, and actually to go even further and to talk about the letter I sent to the editor of the *Telegram* and also, certainly, to take note of the details in it.

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I only wish the member had taken that same time and given due consideration to the witnesses who came before our committee. During the committee proceedings when we had a witness who did not necessarily agree with his point of view, he would dismiss him out of hand.

As a matter of fact, during our committee proceedings he interjected at one point in time to say the witness had nothing further to add to the debate and that he thought the committee should end its discussions with the witness and move on to other business.

I am really pleased the member opposite has taken the time to listen, finally.

• (2155)

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, for his excellent speech. I thought it was an excellent speech, and I am sure my colleagues in the House would agree. He covered some ground.

I want to get him to comment on an aspect that has not been raised so far, or at least has been just barely touched on in this debate on the amended convention. It is the fact that it incorporates precautionary and ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management and decision-making.

I wonder if the member agrees with me that we are in a new era. We have to realize that no country can single-handedly or unilaterally ensure the sustainability of fish stocks, especially the straddling fish stocks, although that appears to be what is being proposed by some members on the other side. These new approaches are explicitly mentioned in the amended NAFO convention, and I wonder if my colleague could comment on them.

Mr. Rodney Weston: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary's question asks me to comment specifically towards the content of my speech. I talked about how NAFO was originally ratified in 1979 and I pointed out that many things have changed since that point in time.

I think it is important to note that we need to ensure that we have the tools to deal with the issues that we have before us today. The issues today are not the same as the issues we were facing in 1979. I think the former fisheries minister, when he came before our committee, used an analogy that was very well put. He talked about some of the voices of the past coming forward to criticize this amendment. He likened it to sending the 1967 Toronto Maple Leafs team to the Olympics here in 2010 to defend Canada's honour.

I think it was well put. I think it was an analogy that certainly served us very well in our committee proceedings. I think the parliamentary secretary is bang on. We need the tools to deal with the issues today.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the NAFO convention. It is great to follow some of the members who serve with me on the fisheries committee. I feel bad; I might leave a bit of time at the end. It depends upon how many questions are asked by my fellow members.

It was interesting to listen to the debate of the member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. He is the guy who put on a great

event last week for the seal hunt. He is a strong supporter of the seal hunt.

He referred to the members who had worked a long time on DFO issues and had brought the issue to Premier Williams. He also talked about Premier Williams bringing up the issue. While we might not necessarily agree with Premier Williams on this issue, the member for Saint John and I might be on the same page as Premier Williams on some more recent issues, possibly.

A lot of testimony came out in committee. People were talking about the involvement, and whether the people who were negotiating for Canada on this stage had a mandate and while they came back with this deal, did they really have a mandate to do this? There were some concerns about some of the things that had been agreed to.

Bruce Chapman, who is with the Groundfish Enterprise Allocation Council, stated:

In terms of the delegation meetings on the NAFO convention, I don't recall any views expressed contrary to the consensus of the Canadian delegation.

That is important because that indicates that we did have representatives there. Our chief negotiators and our lead negotiators were there, but there were also representatives from industry and representatives from the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador who played a role in these negotiations. Therefore, each of the interested stakeholders had an opportunity during those negotiations to actually put some things forward.

What is important to note is that this process started back in 2005 with the previous government. We launched a multi-faceted strategy to address overfishing, the strategy involved diplomacy, governance, management reform and enhanced enforcement. Canadian officials encouraged other fishing nations to take responsibility for the actions of their fleets and to help reform regional fisheries management organizations. NAFO was a principal target.

At that time, NAFO members agreed with Canada that it was time to modernize the NAFO convention to bring it in line with the provisions of the 1995 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement. NAFO members agreed that we had to be forward looking and give ourselves the modern decision-making tools required to deal with the modern problems that we face today.

NAFO has made significant improvements. At committee, there were good witnesses on both sides of the argument. Each and every one of the witnesses said that the original NAFO convention was broken. It did not work. It was important for us to come up with a convention that would actually work for all the nations that were involved in the negotiations. Progress has been made on that.

I want to refer to some of the comments that were made in committee.

Phillip Saunders, dean of the Dalhousie Law School, talked about our sovereignty and the 200-mile limit. He talked about how important it was that Canada had complete control, as my friend from Saint John also pointed out.

Mr. McDorman, professor of law at the University of Victoria, stated:

And there is progress here. By the standards of other organizations there's actually been some significant progress made here with the NAFO amendments.

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I've looked mostly at the institutional structural issues, and I see there's a positive rather than negative.

• (2200)

There were many other witnesses in committee who also told us that there are many other positives that came out of this and it was not all negatives. I understand that when witnesses give testimony in committee, people are looking for a balanced debate. In the debate tonight, the balance is on the other side of the argument. It is important that we have strong witnesses and that they be recognized.

There were also unsettling disputes. There was a significant discussion in committee about dispute settlement. Mr. McDorman said:

As I point out, that's a problem, but it's a problem that exists in all the fisheries organizations. It's not unique to NAFO. That may not make you feel any better, but it's not as if, for the sake of argument, the Canadian government has somehow failed to achieve something that somebody else has accomplished. In this particular case, they certainly have not.

When we look at some of the comments that were made by very reputable people who were part of this negotiation, it is important for us to understand that we have pushed for things that were part of this negotiation and we were successful. We have actually pushed for NAFO members to adopt stronger rules to deal with violations and to ensure that those responsible are given tough sanctions that would serve as effective deterrents to illegal fishing activity.

As a result, recently it has become mandatory for NAFO members to recall offending vessels to port in cases of serious violation for a detailed inspection. The stronger rules also brought in greater consistency in the interpretation and application of the NAFO conservation and enforcement measures.

Outside the conservation aspects of this, we also heard from a conservation standpoint of the change not just to stock but a whole ecosystem approach, which is a much more holistic view of our fishing resource.

As we move forward and reflect on the new NAFO agreement, the new system is going to give NAFO the teeth that it has always lacked. As everybody said, the previous NAFO convention was not successful. Under this agreement, on the enforcement side vessels that commit serious infringements such as the misreporting of catch or fishing of moratorium species would now be ordered to return to port immediately for a full inspection.

Looking at the cost of doing business, these boats are huge. They get outfitted to go out for extended periods of time. Not only that, but they incur a significant expense when it comes to the cost of fuel and whatever else. It is a pretty harsh penalty in itself when one of these vessels is forced to go back to its home country for any infringements it has committed.

The reforms have also established key principles for NAFO states to follow in the development of sanctions against vessels caught fishing contrary to NAFO conservation and management regimes.

While the reforms to the NAFO monitoring, control and surveillance regime are important, they are only part of the solution. The amendments to this NAFO convention complement the enforcement reforms. These changes are providing a modern decision-making process. We have all the countries outside.

I know there were some people who said they were concerned that some of the other countries would welsh on some of these deals, but in any international agreement it is going to require give and take to make these things happen.

I believe the amendments to this 1978 NAFO convention are in the best interests of Canada, in the best interests of fish stocks in the northwest Atlantic. We are better protected based on the commentary from the witnesses. I hope that my fellow members and I have convinced all members that it is time for us to ratify this convention and move on with business.

• (2205)

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to ask my hon. colleague a question. I would have liked to ask the previous speaker a question but I will focus on him.

He sat through all the hearings on NAFO and I asked this question of every single witness who appeared, Is this custodial management? In testimony after testimony everyone said that no, this is not custodial management. The only two people who think this is custodial management is the current minister and the former minister. Even their own senator does not think this is custodial management.

I have two questions for the member. Does he honestly and truly believe this represents custodial management or was his leader right when he said, "We will give coastal states, particularly Newfoundland and Labrador, an increased role in the management of the fishery". It sounds great. "Early in our mandate, we will seek to include a bilateral agreement with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for this purpose". It sounds great. "We will make moves to extend the 200-mile limit to the edge of the continental shelf, the nose and tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap in the north Atlantic, and to assert Canadian custodial management over this area".

Who said that? It was the Prime Minister. It sounds like custodial management, but the government has not delivered on it. How does the member feel about that?

Mr. Mike Allen: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member asked that question, because I was prepared for it.

In committee and in the conversation we were having on custodial management, it was as though I was back in my elementary school days. There were two things we always did when we defined something. One was that we did not use the word in the definition. That is the first thing we did not use.

The second thing is that I want to give him a definition of "custodian". I took this out of the dictionary. It says that a custodian is a person who is a keeper or a guardian—not an owner—entrusted with guarding or maintaining a property, such as a janitor. We can all talk about our school days and the janitors. They did not own the school and they did not own the hallways, but they sure looked after them. That was their job.

Routine Proceedings

I think that Loyola Hearn, the former minister, when he was there, actually said to the member that it is all in how we define it. I think that is true, because we have the exclusive zone within the 200-mile limit, but I think we are a custodian of that area. We are working with NAFO and we are working as co-custodians of that area to make sure that we protect the long-term sustainability of fish stocks.

• (2210)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his speech, but I also want to comment on the previous speaker, the member for Saint John, who suggested to the member that the Toronto Maple Leafs are an example of how things have changed from 1967 and compared that to NAFO. Mr. Speaker, imagine walking into an argument like that. The Toronto Maple Leafs are somewhat like the NAFO situation in that they have not changed in 20 years. They did not win then, they are not winning now, and NAFO has not been a success.

Why should it be a success now? We have a new team. We have a new coach. We have new players. Who are they? Are there new rules for the game?

I do not think so. What we have now is a backward step. In fact, the situation has changed, and we have a set of rules that are not going to work now any more than the rules worked for the Toronto Maple Leafs for the last 40 years.

Mr. Mike Allen: Mr. Speaker, I feel badly that he has been maligning the Toronto Maple Leafs, because they actually did beat my Montreal Canadiens last week, so we should not be maligning them too much.

We do have a new team and we do have a new coach, and this government is taking a strong stand for Canadians. We are taking a strong stand for the preservation of fish and the long-term conservation of our stocks. That is what this team is really trying to do.

We sent that team to negotiate a strong deal. We improved on the 1978 deal, and it is going to be better for conservation, better for the NAFO states, and better for Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 10:12 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today and Standing Order 66(2), all questions necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Wednesday, December 9, 2009, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

It being 10:13 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 10:13 p.m.)

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