



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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VOLUME 145 • NUMBER 062 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, June 14, 2010**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 14, 2010

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1100)

[*English*]

### COMPETITION ACT

The House resumed from May 12 consideration of the motion that Bill C-452, An Act to amend the Competition Act (inquiry into industry sector), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** When this matter was last before the House, the hon. member for Niagara West—Glanbrook had the floor. There are five minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks. I therefore call upon the hon. member for Niagara West—Glanbrook.

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, from where I left off a couple of weeks ago, a concern that I find with this legislation is the relatively broad scope of powers that it would afford with such a simple change of Canada's Competition Act.

The bill would give Canada's Commissioner of Competition unlimited powers to call an inquiry into an entire industry sector, with no evidence of any wrongdoing, and place entire sectors under scrutiny, through no fault of their own.

Not only would this investigative process cause problems by shifting the focus of a company away from its day-to-day operations to co-operating with the commissioner's investigation, it would also place a great deal of pressure upon the office of the commissioner. As I said previously, the office of the commissioner is one that exercises its authority with the utmost care and responsibility. However, with what this bill is proposing, a great deal of pressure would be placed upon the office to investigate virtually any rumour of wrongdoing by the industry sector, regardless of the grounds upon which these suspicions were made known.

I had begun to talk about our government's budget implement act in the first hour of debate on Bill C-452 and would like to finish my thoughts on that.

In March 2009 this government introduced the most substantial amendments to Canada's anti-cartel laws in over 100 years. These changes introduced an outright prohibition on agreements between

competitors regarding prices, output levels or market sharing. They also significantly increased the penalties for these offences to \$25 million and/or 14 years in prison. To allow business to adjust, the government also allocated a one-year period for them to review their practices and bring about compliance with these measures.

With the coming into force of these provisions on March 12, the Commissioner of Competition finally has the types of improved tools she needs to aggressively pursue and convict those engaged in the most harmful types of cartel behaviour which distort competition and undermine confidence in the marketplace.

Our government has made great strides in legislation to strengthen competition and punish non-compliance of the fundamental principle of a free market system. Broadening the Commissioner of Competition's powers from simply being investigative to the much more comprehensive level of launching inquiries may quickly prove to be ill-thought, both in terms of time and resources.

One thing our government seems to recognize more than the opposition parties is that just as anti-competitive behaviour drives up prices, so too does costly bureaucratic red tape.

In conclusion, the question that we must ask as we consider this measure is whether we as members of Parliament are willing to impose the types of burdens on businesses that would flow from this bill. Do we want to subject businesses to costly and time-consuming investigations where there is no evidence of wrongdoing? Is it appropriate to distract the commissioner's focus for enforcing the Competition Act?

We are very wary of imposing any new regulatory burdens on business, especially in light of today's harsh economic realities.

● (1105)

**Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague for introducing Bill C-452 with regard to the Competition Act. I would like to commend all of my colleagues for participating in the debate on this particular topic. We all, I believe, understand the value of competition.

Certainly, we in the Liberal Party value and understand the importance of competition in the market and understand that a competitive economy is a more prosperous economy. We also understand the need for protecting consumers and to ensure that the market itself is not so much protected but operated in a manner that prevents distortions in the market that may result from concentration or inappropriate behaviour.

*Private Members' Business*

Although the Competition Act and the Commissioner of Competition have important rights, which we value in terms of investigating particular businesses and their activities, the commissioner can only do that as a result of a specific complaint from an entity, individual or some other enterprise. In the market there are times when an individual or entity may, in fact, be hesitant for competitive, market or other reasons that we may not be aware of to raise a specific complaint with the Competition Bureau. In that sense, where those situations exist, it is important to give the Commissioner of Competition the opportunity to look at an entire industry sector.

I have no intention today of raising specific industries. My view is that this is an opportunity for the Commissioner of Competition, when it is appropriate, regardless of the industry, if there are issues that have been raised that suggest that an investigation is warranted into the industry as a whole. This is indeed an improvement to the Competition Act that would allow the commissioner to do just that.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank my colleague for introducing this bill, which would enhance the Competition Act. Liberal members understand how important it is to have marketplace competition, but we also recognize the importance of protecting consumers by ensuring that prices and products on the Canadian market comply with the law.

[*English*]

There have been a number of arguments put forward in debate in this House that perhaps this gives too much discretion to the Commissioner of Competition. I would argue that this is not a situation where the commissioner would undertake an investigation willy-nilly. The history of the Competition Bureau has been one of operating with significant understanding of the Canadian market in all the different industries that have been looked at.

I would also argue that the Commissioner of Competition has had the opportunity to review certain industries as a result of investigations into particular business activities, particular activities engaged in by particular enterprises. That particular study ends up being done appropriately but too often through the back door. The addition of this provision would allow the competition authorities to engage in that larger investigation of an entire industry where warranted.

To address a concern that somehow this would provide an opportunity to go looking for problems, I completely disagree with that. The history of the Competition Bureau has been one of real understanding of the need of when to be involved and when not to be involved. I will repeat my earlier comment that up until now the opportunity has only arisen when a specific complaint has been laid.

The addition of this clause would allow the Competition Bureau to investigate an entire industry sector. That would not happen out of the blue. The entire history of the Competition Bureau would suggest that any such investigation would only happen when there was sufficient information available, whether through the market or through other indications that such an investigation would in fact be warranted.

In that regard, I have considerable faith in the Competition Bureau as an entity and in the people involved not to be engaging in

witch hunts but, in fact, to take advantage the addition of a clause like this one to enhance their ability to balance the needs in the Canadian market of encouraging competition and competitive activity in this country in order to ensure the most prosperous domestic economy that we can achieve. We must also ensure the greatest level of global competitiveness that we can, all the while understanding the need to ensure that consumers in Canada are able to obtain the best products at the best prices without any undue influence in the market or any distortions in the market that may be seen in any particular industry.

I want to again thank my colleague for introducing this amendment to the Competition Act. I want to thank all of my colleagues who have participated in this debate. I have heard some of the arguments against it, but I would suggest that we should have a greater level of confidence in the Competition Bureau and the people who work in the Competition Bureau to use this to enhance their ability to encourage competition, and to ensure the best market and economic opportunities, and the protections that consumers need in Canada.

I look forward to hearing continued debate.

• (1110)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-452. I am happy the member introduced it as it is a long overdue measure in Canada. It would amend the Competition Act to authorize the Commissioner of Competition to inquire into an entire industry sector.

For the past 100 years, we have had a situation that is not necessarily peculiar to the gasoline industry but it is an industry that the average consumer can relate to. For many years consumers have been phoning their politicians and telling us that there is something wrong in the gasoline retailing industry. When one gas station raises the price, the one across the street raises it a couple of minutes later, and then when one lowers it, the other lowers it as well. They work in concert.

Over the last number of years numerous studies have been done on price-fixing in the gasoline retailing industry. After about 150 studies, many feet thick sitting on the desk of the minister, the conclusion is always the same. We know something is going on, we know someone is doing something but we do not know how they are doing it and we cannot prove that they are doing it. That is why we have not made progress.

From 1988 to 1999, I was the consumer critic in the opposition in Manitoba and among the many issues that I dealt with as the consumer critic, one of them was the area of prices increases. We looked at the regulation of gas prices in the Maritimes and concluded that was not the way to go because the regulations seemed to be always going up to the highest price. The minister of the day, Jim Ernst, had a very open mind on this issue. He was not taking the side of the industry but he was prepared to let things go as far as they could. He commissioned a study at the time and once again the same conclusion was that the law had to be changed, that we were not catching the industry because the law was not broad enough.

That is a federal responsibility. The member is a federal member and he is doing what has to be done in this situation.

*Private Members' Business*

The government said that it brought in new changes in its omnibus budget bill last year, and I applaud it for the changes, but the member who just spoke for the government said that we should stop there because we do not want to give the Competition Bureau unlimited powers. It could go on a wild goose chase and tie up the companies in red tape and cost the economy a tremendous amount of money on some sort of whim.

I do not know where the member got his notes on this subject but the fact is that having tough laws are what prevent businesses from doing exactly what we are trying to prevent, which is price fix and collude.

In terms of price-fixing, we always think of large industries. We think of the gasoline industry, the credit card industry and other major industries but price-fixing and collusion can happen with small entities as well.

• (1115)

Price-fixing can appear in very small businesses. In a small town, two real estate firms could get together and decide that commission rates will all be 5%, 6% or 7%. Travel agencies in a small market could get together and collude. Until the Competition Bureau laid down the law a number of years ago and sent out promotional videos that indicated to the industry that this would not be tolerated, many businesses were unaware that it was even against the law. In other words, there was a law but the businesses were not aware of it.

However, once the Competition Bureau became proactive and started to chase the travel industry and the real estate industry, little businesses became aware that it was against the law and if they were doing it, and some were, they stopped doing it. We need very stringent laws, strict fines and we need promotion so that businesses do not get involved in it.

A year or two ago, no lesser a company than Sotheby's, the big worldwide auction firm, we saw two major auction houses in England come together and set prices for auctioning off items at Sotheby's. This practice went on for two or three years until one of the customers who was auctioning his store of art decided to investigate and started to make complaints. Eventually, one of the employees of Sotheby's or the other firm went to the authorities and gave all the information. Can anyone guess what happened? As a result, one of the firm's owners went to jail for a few months and, if he did not go to jail, he certainly paid very big fines, but the company is back to competing again. There was an end to the price-fixing.

However, that only happened because a customer was motivated to investigate, make the complaints and the charges to get things done.

In this House, we had the Liberals in power for 13 years. I have read the speeches in *Hansard* on this bill and others, and the Liberals have absolutely no credibility on this issue. They were the government all those years and there is only one member of the entire Liberal caucus who has any credibility on this issue at all and that is the member for Pickering—Scarborough East because, while the Liberals were the government, he was the lone member who actually attacked his own government and said that it should take off the blinders, that price-fixing was going on in the retail gasoline

business and that something needed to be done about it. What did the Liberals do to him? They simply moved him back a couple of rows and ignored him.

The Conservative government has made some tentative steps, and I applaud it for that, but it is important for the member's bill go to committee where we can call in witnesses and discuss at length the matter of adding on extra powers for the Commissioner of Competition to inquire into the entire industry sector, which is what we want to do.

There is another reason we want to do this. In case there are some industries that want to continue to flaunt the laws because they do not think that even the new penalties and laws are strong enough, then we want to give the commissioner the power to initiate her own investigations and not have to take direction from the minister, which is what happened during those 13 years of inaction under the Liberals and the previous 100 years of inaction in this country.

Let us pass this bill on to committee, let us study it and let us give more power to the commissioner.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Shefford for introducing Bill C-452. The Competition Act is a very relevant topic, particularly with all of the news lately about oil. A huge quantity of oil is spilling into a natural environment and causing terrible pollution. I do not believe that such a major catastrophe has ever happened in our oceans. Those who authorize the construction of drilling platforms should make sure that they will be problem-free before construction begins.

The introduction of Bill C-452 virtually coincides with the study of Bill C-14. The Conservatives call this bill the Fairness at the Pumps Act, but that is just for show and yet another con on their part.

It is a little like the bill whose title referred to trafficking in children, but that contained nothing on the subject at all. That is how the Conservative Party operates. Calling it the Fairness at the Pumps Act is just a marketing strategy. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Electricity and Gas Inspection Act and the Weights and Measures Act cover all measuring instruments, from scales used at the grocery store to weigh fruits and vegetables to those that weigh gold extracted from a mine. The acts cover all weights and measures. The Conservatives are calling this bill the Fairness at the Pumps Act because they want to look good in the public eye by positioning this as an issue that has a financial impact on Canadian and Quebec families.

The summer will soon be here. Some companies will get together to fix prices, because they know that gas use goes up in the summer. So they make the price fluctuate. Obviously, when we point a finger at the oil companies and say that there must certainly be collusion, proponents of economic theory and of the oil sector say that it is a result of the law of the market and the price of crude oil on the stock exchange, and even the price of gas on the stock exchange. I think it is a combination of faulty basic economic principles and people who speculate on the important issue of gas.

*Private Members' Business*

There is no doubt that we missed our chance, and that we have a problem with our dependency on oil. We must not be afraid to admit that society has failed. It is too easy to extract oil, but it is becoming a little more difficult. People are starting to think of alternatives. In Quebec, the Bloc Québécois has been saying for a number of years that we need to reduce our dependency on oil.

Right now, on the island of Montreal, the Shell refinery will perhaps force us to reduce that dependency more quickly. However, we must not forget that, as I was saying earlier, there has been a failure in terms of alternative and renewable energy.

The Competition Bureau still does not have the ability to launch its own inquiries. There must be a complaint from the private sector. Then, the Bureau can launch inquiries regarding potential collusion among oil companies, and even gas stations themselves, as we saw in the Eastern Townships two years ago. Time certainly flies.

• (1125)

We really have to change our attitude toward the oil industry and competition.

We need to develop a comprehensive strategy for dealing with oil price hikes. For some time now, the Bloc Québécois has been pressuring the government to take action to address the rising cost of petroleum products. We recommend a three-pronged approach.

First, we must bring the industry into line. That is the goal of Bill C-452, which gives teeth to the Competition Act. We should also set up a true monitoring agency for the oil sector.

Second, the industry must make a contribution. With soaring energy prices and oil company profits, the economy as a whole is suffering while the oil companies are profiting. The least we can do to limit their negative impact is to ensure that they pay their fair share of taxes. The Bloc Québécois is therefore asking that the government put an end to the juicy tax breaks enjoyed by the oil companies.

Third, we must decrease our dependency on oil. Quebec does not produce oil, and every drop of this viscous liquid consumed by Quebecers impoverishes Quebec and also contributes to global warming.

Oil is making Quebec poorer, and we have to put an end to the bloodletting. All the oil Quebec consumes is imported. Every litre consumed means money leaving the province, thus making Quebec poorer and the oil industry richer.

In 2009, Quebec imported \$9 billion worth of oil, a reduction because of the recession. In 2008, oil imports totalled \$17 billion, an increase of \$11 billion in the five years between 2003 and 2008. At the same time, Quebec went from a trade surplus to a trade deficit of almost \$12 billion in 2009, not to mention that the increase in Alberta's oil exports made the dollar soar, which hit our manufacturing companies and aggravated our trade deficit. The increase in the price of oil alone plunged Quebec into a trade deficit.

Meanwhile, the oil companies are shamelessly taking advantage of this situation. They are posting record profits. In 1995, the entire Canadian oil and gas sector posted combined sales of \$25 billion. By 2004, this figure had climbed to \$84 billion.

Using and importing oil has a very significant impact on Quebec. Consequently, oil prices must be competitive and allow for alternative solutions to reduce our dependency on oil.

The best way to do that in the short term is to vote for Bill C-452, which would take fairness at the pumps beyond weights and measures and extend it to the oil industry as a whole.

• (1130)

[English]

**Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the second reading debate on Bill C-452, An Act to amend the Competition Act (inquiry into industry sector).

As I understand it, the underlying objective of this bill is to address potential problems associated with investigating the petroleum sector. We are all concerned with high gas prices and as many in the House are aware, gasoline prices have long been a focus of the Competition Bureau.

High prices in and of themselves are not illegal under the Competition Act as long as long as they result from free market forces and are not the result of anti-competitive behaviour. The bureau does not hesitate to take action to protect both competition and consumers when there is concrete evidence that the high prices are the result of anti-competitive conduct.

In this regard, since 1972 the bureau's investigations in the gasoline and heating oil markets have led to thirteen trials involving charges of local price maintenance, eight of which have resulted in convictions. The bureau has also conducted six major investigations into allegations of collusion and other anti-competitive behaviour in the petroleum sector since 1990.

Those investigations did not find any evidence to suggest that periodic price increases resulted from a national conspiracy to limit competition in the supply of gasoline or from abusive behaviour by firms holding a dominant position in the market. Instead, they found that market forces such as supply and demand and rising crude oil prices caused the price spikes.

That has not stopped the bureau from remaining vigilant regarding the activities of this industry. In 2008, the bureau's investigation into certain cartel activities led to criminal charges against 13 individuals and 11 companies accused of fixing gasoline prices at the pumps in Victoriaville, Thetford Mines, Magog and Sherbrooke, Quebec. As of December 2009, ten individuals and six companies have pleaded guilty in this case, with fines totalling over \$2.7 million. Of the ten individuals who pleaded guilty, six have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment totalling 54 months.

*Private Members' Business*

The same vigilance is evident in the bureau's work in reviewing mergers in the petroleum sector. In July 2009, the bureau announced that it had reached a consent agreement with Suncor Energy and Petro-Canada regarding their proposed merger. If this transaction had proceeded without the bureau's intervention, Suncor and Petro-Canada would have been in a position to restrict supply at the wholesale level, as well as to reduce competition in the retail sector in southern Ontario.

The consent agreement in this case required the merged company to sell terminal space and distribution capacity at its gasoline terminals in the GTA to an unrelated third party to ensure continued competition in the market for wholesale distribution of gasoline in southern Ontario and the GTA. This agreement also required the merged company to supply 98 million litres of gasoline to independent gasoline retailers each year during the 10-year period.

To address competition concerns in the retail sector, the consent agreement also required the merging parties to sell 104 corporate-owned gas stations in the GTA and southern Ontario.

Bill C-452 proposes a single amendment to the Competition Act. It would provide the Commissioner of Competition with the ability to launch formal inquiries under the Competition Act into entire sectors of the economy.

We need to be vigilant with respect to the duties that we impose on the bureau. Currently, the commissioner has the ability to conduct limited market studies as part of her role as an advocate for competitive markets. Studies into generic drug pricing and the practices of self-regulating professions are two recent examples where the commissioner examined the specific practices of various industry sectors and made recommendations to promote a more competitive marketplace.

There is evidence that these studies have been effective in improving competition in these sectors. The costs to business and the resource requirements within the bureau of such studies were minimal and did not interfere with the bureau's priority which is to enforce the act.

• (1135)

If a formal inquiry into an entire industry sector is required, the government may invoke its powers under the Inquiries Act. Such inquiries would include the authority to compel either oral or written evidence from witnesses and require witnesses to produce documents that are relevant to the matter that is under inquiry.

The government may also launch an inquiry under section 18 of the Canada International Trade Tribunal Act. This provision allows the tribunal to inquire into and report on matters of economic, trade or commercial interests to Canada. In the past, the tribunal has carried out studies on the competitiveness of the beef industry and the fresh and processed fruits and vegetables industries in Canada.

Given these existing avenues for inquiry and the range of issues that have been examined under the commission's current authority, I must say real doubt arises as to whether a new broader power is needed.

As we have seen, the Competition Bureau continues to aggressively enforce the Competition Act whenever violations occur

in the petroleum sector. In addition, provisions in the act exist to ensure that action can be taken against abusive behaviour by dominant firms in any market. As well, the bureau has used its existing limited market studies authority to proactively promote constructive measures to improve competition in markets where structural problems exist.

Should Bill C-452 be referred to committee, I hope that there will be a thorough and detailed analysis of this proposal to determine whether it would truly advance the protection and promotion of competition for Canadian consumers and businesses.

• (1140)

**Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to take part in the second reading debate regarding Bill C-452, An Act to amend the Competition Act (inquiry into industry sector).

I begin today by taking a moment to make a few remarks on Canada's competitive landscape and the government's plan for improving Canada's competitiveness.

A strong and competitive economy is central to the quality of life for Canadians. A strong and competitive economy means jobs, more opportunity, choices for consumers and enhanced prosperity for all. The government continues to take actions that will allow Canadians to thrive and capitalize on economic opportunities at home and abroad, while at the same time safeguarding Canada's interests.

Productivity and growth are at the heart of our standard of living as individuals, as firms and ultimately as a country. Responsibility for a better Canada rests with every individual, as well as with government, which is responsible for implementing appropriate public policies, ensuring effective management and providing strong leadership. Canada must step up its game to become more competitive both at home and abroad.

In the global economy, the pace of competition has accelerated and our competitors are becoming more successful. As a country, we must position ourselves for more wins in this new global marketplace. As a result, the government is focusing on policies that generate future growth and opportunities to boost our economic productivity. It starts with everyone adopting a more competitive mindset.

Competition in our economy is of enormous importance to consumers and their employers alike. The government has recognized that fact by taking significant steps over the past two years to modernize Canada's competition regime and align it more closely with the competition laws of our country's major trading partners. This allows for improved collaboration with other countries and facilitates more transparent and coordinated enforcement initiatives.

The Competition Policy Review Panel report entitled "Compete to Win", released in June 2008, and the government's actions to implement the panel's recommendations reflect this government's commitment to reach a better standard of living for all Canadians. To do so, we need greater competitive intensity, which in turn yields higher productivity and growth.

*Private Members' Business*

The panel spent a year reviewing Canada's competition and investment policies. In its report, the panel concluded that in order to prosper, Canada must adopt a more globally competitive mindset. It concluded that intensifying competition would build a stronger economy, better products at lower prices, more jobs and higher earnings, stronger firms and greater prosperity.

The panel called on the government to reduce or eliminate legal and regulatory barriers to vigorous competition within Canada, at the same encouraging more foreign investment, and to take a series of other measures, including a tax reform, attracting and developing talent and harmonizing our competition laws with those of the United States.

The panel recognized the importance of ensuring that consumers and legitimate businesses did not fall prey to illegal activity and, if they did, they had confidence that the law would be enforced effectively and that penalties would be tough enough to deter future illegal activity. That is why it recommended a number of important amendments to the Competition Act to ensure it promoted the most effective competitive landscape for Canada's consumers and businesses.

These reforms were implemented by the Budget Implementation Act, 2009. They are all about building a better foundation for Canadian businesses to succeed and fostering increased confidence in the marketplace among Canadians consumers and all those carrying on business or considering carrying on business in Canada.

We toughened our approach to clearly anti-competitive acts, made changes to ensure that the law would not chill legitimate business activity and simplified the law in many respects. The reforms introduced tougher penalties for price fixing and other hardcore conspiracies, while narrowing this provision to ensure it did not discourage potentially positive strategic alliances.

To summarize, the Competition Act now provides more certainty to businesses and supports the type of honest competition that benefits all Canadians. We now have robust laws that will protect and promote competitive markets in Canada so Canadian employers thrive and consumers can have confidence in the marketplace.

● (1145)

As we made clear in the Speech from the Throne, this government's goal, as we move forward in our recovery, is to ensure that all Canadians benefit from our agenda of providing more jobs and growth. Over the last year, our government has taken decisive steps to protect incomes, create jobs, ease credit markets and help workers and communities get back on their feet. Moving forward, our strategy for the economy is to create the conditions for continued success in the industries that are the foundation for Canada's prosperity.

Our government is committed to identifying and removing unnecessary job-killing regulation and barriers to growth. This government stands for free and open markets. Open and competitive markets are the best way to promote new, dynamic and innovative products and ideas. Businesses do not need unnecessary government oversight or new regulations to dictate how they should operate.

It is in this context that I wish to remind the hon. member of the significant new powers this government has provided the Commis-

sioner of Competition in order to investigate and deter the types of activities that lie at the heart of the bill. These tools will be far more effective than the measures provided and proposed in Bill C-452.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak during second reading to ask each member to recognize the importance of Bill C-452 for the voters in their ridings.

When this bill is studied in committee, we will need to find answers to the questions being asked. I will give a few examples of questions we have in mind. The committee will hear witnesses, and I hope that we will get some clarification. I also hope that this bill will be passed soon and that we will not be debating it again.

The Conservative members are talking about amending the Competition Act and about Bill C-10. These measures provide for new legal powers, but no real powers for the Competition Bureau.

Industries and the public need to be protected, but the real problem lies in identifying the guilty parties. If the bureau does not have the authority to make an inquiry, then it cannot apprehend them. Yet the government is refusing to give it that authority. If it cannot initiate an inquiry, it cannot issue fines. But that is not all. In 1869, just after Canada was founded, the Competition Bureau was given certain powers, which gradually increased.

Did members know that in 1976 the investigative powers that we are currently asking be granted to the Competition Bureau were already included in the legislation? This is not new. In 1976, under section 47, the director of the Competition Bureau could independently launch an inquiry into the existence and impact of conditions or practices related to the product being investigated. Who took this power away from him?

This bill aims to give the director of the Competition Bureau the power to investigate. Who was in power in 1986? Brian Mulroney's Conservative government. When the Competition Bureau was restructured, that government took away some of its investigative powers. We simply want to reinstate the investigative powers taken away by the Conservatives in 1986.

There were also claims that section 47 had been repealed, at least partially, as a result of objections expressed by the business community. In 1981, the oil sector was investigated to determine whether there was any collusion among the oil companies. The Competition Bureau's power to investigate was taken away because companies complained to the government that it was too expensive, that the government was spending far too much money to protect consumers. They wanted the Competition Bureau's power to investigate to be taken away, so that industries would no longer have to worry and could do whatever they want. That is what we hope to correct with this bill.



I have three, four or five more points to raise. For instance, the price of gas is higher in some regions than in others. Why does a litre of gas cost \$1.05 in Granby and only \$1.00 or \$1.01 just a few kilometres away? It is not complicated; the price varies depending on the population base. The more residents there are in a municipality, the higher the price of gas. The industry tries to tell us that the price is not the same everywhere and there is competition.

• (1150)

There is no competition. There are fewer people, so it is cheaper.

In conclusion, I hope my colleagues will vote to send this bill to committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Motion agreed to.

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

[English]

#### SUSPENSION OF SITTING

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The House is now suspended until 12 o'clock for government orders.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:53 a.m.)

#### SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12:00 p.m.)

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1200)

[English]

### CREATING CANADA'S NEW NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IMMIGRATION AT PIER 21 ACT

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC)** moved that Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Museums Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be here to begin the debate on Bill C-34, a bill that will amend the Museums Act to create a new national museum, the Canadian museum of immigration, at Pier 21 in Halifax.

Investing in Canada's national museum was a commitment our government made during the campaign. Creating a new national museum at Pier 21 in Halifax was a commitment we made in the throne speech adopted by this House. We are proud to bring this bill before the House. It will confirm Pier 21 as the second national

### Government Orders

museum created in 40 years, and the second national museum outside of the national capital.

No country in the world has benefited more than Canada has from our immigration regime. As the Prime Minister said in Halifax at Pier 21 last June:

In every region...new Canadians make major contributions to our culture, economy and way of life....Anybody who makes the decision to live, work and build a life in our country represents the very best of what it means to be Canadian.

[Translation]

Our government believes in our national museums and recognizes their tremendous value to Canadians. We want Canadians and visitors to Canada to have access to our rich heritage. The Canadian museum of immigration at Pier 21 will help recognize and celebrate the experience of immigrants arriving in Canada, the fundamental role immigrants have played in building Canada and their contributions to Canada's identity and all aspects of Canadian society. The museum will be a significant symbol of Canada's contributions and commitment to pluralism and the role of immigration in shaping Canadian identity.

[English]

This new museum will be located at the historic Pier 21 site in the Halifax seaport. That site holds very special memories for the one in five Canadians who can trace their lineage back to Pier 21. It is the port through which, between 1928 and 1971, their families immigrated to Canada. It is the port that saw more than 500,000 members of Canada's armed forces embark to defend Canada's values in the second world war.

I would like to congratulate the leaders of the Pier 21 museum, who deserve recognition for their enthusiasm for and contributions to this project and its remarkable achievement. They include Ruth Goldbloom, chair of the Pier 21 Foundation and one of the original driving forces behind the creation of the Pier 21 museum; John Oliver and Wadih Fares, the current and past chairs of the Pier 21 Society; and of course, Bob Moody, the current CEO of Pier 21.

• (1205)

[Translation]

The Canadian museum of immigration at Pier 21 will pay tribute to a mission that affects all of Canada. It will tell the story of Canadians who entered the country through the Vancouver gateway at the end of the 19th century. It will tell the story of the first nations whose ancestral knowledge of the land helped newcomers to survive. It will speak to the new Canadians who have arrived recently at the Montreal, Toronto or Calgary airports.

[English]

It speaks to Canadians whose ancestors took the dangerous journey, represented by the Underground Railroad. It is a mission that speaks to all Canadians and to our values.

Until 2008, all national museums were located in the national capital region, despite the fact that the Museums Act clearly states that the head office for a national museum can be anywhere in Canada.

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

This government recognizes that our national museums belong to all Canadians. Under this government, funding for our national museums has never been higher. In every one of our government's budgets, we have increased funding for the national museums. Not only is funding at its highest level under the leadership of the Prime Minister, but our government has also created two new national museums; one in Winnipeg and one in Halifax.

[English]

The executive director of the Canadian Museums Association, John McAvity, said recently about our support for museums at Canadian Heritage that the Prime Minister “deserves credit for delivering new funds—indeed, the largest new investment in culture in recent memory”.

Pier 21 will draw on the model that has been well tested for our long-serving national museums. This legislation will establish the museum as a federal crown corporation with the same status as other national museums. It will be accountable to Parliament, and its board of trustees will be appointed by the government in accordance with the Museums Act.

Just like other national museums, it will offer its services in both of Canada's official languages, and it will have an obligation to enhance the vitality of official language minority communities.

The bill will ensure that the museum will begin, as soon as it is created, to develop the public programming that reflects its mandate.

Our museum of immigration at Pier 21 is only the sixth national museum to be created in 143 years since Confederation. This museum is about the people of Canada, and it is for the people of Canada. It will belong to all Canadians, and I am proud to present this enabling legislation on behalf of the government.

Finally, I would like to add that I am very proud to work with all the opposition parties on this legislation to ensure that it passes in a non-partisan and effective way. Of course, partisanship is what gets highlighted in the daily news, but the reality is that when members of Parliament see a common goal and something that is clearly in the best interest of all Canadians, we can rally around certain key projects. I think all parties did that with regard to the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and I think we have done so again here with regard to Pier 21, Canada's national museum for immigration.

This is a good project. It comes from the greatest sentiments that are at the root of Canada's history. We want to cherish the fact that Canada is, always has been, and will continue to be a country of immigrants. We are very proud to sponsor this legislation and to have the full support of the members of the opposition parties.

[Translation]

**Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support Bill C-34, an act to create a national museum at Pier 21 in Halifax-Dartmouth. I am very pleased to give my personal support to this bill.

[English]

Before I continue, Madam Speaker, I would like to ask for consent to split my time with the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Does the hon. Leader of the Opposition have the unanimous consent of the House to split his time?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Michael Ignatieff:** Madam Speaker, I am rising today to speak on behalf of this project.

I spent a very happy Friday morning at Pier 21, as it happens, with that force of nature, Ruth Goldbloom, and Wadih Fares and all the incredible civic leaders of Halifax who have made this dream a reality.

I want to announce the support of my party for this wonderful project, but I also stand for a very personal reason. One of the greatest things about Pier 21 as a project is that it contains all the records of Canada's immigration service in the 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, and 60s, not just for the port of entry at Halifax but for the ports of entry at Quebec City and Montreal and other ports of entry. Therefore, all Canadians will be able to go to Pier 21 and find the place where their part in the national story begins.

That is what happened to me on Friday. I asked Pier 21 whether they could locate a certain George Ignatieff, age 15, who came ashore in Canada in Quebec City in September 1928. I wanted to find the moment at which my family's story began in Canada. Thanks to the wonderful researchers at Pier 2, they went down the long columns of those admission registers, and they found that young 15-year-old, my father.

It is meaningful to me to stand in this great Parliament and acknowledge with gratitude what Canada has done for my family. I think that everyone who goes to this great national museum, everyone whose life started as an immigrant, who started the new adventure in Canada, will find this museum especially moving, especially emotional, because it is the place where when we study all those records, Canadians can find the moment when their dream began.

For that reason, I feel especially proud to stand as the leader of this party and urge the House to give rapid assent to this marvellous bill so that we can create a museum that will allow all Canadians the joy and pleasure that I enjoyed on Friday. Thanks to the work of Ruth Goldbloom and Wadih Fares and that wonderful team, all Canadian families will enjoy that moment of thrill, discovery, and emotion I experienced on Friday.

● (1210)

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it has always been my view that every Canadian should, at least once in their lifetime, attend a citizenship ceremony, to see the pride of new Canadians, to hear them take the citizenship oath and to stand ramrod straight and sing O Canada. Whether born in Canada or, like myself, come to Canada at a young age, one cannot help but be absolutely touched and amazed by the pride and the passion of those who have chosen Canada.

Every Canada Day, a citizenship ceremony is held at Pier 21, and a more perfect union could never be made. New Canadians from all over the world become citizens on the very ground that started the Canadian journey for so many others.

As the first nation to embrace multiculturalism as a national policy, it seems natural that we would have the National Museum of Immigration, but it has only come about through vision, dedication and unrelenting hard work.

Many people played a big role in the evolution of Pier 21. It is not possible to pay tribute to all of the volunteers, donors, partners and staff, but if there is one thing that ever person who ever worked for Pier 21 could agree on, it is that Ruth Goldbloom is the driving force, the heart and soul, the energy that made Pier 21 come back to life.

In 1989 Mr. Leblanc asked her to join the Pier 21 Society and in 1993 she became its president. At the time, Pier 21 was a dusty, empty old shed on the waterfront that reeked of history, and likely reeked of much else, but seemed an unlikely candidate to be chosen as one of the Seven Wonders of Canada. However, Ruth could see something and, more important, she could translate that vision to others. She not only encouraged people to get involved, she appreciated everybody who ever helped with Pier 21, whether they worked in the gift shop or whether they gave \$1 million.

The most remarkable thing, in fact, about Ruth Goldbloom's leadership is her sincere belief that she is genuinely privileged to have been able to serve. When she speaks of people like Bill Snooey of the Dutch Reformed Church, who visited Pier 21 when it was an old shed on the harbour and how she connected with him and his ancestors, we get a sense of her humility and her connection to those who loved Pier 21.

Pier 21 is more than just a special place or an historic place. To many, it is an honoured place and to some it a sacred place. Thousands of Canadians, such as my leader, connect to ancestors at Pier 21. It helps to make them whole. Indeed, Pier 21 helps to make Canada whole.

Today is a special day. I would not be surprised if Ruth Goldbloom, who once was known as Nova Scotia's Shirley Temple, does not have a little celebratory dance tonight, with John Oliver, Wadih Fares, Bob Moody and the many others who are celebrating. This is a special day. Parliament has come together to honour our past, to celebrate our great country today and to prepare for a bright future and let Pier 21 take its rightful place as Canada's National Museum of Immigration.

Congratulations to everybody.

• (1215)

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-34, establishing the national museum of immigration in Halifax. The Bloc Québécois is dedicated to the interests and the defence of Quebec, a role that we have fulfilled effectively for 20 years. Any attempt by the federal government—indeed, any temptation it may have—to weaken Quebec's powers, meddle in its jurisdictions or go against its

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interests will be opposed by the Bloc Québécois. Let there be no mistake about that.

Having said that, the Bloc Québécois's role in Ottawa is not and never has been to hinder the development of Canada's provinces. As the Bloc Québécois official languages critic, I have always worked very hard for the francophone and Acadian communities of Canada and listened carefully to Quebec anglophones. Once again this year, it was this openness to the rest of Canada that led the Bloc Québécois leader to tour English Canada to increase awareness about our ideas.

My point is that the Bloc Québécois supports the creation of an immigration museum in Halifax. Moreover, it agrees that this matter should be handled swiftly in order for Nova Scotians and tourists alike to benefit from it as quickly as possible.

I will come back to the museum in a moment, because I must point out that it is very unfortunate that the government has not acted as swiftly with the Science and Technology Museum.

Twenty-eight years ago, the federal government made a promise to the people of the Outaouais that it would move the Science and Technology Museum to Gatineau. The unfortunate closure in 2007 of the Domtar mill, the oldest pulp and paper mill in Canada and Quebec, housed in the old E.B. Eddy plant in the Hull sector, was a tragedy for many forestry workers in Gatineau. The government could turn this tragedy into something more positive by relocating the Science and Technology Museum to this heritage building. The old match factory could be revived, in a way.

Michelle Guitard, a historian and specialist in industrial heritage, agreed in an article that appeared on the website [ruefrontenac.com](http://ruefrontenac.com) on January 24, 2010, and I quote:

The federal government must acquire this site...It cannot let this go. [If it were to do so,] it would show that the government has absolutely no sense of what made Canada what it is today, the importance of the first nations and of the pulp and paper industry.

On February 16, Michel Prévost, the chair of the Outaouais historical society, spoke to Radio-Canada about developing the Chaudière Falls sector and transferring the Science and Technology Museum to Gatineau. He said, "Let us hope that this dream will become a reality sooner rather than later".

Just this morning, the following article appeared on page 8 of *Le Droit*:

Officials responsible for the [Gatineau science and technology museum] project must now consider wedging the museum inside an abandoned paper factory dating from the mid-1800s. Documents obtained under the Access to Information Act show officials have already begun surveying the old E.B. Eddy Co. factory in Gatineau as a possible location for the museum.

The documents suggest that the location meets the needs of the new museum because it includes elements of past, present and future and it is close to downtown.

The collections are currently located in an industrial park far from the downtown core, inside a bakery warehouse the federal government bought in 1967. The location was intended to be temporary, but 43 years later the Canada Science and Technology Museum remains a national orphan.

*Government Orders*

●(1220)

This contrasts with statements from the Conservative minister responsible for the Outaouais, the member for Pontiac, who is being a real killjoy on this issue.

People in Saint-Constant have been waiting for Exporail to be recognized as the national railway museum since 2007. A report about that from the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage was adopted in the House on March 1, 2007, but since then, for some unknown reason, the federal government has done nothing.

My colleague from Châteauguay—Saint-Constant pushed hard for that recognition. She is still pushing for it. But unfortunately, recognition does not seem to mean much to this government. Maybe the Conservatives think that they have more to gain from the immigration museum in Halifax than from Exporail in Saint-Constant or from transferring the Science and Technology Museum to Gatineau.

The point is that this government has done nothing to develop federal museums in Quebec.

That being said, an immigration museum is a good idea. In order to know where we are going, we should know where we come from.

Because of Quebec's minority situation, immigration has always had a special status and a special role to play. As Louis Balthazar told the Bouchard-Taylor commission:

Quebeckers have experienced ethnic pluralism for a long time: aboriginals, Scottish and Irish anglophones, Jews, Italians, etc.

But, because of the Durham report, immigration was perceived as necessarily favouring the anglophone minority. Consequently, beginning in 1840, French Canadians turned inward while still living under British rule and being influenced by both the British model and American ideas. Most immigrants were English-speaking.

As a result, it was alarming to realize that the birth rate was dropping, especially at a time when francophone Quebeckers wanted to establish themselves as the majority in Quebec.

Something new has been happening since the end of the 1960s. An immigration department was established. Federal-provincial agreements were signed outlining the Quebec government's role in immigration: in 1971, a presence in federal offices; 1975, Quebec offices overseas; 1978, selection; 1990, welcome and integration. Quebec's 1975.

Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and 1977 Charter of the French Language are the two pillars of modern Quebec society and lay the foundations for the harmonious integration of immigrants.

Will this particular dimension of immigrant integration and the fear that it created in under-educated Quebec, notably due to the mass arrival of anglophones, be reflected in this new museum in Halifax?

Will the bitter negotiations between Quebec and Ottawa to allow Quebec to control immigration based on its own interest and the integration of immigrants into a French society within North America be presented in this new museum in Halifax?

We cannot forget that, for close to 20 years, Quebec negotiated with the federal government in order to acquire more power over the selection and integration of its immigrants. Four administrative agreements were signed by the Quebec government and Ottawa to this effect.

●(1225)

[English]

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am proud to speak today in support of Bill C-34. This bill would create Canada's new national museum of immigration at Pier 21 in Halifax.

Pier 21 is many things to many people. It is a place of historical value, a literal gateway to Canada for many Canadian families. It is also a wonderful museum that has captured the story of immigration for all of us to share. As someone who lives in Halifax, it is also a living, breathing community space in Halifax, hosting celebratory dinners, inspiring lectures, and coming full circle to host quite a few citizenship ceremonies for new Canadians.

Today we have the opportunity to bring Pier 21 and all that it represents into the family of national museums. Naming Pier 21 as a national museum is a testament to Canada's history as a place of refuge, a place of new beginnings and a place of hope. Canada has been and will continue to be defined by how we treat those who come to our country seeking asylum, a safe haven or a better life. This museum will be a breathing interactive symbol of human rights, and economic and social justice.

The history of Pier 21 is remarkable and has touched virtually every family in every region in Canada. We can learn so much from the different stories that are told through the history of Pier 21. Each story tells about a different era of Canadian immigration, a different school of thought, and illustrates changes to the role that Canada played in the international community.

One thing is clear from any visit to Pier 21: the history of immigration in Canada is two-sided. It is both a history to be proud of but at times a history where pride is overshadowed by racist or classist policies. But it is a history that we can be honest about and a history that we can learn from.

During the potato famine of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the city of York, now Toronto, accepted 50,000 Irish refugees, a total greater than the city's population. The city could have rejected these refugees because many of them were seriously ill and public health issues were not very well understood or well managed in Canada. The city of York welcomed these refugees and provided them with treatment and a place to call home.

Only a few decades later in the 1930s many Jewish refugees were sent away. They were refused entry for pretty dubious reasons, reasons that were rooted in discrimination, bigotry and apathy. Only 5,000 Jewish refugees were accepted. I would like members to think of the thousands of lives that could have been saved if we had opened our doors to more than that. To say this is a black mark on Canadian history is an understatement. The realities of the government decision were difficult to rationalize after the extent of the Holocaust was fully understood by the end of World War II.

Yet, history repeated itself again in 1914 when the *Komagata Maru* was turned around, sending some of its Indian passengers to their deaths, and denying all of them the freedoms that those decision-makers clearly took for granted themselves.

These are difficult stories, but they are a part of our history. We can learn from these stories which are well displayed and explained at Pier 21.

I have seen firsthand how the stories told at Pier 21 have touched people. A friend of mine who was visiting Halifax thought he would stop by Pier 21 on the morning he was flying out because he had heard so much about it. He did not have a personal connection to Pier 21. Neither his parents nor his grandparents had arrived at this port, but he thought he would spend a bit of time there before his flight. He became so wrapped up in the museum that he actually ended up missing his flight later that day. That is the kind of effect this museum can have on people.

A couple of summers ago my father and stepmother came out to Halifax for a visit and we went to the museum. We had a nice time exploring. On the way out we thought we would stop by the research centre and see what it was all about. Before long, with an approximation of the spelling of my stepmother's grandfather's last name, we found her family records. Her grandfather had travelled alone on a steamship with \$10 in his pocket. Her grandmother arrived later with the children, including her father. It was such a surprise. We had no intention of doing a family search when we went in. The research centre staff were helpful and welcoming, and the information was easy to access. It is an incredible centre. What was intended to be a half hour stop at a museum turned in to several very emotional hours unravelling a family history. This is what Pier 21 does for people.

● (1230)

My own family shares a history of immigration to Canada as well, like many people here in the House. My grandfather, Tauno Paavola, came to Canada, also alone, on a ship that arrived in Montreal. In Montreal, without knowing a word of English, he was loaded on to a train with a placard put around his neck that had a strange English word on it. The same thing happened to a friend from the same village back in Finland, but he had a different word. They soon realized that this word represented the name of a town where they were to be settled: Winnipeg and Edmonton. My grandfather knew that there were Finlanders in Toronto, so as the train approached Toronto, he actually jumped the train and set off on foot to find other Finns.

Eventually, my grandfather made enough money to send for my grandmother, my mother and my uncles. He worked hard as a carpenter and an underground miner, and in one generation, he was able to send his kids to college and university, and the second generation saw me become the second Finnish Canadian member of Parliament in Canada's history. I am sure it was well beyond my grandfather's imagination when he was on that ship, taking the overseas journey from Finland to Canada.

Pier 21 tells us stories like this, the stories of migration to Canada, and it does it in a thoughtful, truthful and inspiring way. It is only right that it become our national museum of immigration.

I would like to take a moment to recognize and celebrate the contributions of the hundreds of people who have worked to create this special place, dedicating their time, their money and their passion. That effort, like that of Canada's immigrants, was made for us all. Collecting, preserving and sharing the stories of those who

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arrived in Canada, in Halifax, has always been the goal of the Pier 21 Society, and I think it should be a goal of ours. This simple immigration shed on the Halifax waterfront is a place people do not just visit, but to which they make a pilgrimage. As a national museum, it will reach many more people and tell stories. It will honour all Canadians.

Like my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, I would like to recognize the tireless efforts of Ruth Goldbloom, a woman who made Pier 21 the incredible museum that we love.

It is important to note that the historical collection at Pier 21 already contains stories and memories from all ports of entry in Canada from families across the country. It is well suited to be a museum of national focus, but with very special regional significance.

At Pier 21, programs like “Community Presents” and “Diversity Spotlight” ensure that the programming is tied to all aspects of the Halifax community, and the local and regional multicultural communities. The Pier 21 programming slate includes educational tools for teachers and parents, multicultural fairs, summer camps, and public lectures. It is truly a place of learning and sharing, and as a national museum it will bring this element of community development to a broader level. These are not just words on paper. This is something that people in Halifax get to experience and see every day.

I am very proud that parties were able to work together to expedite the passage of the bill. Through its passage, we will send a message to everyone who chose and everyone who will choose to make Canada their home and that Canada is a better place with them in it.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 10, 2010, Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Museums Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts is deemed read a second time, deemed referred to a committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time, considered in committee of the whole, reported without amendment, concurred in at report stage, and read the third time and passed)

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### **ELIMINATING PARDONS FOR SERIOUS CRIMES ACT**

The House resumed from June 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Criminal Records Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and sent to a committee.

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise on this very important Bill C-23. In the few minutes that are mine, I will try to describe the Criminal Records Act and what they are trying to do with Bill C-23.

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I want to start by saying that the Bloc Québécois and I feel that this bill is probably not necessary to protect victims, because they are already adequately protected by the Criminal Records Act.

There was an incident, and we all know how today's fine government reacts. A hockey coach, Graham James, committed some really terrible acts, for which he was sentenced. He served a prison term for sexual assault on two well-known hockey players, Sheldon Kennedy and Theoren Fleury. He served his time, was released, and now lives in Mexico. He got a pardon and the government blew a fuse because it thinks he should never have been able to do this.

I will define what a criminal record is for the benefit of the people listening to us. It is created after someone commits a crime. I should say right away that someone who commits a traffic offence or a hunting or fishing offence does not get a criminal record. Those are offences against provincial laws, or even some federal laws, such as the Migratory Birds Convention Act. There is no criminal record in those cases. A record is created when someone commits a criminal offence and pleads guilty after having seen the evidence or is found guilty after a trial. I will give an example to explain.

Someone is sentenced to five years in prison and three years of probation for armed robbery of a bank. As soon as the sentence is spoken, he automatically gets a criminal record for the rest of his days. Theoretically, he will be stained for life, but the stain can be removed. I will get back to that in a moment. What is important to emphasize is that a person who has been sentenced will have a criminal record that will follow him for the rest of his days, unless he gets a pardon.

It is called a pardon, but actually it is more like a suspended criminal record. A person who was pardoned, in everyday legal jargon, if asked about any prior convictions, does not have to say he has a record. The government wants to change this system by introducing a bill to suspend criminal records. Why? A person who is sentenced to five years in prison plus three years of probation has a criminal record. The government says not enough concern is shown for the victims, but that is not true. The Criminal Records Act gives the National Parole Board all the power it needs to ensure that people who get pardons are entitled to them and have earned them.

In the case we are concerned with, it is not true that anyone can get a pardon quickly and automatically. That is not how things work in real life.

• (1235)

An individual is sentenced to imprisonment for five years with three years' probation, which makes a total of eight years. That is easy to count. The individual has to wait five more years before being able to make an application for a pardon, or, as we are calling it here, an application for a record suspension.

How does it work in real life? The individual serves their sentence, and then they are paroled, subject to conditions, and are still supervised until the end of the five-year sentence. The three years' probation that the judge ordered when they were sentenced is added. So after serving the five-year sentence, three years are added, during which the individual must keep the peace, be of good

behaviour and report to an officer, as the law provides and as the court may direct. The conditions of probation are set by the court.

Let us assume that all goes well, the individual serves his sentence, is released, is a good person, is reintegrated into society, and after three years' probation has committed no offences and has not breached parole in any way. The individual will then have to wait five years, because that is what the law provides.

For a crime committed by an individual at the age of 18 or 19 or 20, which unfortunately happens all too often, that individual will be under judicial oversight for the next 13 years, at least: a five-year sentence and three years' probation, plus five more years, because he has to wait five years before applying for a pardon.

All of that absolutely does not happen automatically. The opposite is true. In my former life, when I practised criminal law, I represented people like that, and we filled out the forms. An individual can apply for a pardon on his own, but he can also have a lawyer to help. Generally, the individual gets assistance because the procedure is very lengthy. When I say very lengthy, that is a minimum, and it varies considerably based on the crime committed.

I will come back to the example of armed robbery that I gave at the beginning of my speech, for which the offender was sentenced to five years with three years' probation. Generally, the National Parole Board will examine the individual's case very carefully before granting a record suspension, to use the term in the bill. Even in sexual assault cases, the board that grants the suspension does a lot of checking.

The individual must first apply, fill out a form and send his criminal record, fingerprints and recent photos to the nearest RCMP office, which forwards it to the board. At that time, an investigation is carried out. This investigation is not necessarily public because it is the individual who has applied. All police forces in Canada, Quebec and all other provinces are contacted to verify whether this individual may, by chance, be hiding offences to which he has pleaded guilty or has been found guilty of. Naturally, if this is the case, this individual's application for pardon or record suspension will be rejected. He will then have to wait a long time to be pardoned.

Thus, the individual files an application, which is forwarded and then studied. All police forces are contacted to determine whether or not the individual has other offences that he has not disclosed. If there are none, it can take between six and eighteen months. In my experience, it takes a minimum of one year before the individual is notified that his pardon, or record suspension, has been granted.

*Government Orders*

●(1240)

Thus, this is a very long process. The Bloc Québécois will agree to study Bill C-23 in committee because we must carefully examine how to proceed. I have to say one thing. Unfortunately, someone with a criminal record is marked. This is what generally, and unfortunately quite often, happens. Take the example of an individual who, at the age of 18, commits a break and enter and is sentenced to a few weeks or months in jail, plus one year of probation. Everyone in this House knows that we have a propensity to forget. The individual is sentenced and then later forgets about it. A few years later, he applies for a job. Therein lies the problem with not obtaining a record suspension or pardon. Some jobs are not open to those with a criminal record. They cannot be a member of the bar, and therefore a lawyer or notary, nor can they be a doctor or surgeon. Some universities ask if applicants have a criminal record. Those who have forgotten to declare it will be automatically rejected.

This is something we want to check when this bill goes to committee. We should not do anything to hurt someone who is rehabilitated. We are going to agree on that. I just said that big, important word, “rehabilitated”. The Conservatives always say we are more concerned about offenders than victims. Individuals who are entitled to a record suspension are those who have truly been rehabilitated. They have recognized their problems, dealt with them, served their sentence and been pardoned; they have paid their debt to society. We need to stop getting carried away. Obviously, someone who has been charged with and convicted of murder may have a great deal of difficulty getting a record suspension. The offender is convicted and serves a 25-year sentence. This bill does not target these people. It is aimed much more at petty criminals. I am in no way suggesting we should pardon every crime without checking.

With respect, I believe a person can be rehabilitated. We all know people who have made foolish mistakes in their youth, and I can give some examples. In my former life as a criminal lawyer, I had clients who had driven while impaired and unfortunately had been in an accident. I can tell you that this is traumatic, but on top of the crime he has committed and the wrong he has done to a victim, the offender receives a sentence. However, he will likely be able to obtain a pardon for this sentence once he is completely rehabilitated.

We need to be careful not to deprive individuals of the right to a record suspension if they have made every effort to rehabilitate themselves. This is what worries me about this bill, and we will have to look at it very carefully in committee.

●(1245)

I agree that we need to be tough on criminals, but do we need to be as tough on someone who is completely rehabilitated? I have an example. I represented someone who was sentenced to 36 months in prison for eight break and enters. This person has been completely rehabilitated since then and today works as an expert mechanic. If he had not been pardoned, he never would have been able to get this job.

That is the problem with this bill. We must not deny a rehabilitated individual a decent job if he has served his prison term and successfully completed his probation under supervision. Such a person is completely rehabilitated and after spending some time in society, is entitled to have his youthful mistakes erased.

Some people will point out that there are mature individuals, 40 or 50 years old, who commit sexual assault. With all due respect to my opponents, this bill is not intended for those individuals. A criminal who commits offence after offence is not the focus of this bill. I have some examples. A repeat offender will never receive a pardon. His criminal record will never be suspended. This bill is for individuals who have made a mistake or two over an extended period.

Unfortunately in our society, many people make mistakes and keep making mistakes. Many university applications and job applications ask the applicant if they have ever been convicted of a criminal offence. Having successfully applied for a pardon—or a record suspension—the individual is not required to answer that question. He can say he has never been convicted. By virtue of serving his sentence, resolving his problems with society and receiving a pardon from the governor in council, the individual's record is suspended. That is what we will be looking at in this bill in the coming weeks and months, if we are given the opportunity to do so.

Another aspect of this bill causes me great concern. Someone who is pulled over and suspected of driving while impaired would be taken to the station and asked to do a breathalyzer test. He gets a result of 0.7, which is not so bad, but he would be charged with impaired driving. His fingerprints would be taken and so would his photo. That is what could happen under this bill.

This is completely unacceptable and goes against the charter, under which a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty. This aspect of the bill should be withdrawn. A person's fingerprints and photo cannot be taken if they have not been found guilty or if they have not pleaded guilty. This bill would change that process and that is unacceptable. We think this is very dangerous. This aspect will have to be explored further.

For now, we are voting in favour of this bill so that it can be studied in committee.

●(1250)

[English]

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate that my colleague was very illustrative in what he was doing. With his years of experience in criminal law practice, I would like to ask him a few questions about this.

*Government Orders*

He mentioned that his party would vote to put this into committee. I get the feeling that the major opposition they would have to this bill pertains to the idea of the rehabilitation of younger offenders, those around the age of 18 or 19, despite the crime. However, he does go on to say that he is not particularly concerned with the people who are serving 25 year sentences for things like murder, but that his focus lies more or less on 5 year sentences. Once they pass this bill to get it to committee, is it their intention to focus on those younger offenders who may stand a greater chance of being rehabilitated several years down the road?

He mentioned that certain aspects in the bill were against the charter, but if we accept this bill in principle, beyond that, maybe the scope of the changes that he wants will not be possible. Is that a fear of his as well?

• (1255)

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Madam Speaker, answering all those questions will be a little complicated. I would like to correct one thing right away: I have extensive experience as a criminal lawyer, not as a criminal. We have to be clear. Otherwise, I would not be here. In order to be a member of Parliament, one cannot have a criminal record. This is the perfect example. I know members who were elected who had obtained a pardon and were therefore able to sit. I cannot say where, nor can I name those individuals.

I agree with my colleague. There are two important points. I know people who served 10 years in prison before obtaining a pardon. The harsher the sentence—which is very important for my Conservative colleagues—the more monitoring there will be before that individual's criminal record can be suspended. If someone is serving a 10-year sentence, that means the crime was serious. So of course there will be more monitoring. That is the first point.

The second point is this. Unfortunately, 90% of people who apply for pardons are young people. They are young offenders. They committed offences, the foolish offences that young people commit. For instance, maybe they stole a car to go for a joyride; maybe they were charged with impaired driving causing bodily harm, which unfortunately happens to many young people. Yes, crimes were committed, but in my opinion, these young people are entitled to a pardon.

The last point I want to come back to has to do with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If people are not satisfied with this charter, it must be amended or abolished. For now, we must deal with it. According to that charter, defendants are innocent until proven guilty. When someone's fingerprints and photos are taken, he or she is not necessarily charged. Just because someone is arrested by police does not mean he or she will be charged. There is a big difference. It is up to the Crown prosecutor to decide. This is what we will consider when we study this bill.

[English]

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the thoughtful comments by my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue. He began his comments by talking about Graham James, saying that he was very much the exception, not the rule, to the intent of the bill we are debating today.

I am from Hamilton and I would suggest that for the people in my community, for those right across the Niagara peninsula and even for those nationwide, a better example would perhaps be Karla Homolka. I do not believe anybody in my community would think it reasonable that a pardon be given to her.

I appreciate and share the member's concerns about the very real distinction we need to make between the extreme cases and the vast majority of other incidents that are being covered in the same legislation. I would suggest that the Conservatives have thrown the baby out with the bathwater.

That is one of the reasons we in the NDP tabled a motion in the House last week suggesting that parts of this bill be severed, in particular the kinds of crimes that would shock the conscience of Canadians or bring the administration of justice into disrepute. However, those are quite different from a whole host of other instances where, for example, somebody made a youthful error.

I know for a fact that none of us in the House would condone drinking and driving. Nonetheless, if someone were convicted at the age of 18 or 19, should the criminal record stay with the individual and make it impossible for him or her to pursue a career, such as a teaching or one of the many other careers that require criminal record checks by the time the person graduates from university? I am not sure that would pass the nod test for very many members in the House, nor, frankly, for constituents in my home town of Hamilton.

Would the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue comment on whether he would support severing the crimes that I mentioned that would shock the conscience of Canadians or bring the administration of justice into disrepute, and if we would then be able to deal with some of the other issues, in the way he suggested in his speech, through a thorough examination in committee and perhaps a complete rewriting of the bill?

• (1300)

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Madam Speaker, I respect my colleague very much, but I am not too sure about an answer to her question. I will explain. I have always believed that justice should be individualized, that the sentence should be individualized, and that when judges address the accused and find them guilty, convict them or impose a sentence, that that sentence should be individualized.

It is clear that every single thing cannot be included in a bill, and we cannot turn it into an omnibus bill that solves every problem. I say with all due respect that the more serious a crime is, the more we should extend the amount of time it takes to obtain a pardon or record suspension. In the case of conspiracy to commit murder, the individual has obviously not killed anyone, but they helped someone else commit the crime. We must be careful. With all due respect, we must at least be careful before granting a pardon.

Should we split this bill? I cannot say. However, I firmly believe it must be examined in committee. I also think that pardons or record suspensions must be individualized. That seems obvious. It will have to be examined in committee. It is not easy to answer my colleague's question.



*Government Orders*

[*English*]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member may remember that recently in committee an Inuit witness suggested that Inuit youth have a hard enough time getting a job and that making pardons more difficult would exacerbate that situation. I wonder if the member would like to comment on that.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Madam Speaker, my colleague is quite right. I have worked with Inuit and Algonquin people in my career, and they do not understand what a criminal record is. In their mind, once they have served their sentence after committing a crime, there is no longer a problem; it is resolved.

My colleague is quite right. Everything concerning the parole service and criminal record suspensions will be very difficult to explain. It is already difficult to explain. Heaven knows there will be a lot of work to do in the north, a lot of development work. I do not know how this will all be done in the next few years, but clearly some work will be needed when it comes to criminal record suspensions, especially with first nations and Inuit communities. It is already extremely complicated for white people, white Canadians, that is, francophone and anglophone non-natives. Indeed, most people will remember events that happen today or tomorrow, but in a year and a half or two years, they will have forgotten everything. Someone who serves a sentence will forget it completely six years later. This is what they need to remember. The law must be open enough in that regard.

● (1305)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-23.

First, I thank our party's critic, the member for Vancouver Kingsway, who has done a very good job in the research on the bill. As he has indicated, we will be supporting this bill at second reading, getting it to committee so we can initiate the process of having witnesses appear and proper professional opinions given on this whole area. We certainly support a thorough study of the pardon system by the committee. In the next few minutes I will outline the history of what the government has done in this area.

We also want to look at extending the ineligibility periods for certain kinds of offences.

We also support giving the Parole Board more discretion to deny pardons, particularly in cases that would shock the conscience of Canadians.

We also want to hear from correctional experts, from victims, from police and from other groups to ensure our pardon system is strengthened and fair.

The government has held itself out as being very sympathetic and on the side of victims. Yet three years ago, when it appointed Mr. Sullivan as the victims rights' advocate, it proceeded to ignore his advice, to the point where in the last several months, it refused to renew his contract because he criticized it for not being supportive of victims' rights and being more concerned about the punishment side of the equation. I think that speaks volumes of where the government is on this issue. It talks a great line out in the public about how

supportive it is of victims, but at the end of the day, it does not come through for them.

The fact is Mr. Sullivan is now no longer working in that job because he did his job and he stood up for victims. He was rewarded by the government by being fired, in essence, because his contract was not renewed.

We have proposed that the government introduce urgent legislation that would immediately stop pardons from being granted in outrageous cases, while preserving the process of study for the rest of the bill. We have taken language from the Conservative bill and strengthened it by referring to crimes that shock the conscience of Canadians, which is language not present in its bill.

We know the bill will not pass all of the various readings before we break for the summer, and Canadians are concerned about the potential for Karla Homolka getting a pardon. As a result, we have said that we would support the government bringing in an immediate bill dealing with this issue. We want to immediately stop pardons from being granted in outrageous cases. The Karla Homolka case is certainly one that fits within that category and would be covered by the proposal of our critic, the member for Vancouver Kingsway. Then we would separately study the rest of the bill in the committee. That is our proposed.

We have offered the government this option and we are prepared to move on it today. However, the government has rejected it. What the purpose and reason is for it to take that kind of attitude on the bill beyond me when we have offered it the solution to what we see as the immediate problem.

● (1310)

We not support a U.S.-style three strikes and they are out correctional system because, and only because, it has never worked where it was tried. It was the flavour of the month, flavour of the decade, back in the Ronald Reagan administration. We saw many American prisons become privately owned. The new prison development became private prison development. Under the three strikes and they are out, the Americans built more prisons and filled them up. At the end of the day, the crime rate in the United States went up. It did not go down.

After all these years of a proven failed system, there are situations like Governor Schwarzenegger, who I was fortunate to speak to at the governors' conference in February in Washington. His state is on bankruptcy notice. He is being forced, as are other jurisdictions in the United States, to let people out of jail. They cannot afford to keep them in jail anymore because of the enormous cost involved.

What do we have here? We have the Conservatives following a discredited system that does not work.

Our members have said over and over again that we need to look at best practices. The Conservatives are great about talking about best practices in business. Let us scan the world and find out what works in other jurisdictions and let us try to do the same thing.

*Government Orders*

We know there are programs that work in certain countries in the European Union. With respect to the area of auto thefts, we know different jurisdictions in Canada have tried different ideas. Some work better than others.

We found in the province of Manitoba that by having a combination of a gang suppression strategy involving the police force identifying the top 50 car thieves, keeping them under surveillance, picking them up and keeping them in custody, it reduced our car theft rates dramatically to the point that last year we had zero car thefts on one day.

Four or five years ago an immobilizer program with Manitoba public insurance was not working well. If people installed immobilizers, they would get a break on their car insurance. Guess what? People were not taking up the program. The government woke up one day and decided to make it mandatory for people to install immobilizers and the government paid for them and gave people a reduction in their insurance. There was some grumbling, but by and large it has been widely accepted in Manitoba. Now hundreds of thousands of cars have immobilizers and the thieves cannot steal them cars anymore.

This problem will take care of itself because over time, as all the old cars are taken off the road, new cars will have the proper immobilizer systems in place at the factory, where it should be done. In fact, the Manitoba government deserves credit for mandating immobilizers in new cars effective last year.

This is something that could have been foreseen. The insurance bureaus in Canada and in the United States have known for years that we could put immobilizers in cars in the factory for say \$30. However, to save the \$30, the car companies preferred to let the public pay \$300 for immobilizers if they wanted them. This could have been done, yet the insurance industry kept paying the claims and people kept paying higher insurance rates. What kind of an insane system is that?

● (1315)

We could have been on top of this 20 years ago had we put these requirements on the car companies to bring in proper immobilizers. It would have saved the public an awful lot on insurance rates and it would have cut down the death rate. When people steal cars, they can get into car accidents and kill people. All this could have been foreseen.

However, we go back to Ronald Reagan who told the car companies that they did not have to attain certain standards. He reduced the standards. This is the same president who brought in the "three strikes and you're out" program. The Conservatives are back to Ronald Reagan's days.

In any event, we have offered a solution to the government and we still would prefer to get an answer as to whether the Conservatives would prefer to bring in this bill today. We will support the bill to stop these pardons from being granted in outrageous cases. We feel that would be a big part of the solution, not to follow the discredited policies of the past.

Bill C-23 would rename "pardons" as a "record suspension". It also would increase the eligibility period, which must pass before a pardon application could be submitted, from the current five years to

ten years for indictable offences and from the current three years to five years for summary offences. It would also prohibit those convicted of four or more indictable offences from ever receiving a pardon. It would prohibit anyone convicted of one or more offences from a designated list of sex offences from ever receiving a pardon. With respect to pardon applications for indictable offences, the Parole Board would be required to deny a pardon if granting it would bring the administration of justice into disrepute.

On that last point, this is the section that would apply to Karla Homolka, which is already in this existing Bill C-23, but nothing in the rest of the bill would serve to deny her a pardon. The increased waiting periods proposed will require her to wait five more years before applying, but only that one section will actually stop the pardon from ever being granted.

If the House were to adopt the NDP's suggestion, then we could deal with it summarily, we could deal with it today, and the problem would be at an end. Then we could follow the bill through to committee where we would deal with the issue as we should.

In 2006 the government, under the former public safety minister, oversaw a review of the pardon system in response to the Clark Noble case, a convicted sex offender. At the time, the government made a big issue of the case. It was a new government and it would to review the pardon system. After all this, one would think there would be some revolutionary change by the government, but that is wrong. At the end of the day, the 2006 review by the former minister of public safety led to just minor changes, including a requirement for two Parole Board members to review the pardon applications from sex offenders. Ultimately the tough on crime minister and government signed off on the current system as adequately protecting public safety.

● (1320)

What happened after that is that a government member, the member for Surrey North, who has a lot of credibility on this issue, introduced Motion No. 514. It is a very good motion and is still before the House. We support the motion, which states:

That the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security be instructed to undertake a review of the Criminal Records Act and report to the House within three months on how it could be strengthened to ensure that the National Parole Board puts the public's safety first in all its decisions.

Not only did the government do its review in 2006, which did nothing, but, rather than introduce this bill, Bill C-23, to solve this problem, it had a government backbencher introduce a motion asking for a review of the pardon system. Then all of a sudden the Graham James issue came to the fore, and overnight this became a serious issue again and the government brought in Bill C-23, essentially cutting the rug out from under the member for Surrey North, a government member.

*Government Orders*

The government did not even give the member for Surrey North a fair hearing. She did a lot of work on her motion which is before the House, and the government short-circuited it. The government said that the agenda has changed because people are interested in an issue that just popped up and calls for Bill C-23 to be brought in, regardless of the fact that a member with some credibility on the issue brought forth a motion which is the proper way to look at it. The member is asking for a review of the Criminal Records Act and for a report within three months to strengthen the system. At the end of the day, we all support the member's motion.

The public can be forgiven for being somewhat confused about what goes on around this place and what goes on with the government as it lurches back and forth not only on its crime agenda but on its whole legislative agenda. Let us look at the priorities of the government right now. One of its priorities is to close down six prison farms. Another priority is to spend \$1 billion for the G20 and G8 summits which should be held on a military base or at the United Nations. To spend \$1 billion of public money when the government is running a deficit of \$56 billion just defies all logic.

We are looking at a government that definitely has misplaced priorities. It has no plan, or if there is a plan, it is certainly not letting us know what it is. The public must be confused about where the government is going on this issue.

We have offered to solve the problem but the government has said no. We are going into the summer recess. This bill will be in committee and nothing will happen with it until the fall and then we will be starting over. There is no sensibility as to how the government operates.

In terms of the provisions, we have suggested that this bill move quickly. The government knows that it cannot pass this bill through the committee and the Senate—it has to get through the Senate as well—before the summer recess. We know that all parties will not give unanimous consent; that is pretty much a given around here.

Once again, we brought forward a specific targeted bill to make these changes, to prevent the granting of pardons that would shock the conscience of Canadians and bring the administration of justice into disrepute. That is exactly what this House calls for at this point to solve the problem. We provided the solution, and we are waiting for the acceptance of the government on this point.

● (1325)

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona on his thoughtful speech in which, as a member of the NDP, he conveyed the stance that we have taken.

He spoke a great deal about the Conservatives' approach to crime and their emphasis on punishment. Their approach to pardons or anything, quite frankly, when it comes to their justice and crime agenda has been extremely one-sided. Not only is there an emphasis on punishment, but there is no commitment when it comes to prevention or rehabilitation.

I would like to hear the member's thoughts on the complete lack of commitment when it comes to supporting prevention efforts among aboriginal peoples and communities that have disproportionately high rates of incarceration. I would like to hear his comments on

how one-sided, imbalanced and wrong an agenda is that seeks only to punish, in many cases without a fair approach by any means, and yet does not seek to prevent individuals from falling through the cracks in our society.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Madam Speaker, what the government did and how it acted surrounding Mr. Sullivan, the victims advocate, speaks volumes about the government. The Conservatives pretend that they support the rights of victims. To give them credit, they did hire the first victims advocate. However, at the end of the day, after three years, the victims advocate walked away without getting his contract renewed and criticized the government for not being supportive of victims' rights in this country.

Clearly, it was all for show. It was a sham. The government does not support victims' rights. Even though the Conservatives constantly advertise that they do, we know that they do not.

We in the NDP are extremely concerned about the rights of victims. As a matter of fact, the criminal injuries compensation fund in Manitoba was set up by Premier Ed Schreyer way back in 1970. The criminal injuries compensation fund is certainly a very important part of the victims' rights process. For the last 10 years, the NDP in Manitoba under Gary Doer went a long way to involve victims in terms of victims' impact statements and their being able to let people know what happened in the crime.

We have shifted and the whole country has shifted toward a greater focus on the role of victims. However, the Conservatives' pretense that they are somehow the paramount leaders in this area came to a crushing end with the departure of Mr. Sullivan and the exposure of their commitment as being not as strong as they like to pretend that it is.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member referred to this tangentially. Does he think this bill will ever actually get through? As I think he mentioned, the government keeps on delaying its own crime agenda. It either prorogues Parliament or calls an election and all the crime bills and things that it believes will make us safer die. Some of the things the government thinks would make us safer probably would not and it is probably good that the government lets them die. Does he think this bill will actually get through?

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Madam Speaker, that is why we are so concerned. We want to offer that solution and simply pass the measures required so that we do not take that risk.

We have no guarantee. For example, we have suggested that the government introduce urgent legislation that would immediately stop pardons from being granted in outrageous cases while preserving the process of this bill. It would not matter what happened to the bill in committee. We would at least have this part in place right now.

After the G8 and G20 summits next week, the Prime Minister may wake up one day and decide to call an election and we will be right back to square one again.

*Government Orders*

The member for Yukon is 100% correct. It is the Conservatives themselves who keep torpedoing their program and then they attempt to blame it on us. I do not know how they can possibly get away with that. Maybe they could get away with it once, but it is certainly not going to work repeatedly the way they have been operating for the last couple of years.

• (1330)

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to commend the member for Elmwood—Transcona on yet another very, very good speech in the House. I think he must hold the record by now on the number of bills a member has spoken to or commented on.

I know he watches the proceedings in the House very carefully, so he will know that the government of the day is one that constantly talks about wanting to get tough on crime, yet what I am hearing from my constituents is that people would much prefer if the Conservatives actually got smart on crime. Smart on crime is much, much better because they would be focusing on things like crime prevention and support for the victims of crime. Frankly, they would be supporting law enforcement officers to ensure that they can do their job effectively. Yet instead, we again are forced to deal with issues that are tough on crime only.

Unfortunately, as we are debating Bill C-23, let us recall what precipitated the bill. It was not a legal matter. It was a public relations nightmare for the Conservatives when the story of Graham James hit the news. It was after that story hit the news that people started to be concerned about what would happen with respect to Karla Homolka. Instead of dealing with those issues as they are, individual incidents that needed to be addressed, the government brought in omnibus legislation that changes the entire pardon system in the country.

I have to say, before that time not a single person contacted me to say that the pardon system was not working. Now we are confronted with a bill where we are throwing the baby out with the bathwater. What we ought to be doing is severing the bills to deal with people like Graham James and Karla Homolka. In those cases, by all means, let us put the brakes on. Let us look at the implications that this bill has for the broader justice system. Pardons are an imperative part of the correctional system. They are an important part of that toolbox.

I wonder whether the member would take a minute to talk about the motion that the NDP introduced in the House last week to do exactly that: sever one piece of the bill and let us send the other piece for further study so that we can act responsibly and be smart on crime.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Madam Speaker, the member for Vancouver Kingsway introduced a motion, and I will read it, because it is important: “That, in the opinion of the House, urgent changes to the Criminal Records Act are required to prevent pardons from being granted that would shock the conscience of Canadians or bring the administration of justice into disrepute, and therefore the government should immediately introduce legislation with the specific purpose to empower the National Parole Board to deny pardons in cases where granting a pardon would shock the conscience of Canadians or bring the administration of justice into disrepute, with cooperation and support from all parties to move swiftly such legislation through the House and the Senate before the Parliament rises for summer...”

That was the suggestion of the NDP. I do not know how more clear we could be that we want action on this issue, we want action now on this issue and we simply are waiting for the government to say yes or no.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-23. Like my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue who spoke earlier and my other colleagues who have debated this subject in the House, I think it is important that we be able to debate this bill in committee and decide what rules should govern the act relating to pardons and the act relating to suspensions of records. The surprising thing about this bill is that it has been presented to us at the end of the session because they are upset that someone was granted a pardon when they had broken the law by committing heinous acts against minors. I would ask that we remember that when it comes to record suspensions, in all cases where the person has committed acts against a minor or crimes relating to pedophilia, the criminal record can be suspended, but special attention is paid to that record.

When the criminal records of people we want to hire or take on as volunteers are checked, that is when we are informed that the person has something specific in their criminal record. We are entirely able to ask the Minister of Public Safety to explain the exact situation regarding the criminal record to us. The reason I am talking about it that way is that I worked for several years with a home support cooperative. When we talk about home support, we are talking about support for vulnerable people, elderly people, people who are ill. All of the people we hired had to complete a hiring process in which we asked the police to do an investigation. That was part of the hiring process. The people we wanted to hire had to go to the police station, apply for a certificate and pay for it, because there are in fact fees associated with the certificate. They had to ask the police to investigate them so they could prove to us that they had no criminal record or outstanding charges. Of course, when you do this research, you realize that first, when people have been granted a pardon, very few of them reoffend. You see that 97% of people who have been granted a pardon have never reoffended. The 3% figure is quite respectable, but when we think that 97% of those people did not reoffend, that really is a system that works relatively well.

And those are the people we are talking about. With this new law that our colleague is proposing, no one could ask for a pardon for at least five or ten years, depending on the crime committed.

*Government Orders*

I remember quite well that the people who committed crimes did so when they were young and carefree. The crimes they committed did not necessarily have a significant impact on society. But they were still crimes that resulted in a criminal record. These people, when they turn 20, 22 or 23 and want to take their place in society again, go to school, start a relationship and maybe get married, must think seriously about asking for a pardon. If they ask for it, it is important that they be able to get it, because we see how it can affect training and even automobile and home insurance applications. It can also affect work, your job and promotions if you have not asked for a pardon and you have a criminal record. A lot of young people think that because they were not charged or convicted that they do not need to ask for a pardon. However, if their fingerprints were taken, they would immediately have a record or their fingerprints somewhere. If they do not ask for a pardon, those fingerprints are there for life.

• (1335)

If they apply for a visa or a passport—for their work, for example—they will have a hard time obtaining them.

The Bloc Québécois has always said that it is important to support victims of crime. What is important is the guarantee that we can rehabilitate those who commit crime. We have to ensure that crime is reduced. This will not happen spontaneously simply because people are scared. It must happen steadily and over the long term because people realize that there is more to life than committing petty crime.

In many cases, people who commit crimes are those who are not necessarily fortunate enough to be among those who have an easier time of it in the labour market. Members of aboriginal communities have a very hard time getting an education and finding a job. They may turn to petty crime because it is easier. Then they go to jail and get caught in a vicious cycle.

Many of the aboriginal people who serve time in jail do not have access to rehabilitation programs. For the past few years, unfortunately, more attention has been paid to the risk of reoffending than to anything else. We know that people from aboriginal communities are less likely to pass these tests because they are more likely to reoffend once released from jail. People in their communities are very poor and do not have opportunities for paid work. Unable to find a meaningful goal, they will do what they have to to survive.

Last weekend, aboriginal peoples met in Ottawa to accept the government's apology, which they requested last year. Their forgiveness is unconditional. The pardon that aboriginal peoples granted the government is an act of generosity, love and respect. Why must the government always place a dollar value on forgiveness and manipulate public opinion to make people believe that it cares about the safety and well-being of victims?

All this government has done is introduce divisive bills and ensure that victims do not really get government support. Recently, the government cut funding for a number of victims' groups. Help centres for victims of sexual assault and other crimes do not have the funding they need to help victims recover. Victims do not have the funding they need to recover.

My colleague introduced a bill to give victims and their families more time to recover. Why does the government not agree with us when it comes to helping victims? They seem to find it much easier to punish criminals.

It would be much easier to work on rehabilitation and reintegration into society in order to ensure there are no more victims, as we do in Quebec with much success. All they do here is ensure there will be more criminals who remain criminals longer. Rather than making sure there will be no more victims by working on the reasons and the symptoms, we ensure that criminals stay in prison. There they do not become any less criminal. If they do not get the treatment, training and all they need to integrate back into society in a constructive way, they will remain criminals.

We should work together to find better ways of containing crime and ensuring that victims are protected in all ways and crime is further diminished.

• (1340)

By reducing poverty and ensuring there is social housing and gainful employment, we also do a lot to reduce crime. Much petty crime is due to the fact that people are struggling to survive. We should work on these issues, as well as on having programs to fight drugs and help people who want to get off drugs and away from prostitution. We need not only to punish people and put them in jail but also ensure they have the tools they need to start over and not just continue down the same old path. I think we are doing miracles in Quebec in this regard, given the paucity of support from the federal government. Luckily there are people like those in the Bloc Québécois and the NDP who believe in rehabilitation and think that individuals who have made mistakes can be rehabilitated because we all make mistakes.

I know someone who was charged with robbery in the 1960s. That person was sentenced to 15 years and spent eight in prison. They were not finally exonerated and found innocent until 2009. It is incredible to think that this person spent all those years in prison knowing they were innocent. They lived far away from their relatives and it destroyed their family and their relations with their daughter and son. It broke up their marriage. They separated. This person is still trying to get compensation from the government for all the years they spent in prison. We too make mistakes sometimes and harm people.

The committee should study all the ways of ensuring that criminals who should stay in prison do so but also that those who can be helped to get out and be rehabilitated do so as well and become full members of society.

*Government Orders*

• (1345)

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, which was dynamic, as usual. She brought up some points that this government needs to hear about its crime agenda, and also about the way we should address the challenges facing people in our society.

The member mentioned that we must focus on prevention and support for those who are themselves victims of unfortunate situations. She spoke about how we needed to envision an equal society and a society that does not simply want to punish everyone. We must obviously look at how we can improve the situation or support people so that they can change for the better and not always have to live with the crime they committed or the unfortunate situation they found themselves in. I would like to hear what she thinks the government could do about this.

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, who is also very knowledgeable about all the harm that can be done by inappropriate sentencing, especially in the community she represents.

In the case of female inmates, they are mostly women from aboriginal communities. Once again, we see that there is no equity, that there is no justice for the aboriginal peoples of this country. We must ensure that the aboriginal communities at least have the necessary resources to educate themselves and to transmit their culture and values.

With regard to Indian residential schools, we must ensure that healing takes place. We must ensure that aboriginal communities have running water and safe drinking water in their communities. We must ensure that education and health programs are provided consistently.

Some programs, such as smoking cessation programs and programs to combat fetal alcohol syndrome, have been cut. And yet these programs are essential. Without these programs, the people cannot break the cycle. Without these programs and without a significant investment in social housing, they cannot break the cycle. When 10 or 15 people live in one room, it leads to a certain promiscuity and despair. Sometimes, it leads to criminal acts.

We must ensure that there is justice for everyone. We must ensure that rehabilitation is an important component of the decisions we make to fight crime.

• (1350)

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Madam Speaker, does my colleague believe that the change in the bill from using the word “pardon” to using the words “record suspension” is a significant issue? In my way of thinking, this is a very significant issue in the legislation.

I know there is divided opinion in the House. Some members think that is not a very significant issue, but to me the word “pardon” has a depth of meaning that cannot be encompassed in the term “record suspension” and an important meaning in terms of the end of the rehabilitation process and the successful conclusion of that, and the conclusion of someone paying their debt to society for a mistake they made earlier in their life.

I wonder if the member might comment on that change in language which I believe is a very significant issue in this legislation.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Madam Speaker, we are very familiar with the concept of pardon. Quebec Catholics are well aware of what “pardon” means, and what it implies.

A pardon is truly a gift of great generosity and open-mindedness from those being asked to do the pardoning. It also requires great candour, authenticity and humility from the person asking to be pardoned. They have to ask themselves what drove them to commit certain acts. It requires introspection. When one asks for a pardon, one reflects on the acts one has committed. If we eliminate the concept of pardons, perhaps we are also eliminating the opportunity to involve that person and forgetting about the human dimension to the process.

I do not have enough legal knowledge to determine the appropriateness of eliminating the word “pardon”. The concept of record suspension is also quite close to what the bill is calling for. I do not have enough legal knowledge to properly answer that question. I will leave it to my colleagues who are more knowledgeable about this than I am to answer on my behalf.

[English]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I support Bill C-23. The pardon system does need to be improved with respect to some serious situations.

A number of experts have said that this bill, like other crime bills put forward by the government, is a knee-jerk reaction. The bill is not well thought out, which is why opposition parties want it to go to committee where we can make some of the changes suggested by criminal lawyer organizations and LEAF.

LEAF made the important point that delaying pardons for minor cases may actually backfire. If we make changes that would allow individuals to be stigmatized further, that could remove all of the investment we have put into rehabilitation, which is the highest goal we would like to achieve because Canadians would be safer.

This legislation would have no effect internationally. Hopefully, we will consider the seriousness of a crime when imposing a sentence because that criminal record will have a major effect on an individual's life.

I want to spend the rest of my time talking about the effect this legislation would have on aboriginal people who are sometimes forgotten in legislation. There is no aboriginal lens on crime bills and that is because aboriginal people are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. This fact has been raised many times but the government has taken no initiative toward rectifying the problem or dealing with that inequity.

Therefore, as this proliferates throughout the justice system, whatever we do will have a larger effect on aboriginal people in Canada because the government has made no attempt to rectify this problem. This fact has raised itself, unfortunately, in a number of cases.

When the ombudsperson for the correctional system reported to committee a number of recommendations that it had made to remove the inherent discrimination against aboriginal people, the recommendations were not followed up on. Opposition members complained vehemently about that and tried to follow them up.

The minister extended the aboriginal justice strategy for a couple of years. However, permanent people need to be in the courts just like judges. This funding should have been made permanent. We would not ask judges, policemen or lawyers to apply every couple of years for their funding to be reinstated. They are just part of the system.

The government cut back on alternative sentencing, which was very effective with respect to aboriginal people. It reduced recidivism and made Canadians safer. It reduced re-victimization and made it much better for victims and yet the government is cutting back on this once again.

Bill C-23, as with other government efforts relating to the criminal justice system, would disproportionately affect first nations, Inuit and Métis. This should be taken into consideration as this bill moves forward, as it should with all bills relating to the criminal justice system. Aboriginal people are grossly overrepresented in the criminal justice system and yet the government has not made the necessary changes to deal with this disparity. It could just bring forward another bill that would exacerbate the situation.

An Inuit witness appeared at committee a few weeks ago from an area where there is chronic underemployment. A lot of government jobs are available but these jobs require criminal background checks. This witness made it quite clear that this bill, which would delay pardons in some minor instances, would exacerbate the problem.

● (1355)

That is an example of how this bill was not thought out in detail and why it needs to go to committee. We need to look at the ramifications for employment in general and to recognize the rehabilitation people have made, when they have made a mistake and have tried to go the right way, and whether they could be held back by this particular bill and be further stigmatized, and whether it would work contrary to the goals that we are trying to achieve.

I have one official message for the clerk of the committee, probably the justice committee. I would ask that the committee ensure there are appropriate aboriginal witnesses from the first nations, Inuit and Métis communities to explain for us the effect this will have on them. I also ask that the committee call appropriate expert witnesses on the employment of Canadians regarding what effect this bill would have on those people, and appropriate experts from the rehabilitation societies, such as the John Howard Society, to explain what effect the bill might have on those people and ensure it is not counterproductive to the things we want to achieve.

*Statements by Members*

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

### STEPHEN LEACOCK MEMORIAL MEDAL FOR HUMOUR

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Madam Speaker, last Saturday the 2010 Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour was presented at a gala reception near the city of Orillia, the home of the Leacock Museum.

Each year, the Leacock medal is awarded for the most humorous book published in Canada in the previous year. Its winners have included literary icons, such as W.O. Mitchell and Mordecai Richler, and contemporary humorists, such as Stuart McLean and Arthur Black.

This year, the Leacock Associates have awarded the medal and its \$15,000 prize, courtesy of TD Bank Financial Group, to Will Ferguson for his recent book *Beyond Belfast*. In so doing, Will becomes the fifth author to win the Leacock a third time.

I invite members to join me in congratulating Will Ferguson for this great achievement, because we recognize, as Leacock himself did when he wrote, "Writing is no trouble: you just jot down ideas as they occur to you. The jotting is simplicity itself—it is the occurring that is difficult".

I congratulate Will.

\* \* \*

### ST. JOHN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, on May 8, I had the privilege of attending the 100th anniversary of the opening of St. John Catholic School in my riding of Beaches—East York.

Located on Kingston Road, the school was first opened in 1910 under the guidance of Rev. George Williams. At that time, the school operated with one teacher for sixty students.

Alumni from the 1950s and onward were present for the ceremony, including Kathleen Gatti, who spoke eloquently about her experiences as a student and the impact of the quality of education she received there.

A memorable moment for attendees was when special readings by the past principal from 1949 to 1967, Sister Mary Hamilton, were read out by Sister Mary Jane Leonard. She noted the large transformation the school underwent under her long tenure.

I had the pleasure of presenting St. John Catholic School with the Canadian flag that was flown atop the Peace Tower.

I congratulate St. John for reaching this tremendous milestone and for helping to shape the lives of thousands of students. I wish it great success in the years ahead.

*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

**2010 NATIVE INTER-BAND GAMES**

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Madam Speaker, Mistissini, in my riding, will host the 2010 Native Inter-Band Games from July 4 to 11. These games offer 1,200 young people from Cree and Inuit communities in northern Quebec the chance to participate in various sporting events. Some communities will be represented by delegations of over 100 athletes.

To ensure that this positive youth-oriented event is a success, all of the public agencies have already promised to help by sponsoring the event or organizing additional activities.

My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I congratulate Ashley Iserhoff, President of the Organizing Committee of the 2010 Native Inter-Band Games, as well as his entire team. But I am especially impressed by all of the young athletes, and I wish them the best of luck in achieving and even exceeding their goals.

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**HANMER KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS**

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Madam Speaker, on July 6, Knights of Columbus Council 5005, which is affiliated with Saint-Jacques Parish in Hanmer, will celebrate its 50th anniversary.

I would like to invite the House to join me in wishing a wonderful anniversary to this organization, which has done so much for the community.

The generosity of its members has benefited countless people through fundraisers for the food bank, schools, charities, service groups and Saint-Jacques Parish.

For example, last December, the Knights of Columbus Council 5005 helped distribute Christmas hampers to 142 needy families.

This parish's suppers are legendary in Hanmer: they attract hundreds of parishioners and citizens.

On behalf of the riding of Nickel Belt and the House of Commons, happy 50th anniversary to the Hanmer Knights of Columbus Council 5005.

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[English]

**ALBERTA SPORTS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE**

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC):** Madam Speaker, on May 28, the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame held its annual induction banquet to honour athletes, builders, teams, and media who have made a significant contribution to sports in Alberta.

Among the 2010 inductees was Red Deer's own Don Moore, who was honoured as a multi-sport builder. Mr. Moore's accomplishments in our community are far reaching. They include his founding of the Catalina Swim Club and his help in establishing the G. H. Dawe Centre and Waskasoo Park.

Don served as committee chairman on the Alberta Sports Council and as Red Deer's superintendent of recreation. He was also directly involved in securing a permanent site for the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame, of which he is now an inductee.

However, it was his continuous work with Red Deer's youth, coaching football, hockey, swimming, and skiing, that is most remarkable.

I would like to thank Don Moore for his dedication and vision and to congratulate him on his induction into the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame.

He has had a tremendous impact on central Albertans, and his accomplishments have truly left a lasting mark on Red Deer.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

**HIV-AIDS AND TB CAUCUS**

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, two world-renowned Canadian activists, Stephen Lewis, who is a former UN special envoy for HIV-AIDS in Africa, and Dr. James Orbinski, who is the founder of Dignitas International and the former president of Doctors Without Borders, will join parliamentarians, community organizations, and stakeholders today to officially inaugurate and launch the HIV-AIDS and TB all-party caucus.

With the support of members from all parties in the House, the HIV-AIDS and TB caucus will help to raise awareness about those living with HIV-AIDS and TB and will provide a forum for discussion and the exchange of ideas.

The founding of HAT is actually a tribute to the work of survivors, volunteers, and advocates such as Mr. Lewis and Dr. Orbinski, who have worked tirelessly to develop solutions to these growing global challenges.

As parliamentarians, we all have an opportunity to play a key role in the development of these solutions. Thanks to the work of many champions, thousands of lives have been saved. I join all parliamentarians in thanking Mr. Lewis and Dr. Orbinski for their vision and their—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Nanaimo—Alberni.

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**FORGIVEN SUMMIT**

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, thousands of first nations, Inuit, and Métis leaders and individuals gathered in Ottawa for the Forgiven Summit. They came to express their individual decision to embrace healing and wholeness through forgiveness. Aboriginals from as far away as Taiwan, New Zealand, and Polynesia came to witness the event.

Two years ago in this chamber, the Prime Minister issued an apology on behalf of the Government of Canada and asked forgiveness for previous government policies of assimilation that regrettably caused immense personal, cultural, and intergenerational harm. However, aboriginal people have been on a journey of healing, and it was joy to see the singing, the dancing, the drumming, and the celebrations expressed in many languages and ceremonial acts of reconciliation.



In the words of Chief Kenny Blacksmith, “Forgiveness is not political; it cannot be bought or sold; it cannot be legislated. It is an individual choice that can break the generational cycle of victimization and accusation”.

There have been gatherings before and there are more to come, but these leaders came with a hope and a dream for a better future. The message throughout the weekend was “Catch the Dream”.

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[Translation]

#### QUEBEC AGROTOURISM AWARDS

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Association de l'Agrotourisme et du Tourisme gourmand held its annual gala on May 16. This event honours certified establishments that provide outstanding customer service. La Ruée vers Gould, an inn and restaurant, was a provincial prize winner in the People's Special Favourite category.

Over the years, La Ruée vers Gould has become a real institution in the cultural and tourism industry in the Haut-Saint-François RCM. The inn, which incarnates the “buy local” philosophy, helps promote the history of the area with its 19th-century decor.

I want to congratulate the owners—Yvon Marois, Benoit Gaillard and Daniel Audet—on this honour. Long live local buying, and long live La Ruée vers Gould.

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[English]

#### ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government continues to reform and strengthen our national police force. We are giving the RCMP the tools it needs to protect the security of Canadians while ensuring at the same time that appropriate accountability mechanisms are in place.

Our recent 2010 budget reaffirmed our government's promise to strengthen the RCMP civilian review process by providing funding to improve how complaints are investigated.

Today, the Minister of Public Safety is delivering on that promise by announcing a more robust civilian complaints body. Our Conservative government recognizes that Canadians want to remain proud of their national police force. That is why we are committed to achieving real results and the effective review of civilian complaints. Our efforts will ensure that the RCMP becomes a stronger, more modern organization that is respected by all Canadians.

We call on the Liberals to support our efforts to strengthen the RCMP.

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[Translation]

#### ALCIDE BOURQUE

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to congratulate Alcide Bourque of Grande Digue, the community where I live in my riding of Beauséjour, on his recent induction into the New Brunswick Sports Hall of Fame.

#### Statements by Members

Alcide Bourque is known as the father of karate in Atlantic Canada. Since he received his black belt in 1967, Mr. Bourque has opened a dozen karate clubs in the Maritimes. His drive and determination to develop this sport in the region are exemplary. Many people have learned karate thanks to Mr. Bourque, and more than 300 of his former students have received their black belt. At 77, Mr. Bourque still teaches five days a week, purely out of a love for this sport.

Alcide Bourque has changed the lives of his students and thousands of young people.

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● (1410)

#### VICTIMS OF CRIME

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we all know that Bloc members care more about rehabilitating dangerous criminals than they do about the victims who saw their lives and those of their family members changed forever.

Their leader was very clear on this on March 25, 2010, when he expressed concern about the rehabilitation of serial killers who are behind bars. On March 25, 2010 he told *CTV National News* that once they have served their sentence, if they have no money, they could cost the state more than if they had a pension, and that it is really bad for their rehabilitation.

In contrast, the Conservative government's first reflex is to take care of the victims of crime. The Conservatives put an end to the Liberals' soft on crime approach, something which the Bloc has been powerless to do for a very long time.

The Conservative government is the only party that really works on behalf of victims and the interests of Quebec.

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[English]

#### G20 SUMMIT

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as Canada hosts the G20 summit, we are reminded of the fact that increasingly, there are two Canadas: the Canada that other countries think we are and the Canada we have become.

We say that we are putting maternal health on the G20 agenda. We are seen as the Canada that is a leader in terms of women and human rights. We are also seen as a leader in terms of health care.

The reality is that we are actually a country that has a disappointing record on everything from infant mortality to poverty to equality for women. Our poor record on aboriginal infant mortality and poverty stands in particularly sharp contrast to our reputation.

We are seen as a peacekeeper internationally. The reality is that we are increasingly involved in direct military action. One hundred and forty-seven Canadian soldiers have died in that process.

*Statements by Members*

Many people of my generation wonder if we will ever make progress again to regain our unique place in the world as a country of equality and diversity that is committed to peace and as a country that is seen as a leader globally. To paraphrase Gandhi, perhaps we need to be the Canada—

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake.

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is becoming more and more evident that the Liberal Party does not care about criminal justice and public safety.

Why does the member for Ajax—Pickering continue to say that prisoners' rights come before keeping our streets and families safe from crime?

This just goes to show how out of touch the Liberal Party is with Canadians and farmers. Unlike the Liberals, we do not think that a prison farm program, when fewer than 1% of released offenders ever find work in the agriculture sector, is effective and helps our farmers.

We do not support a wasteful and ineffective long gun registry. Why do Liberals want to turn law-abiding farmers into criminals and convicted criminals into farmers?

This Conservative government believes in ensuring that programs are effective and efficient and are meeting the needs of all Canadians.

This is more proof that the Liberals are not in it for Canadians; they are obviously just in it for themselves.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**2010 SHAVED HEAD CHALLENGE**

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the 10th annual Leucan Shaved Head Challenge was held yesterday. It is with great pride and a great deal of compassion that three of my employees, the member for Gatineau and myself shaved our heads.

Over the past 10 years, more than 40,000 people have decided to shave their heads to support children with cancer who have lost their hair after chemotherapy treatments. In addition to showing solidarity, the challenge is a fundraiser, with those shaving off their hair collecting pledges.

This year, more than 9,000 people shaved their heads and collected \$4.5 million.

We hope that this record number of participants in the Leucan Shaved head Challenge not only will help children to not feel singled out but will also give them hope for a cure one day thanks to the donations collected.

●(1415)

[*English*]

**G8 AND G20 SUMMITS**

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when Canadians head up to the lake this summer, let us remind them to think about how they are paying for the Prime Minister's trip as well: his ego trip.

In a series of radio and YouTube ads launched yesterday, Liberals are reminding Canadians that their tax dollars are being wasted by the government on an unprecedented scale, well past \$1 billion and still counting, for 72 hours of G8 and G20 meetings that have turned out to be little more than a photo op for the Prime Minister.

Because of poor planning and pork-barrel politics, the Prime Minister is wasting Canadians' money on a fake lake, a dry-docked steamship, gazebos, public toilets, and sidewalks that are nowhere near the G8 site. Just witness the \$1 billion security bill. The government must have the Canadian navy patrolling the fake lake.

At a time when world leaders are preaching restraint, this G8 and G20 photo op is an ego trip for the Conservative Prime Minister that Canadians simply cannot afford.

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**LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is breaking news from the Liberal caucus. Upon returning to Canada after 34 years abroad, the Liberal leader wants to meet with whom he calls “the Canadians”. Just visiting every province is what the Liberal leader thinks he needs to break through with “the Canadians”.

It is unclear what the Liberal leader wants to say to “the Canadians” that he has not already said, but maybe he plans to try some of his favourites: that he called the United States of America his “country”; that he might tell “the Canadians” he wants to raise their taxes; maybe he can tell “the Canadians” from northern Ontario about his opposition to scrapping the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry, there is a good idea; or maybe he will remind “the Canadians” that he is embarrassed of our country and that he thinks our flag looks like a beer label.

On this side of the House we call them friends, neighbours and constituents. When the Liberal leader calls them “the Canadians”, he proves he is not really in it for “the Canadians”, he is just in it for himself.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### AFGHANISTAN

**Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, your ruling on the Afghan detainee documents was very clear. You said it was up to Parliament, not the government, to decide which documents could be seen by the members of the House. But so far, the government has not reached a final agreement on this matter.

When will the Prime Minister tell his representatives on the committee to reach a final agreement and comply with the ruling of the Speaker of the House?

[English]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would tell the hon. member that if he chats with the members he has put on that committee, that progress has been made. Again, we have been very clear. We will do nothing to compromise national security and will certainly do nothing that would jeopardize the men and women who serve us in uniform. However, I continue to be optimistic at this point that an agreement will be reached.

**Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the tentative accord safeguards national security. The minister knows full well that it is fully possible to reach an accord this afternoon. But it is also clear that the government is dragging its feet, with no good reason.

Will the Prime Minister and the government issue clear instructions to their representatives to conclude an accord today to respect the judgment of the Speaker of the House of Commons?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure how much research the hon. member has done on this but, again, what he will find out, if he has a look into this, is that we have been prepared to sign an agreement at every single meeting. We have had at least 10 of them at this point.

Again, I look forward to the meeting that is scheduled a bit later on this afternoon.

**Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I remind the minister opposite that it was seven weeks ago that the Speaker ruled on this matter. We have had a tentative agreement about a month ago. The government keeps inventing excuses to avoid dealing with this matter.

How long will this stalling go on? When will the government sit down, do the business, and respect the will of Parliament and respect the will of the Speaker?

• (1420)

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have been doing that each and every day. Again, I think there have been over 10 meetings. I thought they all had gone well. We have been prepared to sign at each and every one of those meetings. We have presented documents to the hon. members in his party and other parties to get those things signed.

### Oral Questions

However, if he wants to really get fully informed, I invite him to the meeting later on this afternoon. He might find it instructive.

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### G8 AND G20 SUMMITS

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, just days after the industry minister bragged about the cost savings of hosting the G8 and G20 in a single location, his riding, the Prime Minister announced it could not fit. After \$50 million in gazebos, bathrooms and a sunken boat, the Conservatives finally figured out the venue was too small.

We now learn Toronto, “the whoops, we messed up site”, was only given a heads-up 15 minutes before the Prime Minister announced it. There was no consultation and no effort to contain costs. This summit was planned on the back of a napkin and taxpayers are left with the billion dollar bill.

How did the government so badly mismanage this?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, obviously, I do not agree with the premise put forward by my hon. colleague. We have indicated here that costs of holding both summits, a large part of the costs, are attributed to security, which is extremely important.

We have, of course, put aside some money to ensure that we can celebrate Canada and do its promotion. We have done it through our experience Canada pavilion and we are very pleased that we are doing so.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that answer is as shallow as their fake lake.

Conservatives inherited a \$13 billion surplus. They turned it into a deficit before the recession even started and snowballed it into the biggest deficit in Canadian history.

Now they blow more than \$1 billion on 72 hours of meetings and defend it as normal business. The lake may be fake, but the money is real. This is taxpayers' money and Conservatives are spending it like they are having a going-out-of-business sale. Now we learn that 85% of the contracts are sole-sourced, untendered, no competition.

How much worse can this boondoggle get?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me assure the member opposite that the entire process is managed by the professional members of the public service. They work to ensure that everything is done in a fair and transparent fashion. Our goal is to ensure that taxpayers get value for money. That has always been the hallmark of our government and it always will be.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister paid lip service to the idea of putting climate change on the agenda for the G8 and G20 summits. Recently, Mexican President Felipe Calderón and six Nobel peace prize laureates stressed that it is important to use these international summits to talk about the environment and climate change.

To clear up any doubt, will the Prime Minister put climate change on the agenda for the G8 and G20 summits?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister said last week in response to a question from the leader of the Bloc Québécois, the economy is the main priority for the G20. We have said that this forum will obviously focus on the economy. Of course, a number of issues will be dealt with, including climate change.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the environment and the economy cannot be separated because they are so closely linked. Moreover, if climate change is going to be discussed, it should be on the agenda. The Prime Minister is not hesitating to take advantage of the G8 and G20 summits to invite heads of state and discuss different issues with them.

Why not broaden the scope of the meeting and invite Yvo de Boer, the senior climate change official at the UN, and officially put the environment on the agenda for the two summits?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois leader may not be interested in economic recovery and economic issues, but this government has decided that the G20 meeting of heads of government and heads of state will focus on the economy. Canada has an excellent story to tell about its economic performance. Other issues will also be addressed and, as I said, climate change will be among them.

\* \* \*

• (1425)

**INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION**

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, hundreds of women carrying coat hangers demonstrated in Montreal against the Conservative government's refusal to include abortion in the G8's plan for maternal health. The Fédération du Québec pour le planning des naissances, the Fédération des femmes du Québec, the CSN and the FIQ all denounce the Conservatives' backwards ideology.

Why is the government so keen on reopening the abortion debate, when this issue has been resolved in Quebec?

[*English*]

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as we have clearly articulated, the Prime Minister and Canada at its G8 will be focusing on saving the lives of mothers and children. We have support for that initiative from many.

What did Melinda Gates say? She said that the number of dying is "atrocious" and she added:

The truth is, we can prevent most of these deaths — and at a stunningly low cost — if we take action now.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that 2010 is "a year when the world decided that no woman should die giving life and no children should die when we know how to save them".

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, maternal and child health are part of the commitments made by Canada at the Millennium Summit in 2000. Instead of respecting the commitments we made, the Conservative government has frozen international assistance.

In light of the Conservatives' broken promises, how can we believe that they will respect the commitment they claim to have made to maternal and child health?

[*English*]

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government, since its 2006 election, has met its commitments to the international world. We have retained our commitment to doubling our international assistance. We have met our commitment to doubling our aid to Africa. We have not only met but surpassed our commitment for food aid and food assistance.

We have a record on which we will stand, unlike the previous government, which had 13 years to fulfill commitments to those in poverty.

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**AFGHANISTAN**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it seems to us that the Conservatives are trying to run out the clock to prevent members of Parliament from getting access to documents that would tell the truth about torture in Afghanistan. But time has run out. Enough is enough.

Can the Prime Minister commit today that he will instruct his negotiators that this will be the last meeting and that an agreement will be reached today so Canadians can finally learn the truth?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is prepared to commit to signing the document that we will present today, this in fact will be the last meeting.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the documents that have been presented so far would not allow Canadians to get to the truth. That has been the problem.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister still has not understood that he is the leader of a minority government, and that the members in this House have complete authority and every right to obtain, read and examine all of the documents related to torture in Afghanistan.

The opposition is prepared to be flexible on the terms and conditions, but the Speaker's ruling was clear.

Does the Prime Minister understand, yes or no?

[*English*]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we understand that we are working in a minority Parliament, every day.

That being said, we have a responsibility. Any documentation has to be consistent with our international obligations. We cannot compromise national security and we can do nothing to jeopardize the men and women who serve us in Afghanistan and around the world.

That should be abundantly clear to the hon. member and he should not have any problem with that.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we need the Prime Minister to be crystal clear as to what we are saying. We are done with the foot-dragging. We are done with the cancelled meetings. We are done with the lame excuses that there are no meeting rooms available. We are done with the countless efforts to circumvent your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is that Canadians must be told the truth about torture in Afghanistan. If his ministers fail to conclude an agreement this afternoon, is the Prime Minister ready to take it to the next level, leader to leader, tonight?

• (1430)

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think the hon. member has to wait that long. If he wants to hook up with his coalition partner the Leader of the Opposition, why do not both of them come to the meeting this afternoon and they can append their signatures to the document we will be presenting at 4 o'clock?

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**G8 AND G20 SUMMITS**

**Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's fake lake and the Conservative's billion dollar boondoggle have made Canada a laughingstock on the world stage, but Canadians are not laughing. They are outraged at the Conservatives' incompetence and they do not understand why they have to pay for the Prime Minister's whims.

Does the Prime Minister still believe that his \$2 million fake lake will restore Canada's international reputation?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I totally disagree. When we look at Canada's economic performance over the past few months, there is no doubt that the eyes of the world are on Canada. We will take every opportunity to promote Canada's position with regard to banks, managing the economy and job creation. This will be an excellent opportunity for Canada.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the world is laughing at the Conservatives' incompetence and the world is criticizing the Prime Minister's biased and partisan agenda.

The UN, Nobel laureates and prime ministers visiting Canada are all calling on the Prime Minister to include climate change on the agenda. Everyone is asking him to reverse his decision to condemn African women to resorting to illegal abortions.

Why is the Prime Minister using these summits to promote his party instead of his country?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, the Prime Minister has indicated that we will discuss climate change. What is more, three weeks ago, the President of Mexico, Mr. Calderón, addressed the members of the House of Commons. He had a meeting with the Prime Minister, who indicated to the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Bloc Québécois that climate change would be on the agenda. Many issues will be discussed. The economy will top the agenda, but climate change will be discussed as well.

[English]

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has given the excuse that the G20 was too big to meet in Muskoka, so it moved it to Toronto, at an extra cost of \$400 million at least. Now it appears that the Prime Minister has invited another 10 countries to the G8. Apparently the government could not quite handle the G20 in Muskoka, but it can handle the G18 just fine.

Was the Prime Minister not satisfied with having the G8 only? What is all this costing? There is no limit to what Canadians will have to pay for the Prime Minister's ego.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as you know, the majority of the costs are related to the security of the G8 and the G20. In that regard we are following the advice of a number of consultants who have indicated to us that the costs are in line with all the summits that have been held previously. This is exactly what needs to be done to be able to protect not only Canada's incoming visitors but to be able to protect and celebrate our reputation as well.

\* \* \*

**GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES**

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives seem to think they can get rid of the \$56 billion deficit by giving out prizes. Here is the latest from the Treasury Board president: "find government waste, get a \$10,000 reward".

Since he has offered, I can give him an idea to save money. The government should scrap the fake lake and that will save \$2 million. The government should give that \$2 million, plus the \$10,000 prize, I would think, to offset the cuts to women's groups and get on with the real plan to fight the deficit.

• (1435)

**Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that my friend has made a pre-announcement of an announcement I am going to make in about two hours, to indicate to all of our public servants that if they come up with a business plan that shows how a certain service can be delivered and money will be saved over a six-month period, they will receive a cash award. We think our public servants are up to this task.

I had not anticipated providing it to MPs, but the hon. member has offered a suggestion. I guess I could put that forward to the Auditor General to see if MPs could be part of this too, but it is mainly directed toward our good public servants.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**SECURITIES**

**Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, following the lead of France and the United Arab Emirates, the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Ontario Securities Commission entered into an agreement with Quebec's AMF during the financial meetings that were held in Montreal.

These three authorities signed a comprehensive arrangement concerning the supervision of financial operations between the United States and Canada.

Given this international recognition of Canada's regulatory structure, why does the Minister of Finance not do likewise?

[English]

**Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as has been mentioned in here many times, this is a voluntary process that we are encouraging the provinces to take part in. We have had advice from all around the world that the system that Canada is adopting, a voluntary system where provinces can opt in, will actually protect investors and it will increase investment into our country.

If that is such a bad thing, then why are the OECD, IMF and World Bank suggesting it is that good a system? We have made it voluntary, which makes it that much better.

[Translation]

**Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, all of these organizations are signing with the AMF and the Ontario Securities Commission.

Instead of this nonsense, why have serious people, like the governor of the Bank of Canada or the Associate Deputy Minister of Finance reiterated the urgency to improve—not destroy, but improve—the regulatory system?

Now is not the time to reinvent the wheel or the zipper.

Why is the Minister of Finance trying to take away our autonomy? Why make a big mess of something that works very well?

[English]

**Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, a voluntary system would not deprive anyone of the opportunity of being part of a Canada-wide system, a system that the investors who were caught in the Earl Jones debacle suggest to us would have helped them.

That is what we are trying to do, protect good investors in this country, people who are trying to save for their futures. But we are also encouraging companies that want to come to Canada that they do not have to go through 13 separate regulatory processes, simply one.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**COPYRIGHT**

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, artists and creators are very critical of Bill C-32, the copyright bill. The bill's new digital lock will not help, because they

will have to play the part of investigator, detective and lawyer—just like Claude Robinson—if they want their rights to be respected.

Does the minister understand that by forcing creators, artists and artisans to enforce their rights themselves, he is not giving copyright holders enough protection?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-32, which we introduced in the House of Commons, is fair to both consumers and creators.

The Canadian Film and Television Production Association applauds the government's proposed copyright reform. Film, television and online content creation is responsible for more than 160,000 jobs in Canada.

The government's actions play an important part in ensuring that those jobs are maintained and that new jobs are added. We kept the promises that we made to creators and consumers.

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely wrong. The government has not kept the promises it made to consumers.

The Canadian Consumer Initiative has stated that the digital lock is:

...a punitive approach that has proven ineffective elsewhere in the world. Consumers' rights may be restricted or even denied by the media companies.

That is what national organizations responsible for consumer rights have said. How can the minister deny the fact that his bill favours neither creators nor consumers?

●(1440)

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is simply not true. This bill is good for both groups.

An organization that my colleague knows well, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, does act in consumers' best interests. According to the chamber, Bill C-32 is an important step toward maintaining a competitive, thriving economy. Bill C-32 is a monumental and essential measure that will go a long way toward maintaining a stable and competitive business environment in Canada.

The only suggestion we have heard from the Bloc Québécois so far was to impose a new \$75 tax on iPods. That is not in consumers' best interests.

\* \* \*

**AEROSPACE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that our fighter planes need to be replaced and we know that several companies have expressed an interest in landing this major contract. There is a well established process for this kind of procurement and it begins with a tendering process. But this government cannot seem to follow procedures. It could cost up to \$16 billion.

*Oral Questions*

How can we be sure that we get the best aircraft for the best price, and the best spinoffs for our aerospace industry, if the government refuses to call for tenders?

[English]

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member opposite that is exactly what we are doing. We are of course, as a government, committed to providing the best possible equipment at the best possible price in a timely fashion to give our men and women in uniform the equipment they need.

What is ironic and what is lost on the member opposite is that in fact, it was his party when in government which, in 2002, entered into this 10-year, \$10 billion contract. It is a bit beyond hypocrisy for the member now to suggest that we are not moving in the right direction with respect to replacing the next generation of fighter aircraft.

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on May 27 the Minister of National Defence told the committee of the whole, “the reference to the next generation of fighter aircraft does not preclude a competition, and an open and transparent one”. Was the minister misleading the House?

Does the minister intend to follow well-established procedures, or has he already chosen his \$16 billion aircraft without tender, without competition? How will this ensure that we get the best deal for Canada, the best aircraft, as well as the greatest benefits for the aerospace industry?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I only wish we could somehow bottle that feigned indignation and manufactured outrage for a positive purpose.

What we will do of course is comply with rules. We will comply with the best interests of the Canadian Forces, the best interests of Canadian industry.

That is exactly what we are doing. I do not know what the hon. member knows that I do not, but we have not made that decision yet. It is still before cabinet. Perhaps he has a source that I am not familiar with.

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**OFFSHORE DRILLING**

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources has finally admitted the truth about absolute liability being limited to \$30 million on the east coast and \$40 million elsewhere. That is a drop in the bucket if we consider the \$3 billion cost of the ongoing gulf disaster. When he boasts about unlimited civil liability, he forgets that it requires proving negligence. That would cost millions and could take decades.

Will the minister take immediate steps to ensure taxpayers are not left holding the bag in the case of a major spill?

[Translation]

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is sad to see my colleague trying to scare Canadians. We know that the Canadian offshore drilling system is one of the most solid, rigorous systems in the world. It is a strict system and offshore drilling companies must have an emergency response plan

and contingency plans approved by regulatory authorities before any drilling will be authorized. No drilling projects will be approved unless and until the regulators are convinced that all workers are safe and the environment is protected.

[English]

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, U.S. regulators gave the same assurances before the gulf blowout. The minister needs to accept his responsibilities, close the loophole and protect Canadians. After all, why should a fisherman have to go up against a whole team of corporate lawyers using every legal manoeuvre and delaying tactic in the book?

When will the minister bring in a bill to make oil companies 100% liable in the case of a major spill?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have a strong regulator, which has a solid track record for the last 50 years. The National Energy Board enforces world-class standards for oil and gas rigs in the Canadian offshore. The equipment and operator training must meet these strict standards. Offshore companies must have an emergency response plan and backup contingency plans approved by the responsible regulator before any authorization to drill is issued.

Therefore, he should stop speaking about loopholes. That is totally untrue and no project will go on unless we are convinced that the safety of the waters and the protection of the environment is ensured.

\* \* \*

● (1445)

**G8 AND G20 SUMMITS**

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the Liberal leader says that he is embarrassed that Canada is hosting the G8 and G20 summits, others recognize the benefits of bringing the world to Canada, particularly the economic benefits. Businesses of all sizes will benefit greatly from Canada's global leadership.

Could the Minister of Transport please tell us about the upside of Canada hosting the G8 and G20?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is proud to be hosting the world in the great region of Muskoka and the great city of Toronto. According to Tourism Toronto, it says that this summit will be a huge boost for the local economy. Terry Mundell, the president and CEO of the Greater Toronto Hotel Association, says:

In terms of bookings, this is the single largest event we've held in probably a decade. This is our economic stimulus package. It is a huge, huge economic boost.

In addition to the 3,500 media outlets that will be in Toronto and Muskoka to tell the story of our great country, we will see some great benefits and we are very proud of that.

*Oral Questions***PENSIONS**

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a majority of Canadians do not have workplace pensions and one in three retire with no savings at all. Right now, today, one-quarter million seniors are living in poverty. Close to two million more are living on the edge of poverty. Seniors' poverty is the immediate problem.

When will the government address this crisis and increase the GIS?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Finance minister, I can assure the House we are seeking to work co-operatively with our provincial and territorial partners to further strengthen Canada's retirement income system. We share the concerns of Canadians about their retirement security. I understand, from a note I have received from the Minister of Finance, that some progress has been made and we seek to move on that progress at the earliest opportunity.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yes, we are pleased that the finance minister finally has agreed with New Democrats and now recognizes the crisis facing Canadians. However, the government's plan to increase the CPP is just part of the road map that we laid out in our motion last June. We also called for an increase to the GIS to end seniors' poverty immediately.

Instead of playing with the edges of this crisis, will the government implement the full NDP retirement security plan?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, maybe it was just the bell ringing from the South African trumpets, but I may have misheard what the member was saying about our position.

The fact is we have already done much for seniors. We have required companies to fully fund pension benefits. On plan termination, we are giving pensioners more negotiation powers. We are modernizing the investment rules of pensioners. This government is on the side of pensioners.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while the government is proceeding with consultations on the next agricultural policy framework, criticism is already being levelled at its programs. The AgriStability program put in place by the Conservatives is a carbon copy of the former income stabilization program. According to the UPA, the AgriStability program is a failure because it does not take production costs into account.

Will the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food correct this situation and ensure that AgriStability truly supports income?

[English]

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in talking to groups across our great country and working with our provincial and territorial colleagues, we came out with a new set of programming that was far better than CAISP. We continue to work

toward changes within the parameters of those programs as well as holding discussions on the next suite of programs for the following five years. We will work with the industry to get that job done.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business deems AgriStability to be an expensive, complex and unpredictable program. In its report, *AgriStability or Aggravation*, the CFIB identifies a number of problems such as poor customer service, complex and large volumes of paperwork, timeliness issues and predictability.

Does the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food intend to change the program so that it truly meets farmers' needs?

• (1450)

[English]

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we do not work arbitrarily in this situation. We would no more stomp all over the province of Quebec in doing this than we would over any other province or territory.

We will continue to work with them in the best interests of producers.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has decided that the law does not apply to his director of communications. He has Dimitri Soudas doing all of his lying, finger-pointing and manipulating, yet he would have us believe that Mr. Soudas is too fragile to appear before the committee. Yet he appeared to be in fine form when he was attacking Steven Guilbeault's reputation in Copenhagen.

One would think we were in the Soviet Union. Since when does the Prime Minister have the right to place his friends above the law, which applies to everyone here and to all Canadians?

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as a government, we have already announced that we intend to continue respecting the tradition of ministerial responsibility. This system has been in place for hundreds of years: since the beginning of the parliamentary system and throughout its evolution, going back to its British origins. We will respect this tradition and that decision is final.



*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is the Prime Minister pays Dimitri Soudas over \$150,000 to bully the press, to tell cabinet ministers what they can and cannot say and to announce policy, like the closing down of Parliament. Mr. Soudas has more responsibility than many ministers, yet he is flouting accountability and the law by ignoring the subpoena from committee. Has Mr. Soudas entered the Conservative witness protection program?

Will the Prime Minister instruct his team's spokesman to obey the law, to respect the summons and to appear before committee?

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this gives me an opportunity to highlight the good work of Mr. Dimitri Soudas in building friendships between members of Parliament and members of the media with a soccer game that will be coming up between both sides. There will be a healthy rivalry, but it will be a friendly one. We will build upon the excellent relationship that we have always had with members of the media.

The member for Malpeque may play soccer. If he does not put the ball in his own net, maybe he will take a moment to explain why he broke his promise on the gun registry.

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**G8 SUMMIT**

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today we learned that the Prime Minister has invited leaders from several countries to attend special outreach meetings at the G8. Inviting Haiti is worthwhile, but the choice of other countries shows the Prime Minister's misplaced priorities.

The Prime Minister has ignored countries struggling with poverty. He has ignored countries that will pay the price in climate change. Instead he has chosen leaders who share his Conservative ideology, like the president of Colombia, who is on his way out.

Is this really a meeting of the G8 or is this just a meeting of the campus Conservative club?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, following the tradition that the chair has, the Prime Minister has decided to invite a number of foreign dignitaries and representatives of different countries to discuss the outstanding issues they face.

As members know, the Prime Minister will be discussing issues that are related to development and issues that are related to global security. This is going to be an excellent summit for Canada and Canadians. We are going to be very proud of our Prime Minister.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister announced that child and maternal health would be a top priority of the upcoming G8, we all applauded.

However, despite the rhetoric, we have seen no action. While the government is spending billions on security and its fake lakes, it is flatlining its aid budget and is refusing to commit any concrete money to maternal health.

Last week Bill and Melinda Gates committed \$1.5 billion over five years to maternal and child health. Could the government tell us what its commitment is and if it cannot tell us that, when can we know the exact amount for child and maternal health?

● (1455)

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right that the Gates Foundation has supported Canada's initiative to save the lives of mothers and children. In fact, Melinda Gates said, "Canada is proposing a bold but achievable plan that can save countless lives – and I hope all G8 members will lend their strong support". That is exactly what is happening.

Secretary of State Clinton said, "We commend the Canadian government for focusing attention".

The Prime Minister of the U.K. said, "We have agreed to tackling the scandal of—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley.

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**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals continue to show how out of touch they are with the average Canadian, particularly the Canadian farmer. They continue to advocate for the continuation of the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry and the prison farm system.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety please explain to the Liberals that Canadians expect their programs to be run effectively and efficiently?

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his strong support in standing up for hard-working Canadians and victims of crime.

For Liberals, a 1% success rate is an effective use of taxpayer dollars and justifies the continuation of the prison farm system. For Liberals, farmers should be criminalized by a wasteful long gun registry.

Unlike the Liberals, this Conservative government believes in ensuring programs are effective and efficient. When will the Liberals stand up for victims and law-abiding Canadians?

\* \* \*

**TOURISM INDUSTRY**

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it seems the Prime Minister made a big mistake when he gave control of the marquee tourism program to the minister for fake lakes.

Instead of helping promote tourism, we learned the minister decided to choose ideology over economics and cut events like the Edmonton Folk Festival, Caribana and Toronto Pride.

*Oral Questions*

With so much spent on the G8 and G20 summits that no one will remember a month from now, why can the government not support festivals that actually generate tourism dollars?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what this government has done for two years running. We have supported marquee tourism festivals through this special stimulus fund. This year we have expanded the reach of the marquee tourism program to 19 other events in other cities and towns across our great nation.

I was at the Luminato festival in the city of Toronto on Friday night for its grand opening. I can assure the hon. member that the people were very excited, this premier arts festival for the country and indeed the world. They were happy this government was on their side.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS**

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, for the third year in a row, the francophonie festival in Gatineau, “Outaouais en fête”, has been denied funding from Canadian Heritage. The reasons—or excuses—cited are the geographic and historic aspects of the festival. The event's chairperson believes this refusal has more to do with a prejudice against Impératif français.

Can the minister review the organization's request for funding and ensure that it was considered fairly?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that application was considered fairly. The organization did not qualify to receive taxpayer money for three reasons.

[English]

I will explain to my colleague very clearly. The reason this festival did not qualify for taxpayer funding was that this particular festival had a \$1 million surplus left over from last year.

The reason we are not funding this festival is that it has a surplus and we think there are other festivals and other priorities for taxpayer dollars other than giving money to festivals for a second and third time unnecessarily.

\* \* \*

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, maternal health care for first nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada lags behind the care available for non-aboriginal Canadians. Aboriginal women have less access to pregnancy care, have more premature births and suffer more complications. This results in double or triple the national infant mortality rate, Canada's hidden shame.

When will the government commit the same level of funding to aboriginal maternal health in Canada as it has to security and props for the G20?

• (1500)

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the Minister of

Health comes from the north and she recognizes that investing in maternal health leads to greatly improved long-term health outcomes.

We continue to work collaboratively with first nations and Inuit leaders, partners and stakeholders to ensure access to quality health programs for infants, children and families in all first nations and Inuit communities.

In Nunavut, we are supporting the Government of Nunavut in its responsibility of delivering health services, including those for new mothers and children. This year alone our government is transferring over \$25.4 billion, which is an all-time high to the provinces and territories.

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**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to moving forward with a more robust complaints investigation and resolution mechanism for our national police force, the RCMP.

I am encouraged that the Minister of Public Safety is working hard to ensure that the appropriate oversight and accountability mechanisms are in place for the RCMP.

Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety update the House on the good work being done with regard to our 2010 budget commitment?

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her strong support of the RCMP and her work in advocating for a strengthened complaints review body.

This government committed in budget 2010 to moving forward with strengthening our nation's police force by providing for a more robust complaints investigation resolution mechanism.

I am proud to say today that the Minister of Public Safety will announce that we are delivering on that promise by improving the RCMP civilian review and complaints body.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS**

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister of fake lakes chose to make cuts to Quebec festivals like FrancoFolies, the New France Festival and the Festival Grand Rire de Québec.

The irony is not lost on Quebecers who saw a significant amount of support for the tourism industry evaporate, despite the fact that the minister “forgot” to spend \$12 million last year.

Can the minister explain how he found the money to drop gazebos into his own riding, but does not have a penny for Quebec culture, nothing for Maillardville and nothing for the people of the Saguenay region?

*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have no minister by that designation and until members actually address their questions in a respectful manner there will not be a minister answering.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PRISON FARMS**

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this Conservative government's agenda with respect to crown corporations is coming more into focus. After passing a budget that will privatize Canada Post and sell Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, the government has announced that it wants to end the 130-year-old prison farm program.

Experts say that this program is much more effective than the repressive approach of the United States.

Is the government using its so-called “tough on crime” approach to justify the sale of farm prison assets to its private sector friends?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to put the agenda of this government on the table. Its jobs open opportunity. Our single focus is on the economy and to return Canadians to work.

We are excited by the results we have seen. Since last July, we have seen more than 300,000 jobs created, and we are proud of that.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 20 petitions.

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● (1505)

**ENSURING THE EFFECTIVE REVIEW OF RCMP CIVILIAN COMPLAINTS ACT**

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-38, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

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**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT**

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-535, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (sickness benefits).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to stand in the House today to introduce a bill that I feel is necessary and its time has come. It would get rid of an inadequate system right now when it comes to sick benefits by reducing the number of hours of insurable employment required to qualify for benefits because of illness, injury or quarantine to 420 hours and increase the maximum benefit period for illness, injury or quarantine to 30 weeks.

This is something that has come into my riding, like many of the other members' ridings in this House of 308, when people say that they have come into a situation where they can no longer work. They would need less hours to qualify and, as a result, the benefit period would be increased to 30 weeks, which is a sufficient period for people suffering from illnesses, quarantine or injury.

I my hon. colleague from Random—Burin—St. George's who, too, feels that this is an incredible issue that should be settled right now in this House.

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

\* \* \*

**CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-536, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act (genetic characteristics).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act, genetic characteristics. I thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for seconding the bill.

The bill would add the term “genetic characteristics” to the list of prohibitive grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act. It is an updated version of a bill tabled by my former colleague, Judy Wasylcia-Leis, earlier this year. At the time she tabled it, she said that this bill would stop Canadians' personal genetic information from being used against them. Employers, insurance companies and others have already begun to discriminate against people based on their genetic makeup. People are being punished in fundamental ways, like being prevented from earning a living or buying a house for something they have no control over. That is unfair, and this bill would update the Canadian Human Rights Act to deal with this 21st century problem.

She also pointed out that health conscious Canadians were increasingly testing for genetic clues so they can take steps to avoid diseases or conditions to which they may have a genetic predisposition. Their reward should be better health but the information is increasingly being used to exclude people from job opportunities and limit access to mortgages and insurance benefits. There is currently nothing to prevent insurance companies and others from demanding test results and basing decisions on them.

*Routine Proceedings*

This issue was brought to my attention by Kristina Vandervoort of North Vancouver and it is supported by the Canadian Coalition for Genetic Fairness, whose members include the Huntington Society of Canada, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, the Muscular Dystrophy of Canada, the Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics, the Parkinson Society of Canada, the Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus Association of Canada, the National Ovarian Cancer Association, the ALS Society of Canada, the Alzheimer Society of Canada, the Osteoporosis Society—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I remind the hon. member that he is to give a brief summary of the bill at introduction. He can tell us who is supporting it at the second reading debate stage and everyone will look forward to that, I think.

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

\* \* \*

**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-537, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (judicial interim release for offences involving firearms).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce legislation to amend the Criminal Code in memory of Boris Cikovic, a 17-year-old constituent from my riding of Etobicoke Centre, who was gunned down on October 3, 2008, in Buttonwood Park.

This bill would amend the Criminal Code to add offences involving firearms to the list of offences set out in section 469 so that offences involving firearms may only be tried by a superior court and a person accused of an offence involving a firearm would be required to demonstrate to the court why they should not be detained in custody before trial.

Boris Cikovic's accused killer has been out on bail since this terrible murder and refuses to co-operate with police in identifying his three accomplices. Boris' parents are forced to struggle daily with the unbearable knowledge that they are possibly walking past the dangerous perpetrators of the murder of their son on the streets of their very own neighbourhood.

By adopting this bill, we would ensure that perpetrators of crimes involving guns are not released into our neighbourhoods under our currently soft bail regime.

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

\* \* \*

• (1510)

**CANADA PENSION PLAN**

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-538, An Act to Amend the Canada Pension Plan (designation of survivor).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to present this bill. It would amend the Canada pension plan to allow contributors to designate as the beneficiary of their survivor pension someone who is not their spouse or common-law partner. I would like to thank the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for seconding the bill.

This came to my attention because a constituent was recently diagnosed with mesothelioma, a rare and lethal form of cancer, as a result of her being exposed to asbestos in the workplace. She is only 50 years old. Her doctor says that her cancer is inoperable and that her prognosis is one year. She is now trying to put all of her affairs in order before the inevitable and has discovered to her great dismay that the CPP survivor benefits are provided only to a spouse or children.

As she has never married or had children, she wishes to designate a beneficiary but the legislation prohibits her from doing so. My constituent believes that this legislation amounts to theft of her hard-earned CPP contributions, a pension that she has paid into for 25 years. The purpose of this bill is to ensure that this grievous inequity does not exist and that people in this position can designate someone as their beneficiary.

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

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL PHILANTHROPY DAY ACT**

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC)** moved, seconded by the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, that Bill S-203, An Act respecting a National Philanthropy Day, be read the first time.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

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

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practices of the House, during the debate tonight pursuant to Standing Order 53.1 any member rising to speak may indicate to the Speaker that he or she will be dividing his or her time with another member and no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

**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)

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I request that the following motion be adopted by this place by unanimous consent and that it be known as the Homolka motion.

*Routine Proceedings*

I move: “That, in the opinion of the House, urgent changes to the Criminal Records Act are required to prevent pardons from being granted that would bring the administration of justice into disrepute, and therefore the government should immediately introduce legislation with the specific purpose to empower the National Parole Board to deny pardons in cases where granting a pardon would bring the administration of justice into disrepute, with cooperation and support from all parties to move swiftly such legislation through the House and Senate before Parliament rises for the summer, and further that the Standing Committee on Public Safety should be directed to conduct a thorough study of all other changes that should be made to the Canadian pardon system to ensure it is strengthened and fair or all Canadians”.

I think it only fair to note that draft legislation referred to in this motion has been circulated to all parties.

• (1515)

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Welland have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** There is no consent.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I move, “That notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-23 be deemed read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, and deemed read a third time and passed”.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** There is no consent.

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS**

## POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present four petitions today, all dealing with the same issue. The issue is that budget 2010 prohibits post-doctoral fellows from claiming the scholarship exemption. This is a real disincentive to researchers and is a discouragement for research and innovation.

The petitioners suggest that the decision should be held in abeyance until at least some discussion takes place. The government should suspend that decision and get together with a national working group on post-doctoral fellowships to establish the best course of action to ensure we have the best environment for encouraging young researchers in particular in this country. The budget works against that. I am pleased to present that petition on their behalf.

[Translation]

## PREVENTIVE WITHDRAWAL PROGRAM

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present another petition calling on the Government of Canada to develop an administrative agreement with the Government of Quebec giving all pregnant women in Quebec the right to access the preventive withdrawal program offered by Quebec’s occupational health and safety commission.

This time, we received the petition from different groups, including the Outremont branch of the Syndicat des employées et employés professionnels-les de bureau; the Centre des femmes dynamiques de Laval; the Syndicat des employé(e)s de Vidéotron, Montreal; the West Island Women’s Shelter, Kirkland; the Fédération des agricultrices du Québec, Longueuil; the Regroupement des femmes de la région de Matane, La Ressource, Montreal; the Centre des femmes du Témiscouata; PSAC, Rimouski; the Service Employees Union, Montreal; the Service des travaux publics de Boisbriand; Employment and Social Solidarity, Montreal; and the Syndicat des débardeurs, the Port of Montreal.

[English]

## PUBLIC TRANSIT SAFETY

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a petition from Canadian citizens from my community of Sault Ste. Marie who are extremely concerned with the increase in violent assaults against public transit, school bus, para transit and intercity bus workers across Canada.

The petitioners say that almost 40% of Canadian bus operators have indicated that they have been physically assaulted in their career. In 2008 alone, 2,064 assaults were reported by bus operators, an increase of 438 assaults over reported cases in 2007. They are also concerned with the safety of passengers.

[Translation]

## IMMIGRATION

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting a petition signed by residents of the National Capital Region. They are calling on the government to create a special immigration measure allowing Canadian citizens and permanent residents to sponsor family members who were personally and directly affected by the earthquake in Haiti on January 12, 2010. More specifically, they are asking the government to show more flexibility in its definition of the people who can be included in the family class, particularly concerning age.

[English]

## HOUSING

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions.

*Routine Proceedings*

I have presented many petitions on this subject. It is signed by many residents in East Vancouver and other parts of Vancouver who are in support of a national housing strategy. The petitioners are calling for an increased federal role in housing, not for profit housing, housing for the homeless and access to housing for those with different needs. They are calling for the support of Bill C-304.

• (1520)

## KAIROS

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition has also been presented a number of times in this House. It is signed by individuals across the country who are very concerned about the situation facing KAIROS, a Canadian ecumenical justice initiatives group that provides sustainable development, human rights and peace through education, advocacy and co-operation programs, linking more than 21 organizations in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa.

The petitioners are very concerned about the program cuts and the funding cuts that have happened to KAIROS. They call upon the Government of Canada to immediately restore its funding relationship with KAIROS and to fund the organization's overseas program for the period of 2010-13.

## IRAN

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition on the occasion of the one-year anniversary of the fraudulent Iranian election and the ensuing massive domestic repression and alarming march toward nuclear weapons capability, calling upon the government to act against the Iranian regime's clear and present danger to international peace and security, to regional and Middle East stability and, increasingly and alarmingly, to its own people.

In particular, the petitioners urge the government to combat the critical mass of Iranian threat, including the nuclear threat, the threat of state-sanctioned incitement, state-sponsored terrorism and the threat of massive domestic repression.

The petitioners urge the government to enact the Iran accountability act, to hold President Ahmadinejad and Iranian leaders to account for violating the prohibition against incitement to genocide in the genocide convention and international law, and to support Interpol arrest warrants against Iranian leaders implicated in terrorist acts against the AMIA in Argentina.

The petitioners reaffirm the feeling of Canadian friendship with the Iranian people, regret developments that have created impediments to that friendship, and hold the Iranian people, their culture and their ancient and rich history in the highest esteem.

## HORSE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I present this petition on behalf of some residents of Alberta who are concerned with the Canadian horse industry, which they say will result in the loss of a way of life, careers and livelihoods.

The petitioners point out that close to 100,000 American horses are being dumped into Canada because of the closure of all American horse-processing plants, and that these horses are being

stockpiled for the future because of pending traceability and health regulations.

The petitioners would also like the government to abandon any design in regard to a functioning horse traceability program. They say that the one that is already in place has worked well for the past 100 years. They ask the minister to end the dumping of American horses into Canada and to cancel all proposed Canadian horse traceability and health regulations.

## NATIONAL ABORIGINAL CENTRE

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, for centuries before Samuel de Champlain's arrival, the Chaudière Falls at Victoria Island were a sacred meeting place for indigenous peoples. The area had been a site for cultural convergence, political evolution and influential innovation. Today the land sits in the shadow of this place.

I am presenting a petition signed by people from all over the country who wish to see Victoria Island become the site for an aboriginal centre. They ask that the government support such a centre.

The good news is that the drawings and the plans by renowned Canadian architect Douglas Cardinal have already been done.

The petitioners ask that the government get behind this initiative to support our first nations.

## CAFFEINATED BEVERAGES

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

We are getting new petitions every day against Health Canada's authorization of caffeine in all soft drinks. Health Canada announced on March 19, 2010 that beverage companies will be allowed to add up to 75% of the caffeine allowed in the most highly caffeinated colas to all of their soft drinks.

Soft drinks have been designed and marketed toward children for generations. Canadians already have concerns about children drinking coffee and colas. They acknowledge that caffeine is an addictive stimulant. It is difficult enough for parents to control the amount of sugar, artificial sweeteners and other additives that their children consume, including caffeine from colas.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to reverse Health Canada's new rule allowing caffeine in all soft drinks and not to follow the deregulation policies of the United States and other countries that sacrifice the health of Canadian children and pregnant women.

● (1525)

## EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition, also signed by dozens of Canadians, calls upon the Canadian government to match funds personally donated by the citizens of Canada for the victims of the earthquake in Chile. On February 27, 2010 an 8.8 magnitude earthquake occurred in southern Chile, as Mr. Speaker knows as he was there a couple of weeks ago.

The community here has been fundraising since that time. Chilean Canadians are asking when the Prime Minister is going to give the same treatment to the victims of the earthquake in Chile as he did for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti and match funds personally donated by Canadians to help the victims of the earthquake in Chile.

\* \* \*

## 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. 225 and 237. [Text]

Question No. 225—**Mr. Malcolm Allen:**

With regard to the government's collection of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on poppies and poppy wreaths: (a) what is the total amount in dollars of GST collected by the government from the purchase of these items for each year from 1996, up to and including the current year; and (b) what is the total amount in dollars of GST collected by the government from the purchase of these items for each year from 1991 through 1996?

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister of the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canada Revenue Agency, CRA, is not able to respond to the above-noted question as it does not collect the information in the manner requested.

Goods and services tax/harmonized sales tax, GST/HST, registrants must collect GST/HST on all taxable supplies; that is, goods and services that are supplied in the course of a commercial activity and are subject to GST/HST, and must file GST/HST returns. The CRA requires such registrants, on their returns, to provide data in aggregate form with respect to sales and other revenue. Therefore, data on specific items, such as poppies and poppy wreaths, is not available.

The CRA would note that under the Excise Tax Act, ETA, sales of poppies and poppy wreaths are exempt from GST/HST when made by the Dominion Command, any provincial command of the Royal Canadian Legion, or any branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. As well, a 50% rebate of the GST/HST paid on purchases of poppies and poppy wreaths is available to registered charities and qualifying non-profit organizations.

Question No. 237—**Mr. Bill Siksay:**

With regard to nuclear disarmament, what is the government planning to do to ensure Canada's participation in verification efforts in preparation for multilateral verification of nuclear disarmament processes?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada remains at the forefront of efforts to ensure that nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament instruments feature robust verification mechanisms. Canada maintains a high level of

*Speaker's Ruling*

expertise in the field given its work in International atomic energy agency inspections, the verification technologies used in the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty's international monitoring system, remote sensing systems and verification systems used in other conventions on weapons of mass destruction.

\* \* \*

[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 Question No. 223 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 223—**Mr. Charlie Angus:**

What is the total amount of government funding, for each fiscal year since 2004-2005, up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Timmins—James Bay, specifying each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## PRIVILEGE

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I am now prepared to rule on the questions of privilege raised on May 10 and 14, 2010, by the hon. member for Mississauga South concerning statements made pursuant to Standing Order 31 by the members for Peace River and Selkirk—Interlake and the preamble to an oral question by the member for Peace River.

Each of these related specifically to the role played by the member for Mississauga South as chair of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

*Speaker's Ruling*

[English]

I would like to thank the hon. member for Mississauga South for having raised these matters, and the Minister of State for Science and Technology and Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, as well as the members for Peace River, Pickering—Scarborough East, Selkirk—Interlake, Cariboo—Prince George, Scarborough—Rouge River, Charlottetown, and Burnaby—Douglas for their interventions.

The member for Mississauga South alleges that the member for Peace River and the member for Selkirk—Interlake knowingly made inaccurate statements in the House that were personal attacks on him in his capacity as committee chair. He also argued that they were an indictment of him and contrary to the spirit and intent of the February 26, 2009 letter sent by me as Speaker to the House leaders concerning statements pursuant to Standing Order 31.

[Translation]

To support his arguments, he cited both Standing Order 18, which requires members to refrain from using offensive words against other members, and *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Second Edition, at page 618, which reads:

Personal attacks, insults and obscene language or words are not in order. A direct charge or accusation against a member may be made only by way of a substantive motion for which notice is required.

[English]

The member also referred to rulings by Speakers Michener, Fraser and Parent which emphasized the importance of freedom of speech, but cautioned about the dangers of its improper use. Claiming that the comments complained of amounted to a form of intimidation and impugned his integrity, honesty, character and ethics, the member asked that the Chair find that these interventions in the House constitute a prima facie breach of privilege.

For his part, the member for Peace River explained that he had used the statement to expose what he believed to be an abuse of authority by the member for Mississauga South in his capacity as chair of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. He stated that his statement was not meant as a personal attack but was simply a difference of opinion, freely expressed, that was really a matter of debate.

The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake echoed these arguments, contending that he did not believe he had impugned the reputation of the hon. member for Mississauga South.

[Translation]

When this issue was first raised on May 10, 2010, the Deputy Speaker rightly noted that, if there are issues about the proceedings in the committee, it is incumbent upon the committee itself to deal with them and, should it deem it necessary, to report to the House on the matter.

It is clear to the Chair in this instance that many of the grievances aired in the House by the members for Peace River and Selkirk—Interlake, including those that gave rise to this question of privilege, relate directly to events that are said to have occurred in committee.

That venue provides ample opportunity for the members for Peace River and Selkirk—Interlake to raise their concerns about the

conduct of the committee proceedings, and provides the member for Mississauga South, as chair, with a venue to respond. Ultimately, these are committee issues which the committee itself should address.

[English]

At the same time, the Chair is being asked to rule on a sort of hybrid matter, that is, whether or not statements made in the House with regard to events in committee, because of the way they were cast when made, constitute a prima facie case of privilege.

● (1530)

[Translation]

Members' statements, pursuant to Standing Order 31, as well as oral questions, are important means by which members bring matters to the attention of the House, and I need not remind members that the public takes great interest in both proceedings.

As the hon. member for Mississauga South indicated, many of my predecessors as Speaker have noted that the privilege of freedom of speech that members enjoy confers responsibilities on those who are protected by it, and members must use great care in exercising their right to speak freely in the House.

[English]

As was correctly pointed out, the use of members' statements and preambles to questions to attack other members does not provide those targeted with an opportunity to respond or deal directly with such attacks.

[Translation]

The Chair has been at pains to remind the House that statements made pursuant to Standing Order 31 and preambles to oral questions are not the appropriate mechanisms to use if members wish to bring such matters to the attention of the House. As has already been mentioned, page 618 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, states:

A direct charge or accusation against a member may be made only by way of a substantive motion for which notice is required.

[English]

As the Chair indicated earlier, if the matter emanates from committee, this would be done by way of a report; however, as to whether a case of prima facie privilege exists, which is the matter on which the Chair has been asked to rule, it is important to remind the House that in such cases the Chair must be satisfied that the actions complained of are of such a character as to have impeded the member in carrying out his duties.

[Translation]

Page 109 of O'Brien and Bosc is helpful in this regard:

In order to find a prima facie breach of privilege, the Speaker must be satisfied that there is evidence to support the member's claim that he or she has been impeded in the performance of his or her parliamentary functions...



*Government Orders**[English]*

While the appropriateness of the statements made has been called into question and while there is little doubt that the member has raised legitimate grievances that are akin to a point of order, the Chair is not satisfied that the evidence presented is sufficient to suggest that the member for Mississauga South has been impeded in carrying out his duties.

Accordingly, the Chair cannot find a basis for finding a prima facie case of privilege in these instances. The Chair nonetheless remains concerned by the continuing and unsettling trend towards using members' statements as a vehicle to criticize other members.

As has been pointed out, House of Commons Procedure and Practice, 2nd edition at page 618 states:

The proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all Members. Thus, the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden. Personal attacks, insults and obscenities are not in order.

When speaking in the House, members must remain ever cognizant of these fundamental rules. They exist to safeguard the reputation and dignity not only of the House itself but also that of all its members.

*[Translation]*

I thank hon. members for their attention on this matter.

\* \* \*

● (1535)

*[English]***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**The Speaker:** I would like to inform the House that under the provisions of Standing Order 30, I am designating Wednesday, June 16 as the day fixed for the consideration of private member's Bill S-210 standing in the order of precedence in the name of the hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

*[Translation]*

This additional private members' hour will take place immediately after the time for private members' business already planned for this day, after which the House will proceed to the adjournment debate pursuant to Standing Order 38.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***ELIMINATING PARDONS FOR SERIOUS CRIMES ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Criminal Records Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak in this debate at second reading on Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Criminal Records Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

This is a very important bill that I believe needs a thorough debate in the House of Commons. I think it is a very significant piece of legislation.

The bill would rename pardon as record suspension. I think that is a very significant action in the bill. I know there has been some opinion in debate already that it may be an inconsequential change, but I believe it is an extremely serious change in the legislation and in our overall perspective on what the pardon system is about.

The bill would also increase the ineligibility period that must pass before a pardon application can be submitted from the current five years to ten years for indictable offences and from the current three years to five years for summary offences. The bill would also prohibit those convicted of four or more indictable offences from ever receiving a pardon. It would prohibit anyone convicted of one or more offences from a designated list of sex offences from ever receiving a pardon. With respect to pardon applications for indictable offences, it would say that the Parole Board would be required to deny a pardon if granting it would bring the administration of justice into disrepute.

Therefore, there are very significant changes to our current parole system included in the bill. I think it is something that we need to very carefully consider and proceed with caution with regard to changing the system, which I believe has served us well.

I want to talk a little about what our pardon system is actually about. To do that I have gone to the website of the National Parole Board and pulled up its fact sheet on our current pardon system.

It has a frequently asked questions page which poses various questions and provides information about the system. In response to the question, what is a pardon, the Parole Board notes that a pardon allows people who were convicted of a criminal offence, that have completed their sentence and demonstrated that they are law-abiding citizens, to have their criminal record kept separate and apart from other criminal records.

Under the current Criminal Records Act, the National Parole Board may issue, grant, deny or revoke pardons for convictions under federal acts or regulations of Canada.

Another question posed is, what is the effect of a pardon? It notes in its answer that all information pertaining to convictions will be taken out of the Canadian police information centre, CPIC, and may not be disclosed without permission of the Minister of Public Safety of Canada.

The CRA applies only to records kept within federal departments and agencies. However, many of the provincial and municipal law enforcement agencies co-operate by restricting access to their records once notified that a pardon has been granted or issued.

*Government Orders*

The Parole Board also notes, in this answer, that the Canadian Human Rights Act forbids discrimination based on a pardon conviction. So that includes services a person needs for the opportunity to work for a federal agency. It also states that no employment application from within the federal public service may ask any question that would require an applicant to disclose a pardoned conviction. That also applies to a crown corporation, the Canadian Forces or any business within federal authority.

The next question posed is, what are the limitations of a pardon? I think this is an important feature of the current pardons regime. It notes that a pardon does not erase the fact that a person was convicted of an offence. It notes that a pardon does not guarantee entry or visa privileges to another country. It notes that courts and police services, other than the RCMP, are under provincial and municipal legislation. This means that they do not have to keep records of convictions separate and apart from other criminal records.

The Parole Board notes that the Criminal Records Act lists certain sexual offences. If a person was pardoned for such offences his or her record will be kept separate and apart but his or her name will be flagged in the CPIC computer system. This means that a person will be asked to let employers see his or her record if this person wants to work with children or with groups that are vulnerable because of their age or disability. The flag is applied regardless of the date of conviction or the date of pardon was granted or issued. We should all be apprised and reminded of this very important feature of the current legislation, that for sexual offences there is still that proviso in the existing pardon regime

● (1540)

The National Parole Board also notes that a sentence may have included various prohibition orders imposed under the Criminal Code, such as driving or firearms prohibition orders. A pardon does not cancel those prohibition orders.

When can a person apply for a pardon? An individual can apply when their sentence is completed; when they have paid all fines, surcharges, costs, restitution and compensation orders in full; when a person has served all of his or her time, including parole or statutory release; and, when a person has satisfied his or her probation officer.

What are the specific waiting periods for convictions under the Criminal Code and other federal statutes? It is three years for summary convictions and five years for indictable offences. For convictions under the Transfer of Offenders Act, it is five years for all convictions. For convictions under the National Defence Act, it is five years if the person was fined more than \$2,000; five years if the person was imprisoned more than six months; five years if the person was dismissed from the service; and three years for all other penalties.

Other questions are posed in this information section from the National Parole Board on pardons.

Can a pardon be denied? The answer is yes, for example, if the National Parole Board finds that a person is not of good conduct. However, in that situation that individual can reapply after one year.

Can a pardon be revoked? Again, the answer is yes. The National Parole Board may revoke a pardon if the person is later convicted of

a summary offence under a federal act or regulation of Canada. He or she can do it if the National Parole Board finds that he or she is no longer of good conduct, or if the National Parole Board learns that a false or deceptive statement was made or relevant information was concealed at the time of the application.

There are very explicit terms for the revocation of a pardon.

In terms of the actual process, there are two ways of dealing with a pardon: a pardon can be granted or a pardon can be issued. For an offence punishable on summary conviction, it is a non-discretionary process. The National Parole Board confirms that the necessary waiting period, three years after satisfaction of sentence, has been completed and verified through the RCMP that the applicant has not been convicted of any other offences since the last conviction. Depending on the result, a pardon may then be issued.

The other circumstance is where there was an indictable offence and the person has applied for a pardon in that situation. In assessing a pardon request for an indictable offence, the National Parole Board confirms that the necessary waiting period, five years after satisfaction of sentence, has been completed and verified through the RCMP and local police services that there have been no further convictions. They investigate the applicant's behaviour since the sentence was completed to confirm that he or she was of good conduct. In light of this evaluation, a board member will decide whether to grant or deny a pardon.

There is a very explicit process to the current pardon regime. It is important to review that because one would think that there was nothing to this system, that there was nothing there to protect Canadians, that there was no rigour to the existing system. When we actually look at the details of how the current system works, we can easily see that is not the case.

There are significant limitations to what a pardon means, to how it can be obtained, to whether or not it continues and can be revoked. This is by no means a blank cheque to someone who has committed a criminal offence in the past. It comes as a result of responsibilities having been met and kept, and it requires a long-term commitment to avoid the behaviour that put the individual in trouble in the first place.

We have to look at this system as a very successful system. We know that 96% of the people who have applied for pardons never commit another offence. That is a 96% success rate. I doubt if there are many other programs anywhere in government that are as successful as that. This is a hugely successful system.

In the past four years, 400,000 pardons have been granted and only a small number have ever been revoked. That says volumes about the importance of this system, how well it functions, and how well it has served Canadians and our communities.

*Government Orders*

● (1545)

This is not something that is done cavalierly. It is not something that is done without serious consideration. It is not something that is done outside of any proven track record. All of those things have been taken into account when we look at the success of the pardon system.

It is not just me, as a member of Parliament for Burnaby—Douglas, who believes that. In 2006, shortly after they were elected, the current Conservative government members reviewed the pardon system. The former minister of public safety, the current President of the Treasury Board, undertook that review. It came back with only minor changes to the system, because even the Conservative minister of public safety had to admit that the system was working well and serving us well.

The small change was that in the situation where a pardon was being granted for an indictable offence, two members of the National Parole Board had to be involved in signing off on that pardon. That was a very small change, perhaps a sensible change, but again, it was not a major change after a review by the current government. So one wonders why we are faced again with this significant change in the current bill we are debating, Bill C-23.

As I said earlier, one of the key elements of the legislation before us, Bill C-23, is to change the name from “pardons” to “record suspension”. Some people seem to think that is an insignificant change, but I do not happen to be one of them. I think the word “pardon” is imbued with a meaning that is very, very important in our criminal justice system. It has a very important place in the whole process of charging, convicting, rehabilitating and then ultimately pardoning someone who has shown they have paid their debt to society for behaviour that caused them to face a criminal conviction in the first place.

Moving to something that sounds much more administrative, that takes away a whole level of meaning, moving from pardon to record suspension, is a serious downgrading of the system that has served us so well. We have to stress rehabilitation. We have to stress the successful conclusion of rehabilitation. I worry sometimes that the government of the day does not care very much about that. It is very hot to trot on the punishment side of the equation, but less so on the rehabilitation side, on ensuring that people who have gone through our criminal justice system and paid their debt can then live successfully in our society.

One of the ways those people have been able to live successfully is by obtaining a pardon, which allows them to find their place again in society without being burdened by their criminal record in a way that causes problems for them as they try to make a living, as they seek housing, as they take their place back in society.

A pardon does not come easily, and it comes after a significant waiting period. People have to show they have been a responsible member of society. If we move from a word like “pardon” to a concept of “record suspension”, we are dropping a very significant piece of what has been part of the current regime.

We go to questions of redemption. We go to questions of mercy. We go to questions of responsibility. The word “pardon” conveys all those kinds of things and they are a very important part of it. We lose

those meanings at our peril in this process. It is something we have to take very seriously. The concept of a pardon helps us to take this process very, very seriously and to give it the attention and the importance it deserves.

There are others who believe that the bill before us has other flaws. An interesting perspective comes from the Mennonite Central Committee. It raised the whole issue of the role of victims in the pardon process, and the bill does not deal with that situation. If we were moving toward the concept of restorative justice where we were ensuring that all those who were hurt by a criminal act were involved in the justice process to ensure that broken relationships were healed as best they could be, that the community was involved in ensuring that the persons who had committed the crime took responsibility for that crime, that they faced the people who had been directly harmed by that crime, reconciliation would be a part of the process.

● (1550)

Often in our criminal justice system someone is convicted. We might hear a victim impact statement at the time of conviction and they disappear into our correctional services system. They serve their time and then they are released.

There is no final act of reconciliation, no clarity around the harm that was done to society and the way that person can be successful reintroduced into the community. If we took more of a restorative justice approach that had that broader perspective on crime, on reconciliation, we would be far better served in the long run.

It is an important point that the Mennonite Central Committee raised when it looked at the current bill and felt the whole concept of the role of the victim of a crime when a pardon is granted had been ignored.

That is something that merits attention, that merits study by the House, and it should be part of any review of a pardon system.

It is very clear where the bill emerged and why it emerged at this point in time. There are concerns in our communities about pardons that were granted to Graham James and about the potential of a pardon being granted to Karla Homolka. I do not think there is anyone here, or in our communities, who believes that is a good thing, that Karla Homolka, for instance, would be granted a pardon for the very heinous crimes she committed. Somehow that would seem to be an extension of the kind of errors that were made as her case proceeded through our criminal justice system. People feel that very acutely given what happened in that horrible, horrible case.

I do not think we do justice to the legislative process when we build legislation around the worst possible case we could imagine. When we develop legislation based on the situation of Karla Homolka, I am not sure it serves those hundreds of thousands of other people who have shown that the pardon system has real meaning and has been a real benefit to them. There is real benefit when people who have committed crimes have been successfully reintegrated into our communities.

*Government Orders*

That is a very serious problem with this legislation. If we go to the worst case, then we somehow forget or downplay the importance of all those other cases, the more ordinary, the more regular cases. They are significant but they do not raise the same issues that a Karla Homolka or a Graham James would raise. So we have to be very cautious when we proceed on this.

The NDP put forward a very helpful proposal in this regard. When the hon. member for Welland spoke as debate began on this legislation, he made the proposal that we take out that section of the bill that would deal with a situation like Karla Homolka. He suggested that we debate it separately, that we ask the government to bring in legislation that would deal with that specific situation and that we would try to facilitate it going through the House with great speed so we could address that very particular situation.

We do not suggest an overhaul of the pardon system in light of that specific need and that specific case, but we do suggest we also move to a full study of the pardon system to make sure it is the best possible system we could have.

Earlier today the member for Welland sought unanimous consent in the House, and unfortunately that was denied. I want to remind members of the motion he presented earlier this afternoon in the House. He said, "That, in the opinion of the House, urgent changes to the Criminal Records Act are required to prevent pardons from being granted that would bring the administration of justice into disrepute, and therefore the government should immediately introduce legislation with the specific purpose to empower the National Parole Board to deny pardons in cases where granting a pardon would bring the administration of justice into disrepute, with cooperation and support from all parties to move such legislation swiftly through the House and Senate before Parliament rises for the summer...".

That was an excellent suggestion coming from New Democrats in the House. I am disappointed that did not go anywhere. I hope there may be reconsideration given to that.

We need this system in place, and I am very concerned that we would dismantle it in light of these particularly heinous cases.

• (1555)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, less than one hour ago the member for Welland introduced a motion in this House. The government has had copies of it for several days now. It was the government members who refused unanimous consent to proceed with the motion.

The member for Welland said, "That, in the opinion of the House, urgent changes to the Criminal Records Act are required to prevent pardons from being granted that would bring the administration of justice into disrepute, and therefore the government should immediately introduce legislation with the specific purpose to empower the National Parole Board to deny pardons in cases where granting a pardon would bring the administration of justice into disrepute, with cooperation and support from all parties to move such legislation through the House and Senate before Parliament rises for the summer...".

That was the motion he introduced only an hour ago.

He asked for unanimous consent. All three opposition parties agreed. It was the government that denied unanimous consent.

I would like to ask the member what the agenda of the current government is when we, on this side of the House, are willing to give unanimous consent to get this important piece of legislation through the House in one day and it said no?

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Madam Speaker, I am disappointed as well. I think this was a very significant compromise that was proposed by New Democrats in this House to ensure the situation that is causing the immediate concern in Canada would be addressed, the situation of Karla Homolka being eligible soon for a pardon.

If we let Bill C-23 go through the normal process in the House of Commons and then through the Senate, we know we will be well into the fall before this bill could be passed through the normal legislative process of this place. Unfortunately, that means we will not be able to address the specific situation of Karla Homolka.

The motion proposed by the member for Welland, by the NDP, would have allowed that particular situation to be addressed in a very appropriate way, by ensuring it is the National Parole Board that has the ability to review that circumstance and to use the provisions where a situation would bring the administration of justice into dispute, but also where a pardon would shock the conscience of Canadians.

I think those are very important criteria.

I also think that the National Parole Board is absolutely the right place for that decision to be made. Those are the people who have the experience with the criminal justice system, with the end of the criminal justice process in Canada. They are the ones who know best about how that part of the system functions. They have the experience and they do excellent work on behalf of Canadians.

I think we forget how hard those folks work and how dedicated they are to that process, and how important their work is to all our communities. Sometimes they take criticism for decisions that were made, and sometimes that criticism is left to stand, to tarnish the whole reputation of the National Parole Board and the folks who work there. I think that is often extremely unfair. These people do great work on our behalf. If we could have expanded their jurisdiction to deal with those very particular cases, that would have been a responsible step to take.

Then, we would do the review. We are not saying to not review the pardon system. We agree that Canadians must have confidence in that system. Canadians must trust that system. We think that they should trust that system, given its incredible record of success.

Both of those things that were proposed could have been done. Unfortunately, that idea was shot down this afternoon.

• (1600)

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Madam Speaker, the government undercut one of its own members. The member for Surrey North spent a lot of time putting together Motion No. 514, in which she stated:

That the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security be instructed to undertake a review of the Criminal Records Act and report to the House within three months on how it could be strengthened to ensure that the National Parole Board puts the public's safety first in all its decisions.

*Government Orders*

This motion went through the process. It sat on the order paper. It came up for debate a few weeks ago. The member was able to present it. We were able to speak to it. However, her own government undercut her. It pulled the rug out from under her. It short-circuited the process by introducing Bill C-23.

Is that any way for a government to be treating its own members, especially one who has credibility on an issue like this in the first place? The government also did its own review in 2006. The former public safety minister did a review and at the end of the day decided that everything was fine with the system.

Once again, I would like to ask the member what he thinks about the government's lurching back and forth with no direction on this issue and many other issues in the House.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Madam Speaker, I think the member again raises a good point. This issue was already on the agenda of the House, thanks to the MP for Surrey North. In her motion, she talks about strengthening the Criminal Records Act to ensure that the National Parole Board puts the public's safety first in all its decisions.

I have no reason to doubt that the National Parole Board does not do that already. I believe that in all the work the board does, it is very much seized of the importance of putting the public's safety first. I would be very concerned if there were any suggestion otherwise.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Madam Speaker, as we are debating the bill before us today, Bill C-23, I think it is important to remember that this bill was nowhere on the government's radar during the throne speech. In fact, the only time we started talking about the pardon system and the need for reform of the pardon system was when the case of Graham James came before the national media.

The reason for introducing this bill is that it is for PR purposes. Graham James's case looked particularly bad for the government. It realized that the Karla Homolka case would also be coming up, so we have had a legislative response to a PR problem. Again, this was nowhere on the government's radar during the throne speech or during the prorogation. Nobody was talking about it.

I want to remind the House that this bill does five things. It renames pardons as record suspensions. It increases the ineligibility periods that must pass before a pardon application can be submitted from the current five years to 10 years for indictable offences and from the current three years to five years for summary offences.

It prohibits those convicted of four or more indictable offences from ever receiving a pardon. It prohibits anyone convicted of one or more offences on a designated list of sex offences from ever receiving a pardon. The last point is that with respect to pardon applications for indictable offences, the Parole Board would be required to deny a pardon if granting it would bring the administration of justice into disrepute.

This point is the only one that would apply to Karla Homolka. We have offered to pass that piece as a stand-alone piece, expeditiously, in the House. I wonder if the member for Burnaby—Douglas has a sense of why the government, if it feels so strongly about this, would not agree to pass that, because the rest certainly will not pass before the end of this session.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Madam Speaker, it is baffling. I do not know why it would not take the sure thing that deals with the immediate issue, which is the issue everybody is concerned about. That opportunity was there. We could have been doing that this afternoon. We could have started earlier, actually, because this motion has been circulating for a number of days around this place already.

We could have been doing that important work and dealing with the aspect that everybody is concerned about, but no, we did not do that. I do not know why. I wish I could understand the motivation of the government on criminal justice issues. It seems that its interest only proceeds to punishment, and it does not proceed any farther than that.

We cannot have a criminal justice system that is based on punishment. That will be an unsuccessful system. We have seen that in other jurisdictions in the world. When one does not pay attention to rehabilitation, when one does not pay attention to reintegration and reconciliation, one does not have a good criminal justice system.

● (1605)

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

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. member:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

\* \* \*

**PROTECTING VICTIMS FROM SEX OFFENDERS ACT**

**Hon. Diane Finley (for the Minister of Public Safety)** moved that Bill S-2, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to join in the debate on Bill S-2 put forward by the Minister of Public Safety.

These proposals speak to the issues of public safety and the basic rights of individual Canadians, subjects of some familiarity in this place. As hon. members will know, this legislation was debated in this place on an earlier occasion as Bill C-34.

In the current session, I am sure that the progress of these proposals has been monitored carefully as they have made their way through debate in the other place and have enjoyed the scrutiny of the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

*Government Orders*

Having carefully reviewed the debate thus far, I detect no great controversy. Nonetheless, I see no reason to refrain from a spirited discussion regarding the merits of the proposals before us, and I expect no less from the hon. members opposite.

The government has identified areas in which an existing mechanism within our criminal justice system may be improved. Since their introduction, these proposals have been given additional weight through the vehicle of the parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, which reviewed the existing legislation and made suggestions for its improvement.

Since these areas inviting positive change coincide with those highlighted over the years by various groups with an interest in criminal justice and by Canadians across the country, the government is quite rightly acting to update the legislation to reflect the constructive input of many knowledgeable citizens.

Over the last 20 years, there have been numerous legislative initiatives undertaken by a series of ministers responsible for facets of the criminal justice system, including some specifically directed at increasing penalties and delaying release for those convicted of serious crimes, particularly crimes of violence or sexual exploitation.

Historically among the more constructive of these parliamentary initiatives was the passage of a massive bill in 1992 that was brought forward by the Solicitor General of the day to replace the Parole Act and the Penitentiary Act with the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. I mention this as an example of legislation that achieved enlightened and enduring results based on research, consultation, and co-operation.

I might also add that on several occasions since, even this well-thought-out legislation underwent additional constructive change. Even the most carefully crafted legislation can benefit from experience and hindsight.

All Canadians are aware of examples of senseless crimes and the plight of the victims of these crimes. We are all aware, through our constituency offices, our correspondence, and media accounts that some of our citizens live in fear of crime and are of the belief that Parliament has not always risen to the challenge of protecting society.

Those of us who have followed criminal justice issues recall that for a time in the 1980s and early 1990s, the incidence of crime was of some concern to all of us. We saw both more and different sorts of crime being reported as victims of crimes involving family violence and sexual assault came to be less stigmatized and could come forward more readily to assist in the prosecution of their assailants.

The public has become more aware of our criminal justice system. It is obvious that an informed public is more likely to perceive flaws in the system with which it has more than a passing knowledge.

Those directly responsible for the safety of Canadian communities, from the police to prosecutors, judges, and ultimately our penal systems, both provincial and federal, are responding to the criticism and constructive suggestions that this increased awareness and oversight bring. As legislators, we should do no less.

There are many factors that affect an individual's exposure to crime. Geography, for example, plays a big part as an urban area

witnesses more violent crime than does the countryside. While I grant that many Canadians do not have ready options as to where they live and who they may encounter in their daily lives, there are also many Canadians who might reasonably expect that their only encounters with crime would be on the six o'clock news.

It is when this reasonable expectation of safety is shattered by direct, involuntary involvement with senseless crime that public reaction surfaces in our mail and in the media.

We must respond to these concerns, and we must do so in an effective manner. I submit that the government is doing just that by putting forward Bill S-2 to respond to identified issues within the justice system.

• (1610)

The government and the parliamentary committee that reviewed the legislation governing the National Sex Offender Registry determined that the status quo was just not good enough. Needs arising from systemic faults within the system must be changed through policy and regulatory changes or, if necessary, be altered through the legislative process.

We must do everything in our power to reduce the number of these faults, but a partial or ineffective response can be worse than no response at all. The government has acted by producing a comprehensive body of reforms that have been studied by parliamentarians of both Houses. As mentioned, those issues that cannot be fully resolved under the current legislative boundaries will be dealt with effectively by the legislation before us today.

Just as no two victims require exactly the same response from the criminal justice system, the law must be fashioned to accommodate a range of offenders in any given category. Offenders who respond favourably to treatment, training and educational opportunities available in our system can rejoin the community as upright taxpayers. These individuals will be back among us eventually whatever we do to them. Every reasonable opportunity must be provided for those who no longer threaten us to return as expeditiously as safety dictates.

However, as part of the balance of the system, there are offences of such a serious and sexual nature that the possibility of their recurrence means that the offenders responsible must be restricted in their interactions with fellow citizens. The bill before us would limit the opportunities for a significant but necessary number of offenders.

Bill S-2 is a coherent package of reforms and is worthy of our serious consideration and swift passage. As I have mentioned, I see nothing controversial in these proposals. It is to be hoped, however, that through a frank discussion of the issues addressed, that the public may gain a greater knowledge about this portion of our criminal justice system.

I certainly favour keeping criminal justice issues in the public eye so Canadians may be better informed. It is my further hope they would also be reassured that the system is under scrutiny and that the government will make changes as necessary to ensure the system works.

*Government Orders*

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, this bill is maybe No. 10 or No. 12 of a whole panoply of crime and justice bills, which the government loves to introduce to fix apparent problems in our justice system. We have quite readily supported those which have merit.

A while back, Bill C-9 was before the House and it contained a whole variety of issues related and unrelated to the budget. Why has the government not taken the opportunity to bundle all these justice bills into one crime and justice initiative? That way we could have a fulsome debate on each and every section rather than having a separate bill, a separate debate, a separate vote, a separate meeting at committee, witnesses at committee and the bill coming back to the House, et cetera, which stretches the whole process over literally months and sometimes with prorogation and things of that nature years of dealing with what are essentially small amendments to the Criminal Code.

• (1615)

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear my colleague across the floor is in strong favour of many of the initiatives that the government brings forward.

Bill S-2 is one bill that did receive fulsome scrutiny at committee, as I have already indicated. We look forward to members opposite giving swift passage to Bill S-2 in its current form. We hope the bill will get through the House very quickly.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the amendments to the Sex Offender Registry. It is not an easy issue to talk about. Any time we talk about sex offences, it is one of those issues that really causes us great personal pain. Whether as parents or as members of the community, when we hear about these offences, we recognize they are some of the most despicable and horrible acts that can happen in our communities. I do not think any member of the House would say that we should not put at the disposal of police officers every tool they possibly can have to stop one of those crimes from happening, to stop there being a victim in the first place.

I am pleased to be generally very supportive of these changes, but I will do something to start that I do not typically do, and that is to quote myself. The reason I will do this will become clear in just a moment:

We the know of the Stephensons, who lost their son, and all the work they did in developing Christopher's law. It has led in Ontario to some very effective legislation, legislation that is used many hundreds of times a day and searched far more than the national registry. The success of that registry underscores the failure of the national registry. When we look at the statistics, and it is hard to believe, the Ontario registry is used four times more in a day than the national registry is used in a year.

I do not think there is any disagreement from anyone in the House that the sex offender registry is in need of modernization and amendment, and I welcome that debate.

The reason I quote myself is because that was almost exactly a year ago in June 2009 when the House had this debate. At that point in time, I made a speech on the necessity of moving forward with then Bill C-34. Everyone was participating in that debate agreed there was a need to move forward expeditiously.

However, we are here after prorogation, after the government killed that bill, to debate it yet again. What is so frustrating about the bill is the government not only short-circuited, through prorogation,

the efforts of the House to deal with modernizing the National Sex Offender Registry, but in committee when we had undertaken a mandatory legislative review, as dictated by the government. We cleared our committee calendar. We pushed away all other business. We said that this was important, that we ought to sit down and work on this in a bipartisan way. We did exactly that.

We went over the National Sex Offender Registry. We had witnesses come from across the country and heard their testimony. As we were developing our report for the government, the government short-circuited all of it and tabled its bill without having even the courtesy of listening to the conclusions of the committee before ignoring them. Our committees are used to being ignored, but usually the government has the courtesy of letting the committee table the report before it ignores it. In this case, it did not even wait for that report. The Conservatives stated that the reason they needed to short-circuit our process was the legislation was so urgently needed, it was so desperate to push this forward and have it done, that they could not even wait to hear from the committee.

Then the summer passed, then prorogation and now we have the bill again. They would not wait for the opinion of committee, yet it was okay to prorogue and cancel the bill and now bring it back and talk about it with great urgency yet again, a year later. It shows of pattern behaviour. The government holds a reservoir of crime bills that it puts forward, retracts, puts forward, retracts, prorogues, kills, moves to the House and there is a curious timing with these bills. They seem to coincide with big Conservative problems.

Right now the government is embroiled in a rather large scandal, involving more than \$1 billion that is being wasted on G8 and G20 summits. If Conservatives do not want to talk about fake lakes, gazebos, sidewalks to nowhere and some of this colossal waste they have undertaken, they switch to a crime bill and say that we have to deal with it, that it is urgent. They expect everyone is going to forget that they killed their own bill, are reintroducing it, short-circuited committee's process a year ago because they said that it was so urgent.

Canadians are a little smarter than that. They see the game and it is unfortunate because, as I said, these changes should have been made a year ago.

*Government Orders*

My colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood asked an excellent question to which he did not get an answer just a few moments ago. Why on earth, if all of these bills are so urgent, did the Conservatives not reintroduce them in an omnibus fashion? They did it with the budget, Bill C-9. They put everything but the kitchen sink into the budget bill. Yet when it comes to a crime bill, they have to reintroduce them one at a time, month over month and there is suddenly time to match whatever controversy they happen to be embroiled in at the time. It certainly makes one ask the question of why the Conservatives are introducing these bills when they are. It would seem that they are channel-changers more than genuine attempts to change legislation.

• (1620)

It is important the committee identified a number of items within the sex offender registry that needed change. The bill has now incorporated many of those amendments, now that the government has waited a year and actually listened to what the committee had to say.

One of the provisions in the bill, which is clearly very important, is automatic inclusion, the idea that people who commit offences of a sexual nature be automatically included in the sex offender registry. When we were hearing from those who were involved in creating Christopher's law in Ontario, they told us how important this provision was. We heard that there were roughly 12,000 people, as of last April, on the Ontario sex offender registry. On our entire national registry, there are only 19,000, to give an example. As I mentioned earlier in my speech, it was being used more times in a single day in Ontario than it was being used in a year. Clearly police did not find this registry reliable and automatic inclusion was an important provision with which to move forward.

The second element we heard again and again in the committee testimony was the importance of the ability for the police to use this tool proactively. As an example, if people call in suspicious activity around a school or somebody acting in an odd way that is causing them concern, if police officers are called, they are able to reference that person against the sex offender registry to find out if that person has a history of sexual-based offences. This is something police officers could not do before and it something they said they needed to do. The bill before us today can do that.

The next point is it allows accredited law enforcement agencies to share information. What we do not want to have is silos, where the RCMP is guarding its information, a municipal police force is guarding its information and there is no exchange of data. In that situation, with those silos, there is opportunity for information to be missed, for somebody who should have been recognized or noticed before a crime occurred not to be noticed. That inclusion is important.

Another provision that one would have thought was in there but was clearly a mistake and an oversight was the fact that if somebody committed an offence overseas in another country, he or she would not be included on the National Sex Offender Registry. Clearly this is a huge loophole. We are aware, unfortunately, that sex crimes are very prevalent in certain parts of the world, where people will actually travel to commit sex crimes. It is essential that this information be captured in our national database and that when

police search records, it is not just domestic instances that are picked up, but also anything that happened internationally.

Something left out of the bill, which we recommended as a committee a year ago, was vehicle registration and ensuring the licence plate and vehicle were also registered. This was a big omission. Clearly when police officers are trying to ascertain whether there is something amiss, a vehicle with the plates registered to somebody who is a sex offender is very useful information.

None of these items unto themselves necessarily will stop every crime, but we are trying to empower our police officers to the best of our ability, to give them the tools they need to get the job done.

There were a couple of areas throughout the committee hearings that were concerns and to some extent remain concerns. Christopher's law in Ontario includes a very focused list of sex offences that have been very effective when used by police.

We heard from some witnesses that they were concerned with some of the additional lists of sex offences that were included in the sex offender registry, as they could weaken the registry, for example, if someone were charged with an office indiscretion. None of us want to see that sort of behaviour go on. Clearly it needs to be addressed and needs to have justice be served. However, does it make sense for an office indiscretion or for a mistake of a minor nature to land somebody on the sex offender registry? What the police said was this would weaken the sex offender registry by including too many people who were not an imminent threat to their community and therefore lengthening the amount of time police officers had to search through data and information to get at what was relevant.

• (1625)

For expressing and voicing the concern that police had about weakening this registry, one of the hon. members with the Conservative Party labelled me as trying to weaken the sex offender registry on a panel on national television by saying that I was against the sex offender registry. Again, this leads to yet another tool that the Conservatives often use with their crime bills.

If members ask any questions or raise legitimate concerns, concerns that police themselves are asking, the Conservatives try to make it sound as if we are somehow for sex offenders. Nothing, however, could be more patently absurd or intellectually dishonest.

Another issue for which there was concern had to do with judicial discretion, which is tied to the first point that I made. The committee and the Senate made recommendations, which failed, that said that only in the most extraordinary of circumstances, where judges recognized that inclusion in the sex offender registry would be a gross miscarriage of justice, should there be the opportunity for a judge to say no, that it does not make sense to put that person on the list. So, in the rarest of rare circumstances, would a judge be given a modicum of discretion to ensure that only the right people get on that registry.



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Again we were attacked for making that point but it is an important one. Policemen say that they would be put into a situation where the discretion would be forced on them to decide whether putting somebody on the sex offender registry would serve society well or be fair to that individual. Suddenly, the discretion is being put on police to make the decision to not to charge that person. Now, somebody who has committed a more minor offence might be in a situation where he or she is not charged at all after having committed the offence. That remains a concern.

In a broader context, there are a couple of other concerns that raise the question of how we deal with victimization before it happens. I was deeply disturbed when I had the opportunity as public safety critic to tour this country and meet with groups, including the Salvation Army, Boys and Girls Clubs and church organizations, that have seen their funding slashed for crime prevention, for the work they do on the front lines to try to stop crime before it happens. This is stuff that often does not get big headlines because, if it is successful, it never turns into a story.

If one has worked really hard at crime prevention, one can wake up one morning in a safer community. There are no headlines and nothing is trumpeted. There are just less victims and less crime. If we strip away all the rhetoric, should not one of the most major goals of government be to ensure communities are more safe, that crime never happens in the first place and that there are no victims to write about?

This slashing of that base infrastructure that communities have to stop crimes before they happen and to break the cycles of violence is deeply distressing because violence does not come out of the ether. It is not something that appears magically. More often than not, people who commit acts of violence have themselves been victims. They are caught in a cycle of victimization where they are playing out the same tragedy over and over again over successive generations.

What is desperately needed is intervention, to provide people with the opportunity to turn their life toward a bright path, particularly when they start to walk down that dark road. Again and again, when we talk to communities about the most important thing we can do to improve community safety, it is that, and yet, by more than half, spending on crime prevention in this country has been slashed and cut while prison spending has skyrocketed, an issue that, if I have time, I will come back to.

The second area of broader concern is the 41% cut to the victims of crime initiative, which is front line work with victims. The Conservatives often try to haul out the most tragic, terrible, awful examples that make all of our stomachs turn, but the reality is that victims cover a whole range. More often than not, very tragically, victims are aboriginal mothers stuck in a violent situation and needing help to get out of it. The victims of crime initiative worked with those victims to empower them and help them.

● (1630)

The victims ombudsman, the person the Conservatives put in place to be on the front lines of helping victims and recognizing their needs, said that the government's plan was unbalanced and would not work. When he decries the cuts to the victims of crime initiative, there is a pretty big gulf between the rhetoric of the government on victims and the reality. It is a gulf that is unfortunate because, more

often than not, it seems that crime is a political tool. Instead of first asking how we can develop good policy, how we can work with stakeholders, how we can develop good legislation and then develop talking points and communiqués around that, the government seems to first want to create communiqués and talking points and then find legislation to make it match.

Another area of concern deals with lawful access. An hon. member of our caucus put forward a private member's bill several times through successive parliaments that would have given police the ability to go after crimes of the digital age. Police have been asking for many years to implement updated powers and abilities to track criminals online, to deal with new technologies and new ways in which criminals are communicating, planning and conducting crimes. When we are dealing with sex offences, particularly sex offences against children, this is an area that is particularly relevant.

In 2005, the then Liberal government introduced a bill to modernize our lawful access rules and to empower police to use the most modern investigative techniques to go after these types of crimes. Unfortunately, that legislation has languished. It was first killed by an election. It was then introduced by a Conservative government but it killed it by calling an election. It was introduced again and cancelled again by it calling an election. It was introduced again and then killed when the Conservatives prorogued. They have introduced it yet again and we still do not have it. It follows a pattern of a lot of talk but very little action on something that is very relevant to both sex offenders and to fighting crime in general, something that police have been demanding.

The last point I will make is with respect to broad concerns as they affect the sex offender registry, and they have to do with the DNA data bank. There is a provision in the bill that ensures that somebody who is on the sex offender registry is automatically included in the DNA data bank. That is something that is laudable and supportable. However, the problem is that the DNA data bank is desperately underfunded. We know that the RCMP is taking seven to eight months to turn around requests and that its office simply cannot handle what is given to it. This automatic inclusion of all of this additional data will mean that the backup will be even bigger.

Again, we have a government passing something but not following it up with the resources to really make it work. If we are to have automatic inclusion in the DNA data bank, it is rather meaningless if the police do not have the resources to actually process and use that information.

We want to see the bill move forward. We are deeply disappointed that we are dealing with it yet again. It should have been dealt with more than a year ago. However, we look forward to its speedy passage through this place and the opportunity in committee to ask some of these important questions.

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•(1635)

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Madam Speaker, in his speech, my colleague referenced the cuts to organizations aimed at prevention but to other organizations that do great work to advocate and support victims or people in vulnerable situations when it comes to sexual offences.

I would like to hear from him on the government's approach. We are seeing a commitment to dealing with sexual offences but when it comes to dealing with the population that is most at risk of being victims of sexual offences, who, in our country in many cases are aboriginal women, the government has refused to renew funding to the Sisters in Spirit Campaign that is solely aimed at supporting aboriginal women who are vulnerable, who are on the margins of society and who often are the victims of these kinds of sexual offences that the government is supposedly trying to get tough on.

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, the member makes an important point. While the government is always stressing enforcement, we are watching it cut from the things that stop people from being victims in the first place. For some of the most vulnerable groups, the ones who comprise the largest number of victims, their funding is being cut or they are forgotten by the government.

The G8 and G20 has a legacy fund that is building everything, as I mentioned earlier, from sidewalks to nowhere at over \$1 million, a fake lighthouse and a \$23 million media centre that will not be used, but for the first nations people of Ontario they are seeing nothing. Their G8 legacy is to be forgotten. For a government that talks so much about caring about victims, it is simply tragic that it is turning its back on first nations people and that its G8 legacy is to basically ignore them.

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member gave what I consider to be a very accurate and historical context to the situation.

The bill has been before Parliament a number of times but on each occasion the government prorogues Parliament it suspends the bill. We now have the Prime Minister's Office saying that it will prorogue Parliament every year.

Could the member explain for the people who are watching this at home just what prorogation does to these bills once they are introduced, debated, sent to committee and then the House prorogues?

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, it is deeply frustrating to be standing and speaking again to this bill, but it is not the only bill I have been doing this with. I have been giving many speeches many times over because, as the member rightly points out and there is confusion on, when the government prorogues it kills all the business that was on the table.

Traditionally, prorogation would be used after the government has exhausted its legislative agenda and wants to begin a new agenda. Therefore, we would not lose any legislation. It is time not to purge a political issue but to renew a legislative agenda.

However, the last prorogation was used as a tool to get out of a sticky spot. The government was in trouble over the issue of Afghan detainees, an issue that we are still debating in the House even this week as we try to get those documents. When it is used as a tool to

get out of a political hot spot, it kills all the legislation that is on the table. Therefore, instead of renewing a legislative agenda, it short-circuits legislation, which means the House must do all that work all over again.

It is a colossal amount of waste, not only of the time of the House and of the witnesses who fly from all over the country to committee to be heard, but, quite frankly, it delays a lot of legislation that the country needs and should have been adopted some time ago.

•(1640)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would first like to say how much I appreciated the member's speech. He is very eloquent—he has quite a talent—and he bases all his arguments on facts that he has verified. He clearly demonstrated that in his speech.

I worked with him in the study of this bill a year ago when it was Bill C-34. Since that time, I have moved to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, but he will certainly remember some relevant facts he did not have time to mention, in particular regarding the DNA data bank that they want to use here once again. In fact, in the course of our study, we learned that the time for getting a DNA result is now more than a year, I believe. Certainly if there is a very urgent case, at a crime scene, they can be had faster, but the number of times the DNA data bank is used means that it takes an extremely long time. With this bill and the amendments being proposed, an even heavier load will be put on the DNA data bank.

We also learned, if I recall correctly, that training a DNA technician to be able to testify in court is something that takes years. Perhaps the member still recalls the exact time. I would not want to give inaccurate figures. I do not like to give figures when I have not verified them.

However, it strikes me again how the Conservatives have this habit of always making a show of how they are really doing something to tackle crime. Are they not going to extremes that will mean that at some point we are going to be unable to administer these laws, and so they will not be very useful to victims?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, the member was on the committee and was very constructive in asking questions and trying to get at evidence and basing our decisions on evidence, which is where we should start in any process.

He is also right to call the fact that when the government talks about the use of the DNA data bank as if just mentioning it in legislation will somehow empower law enforcement agencies to act upon it is disingenuous. The reality is that it takes years, as he mentioned, to train individuals to properly use that data bank which already has an enormous backlog. The reality of adding all this new information on top of a system that already has a huge backlog will cause huge problems.

I think the point the member makes is a critical one, which is that we should be having a debate on honest evidence and we should have an opportunity in a bipartisan way to look at these issues in committees, working collaboratively, making recommendations and then making legislation through that process, rather than striking it on the back of a napkin to make political points.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I wanted originally to talk about the process because, as the member will know, the public safety committee had been working on this issue for a long time. Before the report that it was able to issue was out the door, the government jumped ahead and introduced legislation of its own, which made a mockery of all of the witnesses who, in good faith, appeared before the committee, who contributed, who like all of us in this House wanted to ensure that the registry becomes more effective.

As I do not have very much time, let me just confine my question more specifically, because it seems to me that the two most contentious issues of the bill that is before us now centre on both automatic registration and access to the registry for prevention purposes. For the former, much depends on the list of offences; and for the latter, what the details of access consist of. So, in the final analysis, we have to be cautious of appearing to be protecting the interests of convicted sexual offenders while balancing privacy rights.

I wonder whether the member could just address whether he thinks this bill strikes the right balance, with respect to those two issues, in particular.

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, I think the reality is that this bill does, by and large, strike a fairly good balance. I think there are a couple of areas that we are concerned about. However, when we were researching it through committee and we heard from witnesses, I think the areas that needed change were very important. Unfortunately, the Conservatives did not listen to them the first time. Now that, after prorogation, they killed their own bill and brought it back, some of the House recommendations are being adopted, now, in this bill.

One of the things we have to get to the point of is that we are returning to a day when crime was not something that was a political football. This is too important an issue with which to play political games. I think we have seen crime politicized more than at any other time, as the government uses crime, and the issue of crime, as a political weapon on something that is very emotional and difficult for people to deal with.

We need to be focused on evidence, what works, and not sensationalism.

•(1645)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Madam Speaker, it is a great honour for me to speak today on Bill S-2, which is an exact copy of Bill C-34 as amended by the Standing Committee on Public Safety during the last Parliament.

We were in favour of Bill C-34 in principle and the witnesses we heard—I was also on the committee at the time—reinforced us in our position. We proposed some amendments that were adopted. By the

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way, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, with whom I worked on this file.

The Bloc Québécois is in favour of this bill on the sex offender registry. It is further proof that when we work on bills, we work on them one at a time in a constructive spirit, without engaging in the demagoguery and Conservative grandstanding to which we have become accustomed.

First, I would like to remind the House that the current Sex Offender Information Registration Act came into force on December 15, 2004.

Bill S-2 is intended to make the sex offender registry more effective and helpful to police forces in their preventive efforts as well as during investigations of sex crimes.

It aims, therefore, to register more people convicted of sex crimes and to include more information about them, especially their DNA.

Bill S-2 also imposes further obligations on the individuals listed in the registry if they move or expect to be absent from their homes for an extended period.

Some changes were made. Specifically, in addition to adding more offences that result in inclusion on the registry, clause 5 of the bill changes the procedure through which the courts order inclusion on it.

In the case of what are called direct sexual offences, the current system gives the crown attorney a choice of whether or not to ask for the person to be included on the registry after being convicted of the offence.

With the new registry in Bill S-2, this is no longer in the hands of the Crown. As soon as someone is convicted and sentenced for a sex crime, he or she must automatically comply and be included on the registry. I want to make it clear that this applies to sex crimes.

Furthermore, the new clause eliminates the exemption that applied when the offender established that the impact of his or her inclusion on the registry, including on personal privacy or liberty, would be grossly disproportionate to the protection of society.

In other words, when a direct sexual offence is committed, registration is automatic. Individuals convicted can no longer justify that their inclusion on the registry would be disproportionate to the penalties they would suffer in their private lives or regarding their liberty.

For other designated crimes, those known as serious crimes or conspiracy to commit a sex offence, thus more indirect crimes, at that point it is up to the Crown prosecutor to determine whether to ask the court to include the individual on the sex offender registry.

Clause 40 of Bill S-2 also makes an important change regarding how the registry can be used. Under current legislation, the registry can only be used when there are reasonable grounds to believe that a sex offence has been committed. Bill S-2 allows police to consult the registry for prevention purposes.

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In addition, if this bill passes, there will be a correlation among offences that lead to inclusion on the sex offender registry and the sex offender's obligation to provide a sample of bodily fluids in order to add his or her DNA to the national DNA data bank.

• (1650)

Now I would like to talk a little about money. As my Liberal colleague and my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin mentioned, this will call for a lot more analyses, whether for investigations or for prevention.

In its last budget, the government announced \$14 million over two years for DNA testing. In fact, in April 2009, in committee, we met with the directors of two major laboratories, one in Quebec and the other in Ontario. The third laboratory in Canada is the RCMP laboratory. Mr. Prime, from the Centre of Forensic Sciences, and Mr. Dufour, from the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale, told us in April 2009 not only that there was no agreement with the federal government, but that they also had to do a huge number of tests with very little money. Unfortunately, it might take over a year to get results.

On March 18, the minister met with us at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. We asked him questions about this, but we did not get many answers. I have also spoken with a few officials, who have confirmed that there was still no agreement with Quebec and Ontario. They were not even able to tell us how much of the \$7 million would be going to the laboratories in Quebec and Ontario.

If we look to previous funding, it was approximately \$2 million per laboratory. We might imagine that there is really no increase. With this bill, whether or not it is intended, there is going to be a major problem if we do not invest more money in forensic laboratories. We are certainly going to see increases.

I will be told that this is nothing new. We see all the bills they are introducing. We see people being increasingly treated like criminals. They want to have longer sentences, but they are investing billions of dollars in just anything, be it for a G8 or for a G20. Obviously we will have to invest billions of dollars in correctional services and for public safety. When a decision is made to incarcerate people, they have to be sent somewhere. I hope it will not happen as it usually does, that they will invest in bricks and mortar, but nothing will be put into programs. In correctional services, at present, 2% or 2.5% of the total budget is allocated to programs.

I will continue on the subject of Bill S-2. The present legislation provides that the database may not be used where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a crime of a sexual nature has been committed. With Bill S-2, the database can be searched. But it will cost, and it will cost a lot.

The Bloc Québécois believes that police forces must be given tools that, on the one hand, effectively prevent and fight crime and, on the other, do not trample the fundamental rights of Quebec and Canadian citizens.

The proper protection of our children requires a number of tools. One of them, which is important and seems fundamental to me, is the Internet. Unfortunately, it is also the tool of choice for the child

pornography industry. I will provide some statistics in support of my comments.

It is estimated that more than 65,000 people—I find this to be a conservative figure as I believe the number to be much higher—exchange child pornography, both photos and videos, on the Internet. In February 2009, the Ontario Provincial Police dismantled a child pornography ring involving 31 people in different Ontario communities.

• (1655)

Mr. Stewart, of the OPP child sexual exploitation section, stated: “Unfortunately, I believe there’s thousands of children we’re not getting to, and that’s particularly difficult.”

In 2004, 480,000 child pornography sites were identified in the world, compared to 4,300 in 1996. In addition to movies, more than five million images of sexually abused children are circulating on the Internet. The pictures are becoming increasingly explicit and feature younger children and the use of violence. Many movies are shot live for the entertainment of pedophile clients and they show abominable sexual abuse of children under the age of seven.

In addition, it is estimated that there are between 50,000 and 100,000 organized child pornography rings, with a third operating in the United States and a portion in Russia. Are we immune to it? No, and I will cover that. We also have a large number of these types of sites. I am not talking about individual sites or images put on the Internet by a “family man” who abuses his child. I am not talking about amateurs, but about organized professionals.

According to research conducted by Cybertip.ca from 2002 to 2009, 57.4% of images on Internet sites containing child pornography depicted children under 8 years of age; 24.7% showed children aged 8 to 12; and 83% were of girls. More than 35% of the images analyzed showed serious sexual assaults. Children under 8 were most often depicted being abused through sexual assault (37.2%), and 68.5% of extreme sexual assaults occurred against children under 8. Canada is in the top three. That is amazing. According to Statistics Canada figures, we rank third in the world among countries that host child pornography sites. The United States ranks first with 49.2% and Russia, second with 20.4%. Who is in third place? We are, with 9%.

We also have people who produce child pornography in Canada. A police officer told me he had even seen images of assaults on newborns. We have to wonder.

I mention this because Bill S-2, which is a rehash of a previous bill, is not the only bill that targets this sort of crime. There are also Bills C-46 and C-47, which still have not been reintroduced here in the House.

Since 1999, police forces across Canada have been calling for a law that would respect human rights, of course, but would force Internet service providers to reveal the IP addresses of their pedophile clients and to have the technology to keep that information.

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On April 22, during his testimony before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, Mr. Sullivan, who was then the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime and who had been appointed by this government, answered my question. I asked him what he thought about the fact that these bills still had not been reintroduced. He answered, "...if I were the Prime Minister today the Internet bill would be my absolute priority; it would be number one in the justice reform areas."

Mr. Sullivan perfectly described the problem resulting from the fact that this legislation is not on the books. I will read what he said. It is horrible.

Right now, depending on where you are in the country and what ISP company you're working with... Some ISPs will actually cooperate with law enforcement, and some won't.

We've heard about cases from law enforcement. They have an IP address. They actually are able to trace the guy to where he lives, and they go, because he's trading in child pornography.

● (1700)

They actually found and arrested the person. He had with him his 11-month-old son, who he was sexually abusing. Now, law enforcement had no information that this was taking place. They had no idea that this child was in that situation. Had they not tracked him down, that child today, four years later, would still be undergoing sexual abuse. The longer we delay these initiatives to give law enforcement the tools, the more kids are going to be abused. I think that makes everybody angry.

I find that disappointing, especially since we know how many years it can take to develop a bill. It is high time that this be passed.

The former victims' ombudsman lamented the fact that in 2007 the former public safety minister and member for Okanagan—Coquihalla did not want to follow up on repeated requests from the police to adapt investigative tools to the current Internet reality. However, in fall of 2009, the Conservative government finally introduced Bills C-46 and C-47 to respond to this Internet loophole. And what did the Prime Minister do? He prorogued the House and these bills died on the order paper. How convenient. It was put off until fall and then they prorogued a few months later, as if by chance. And they did not reintroduce them.

The Conservatives say that pedophiles are a priority and that this is a serious issue. As usual, they are serving up the same old announcements, about victims and children. They are grandstanding for everyone, trying to score political points. They are not really fighting crime. Have they reintroduced the bills? No. Why? That is the million-dollar question given that this government says that it wants to protect children and fight against crime and criminals.

Here is the question we must ask ourselves: what interests are preventing this government, which claims to be a champion when it comes to cracking down on pedophiles, from bringing back the old bills C-46 and C-47 so that we can study them in committee and improve them? Police forces have been waiting for 10 years now, and this government, despite advice from the former victims' ombudsman, has still not dealt with an issue that the ombudsman and I both believe could save children's lives. Ask any police officer; they will all say the same thing.

There is something else that just does not make sense. In my riding, and probably in other ridings in Quebec and Canada, the government is letting pedophiles live in halfway houses and community correctional centres near elementary schools and

daycares. That makes no sense. I have asked three different public safety ministers about this. Three public safety ministers later, nothing has happened. That is absurd. Can a government that makes a huge show of introducing big, important bills not send a simple directive to community correctional centres through Correctional Service Canada? These centres are not even private; they belong to the CSC. The government cannot even send out a simple directive to ensure that there will no longer be pedophiles near elementary schools.

The government is waiting for another scandal to break out. Then they will react, just as they did with Olson and Karla Homolka. They will react by saying that the matter is very serious and that they want to introduce a bill.

That is shameful. According to the former ombudsman, every month that goes by, children could have been saved, as I said before.

● (1705)

As we speak, children are being attacked on the Internet, and pedophiles are living near schools. I would like to know when the government will take real action to properly protect our children.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from the Bloc Québécois on her speech. Bill S-2 was formerly Bill C-34, if I am not mistaken. The government is reintroducing it as Senate Bill S-2. If Parliament had not prorogued, Bill C-34 could have become law. Now we are back at square one.

Can the hon. member explain to me why the government has chosen to introduce this bill as a Senate bill and not a government bill?

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Madam Speaker, I do not want to try to get into the Prime Minister's head here. It could be for a number of reasons. By deciding to prorogue Parliament, the Conservatives killed all the bills on the order paper. Introducing this bill through the Senate could be the Prime Minister's way of telling us that he does not trust the House to pass bills.

At the same time, he is trying to make a show out of it. They are taking things we have already seen and are putting on a show. They made a show out of Bill S-2 and Bill C-23. Today, they put on another show with the RCMP. It will never end. We must remember: the government does not fight crime and does not look out for public safety. It only tries to score election points by putting on shows.

I spoke about pedophiles near schools, and Bill C-46 and Bill C-47, which died on the order paper. There is also the firearms registry. I have a never-ending list of very concrete and specific tools that could truly help fight crime.

But the Conservatives would rather introduce bills that have to do with international transfers, which would help them avoid having to enforce the fundamental rights of Canadians who commit crimes and are arrested abroad. The Minister of Public Safety can decide to transfer them, instead of having to consider human rights. They are not interested in public safety. All they care about is putting on a show.

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**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her very good answer. She used the word “show”, which I find intriguing. I would like her to comment on this. My colleague from Welland moved a motion today that would have prevented Karla Homolka from receiving a pardon, but the Conservatives voted against it. Did they vote against this motion because they want to use pardons for criminals like Karla Homolka as an opportunity for grandstanding?

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

In my opinion, the Conservatives make a show of introducing every bill, so we can be sure they will make a show at some point. My colleague is asking me questions as though I were privy to all the Prime Minister's secrets. Unfortunately—or rather, fortunately—I am not, but yes, I think this government is doing this just for show. Moreover, we can look at what they have done in the past, since history tends to repeat itself.

Today, the Conservatives did not want to vote for the NDP motion. Maybe they are going to make a show of trotting out something else about Karla Homolka and give people the impression they are doing something about public safety. Look at all the grandstanding they did about prisoners who were receiving old age security. They made quite a show of this issue. It is disinformation and demagoguery.

Unfortunately, when they do that, they send the public a false message. The worst thing is not the message, but the fact that they make people believe they are doing something about public safety. People are going to think they are safer because the government is going to put all the criminals in prison, increase sentences, stop making transfers, stop respecting human rights, and so on. What people do not realize is that the Conservatives are actually doing nothing about public safety. They are just making a show of doing something and giving people the impression that they are working on public safety to increase their sense of security, or rather their sense of insecurity.

We need to distinguish between fighting crime and working on people's sense of insecurity. Just because I feel safer, that does not mean society is safer. Instead of playing on people's emotions, what the government really needs to do is work in an intelligent way on important tools for the police. We need to invest in prevention.

I will give another example. Thus far, the NCPC has not received any budget increases. These people work in the community sector, specifically to help young people reintegrate into society and to help victims of crime. Yet they have almost no resources to work with. Public safety involves a number of aspects. Yes, it is being tough on crime, but it is also prevention. It is rehabilitation. It is even research in the field to understand how crime is evolving. It is not about making a show of all this, but the Conservatives do not understand this.

•(1710)

[English]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, we spoke today about Steve Sullivan, the federal ombudsman for victims of crime. The government hired him with great fanfare and three years later it would not renew his contract because

he began to criticize the government as not being supportive of victims of crime.

For example, earlier this year, when Steve Sullivan testified at the public safety committee, he spoke about the need for the government to fund child advocacy centres in major cities across the country. These centres were to provide counselling, support, referrals and other resources for child victims of crime, particularly victims of sexual abuse. These centres would have been a concrete and meaningful way to improve the lives of victims. We know that many sex offenders were themselves sexually abused, so child advocacy centres would be an important part of preventing future sex offences. The victims' ombudsman asked for \$5 million to fund these centres, but the government refused.

The government has \$1 billion for security at the G8 and is closing prison farms, but it cannot afford \$5 million for these very important centres.

Would the member like to make some comments about the government's lack of direction?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with what my colleague said. I would add that Mr. Sullivan pointed out something that was extremely insightful. He said that this government was investing in criminals and not in victims. Indeed, all the bills they bring forward target criminals, but no bills have been introduced for victims or the families of victims of crime.

We in the Bloc Québécois introduced a bill that would amend the Canada Labour Code and very generously grant the families of victims of crime a period of two years to get back on their feet, as well as a year of compensation. Although this is still not enough, at least it is two years, when nothing is being offered at present. The Conservatives voted against it; they voted against victims. I asked Mr. Sullivan what he thought of the bill and he said it must be passed. He supported it, and victims supported it.

The Association québécoise Plaidoyer-Victimes, the AFPAD and several victims' advocacy groups supported this bill, but the Conservatives voted against it. So we can see that they do not really care about victims.

Mr. Sullivan said it best: their actions and their bills target criminals. The billions of dollars that will be allocated to correctional services will be for criminals; that money will not help victims.

•(1715)

[English]

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House and speak to Bill S-2, a bill that has been raised in the House before. It is a bill which the government feels so strongly about that prorogation did not stop the Conservatives from going through with their agenda. They did not feel democracy needed to have respect but certainly when it comes to their priorities, they brought back these kinds of bills, mostly focused on the crime and punishment agenda as many of us see it.

*Government Orders*

This bill was originally Bill C-34, a bill on which my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway had done a great deal of work, along with the public safety committee, to make sure the bill was at its best. Many hours were spent bringing in witnesses for debate and discussion and I understand it was a very healthy debate and discussion. Amendments were made, amendments that we put forward and supported. The discussion was a very vigorous one, but unfortunately as I noted, political games prevailed and the government's disrespect for our democratic institution came first and the result was prorogation. Yet, here we are discussing the bill in a new incarnation today.

We do support the bill at second reading, but we support a very important productive review of the bill at committee as is what happened with Bill C-34 in the last session. I spoke of the important discussion that took place.

There are a number of important pieces that were part of Bill C-34 and continue to be part of Bill S-2. For example, the bill loosens the definition of when the sex offender registry can be accessed. It widens some of the information included, such as vehicle registration and information that is important to police officers who would be conducting the investigations. It also allows police officers to notify authorities in other jurisdictions, both foreign and Canadian, when an offender travels to their area. Those are laudable goals that we support.

Mention has been made of the particular tragedy of Canadians going abroad and taking advantage of victims in other countries that perhaps do not have the same regulatory or investigative powers. The offenders feel they can get away with it. The bill aims at putting a stop to that. We hope it is a great deterrent to those kinds of offenders.

There are some good amendments, as I mentioned, such as vehicle information, not just licence plates but also descriptions. These kinds of details are important. The bill closes some serious loopholes that existed in the registry. As the registry currently stands, there is no way to track whether a sex offender is presently incarcerated or perhaps deceased. The criteria is so strict about what information can be tracked that police are legally prohibited from recording that kind of information. We find the stipulations in the bill that serve to close that loophole to be very useful.

We also know that every minute in an investigation counts. Investigations of sex offences which are particularly serious impact individuals, their families and communities in such a tragic way. Sometimes they result in cases of missing children, young people and women. Closing that loophole and having a better tracking system will mean that police will not be wasting their time verifying the whereabouts of offenders who perhaps have died or are incarcerated. It is very important to close that loophole.

● (1720)

However, despite the positives and some of the amendments that have been made, we feel that it is important to send this bill to committee in order to improve on its faults, to seek the provision of deterrents to sexual crime offences, and to support victims and prevention undertakings.

We do find a number of issues with this legislation. First, this legislation proposes automatic registration of every offender who commits one of the enumerated offences. This takes away prosecutorial and judicial discretion. Most of the offences under the Criminal Code of Canada, that are captured by this legislation, would have no difficulty with automatic registration. However, in the cases of a couple of hybrid offences, such as sexual assault, we believe that these are important pieces where prosecutorial and judicial discretion and decisions must definitely be applied. There ought to be room for that.

There may be an occasion where it is not appropriate to make an order against someone convicted of an offence. It should be up to a prosecutor and judge to determine when that exception may apply. That is very much in line with a pattern we are seeing from the government, which is an overriding of that judicial and prosecutorial discretion.

This is surprising, considering that the House is made up of people who come from the legal profession. We know that the judicial body is considered an independent body from government, yet we do not see that kind of respect from the government. Rather, we have a top down directive often fueled by the desire to make a spectacle, to pick on some sensational issues, and to come to quick conclusions on bills.

For that reason, we feel it is important that this be carefully discussed at committee and that we ensure there is room for that prosecutorial and judicial discretion that we in Canada pride ourselves on. It is something that we would like to see made applicable, not just to elements of this bill but to the overall agenda when we are dealing with judicial decisions and crime in our country.

We see other gaps in this bill. For example, in the area of funds, the Conservatives like to introduce crime bills such as this one to suit political purposes, but they are not so supportive or keen when it comes to putting money up to pay for these necessary kinds of changes. The public safety committee, in discussing Bill C-34, heard much testimony in its study about the Ontario sex offender registry. Police and victims groups talked about that registry as a model.

The national registry has an operating budget of \$400,000 to \$600,000 per year. By comparison, the budget for the operation and centralized management of the Ontario registry is close to \$4 million per year, not including the expenses incurred by local police departments. Somebody who is not as gifted at math might be saying that one of 10 provinces and three territories is spending \$4 million on this kind of an operation while we have a national government that is proposing to do the work of an entire country on far less, between \$400,000 and \$600,000.

That is clearly inadequate. We support strengthening the registry and closing the loopholes, but let us do it in a way that matters. Let us not do a job half well done, or in this case, one-tenth of the way well done. Let us truly look at making it meaningful. We owe this to the victims of sexual offences. We owe this to Canadians who are concerned about these kinds of crimes.

*Government Orders*

●(1725)

Let us not shove that issue of appropriate funding aside. We all know that the job will not get done right without that proper funding. The bill contains nothing to increase resources for the sex offender registry and instead downloads the burden on to already over stretched police forces.

If I can just point out the irony that the government often claims to stand by our police officers and people in uniform, but the downloading of such an onerous responsibility on police officers, detachments and organizations that are already under incredible strain, that as we know are lacking personnel, would be a true shame. We should not go forward without appropriate funding.

There are other issues in the way in which this bill is inadequate. I feel that it is important to perhaps focus on the one area that we have raised with respect to other issues under the government's crime agenda. It is around the area of prevention but also support for victims or for potential victims, young people, people who are often in vulnerable positions and on the margins of society.

Earlier this year, Steve Sullivan, the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, testified at the public safety committee. He spoke about the need for the government to fund child advocacy centres in major cities across the country. These centres would provide counselling, support, and referrals to other resources for child victims of crime, particularly victims of sexual abuse.

These centres would be a concrete and meaningful way to improve the lives of victims. We know that many sex offenders were themselves sexually abused. Therefore, child advocacy centres would be an important part of preventing future sexual offences.

The victims ombudsman asked for \$5 million to fund these centres but the government refused. That refusal I believe is something that we need to see the government quite frankly change its line on. Here we have somebody that the government hired and his work seemed to be quite useful up to now and now we hear that he has come under a great deal of distress. The man who is a specialist in this area came forward with a proposal that was done in consultation with victims themselves, with specialists in this area, counsellors and medical professionals. He said that this would go a long way into cutting down on those offences and into supporting victims. To hear that the government refused that kind of action to me flies in the face of the government's commitment to supposedly cut down on these kinds of offences, and is something that I find to be quite disconcerting. I am not sure how it can respond to that with Canadians.

We all want to see any crime, but certainly sexual crimes, to be dealt with in the right way. We can all see the value of prevention so that we do not need to deal with a crime after the damage has been done, after the victim has been abused, after the tragedy has occurred.

Prevention is very critical. If I can perhaps share the experience of my constituency on that important piece. I have the honour of representing the riding of Churchill in northern Manitoba which is a very diverse riding. In it there are many first nations and Métis communities. They are very diverse communities, but they are communities that have also dealt with extreme tragedy.

●(1730)

Last week we commemorated the second year of the residential schools apology that the government made. As we all know, the residential schools were a place of great horror for aboriginal people. Many aboriginal young people were victims of sexual abuse at these schools. I have consulted with many elders and community members who have told me that cycle of violence, not just physical but sexual violence, is a difficult cycle to break from.

We are talking about children who were ripped away from their parents, ripped away from their identities, and subjected to the kind of abuse that many of us would have difficulty wrapping our heads around. Many survivors were not able to deal with this abuse and were so traumatized that they took their own lives, a tragedy that many of us have acknowledged. All of us here were honoured and proud to hear the government's apology.

There has been little done to deal with the needs of aboriginal people. I would like to point to the failure of the government to provide funding for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, an organization that provided counselling for survivors of this abuse, for their children and their grandchildren. I had the honour of working hard with my colleagues in this House to save this organization. In some cases, survivors were incarcerated. They did their time and sought out rehabilitation. The community programs supported by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation were critical to breaking the cycle of sexual violence.

This government claims to be on the side of victims. It claims to be the government that will cut down on crime and here we are today talking about sexual offences. It was the present government that did away with a very successful program that helped to do the very same thing.

Prevention is not only specific to preventing a particular crime. It is also about ensuring that young people, women, are strong, and that they have support in their communities to achieve their potential.

I represent isolated first nations such as Shamattawa, Oxford House, God's River, God's Lake Narrows, Island Lake, Red Sucker Lake, Wasagamack, St. Theresa Point, Garden Hill, Bloodvein, Berens River, Little Grand and Pauingassi. I think of the many young people who have spoken to me of the lack of recreational programs and the fact that government programs are inadequate. These young people know that their generation is falling into the trap of criminal behaviour and gangs. They want to fight back. They want to ensure they have positive and healthy activities, a space for them to pursue healthy alternatives in their own communities. They want education and proper health care and also proper infrastructure. All of these pieces are integral to that prevention agenda.



*Government Orders*

We feel that Bill S-2 is lacking in that approach to prevention, something that would go a long way in deterring and cutting down on sex crimes. The government needs to answer the call. It needs to support people on the margin. It needs to support people who are seeking to break the cycle of violence, who are seeking to ensure that their families, their children and their communities are safe. Only then will we see true leadership when it comes to cutting down on crime and supporting Canadians throughout our country.

• (1735)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, earlier this year Steve Sullivan, the federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, spoke about the need for the government to fund children's advocacy centres in major cities across the country. These centres would provide counselling, support and referral to other resources for child victims of crime, particularly victims of sexual abuse. The victims ombudsman asked for \$5 million to fund the centres but the government refused.

The government has billions for fake lakes at the G8 and billions more to lock up more Canadians with longer sentences, which by the way, the victims' ombudsman testified "does very little for the victims of crime because sentencing does not address the real needs of victims". The government has billions of dollars for these things but refuses \$5 million to set up a child advocacy centre for victims of sex offences.

Does the member for Churchill think \$5 million is too much to ask for with respect to victims of sexual abuse?

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, that is an important question. Many of us in the NDP feel that it is critical to bring forward the well-researched and well-founded proposal of the ombudsman for centres and the need to apply \$5 million. That money is a drop in the bucket compared to the \$1 billion being spent on security and the millions of dollars being spent on fake lakes, fake canoes, and fake decks.

It is truly an investment in making our communities safer, in prevention, and most importantly, in supporting victims, which is something we hear time and time again, almost like a broken record, from the government. Yet when we look at the plans it is rejecting or the course of action it is taking, we do not see the support as it should be, with an emphasis on prevention and the opinions of experts in the field.

I would note that as one of the youngest members in the House, I find it disheartening to hear my generation's lack of hope when it comes to our political system. This is the kind of investment the government is refusing to make, let us be honest, in the next generation. That kind of cynicism from young people across our country is perhaps well founded when we hear of the rejection of positive plans that would support young people.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Mr. Speaker, one key aspect of this legislation is mandatory DNA sampling from those convicted of a designated sexual offence. Currently, sampling must be applied for by the prosecutor and granted by the judge.

Is the current legislation not a little backward? Should it not be the criminal who applies to be exempt under special circumstances instead of it being the prosecutors and judges who ask for this ruling?

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, this bill has a number of positive measures to close loopholes around the need for more and accurate information. While we find that some of these measures are positive, we also feel that it is important to bring the bill back to committee to discuss some of the inadequacies and failures, quite frankly, as I pointed out earlier, in terms of prevention.

One of the points that came up about Bill C-34, which I am sure will be raised again in committee, if it goes there, as we hope, is the need to still have prosecutorial and judicial discretion applied and available. Let us not override the work of the judicial branch of our country. Let us recognize that it does critical work in ensuring that justice is fair and that everybody is judged fairly on these grounds.

• (1740)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Mr. Speaker, Bill S-2 was originally Bill C-34 before prorogation. It is one of the law and justice bills the government is famous for introducing. It is just one of the bills that fell by the wayside because of prorogation.

For reasons known only to the government, it brought the bill back through the Senate. If prorogation had not occurred, would this bill be law by now? Why would the government bring it back through the Senate instead of the democratic way, which is to bring it through the House of Commons?

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, many of us see the irony of these bills. The government was committed to passing them and to ensuring a quick process, because apparently these were a priority. Maybe they were not such a priority, and neither was democracy. That is why the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament again.

Here we are. It is a bit of déjà vu, in some sense, the difference being that the bill has come from the Senate. It looks as though there are some changes. What we hope to see and engage in is an accurate and full discussion in committee. Witnesses can be brought in, including stakeholders in the work to fight sexual offences, people who use registries across this country, and people who are quite frankly interested in making this registry the best and most appropriate it can be, with particular pieces on rehabilitation and prevention.

The NDP, and we hope the opposition parties, sees the value in making sure that every piece of legislation is paid attention to properly and makes a real difference. The difference here is to support victims, to support Canadians, and to truly set deterrents and cut down on sexual offences in our country.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciated the speech by the member for Churchill. Like my colleague from Sudbury, I too would like to make a more general observation.

It seems to me that we have a government that is constantly talking about it being a government that is tough on crime. For a government that is tough on crime, it sure talks the talk, but it does not walk the talk.

*Government Orders*

First, I would argue that it is much, much more important to be smart on crime. If we are smart on crime, we do not just talk about law and order issues, we also talk about crime prevention. We talk about support for the victims of crime, and we talk about adequately resourcing those who are engaged in law enforcement on a day-to-day basis to make sure that they are well resourced and safe.

My sense here is that we have yet another opportunity to talk about being tough on crime and on improving our justice system. However, if the government were serious about it, maybe it would have done the same thing with respect to the budget bill. It would have introduced one omnibus bill and we could have dealt with all of the changes. Instead, we get them in dribs and drabs. Then we prorogue the House and we start all over again. To anybody watching, it seems as if all we are talking about are crime bills, when in reality, we have not accomplished very much.

To the best of my knowledge, the only bill that has made any progress in the House in this entire session is Bill C-23, which passed second reading this afternoon.

I wonder if the member has her own observations. Perhaps I missed one other crime bill that may have passed this session. I do not think so.

I wonder if the member would like to comment.

• (1745)

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the very important question posed by my colleague from Hamilton Mountain. I certainly could not agree with her more. This constant dealing with the Conservative crime agenda, which as we know has great inadequacies and real gaps in actually dealing with crime, is quite unfortunate.

People in my riding are concerned about the jobs they are losing. They are concerned about climate change. They are concerned about how they will afford their education. They are concerned about the lack of housing and the third-world conditions in their communities. They do talk about crime, but they talk about the need to support communities all across the board.

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is really a pleasure for me to rise to speak to the merits of Bill S-2, Protecting Victims From Sex Offenders Act.

This legislation proposes to enhance the current provisions respecting the registration of information related to sex offenders. As hon. members will know, and we have heard some debate here this afternoon, this is an extremely important bill. It is a bill that deserves our utmost attention, as it deals with ensuring the safety of our children and other vulnerable Canadians from sexual predators.

As hon. members know, public safety is an objective shared by all parliamentarians, both here and in the other place, where this bill originated. Moreover, Bill S-2 carries on initiatives undertaken by all premiers and all territorial leaders, in concert with the federal government, calling for a national sex offender registration system.

Let me give the House a little bit of history. As early as 1997, the principle features of a registry were thoroughly discussed by all of the ministers responsible for criminal justice in their own provinces, the federal government, and all territorial jurisdictions. Their

endorsement led to the Sex Offender Information Registration Act of 2004. Indeed, Bill S-2 reflects and continues a national consensus that responds to a concern shared by all Canadians.

Since forming government in 2006, we have taken a series of actions to better protect Canadians from sexual abusers, and we will continue to do so. I would like to reiterate that the legislative foundations for this bill we are considering here today stand out as a wonderful example of what can be accomplished when federal, provincial, and territorial interests are accommodated through consultation and co-operation. I should also mention that this bill has the support of law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim advocacy groups.

Bill S-2 has been reported by the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, and was previously examined, as Bill C-34, by the parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, of which I am a member, in the last session of this Parliament.

This legislation reflects input from a number of sectors, including corrections, law enforcement, child protection agencies, and victims groups. The Senate committee provided a forum for a thorough discussion of a range of views and positions regarding the efficacy of a national sex offender registry.

I would submit that this is a strong indication that the government's proposals were a fitting response to urgent suggestions that the sex offender database be more inclusive.

These multi-sectoral consultations I referred to led to the significant amendments that have been before the legislative drafters for some years. Discussions have covered the viability of the registry and have monitored the implementation of the act.

Perhaps the most pressing question in this debate has been about arriving at a balance between limiting or increasing the scope of the registry. The question becomes this: What parameters should govern the number of offences, and which offenders ought to be included in a registry?

The following questions also need to be resolved and have been resolved by these amendments: How long should a registration order remain in force? Who should determine whether an offender should be registered? In other words, once a list is begun, where should it end?

These questions were pivotal to the establishment of the national sex offender registry. Experience gained by criminal justice practitioners can now be applied to better balance public safety and human rights in this legislation.

At the time of its inception, the only sex offender registry in Canada was maintained by the Province of Ontario. Aspects of that registry were then being contested in the courts, and we now have the benefit of a number of judicial decisions.

*Government Orders*

Accordingly, our government has drafted legislation that is responsive to public safety concerns across the country, while it achieves a balance with concerns about fairness and human rights.

Although, Mr. Speaker, you need no education in the area of criminal justice, please allow me to refresh the memories of those who were present when the national registry was created and to provide background for more recent arrivals.

The initial legislation, which I referred to, the starting point for the legislative changes we are considering today, proposed a registry that was to have included only those convicted of designated offences after the legislation came into force. However, during review by Parliament, the registry was amended to include offenders previously convicted of scheduled offences who were, as of the date of coming into force, incarcerated in a provincial or federal institution, under conditional or intermittent sentence, or on probation or parole.

• (1750)

Also included are those offenders under a detention order or who had not been absolutely discharged subsequent to a finding of being “not criminally responsible” for that offence. This latter inclusion stems from the fact that while a disposition by a court that an offender is not criminally responsible means there has been no finding of guilt, it is still a finding that the offender committed the offence.

For reasons that are apparent, it was deemed desirable to keep this class of offenders within the registration scope of the act.

Parliamentarians heard from a number of sectors regarding registration and made appropriate amendments. The registry's effectiveness has been monitored through the implementation period. With the benefit of this experience, the government believes the time has come to ensure a more rigorous approach. The final outcome of our efforts here today ultimately focus on the central concern of all involved, the safety of Canadians from exploitation and crime. Protection from sexual predators is the *raison d'être* of this legislation.

Briefly, I will touch on the main features of Bill S-2. To reinforce what others have mentioned, the key provision is that registration under both the Sex Offender Information Registration Act and the DNA Identification Act would become automatic upon conviction, making it mandatory for the sentencing judge to impose an order to register and provide a DNA sample whenever a conviction for a scheduled sexual offence had been entered against the offender.

The crown prosecutor will no longer be required to bring an application for an order. This legislation would empower police officers to take action if they detected suspicious activity on the part of a registrant, even if no overt criminal activity was under way. Prevention becomes possible that previously was beyond the scope of the law.

Certainly in committee, upon examination of the former Bill C-34, we heard anecdotally and otherwise of many instances when crown prosecutors would not ask the court for an order of inclusion on the registry. Some of this was a matter of a plea bargain. Occasionally, it was a mere oversight. However, in any event, under the proposed legislation before the House, the crown will no longer be required to

bring an application. Such inclusion will be automatic. I think all members will agree that change is worthy of their support.

Furthermore, police will be able to identify registered sex offenders who are travelling to other jurisdictions, both domestically and internationally. Again, a level of prevention is made possible by these amendments. In addition, corrections officials will be able to notify police forces of both the release and the re-admission of registrants.

Finally, and just as important, the registry will be enhanced by the inclusion of vehicle data to assist authorities in monitoring, investigating and, if necessary, prosecuting registrants where necessary.

To sum up for all members of the House, the development of Bill S-2 sets out a framework for continuity in a co-operative effort among federal, provincial and territorial governments. Significantly this is a national system, unlike the efforts elsewhere, where duplication and confusion may reign. We have the advantage of a single common approach that combines the efforts of various criminal justice sectors but, at the same time, respects the provincial role in the administration of the system.

The additional measures we will be passing in the House after due consideration will further simplify, unify and strengthen efforts to protect the vulnerable among us. It must be emphasized that these goals will be achieved while respecting both the needs of law enforcement and the courts and the civil liberties of all Canadians.

Bill S-2 is an undertaking to improve earlier legislative efforts that, although well-intentioned, have proven to be less than comprehensive. In this we have benefited from the experience, the expertise and the goodwill of many sectors within the Canadian criminal justice system.

I believe we can move this matter to a timely conclusion. I understand there is support among all members of the House, or the majority of the members of the House, to pass the bill at second reading and to send it to the public safety committee in which I and all its members will give it a thorough examination.

Accordingly I urge all hon. members to speed the passage of this important bill. Canadians have asked for it. Victims of crime deserve no less.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in this session we were often told by the Conservatives that they were looking after the victims and that the opposition was only thinking of the rights of criminals. That is obviously the height of partisan propaganda. Asking for fair and balanced laws does not mean that we are somehow in favour of crime.

*Government Orders*

I would like to ask the member if he could identify one bill, introduced in this session, that will help victims. They reason that by increasing sentences they are helping the victims. However, it is of little comfort to victims to know that sentences will be harsher. Can he indicate another bill that helps victims?

[English]

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes it too easy for me to limit my response to only one bill, but I will talk about Sebastian's law, the amendments to the Young Offenders Act, which are currently before the justice committee.

As the hon. member knows from his participation at committee, young offender crime, although statistically on the decline, with respect to crimes of violence has stabilized and in fact has slightly increased over the last decade. What we have experienced in the area of youth crime is a shift from non-violent youth crime to serious youth crime.

The bill is not only named after a victim of a brutal murder, but it calls for denunciation and deterrence as prospects of sentencing. Victims' groups support it. Police support it. It is one of many bills this government has introduced and is in the process of passing that have been called for by Canadians, by victims, and certainly support victims.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** Mr. Speaker, it seems that the member and his party believe that increasing sentences—threatening people with longer sentences—is the only way to help victims.

Does my colleague believe that, with our help, he could identify other ways?

[English]

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps it will only be the member and I who will participate in this debate, so I will ask him a question. Which government established the office of the victims' ombudsman?

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the member who spoke before indicated off the top that this is an old, non-partisan bill that not only received the approval of all parties in the House but was also tested in various provinces and supported by the attorneys general. I do not believe that this is true. The current bill does not establish a system; instead it improves on the system established in 2004.

If there is unanimous support for improving this system, why have they waited so long to pass the bill? If a minority government wishes to adopt bills, it should start with matters supported by the other parties. In this case, not only has it taken a long time for the government to present amendments to the Sex Offender Information Registration Act but, in addition, after it was adopted in committee, the government decided to prorogue and thus kill the bill. Now, it has waited for the end of the session to present it again to the House of Commons, after a major detour through the Senate.

This shows, once again, that when this government introduces crime bills, it does not care what effect they have on crime. All the government cares about, as the member for Ahuntsic explained very

well, is scoring any election points it can. By introducing a bill several times, the government has the opportunity to make speeches to show the public that it is fighting crime. But the previous speaker made it quite clear that the government has only one idea: increasing penalties.

It is funny to hear the Conservatives talk about Sébastien's Law. Normally, when we name a bill after someone, after a victim, it is because we are providing a solution for the crime in question. I am very familiar with the case of Sébastien Lacasse, who lived in my riding. This case is a perfect example of how the current Young Offenders Act works very well, and the member knows it. Youth crime has decreased. So what needs to change?

Violent crime has increased in some parts of the country, but overall, it has gone down. If Canada were the country I dreamed of before I became a sovereignist, the majority would, from time to time, get its inspiration from what the minority was doing right in solving its problems. The fact that we are so divided is yet another example. The Conservatives do not know that the model for treating young offenders in Quebec has had spectacular results. There is approximately 50% less youth crime, not just in terms of charges against young offenders, but also in terms of overall crime. Crime is measured the same way across the country, with uniform crime reports, which are filled out whether or not charges are filed.

The Conservatives are ignoring the success in Quebec. They do not want to do the same thing as that province. Another great example of failure. There are problems in the west, and they could be looking to Quebec to help solve them.

● (1800)

The Conservatives would rather turn to the southern United States to see who has won elections handily. They see the Republicans in the south who are tough on crime. That is their solution instead of being smart on crime.

This time around the Conservatives have our support for this bill because it is truly smart on crime. It is only smart if the registry is used as a way to track certain criminals and provide protective measures, but not if it is used as additional punishment for those already convicted of sexual offences. When I listen to the Conservatives, I realize that is the part they are latching onto again. To them, criminals do not receive harsh enough punishment from judges. It is not enough to have harsh sentences; there needs to be something more. Sex offenders need to be registered somewhere so that the police force is aware of them, with the hope perhaps that the police will go and bother them once in a while.

However, I know that measures will be taken. They are even in the legislation that was passed, not by the Conservatives, thank heavens, but by the Liberals. They thought about it and they stipulated in the legislation that only police forces need to know who is registered.

*Government Orders*

When this was passed the first time, we told them this would increase the burden on the DNA registry. DNA is not like fingerprints. It is much more complicated. It requires trained technicians. I believe it even requires a university science education or certainly advanced college training. Not just anyone can enter the registration and do the scientific processing correctly so that a proper analysis can be made the next time they see the same DNA. It is quite complicated. I am not talking about DNA samples because anyone can collect DNA samples.

It is too bad I do not have the information in front of me, but I think it requires at least 18 months of training to collect samples, and it takes years to develop the necessary skills to testify in court.

Someone before me already mentioned how insignificant these budget increases have been. They are just pretending. It is another example of the Conservative attitude: they claim to be doing something but the money does not follow. They introduced this bill at the end of the session; it will most likely disappear. Perhaps there will be another prorogation in the fall, or perhaps an election will be called. And finally, this bill, which would have had everyone's support, will once again die on the order paper. And if ever the Conservatives are in power again, they will have a fourth opportunity to introduce it again and give the impression that they are doing something to fight crime.

They also want to increase the number of offences. That can be done, but I told them when we discussed it that instead of increasing the scope of the registry, perhaps we should provide the resources to deal with the registry's backlog because it is enormous already.

However, I recognize that there are some good things that show, once again, that this bill is smart on crime. It will make some improvements. For example, there has been no information about the offender's vehicle in the registry. It is good that the police can track the vehicle when an offender is on the move.

The legislation also provides for sharing this type of police information across the country, which is also useful. And that was the key, by the way, to the success of operation Carcajou.

● (1805)

Those were measures that made a difference in the fight against crime. They are not the same as simply giving longer sentences all the time. That was another good thing about it.

One improvement has to do with removing the restriction on using it only during sexual crime investigations. The best example of when that can be critical is when a child is kidnapped.

Police officers might find it useful to be able to look up whether a person on the sex offender registry lives near where a child was kidnapped. The police could then quickly check with those people to make sure they were not involved. We were given a remarkable demonstration of the software that supports that kind of lightning-fast search in Ontario. It is good to know these things right away. In the vast majority of cases, I believe in 90% of cases, when kidnappings are not solved within 48 hours, they will never be solved.

In most of the Conservatives' bills—this one is a big exception, and that is why we will vote in favour of it—they ignore the issues

that need to be dealt with. Everyone in the House agrees, and the general public is nearly unanimous that Parliament made a mistake—I was not here, so it is easier for me to talk about it—when it decided to amend the law to allow those convicted of non-violent crimes to get out on parole after serving one-sixth of their sentence.

We are totally opposed to this. I even introduced a bill on it myself. It does not need to be very complicated for the simple reason that the legal provisions allowing for release after one-sixth of the sentence has been served apply to only two sections in the Criminal Code. These sections were added at the last minute in one of those marathon sessions on omnibus bills. I do not think the government realized, in its haste, what it was doing.

We are often against minimum sentences and undue increases in sentences. When it comes to incarceration rates, Canada ranks in the middle of the list of 175 countries. That is the reality and we do not see the need for increases, except in individual cases. In the matter before us today, we would like to see more incarceration.

We think, though, that sentences must be individualized and pronounced in full knowledge of the law by an impartial person who has had an opportunity to hear both parties before making a decision and who must, we should note, also apply around 20 criteria already provided in the legislation. We think it is rather insulting to say an individual can be released after serving one-sixth of his sentence after an impartial judge has taken all these precautions and rendered a decision. When this is done, it does not reflect the work the judge did and the decision that has been made.

I would like to ask them again what they have done to help victims other than providing for heavier sentences.

● (1810)

In the Bloc Québécois, we are concerned with fighting crime. It is not about the political shows that the hon. member for Ahuntsic described so well, but about really helping victims. That is why one of our colleagues, the hon. member for Compton—Stanstead, tabled a bill that would give crime victims and their relatives about the same benefits they get under the Quebec legislation.

In Quebec we give two years to people who have been affected by a crime, either as the victim or because a relative of theirs was victimized and they have to care for that person. Her bill would therefore provide the same benefits for things that fall under federal jurisdiction. The federal government also has one very full treasure chest that is still running surpluses, from which it pinches a bit occasionally and from which it took an awful lot during its first attempt to reach a zero deficit, that is to say the employment insurance fund. A measure like this would not greatly increase the employment insurance payouts.

*Government Orders*

What is the government waiting for to enact this bill, which would genuinely help victims? Compare the federal ombudsman for victims of crime, the material and psychological assistance that victims are offered, to the satisfaction they might get from seeing the person who committed the crime serving an additional few months or years in prison. I think a majority of victims would much prefer to get the help we could provide for them, as in fact is done in Quebec.

And then my colleague from Ahuntsic has done a remarkable job of advocating for bills C-46 and C-47, other measures that create an obligation for Internet service providers to report pornography on the Internet.

Everyone supports that, except perhaps Conservative campaign contributors who own Internet service companies. Everyone supports it, including the police across the country. In fact, coincidentally, a counsellor with a Quebec police force was just talking to me this morning and asking me what had become of Bills C-46 and C-47. But they are not doing it.

In this case, the Conservatives are showing us that they can sometimes propose laws that do more to combat crime. In such cases, they can count on the Bloc Québécois to support them. We may have a few comments to make in committee about things that are extreme, but I have not found a lot. We will be able to discuss it in committee. They can be assured that when we do that, it is not because we are eager to stand up for criminals; it is because we want the laws to be written properly so they will be just.

In this case, this bill is smart on crime, and so we will support it. That shows that the Conservatives can count on the Bloc Québécois when they introduce something that truly and effectively combats crime and is not just intended to show that they are tough on crime.

• (1815)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to this bill. I have to say at the outset that I was very impressed with the approach of my friend, the member for Edmonton—St. Albert, to the bill. If the Conservatives put him in charge of the justice agenda, we might see better results than we are seeing right now. I do not know how much better, I do not want to go too far, but from what I have seen so far, he would be a big improvement on the front bench on that side. I would change some of the management if I were at the top over there, but I am not, of course.

This bill is one which we will support going to committee at second reading. We will examine it further and look at potential amendments. There is not a lot that I personally see wrong with the bill. The statutory review of the sex offender information registry by the public safety committee was under way with a confidential draft report having been circulated to the committee members on May 29. Despite this, typical of the government, in the same vein that it proceeded with the pardon issue, it chose to table the changes to the registry on June 1 in the form of Bill C-34.

In terms of the key aspects of this legislation, one of the major provisions is the mandatory registration of those convicted of a designated sexual offence. Currently, registration must be applied for by the prosecutor and granted by the judge. If an application is made,

an order shall be issued, unless the offender can show that the impact on his liberty is grossly disproportionate to the public interest in protecting society.

The second aspect to the legislation provides for mandatory DNA sampling of those convicted of a designated sexual offence. Currently, the sampling must be applied for by the prosecutor and granted by the judge.

Another aspect of the legislation is the expanding of the police's ability to access the registry for crime prevention purposes. Currently, police can only access the registry to investigate a crime that has occurred with reasonable belief that it is sexual in nature. In terms of crime prevention, this is a matter that was mentioned by several other members this afternoon. I believe this is part of the Ontario legislation. I am looking to the member for Edmonton—St. Albert for confirmation on that. I believe that the ability to look at crime prevention is in the Ontario legislation and that has provided the impetus for us to look at that as an improvement to the federal act.

All we have to do is look at the statistics between the two pieces of legislation to see that the Ontario legislation has a much higher number of people on the registry than the federal registry does. Police evidently have a much greater appreciation and respect for the Ontario registry than they do for the federal registry.

The federal registry has been around for a number of years. Once again, the member for Edmonton—St. Albert pointed out that in 1997 the premiers and attorneys general of the day got together with the federal government and there was a lot of early co-operation which started this process moving. We owe it to our predecessors for having the foresight to move, but it was the province of Ontario that was the first to proceed. It appears to be the template for the federal legislation.

It is important to note that once the federal legislation was in force, there was to be a review process. That is what Parliament was engaged in when the government decided to bring in its own legislation. Once again, the government is short-circuiting the process, much as it did with the pardon legislation.

• (1820)

Many members have spoken about the process of the Prime Minister proroguing the House and having us start over again. I believe that the member for Churchill spoke at length about the potential for having omnibus legislation, as much as we do not like it. When it comes to Criminal Code changes, our justice critic, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh has spoken several times about the need to revise the entire Criminal Code of Canada. It is long overdue and it is a huge act.

*Business of Supply*

We should take an omnibus approach to the bill. This would be an argument for that approach. We would include all of the amendments to the Criminal Code in one omnibus bill and bring the Criminal Code up to date, rather than what the Conservatives are doing. They are bringing the Criminal Code amendments in one at a time in a boutique approach so that they can get a press release and a bump in the polls for each and every initiative. In fact, they should just include them in one big omnibus bill and be done with it.

The difference between that approach and the idea of using omnibus bills in terms of budget implementation is that the Conservatives use the omnibus approach and go way beyond budget implementation. They throw in the post office remailers, the sale of AECL, and on and on. We are talking about an omnibus bill that would deal with Criminal Code changes and all of these particular issues. Then we would not have this constant problem of being stuck with prorogation and election calls.

If things go well at the summits and the numbers start to improve in the next few weeks, knowing that their long-term future is not so rosy, the Conservatives may decide to cut their losses and call an election in September. We would be at it again and all of these bills would be back at square one and after the election we would have to go through this whole process again.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** We will have a majority government

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, a Conservative member said that they are going to have a majority government. I say dream on. That is never going to happen with that government. The reality is that things are getting a little bit desperate over there because they know that time is not on their side. The Conservatives are finishing their fifth year in government now. While things may look reasonably rosy relatively speaking, when one starts adding months and years to their longevity in government, there is a certain time when things are going to start to fall and they will not be able to regain.

My point is that that is the agenda they are following and it causes problems for the legislative agenda. The political agenda rules over the legislative agenda. The Conservatives could care less about the legislative agenda. They are really looking at it in terms of the day-to-day politics, how well they can do in the polls and what they can gain out of it. That is not how they should be governing in terms of the legislative agenda with respect to crime. The police forces need action now. The public deserves better from the government. It deserves an intelligent, smart on crime approach, which it is not getting from the government.

In terms of the other provisions of this bill, it also expands the registry to include those convicted of sexual offences outside Canada. That is very important given the identification of sex tourism. It probably existed for many years, but it has only come to public attention over the last decade or so. I think we could all agree that is an excellent improvement to the registry.

Another excellent improvement is the expansion of the type of information included in the registry, including necessary administrative fields that are currently absent.

● (1825)

Another positive aspect would be allowing the police to notify authorities in other foreign and Canadian jurisdictions when a registered sex offender will be travelling to their area.

There are also various administrative changes to improve coordination and communication between different agencies.

There was some mention in terms of information such as the identification of the type of car that was being driven and a certain expansion of information regarding the offenders that is not currently allowed in the registry. There is no point in having information in a registry that does not allow the police to get proper information. It is very important to have information such as phone numbers and car identification.

● (1830)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona will have nine minutes when the House returns to this matter.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—SECURITIES REGULATION

The House resumed from June 10 consideration of the motion.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It being 6:30 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 10, 2010, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of Mr. Paillé, the hon. member for Hochelaga, relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

● (1855)

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

(*Division No. 73*)

**YEAS**

## Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bellavance	Bigras
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Chow
Comartin	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Donnelly	Dorion
Duceppe	Dufour
Faille	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Godin	Gravelle
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	
Hyer	Julian
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée

*Government Orders*

Layton  
Leslie  
Lévesque  
Maloway  
Masse  
Ménard  
Mulcair  
Ouellet  
Paillé (Louis-Hébert)  
Plamondon  
Rafferty  
St-Cyr  
Thi Lac  
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Lemay  
Lessard  
Malo  
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)  
Mathysen  
Mourani  
Nadeau  
Paillé (Hochelaga)  
Paquette  
Pomerleau  
Siksay  
Stoffer  
Thibeault

Obhrai  
Oliphant  
Paradis  
Petit  
Preston  
Rae  
Rajotte  
Rathgeber  
Reid  
Richardson  
Ritz  
Russell  
Savoie  
Scheer  
Sgro  
Shipley  
Simms  
Sorenson  
Storseth  
Sweet  
Thompson  
Toews  
Trost  
Uppal  
Van Loan  
Verner  
Wallace  
Warkentin  
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)  
Weston (Saint John)  
Wilfert  
Woodworth  
Young

Oda  
Pacetti  
Payne  
Poilievre  
Proulx  
Raitt  
Ratans  
Regan  
Richards  
Rickford  
Rota  
Savage  
Saxton  
Schellenberger  
Shea  
Shory  
Simson  
Stanton  
Strahl  
Szabo  
Tilson  
Tonks  
Tweed  
Van Kesteren  
Vellacott  
Volpe  
Warawa  
Watson

Wong  
Yelich  
Zarac — 192

**NAYS**

## Members

Abbott  
Aglukkaq  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Anderson  
Arthur  
Bagnell  
Benoit  
Bevilacqua  
Blackburn  
Block  
Boughen  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Byrne  
Calandra  
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
Cannon (Pontiac)  
Casson  
Chong  
Clement  
Cotler  
Cummins  
Davidson  
Dechert  
Dhaliwal  
Dosanjh  
Dryden  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Easter  
Fast  
Fletcher  
Galipeau  
Garneau  
Glover  
Goodale  
Gourde  
Guarnieri  
Harper  
Hawn  
Hill  
Hoeppner  
Holland  
Jean  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Kerr  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lauzon  
LeBlanc  
Lemieux  
Lukowski  
Lunney  
MacKay (Central Nova)  
Malhi  
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)  
McCallum  
McGuinty  
Mendes  
Merrifield  
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Murphy (Charlottetown)  
Nicholson  
O'Connor

Ablonczy  
Albrecht  
Allison  
Armstrong  
Ashfield  
Baird  
Bernier  
Bezan  
Blaney  
Boucher  
Braid  
Brisson  
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
Bruinooge  
Cadman  
Calkins  
Cannis  
Carrie  
Charlton  
Clarke  
Coady  
Crombie  
Cuzner  
Day  
Del Mastro  
Dhalla  
Dreeschen  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Dykstra  
Eyking  
Finley  
Foote  
Gallant  
Généreux  
Goldring  
Goodyear  
Grewal  
Hall Findlay  
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
Hiebert  
Hoback  
Holder  
Hughes  
Jennings  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kent  
Komarnicki  
Lake  
Lebel  
Lee  
Lobb  
Lunn  
MacAulay  
MacKenzie  
Marston  
Mayes  
McColeman  
McLeod  
Menzies  
Miller  
Murray  
Norlock  
O'Neill-Gordon

**PAIRED**

## Members

Beaudin  
Roy

Flaherty  
Smith — 4

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** I declare the motion lost.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

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

The House resumed from June 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Colombia and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, be read the third time and passed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The House will now proceed to the taking of deferred recorded division on the motion at the third reading stage of Bill C-2.

● (1905)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 74*)

**YEAS**

## Members

Abbott  
Aglukkaq  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Anders

Ablonczy  
Albrecht  
Allison  
Anderson



*Government Orders*

Armstrong  
Ashfield  
Baird  
Bernier  
Bezan  
Blaney  
Boucher  
Braid  
Brisson  
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
Bruinooge  
Cadman  
Calkins  
Cannis  
Carrie  
Chong  
Clement  
Cotler  
Cummins  
Davidson  
Dechert  
Dhaliwal  
Dosanjh  
Dryden  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Easter  
Fast  
Fletcher  
Galipeau  
Garneau  
Glover  
Goodale  
Gourde  
Guarnieri  
Harper  
Hawn  
Hill  
Hoepfner  
Holland  
Jennings  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kent  
Komarnicki  
Lake  
Lebel  
Lee  
Lobb  
Lunn  
MacAulay  
MacKenzie  
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)  
McCallum  
McGuinty  
Mendes  
Merrifield  
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Murphy (Charlottetown)  
Nicholson  
O'Connor  
Obhrai  
Oliphant  
Paradis  
Petit  
Preston  
Rae  
Rajotte  
Rathgeber  
Reid  
Richardson  
Ritz  
Russell  
Saxton  
Schellenberger  
Shea  
Shory  
Sorenson  
Storseth  
Sweet  
Thompson  
Toews  
Trost  
Uppal  
Van Loan

Arthur  
Bagnell  
Benoit  
Bevilacqua  
Blackburn  
Block  
Boughen  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Byrne  
Calandra  
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
Cannon (Pontiac)  
Casson  
Clarke  
Coady  
Crombie  
Cuzner  
Day  
Del Mastro  
Dhalla  
Dreeshen  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Dykstra  
Eyking  
Finley  
Foote  
Gallant  
Généreux  
Goldring  
Goodyear  
Grewal  
Hall Findlay  
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
Hiebert  
Hoback  
Holder  
Jean  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Kerr  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lauzon  
LeBlanc  
Lemieux  
Lukowski  
Lunney  
MacKay (Central Nova)  
Malhi  
Mayes  
McColeman  
McLeod  
Menzies  
Miller  
Murray  
Norlock  
O'Neill-Gordon  
Oda  
Pacetti  
Payne  
Poilievre  
Proulx  
Raitt  
Ratansi  
Regan  
Richards  
Rickford  
Rota  
Savage  
Scheer  
Sgro  
Shipley  
Simms  
Stanton  
Strahl  
Szabo  
Tilson  
Tonks  
Tweed  
Van Kesteren  
Vellacott

Verner  
Wallace  
Warkentin  
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)  
Weston (Saint John)  
Wilfert  
Woodworth  
Young

Volpe  
Warawa  
Watson  
Wong  
Yelich  
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**NAYS**

## Members

Allen (Welland)  
Ashton  
Atamanenko  
Bellavance  
Bigras  
Bonsant  
Bourgeois  
Cardin  
Charlton  
Christopherson  
Crowder  
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)  
DeBellefeuille  
Deschamps  
Dewar  
Dorion  
Dufour  
Freeman  
Gaudet  
Gravelle  
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)  
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)  
Harris (St. John's East)  
Hyer  
Laforest  
Lalonde  
Layton  
Leslie  
Lévesque  
Maloway  
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)  
Mathysen  
Mourani  
Nadeau  
Paillé (Hochelaga)  
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Savoie  
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Bouchard  
Brunelle  
Carrier  
Chow  
Comartin  
Cullen  
Davies (Vancouver East)  
Demers  
Desnoyers  
Donnelly  
Duceppe  
Faille  
Gagnon  
Godin  
Guay  
Hughes  
Julian  
Laframboise  
Lavallée  
Lemay  
Lessard  
Malo  
Marston  
Masse  
Ménard  
Mulcair  
Ouellet  
Paillé (Louis-Hébert)  
Plamondon  
Rafferty  
Siksay  
Stoffer  
Thibeault

**PAIRED**

## Members

Beaudin  
Roy  
Flaherty  
Smith — 4

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, June 10, 2010, the House shall now resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider Motion No. 5 under Government Business.

I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

*Government Orders*

● (1910)

**MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS**

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 5, Ms. Denise Savoie in the chair)

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC)** moved:

That this committee take note of the measures being taken to address the treatment of multiple sclerosis.

**The Deputy Chair:** Before we begin this evening's debate, I would like to remind hon. members of how the proceedings will unfold.

[*Translation*]

Each member speaking will be allotted 10 minutes for debate, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments. The debate will end after four hours or when no member rises to speak.

Pursuant to the order adopted earlier, the Chair will receive no dilatory motions, no quorum calls and no requests for unanimous consent.

[*English*]

We will now begin tonight's take note debate. The Chair will now recognize the hon. Minister of Health.

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Madam Chair, the subject tonight's debate is in regard to multiple sclerosis. It is a devastating disease that usually strikes young adults.

I am delighted to be here tonight with my hon. colleagues to show our solidarity as members of Parliament with Canadians suffering with MS, and their families and friends.

I am also happy our government tabled the motion and asked for consent to hold this important debate in order that Canadians be as well informed as possible.

There are many aspects to this disease and its treatment. We know multiple sclerosis as a progressive neurological disease that slowly robs its victims of their mobility and their ability to speak. It robs them of their youth and robs them of their lives.

Every day in this country three more people are told they have MS. It is estimated that between 55,000 to 75,000 people are now living with MS in Canada. Some of us here tonight have family members and friends affected by this disease.

Being able to speak on the effects of this illness and the struggles, and there are those who see their loved ones fight this disease, is important and relieving. At the moment there is no cure for MS, but there is progress in research and we believe we will some day unlock the mystery of this illness.

Recently, news of a possible new treatment has captured the world's attention and given hope to Canadians who suffer from MS. I realize this news is a source of great hope for those who suffer from this disease.

In November of last year an Italian researcher, Dr. Zamboni, developed an experimental treatment for MS based on a possible relationship between MS and impaired venous drainage of the central nervous system. Many Canadians with MS and their families

have contacted me to share their experiences and the importance of the findings for them.

I know all members have heard the same from their constituents. We share the hope that this has given those suffering from the disease. These findings challenge long held views on MS and have produced results that have drawn the attention of researchers looking into the causes of MS and other illnesses.

That is why we must pursue a thorough scientific evaluation to see who might benefit from the treatment and to see if there are long-term implications. The answers we are looking for can only come through studies and research done on a larger scale.

These studies are important for many reasons. They are important for Canadians with MS and their families who are filled with hope in the findings and want to see quick action. They are especially important to the provinces and the territories who deliver health care.

Canada's health care system is built on partnership that recognizes and respects the unique roles played by the federal government, the provincial and territorial governments, health care institutions like hospitals and health care practitioners, including the medical doctors who administer the treatments. It is a system that requires collaboration in the best interest of patients.

All of us in this chamber know the territories and provinces deliver health care. This means they make decisions on the administration and delivery of health services, including the treatment and diagnosis of multiple sclerosis. We also know the provinces and territories make these decisions based on the best available science.

The federal government's role is to support health research, which includes clinical research aimed at discovering and assessing new diagnostic treatment procedures. This research plays an important role in confirming and validating new scientific findings and helping the provinces and territories make decisions.

Our government understands the importance of health research for the Canadian health care system. That is why in budget 2010 we increased funding to the Canadian Institute of Health Research by \$16 million. This increase alone with other recent investments to CIHR will mean over \$1 billion to health research in Canada this year.

This new funding will allow CIHR to build on the investments we have already made in neurological research. In 2008-2009 roughly \$120 million was invested by CIHR, including \$5.3 million specifically for multiple sclerosis. Another \$38 million went to stem cell research, which could have an effect on the way we treat a wide variety of diseases, including multiple sclerosis.

● (1915)

Our hope for a new treatment for MS and other neurological diseases comes from advances in science that helps us understand the disease.

*Government Orders*

That is why I asked Dr. Beaudet, president of the CIHR, for his advice on how to advance research in MS in light of Dr. Zamboni's findings. I am extremely pleased that Dr. Beaudet will be holding a round table discussion with more than a dozen world experts on MS to seek their advice.

With the guidance of the world-leading experts and in collaboration with the MS Society, the CIHR intends to get a better understanding of the research being done around the world on neurovascular-related MS. The CIHR wants to identify gaps in the current research and develop a better understanding of any obstacles that may be standing in the way of clinical research.

Investments in neurological research by the Government of Canada means we are building on a foundation of strength. With over \$45 million to date invested in MS research, Canadian MS researchers are among the best in the world. They are pursuing important research questions showing great promise for MS and other neurological diseases.

For example, at the University of Toronto, Dr. Courtney is looking at the links between vitamin D and the risk of childhood MS as it affects the progression of the disease. There may be a link between vitamin D and the controlled gene that increases the risk of multiple sclerosis. If we can reduce the risk of childhood MS by giving vitamin supplements to expectant women, there may be implications for adult onset MS.

At the University of Alberta two researchers are studying the use of antioxidants as a nutritional supplement during pregnancy to prevent brain injury. That research is adding to our understanding of how to prevent the damaging effects of low blood flow during pregnancy. Low blood flow is a restricted oxygen supply that can cause brain damage in the fetus. It is hoped that our broader understanding may help prevent brain injury. That research is particularly relevant now because the new treatment for MS is based on improving blood flow to the brain.

With the research now going on in Canada and around the world, we are getting closer to finding better treatments for MS and hopefully a cure.

Scientists are intrigued by the potential links between CCSVI and multiple sclerosis. CIHR welcomes and encourages funding applications from researchers wanting to study this new treatment. We know that good science does not happen overnight. Science demands a measured approach. Science produces results that can produce again and again under the same set of circumstances.

We also know that Canadians with MS in their families want action now. Through CIHR our government will balance the urgency of this issue with the importance of asking the right questions and getting the right answers.

Canadians with MS and their families are asking us to all work together to respond to their suffering and to recognize the great hope that this new finding may generate. Our government is committed to working with CIHR and the MS Society to bring the research community together.

The upcoming meetings of experts on MS with Dr. Beaudet will be an important summit of scientists on the issue. Their thoughts and

opinions will help the CIHR, in the months ahead, and the research community develop its strategy on how to research this potential new treatment for MS. It is of interest from a scientific perspective and a great interest to all of those suffering from the disease and their families.

I would like to thank all members who are here tonight representing loved ones in their fight with MS. We will undoubtedly hear many testimonies about or from victims of this debilitating disease. We are here tonight to provide a forum of discussion because it is important that we stand together to show Canadians we are working toward a solution.

This is a time when partnership matters more than ever. Dr. Zamboni's finding challenges not only the scientific understanding of MS but challenges us all to work even harder to support our fellow Canadians with MS and their families. With hard work and strong will, together we will work toward a cure.

• (1920)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Madam Chair, many MS patients are experiencing a rapid decline in their health. We believe there is a moral obligation to offer all MS patients the imaging necessary to identify venous malformation and access to treatment that could possibly stop the progression of their disease in its tracks.

Why is the government not taking this issue seriously for patients today? They need help now. Why?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq:** Madam Chair, to respond to the question, we are taking the issue very seriously. This government has invested \$120 million for neurological research alone, and \$5 million for MS research.

We are working with the MS Society in pulling the research community together and looking at ways we can advance the clinical trials necessary for this particular procedure, and we will continue to do that.

I asked Dr. Beaudet, as I said in my opening remarks, to provide advice and pull the international research community together to see how we can advance this quickly.

We are also working with the provinces and territories to deliver health care and collaboration. It takes more than one individual to bring a team of scientists and researchers together to deal with this new, possibly important discovery relating to MS.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Madam Chair, I sit on the subcommittee, and over and over again witnesses have indicated there is a need to ensure that treatment continues during the research. They are asking that they be done in conjunction with each other.

*Government Orders*

I wonder what the minister's response is with respect to why would we not put a process in place to ensure that everyone who may have CCSVI, first has the opportunity to be diagnosed. If they are diagnosed with CCSVI, why not treat it? They should not be discriminated against having this treatment because they have MS.

Why not allow everyone, first to be diagnosed and ensure that the doctors who are treating these patients filter the information into the research part of it. I think that is crucial at this point. There are so many people out there who want the opportunity to do this. The cost is about \$1,500 for this treatment in Canada. If they go elsewhere, we are talking about \$15,000.

Would the minister include in her remarks the need to ensure this is a double study, which is what Dr. Sandy McDonald is asking for, and the need to ensure that it is study and treatment?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq:** Madam Chair, I will say again what I said in my opening remarks. There are a lot of investments being made to this research. We are working with the jurisdictions to move quickly on this new finding.

I have quotes from Ontario and from Alberta that state further independent and controlled studies are required to prove a better understanding of this particular result. The MS societies, both in Canada and in the United States, have called the early findings surrounding CCSVI "exciting and intriguing" but have said "more research is required to firmly establish the link between blocked neck veins and MS symptoms".

On June 11, the MS Society released the following statement:

These new studies are necessary because we don't yet know whether, or if so how, CCSVI contributes to MS disease activity.

Our role in the federal government is to support the research in advancing this important work. We will continue to work with the various researchers, the MS Society, as well as the provincial health ministers and College of Physicians and Surgeons to advance this research.

● (1925)

**Mr. Tim Uppal (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC):** Madam Chair, the Sherwood Park MS Community Group in my riding is the largest MS group in the country.

On their behalf, I would like to ask the minister how CIHR is mobilizing the research community around CCSVI and MS?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq:** Madam Chair, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research has been working over the last few years on neurological research, including MS. With regard to this particular issue, I have asked Dr. Beaudet to pull in the international research community to deal with how we can better address this new finding, as well, to identify within the global community what some of the gaps may be around MS research. That conference will be held in Ottawa. I am looking forward to how we can better support that research in this area.

We are also working with the MS Society on how we can better support the research projects with this specific new procedure. On June 11, members in this House may know that the MS Society made some announcements to support a number of research projects.

There is collaboration happening across the country with MS researchers, and we will continue that to find solutions for this issue.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I have a letter from a Canadian medical doctor who has been practising since 1969, which states:

I have MS since 1990 and just got back from Poland where I had balloon angioplasty to a stenotic right internal jugular vein. I have noticed improvements in several areas.

I also met many Canadians in Ketovice, Poland who had been treated, with positive results. They were ecstatic and so grateful to an improvement to their quality of life.

Two-thirds of all the people treated by Dr. Simka and his colleagues...are Canadians. There are 2,000 people on the waiting list.

The argument in Canada by neurologists is that we need more studies before we can do this in Canada. The only way you do a study is by treating people and a follow-up. Neurologists should have no input into this aspect of treating MS. They are not vascular surgeons.

There is no problem paying for angioplasty for coronary artery stenosis or surgery for carotid artery stenosis. Why the discrimination to venous stenosis?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq:** Madam Chair, the MS Society made an announcement on June 11 to support further research. The MS Society of Canada and the MS Society in the United States say the following:

These new studies are necessary because we don't yet know whether, or if so how, CCSVI contributes to MS disease activity.

We will continue to support these types of research in Canada and we will bring in the international community to respond to this possible new procedure. We will continue to work with MS societies in the United States and Canada to do further research.

To answer the question the member is raising, we need to bring in the research community, and that is what we will do.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, NDP):** Madam Chair, the minister herself has mentioned that what is occurring is very promising, but I want to ask whether it is not correct to treat MS and the CCSVI in different functions. Where it indicates there are restrictions in a vein, why should people not have the treatment, as opposed to linking this? If there are benefits for MS, that is perfect. However, in the meantime, people are asking to be treated for the vein blockage.

● (1930)

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq:** Madam Chair, MS societies in Canada and the United States have called their early findings surrounding CCSVI exciting, but they have also said they want more research. We will continue to work with them in terms of providing support to see if this new method is effective or not.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I rise tonight to advocate on behalf of all Canadians living with multiple sclerosis, who not only have the courage to battle their disease every day but also have the guts and the tenacity to take on a new fight, the fight for diagnosis and treatment of chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, CCSVI.

*Government Orders*

I have personally called, emailed, or met 1,000 MS patients and their families across this country. I have been touched by each and every one, and I am proud to know these extraordinary people.

I understand that this next four hours may determine whether some continue to walk, work, maintain their dignity or remain independent. I hope that everyone who rises tonight truly understands the science, the stakes, the desperation and fear of those living with MS, and the family and friends who watch helplessly.

I am a former scientist. I called for our subcommittee on neurological disease because I knew there were potential MS treatments overseas that were unavailable to Canadians. I have undertaken a comprehensive literature review regarding CCSVI, talked to leading researchers around the world, and I have heard the experts lecture: Dr. Zamboni, Dr. Simka and Dr. Haacke.

I understand that numerous research questions remain. Having acknowledged this, time is brain. Any delay in treatment possibly means more damage. The earlier MS is caught and treatment begun, the better the prognosis. For some patients a delay of a matter of months may mean the difference between working and not working, walking and not walking, or living on their own or in care.

The clock is ticking, and MS patients simply do not have the time to wait. It is time that government officials and bureaucrats take MS out of the equation. We need to explore whether individuals living with MS actually have a vascular problem, and if so treat them. If someone is suspected to have a blocked artery in the heart, he or she is imaged, as is an individual with a blocked hepatic or iliac vein.

Why are MS patients being discriminated against? Why is there such resistance to exploring whether an MS patient might have a blocked jugular vein? Is it the ordering of an MRV? It cannot be, as neurologists order MRIs to image the brain and spinal cord for their patients every day.

Is it the potential waste of human and monetary resources if someone does not have an abnormality? The cost of not picking up a potential abnormality is clearly greater, with potential damage to the brain, loss of function, loss of work and more dependence on the health care system. Whatever the reason, it is patients and their families who potentially suffer when imaging is refused.

What then are the possible impacts of waiting? No one can actually answer this. However, whether CCSVI develops in utero or early in childhood, we know that with age the veins deteriorate. Therefore, for those who have a vascular anomaly, the earlier it is caught the better.

Why then would a well-meaning doctor and a compassionate health care system wait? Is it not the first rule of medicine to do no harm?

No one can yet say whether liberation halts or stops debilitating MS, but it is becoming increasingly evident that it can alleviate some symptoms. MS patients who have had the liberation procedure quickly experience an improvement in brain fuzziness and circulation. Over time they have a marked improvement in the quality of life, sometimes moving from assisted to independent living, and from scooter to walking.

Some will argue there is a lack of evidence to support diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI. However, I would strongly argue there is precedence for moving forward. Doppler, ultrasound, MRI and angioplasty are standard procedures that are used safely every day in hospitals. These procedures are used on the neck, just not if a person has MS.

The question then becomes is there enough evidence to start imaging patients? How long will it take to accumulate good evidence? When will enough be enough? Is it in three months, six months, a year? What does this mean to a patient living with primary or secondary progressive MS?

● (1935)

There is precedence now. Often in medicine, when a treatment shows promise, it is fast-tracked. The most recent example, just last week, is a new device that can suck out stroke-causing blood clots. Twenty-seven Calgary patients have already been rescued from strokes by the device.

The liberation procedure shows promise. We know that poor venous flow can cause inflammation and damage to vessel walls. Poor venous flow can lead to major neurological problems. More than 1,000 people have now been imaged for CCSVI worldwide. It is clear that the majority of MS patients have vascular abnormalities. The angioplasty procedure shows that 80% to 97% of MS patients have vascular abnormalities and, in many cases, more than one major vessel is involved. Surely, 1,000 people is enough to allow for early adoption. After all, many medical procedures used daily in hospitals have never been double-blind tested.

Some patients diagnosed with MS present anomalous obstructions of the veins transporting blood from the brain. Some of these anomalies are serious enough for a doctor to conclude that there is a venous insufficiency depriving the patient of an adequate blood flow from the brain. Some doctors or hospitals decline to treat those anomalies by simply angioplasty on the grounds that it might be seen as a treatment of the MS rather than of the vascular problem and therefore decline even to screen for diagnosis.

It is indefensible that a number of patients are left to an undeserved and harmful limbo of non-diagnosis and, even in the case of diagnosis, non-treatment of serious venous insufficiency. It is in the interest of all Canadians, of MS sufferers in particular and also of the integrity of the Canadian health care system that an end be put to this harmful uncertainty.

*Government Orders*

I beg the government that no Canadian be deprived of the imaging necessary for diagnosis of venous insufficiency or deprived of the angioplasty indicated by a diagnosis of venous insufficiency in the drainage of the brain, by reason only that this Canadian has also been diagnosed with MS.

I beg that the Minister of Health should convene her provincial and territorial counterparts to a meeting for the purpose of ensuring that no impediment will be placed in the way of diagnosis of venous insufficiency or of treatment by angioplasty on the grounds only that that patient has been diagnosed with MS.

I beg that CIHR funds be made available to assist in the creation of a registry by which it would be possible to collate data regarding the progress of MS patients who undergo venous angioplasty.

I beg that the funds for the MS Society's research proposal be released to allow for that research, which must not be an impediment to patients obtaining diagnosis or the angioplasty and should proceed in parallel to any such treatment.

I would like to use cancer as an example. While only 1% of patients may be enrolled in a clinical study, the remaining 99% are not denied treatment. Why is MS being treated differently by our celebrated medical system?

Finally, I beseech and I implore the government to do the morally right thing and act: image MS patients for venous malformations and treat them if required. Do not make very sick people beg for health care that they have paid into all their lives.

There is no excuse not to image. Imaging is safe. There is no excuse not to treat. Angioplasty is an established practice. Failure to diagnose and treat is discriminatory.

My beloved cuz and patients across the country are waiting, getting sicker and, in some cases, dying. The government must fight for families.

● (1940)

**Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Madam Chair, I thank my hon. colleague for her hard work on this issue and her passion. I think everybody in the House shares this concern, people with loved ones and my colleagues who have family members and personal friends who are stricken with this terrible illness. I have had constituents in my office, one specifically who went to Mexico and had the treatment, and it has been fabulous.

I understand where we are as a government, working together. This is a non-partisan issue. We all want to find results, but the reality is we have the Canada Health Act that is delivered by the provinces.

I have spoken with the MS Society. I have met with patients and heard their pleas first-hand to get the vascular scan, but it is up to the provinces and the territories that deliver the health care services. That is the way our health care act is. If members want to have a debate on that, they will need to do that at the health committee.

My hon. colleague has spoken with 1,000 patients, but has she talked with the College of Physicians and Surgeons? Has she spoken with the minister of health for her province of Ontario and asked her

why she does not make the services available in her province and across the country?

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Madam Chair, health is not an area assigned exclusively to the provinces by the BNA Act. It is a shared area. That is why we have a federal minister of health and a federal committee on health. The Government of Canada has a legitimate role to play in the area of health. For example, it is responsible for the health of aboriginal Canadians and the Canadian Forces.

This issue is relevant to Canadians across the country, 75,000 of them. Much of the money spent on health care comes from federal transfers and the Government of Canada has an interest, the required jurisdiction and the constitutional power to ensure that those funds are spent efficiently, fairly and consistent with charter values.

I again ask that the minister convene her provincial and territorial counterparts and look at how we diagnose and treat CCSVI.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP):** Madam Chair, I greatly appreciate the comments from my colleague. She was at committee when we heard from Steve Garvey, and I am sure she will remember how touching and emotional that testimony was. Mr. Garvey was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis about 10 years ago and really wanted control of his body back. That is what he talked about during that time. He talked about how difficult it was for him to see himself being imprisoned within his own body.

I have a friend in the riding, David McDowell, and that is how he feels. He feels imprisoned in his body because of the fact that he cannot do for himself. He cannot hold his six year old son. He wants access to this. If all it is going to do is give him a bit of relief, he has nothing to lose. Neither does Mr. Garvey.

Given the fact that we are seeing so much promise here, does she agree that the study being done should be done in conjunction with treatment for everyone?

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Madam Chair, there must be diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI and then we can follow the people with the research.

I also want to point out that it is simply not fair or consistent with charter values to say that angioplasty correction of diagnosed venous insufficiency will be available to Canadians generally but not to people who happen also to be diagnosed with MS. It is not fair or consistent with charter values to deprive people, even if the diagnosis is venous insufficiency, for no other reason but they are diagnosed with MS.

It is also not an efficient use of federal money to deny to MS sufferers a treatment which is not only cheap, about a quarter of the yearly cost of maintaining the disease, but by several accounts, actually appears to do good.

*Government Orders*

● (1945)

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I know the passion and the persistence which is so obvious tonight from the member for Etobicoke North in the way she approaches the issue of MS and emerging treatments like angioplasty. She prompted no fewer than five requests from the official opposition for this debate this evening and it simply would not be happening without her commitment.

I congratulate her for that, but mostly I want to understand her motivation. What causes her to fight so hard for action on these new vein related treatments for multiple sclerosis?

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Madam Chair, I came to the Hill to fight for neurological disease. That is why I started a subcommittee on neurological disease. For the past four weeks, I have not been to bed before 4 a.m., as I have talked to 1,000 patients across the country who are desperate. Some are suicidal. They are separated from their life. They are separated from their family and friends. They are separated from their dignity. They are fighting for their life.

There is only one think worse than having MS, is having MS and knowing there is diagnosis to treatment out there, but they cannot get it. It is unconscionable that Canadians are being forced to go overseas to Poland, to mortgage their homes in order to get the treatment that they should be getting in our country.

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Madam Chair, I want to commend my colleague across the way as well for bringing this important issue to debate this evening. I, too, have had a lot of opportunity to speak to constituents in my riding in terms of this procedure and the frustration they feel in expecting something should be happening for them. They feel there are delays.

I want to focus on the fact that experts have said more research is needed to firmly establish the link between blocked neck veins and MS symptoms. Even Dr. Zamboni has said that more research is needed. I thought I heard my colleague say that she did not believe any more evidence was needed.

Could she elaborate, based on her scientific background, on her conclusion that no more evidence was needed?

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Madam Chair, that is not what I said at all. We absolutely need more research. In fact, I put 50 questions on the order paper that need to be thought about by the government to protect people today and going forward.

The big problem is right now there is no diagnosis for CCSVI, a recognized condition by 47 countries. Canadian MS patients are forced to travel to Buffalo or Detroit, with imaging ranging in costs of \$1,200 to \$6,000. Private imaging clinics are increasing by the day. Kuwait is the first country in the world to offer imaging and the liberation procedure to all its MS patients.

Canada is recognized the world over for its publicly funded medical system and we must protect accessibility and universality. Canadian MS patients should not be struggling along to determine what is a reputable imaging or treatment centre, but in the absence of help, they are forced to do so. Many seeking help are forced to go overseas for private health care. What does this mean for a family that simply does not have the financial resources to do so?

● (1950)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Madam Chair, we are holding a take note debate on multiple sclerosis and the results of a clinical study by Dr. Paolo Zamboni, which has turned the MS world on its head. This is especially true in Quebec and Canada, which have one of the highest rates of the illness with approximately 1,000 new cases diagnosed every year.

First, it is my understanding that since 1868, when multiple sclerosis was first diagnosed by Dr. Jean-Martin Charcot, researchers and doctors have considered MS to be a neurological disorder where the immune system targeted myelin, the protective sheathing on the cells of the central nervous system. This is being called into question by an Italian researcher who now considers MS to be a vascular disease that can be treated with angioplasty surgery. This procedure may lead to a reduction of symptoms in those with the disease.

Dr. Zamboni, of the University of Ferrara in Italy, says that the illness is a disturbance of blood circulation characterized by the inability of the venous system to properly drain blood from the central nervous system. It is known as chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, or CCSVI.

In April 2009, he published his first article on the prevalence of venous stenosis in patients with multiple sclerosis. He carried out angioplasties on 65 patients with various forms of multiple sclerosis whose veins were deformed or blocked. The procedure consists of removing blockages from the jugular veins, which are located on either side of the neck.

The news spread so quickly that in May 2009, Dr. Robert Zivadinov of the Jacobs Neurological Institute in Buffalo, New York, began a study of 500 individuals to verify the Italian group's results. His study showed that 56% of individuals with multiple sclerosis had venous stenosis, and 22% of those in the control group without MS had venous stenosis.

In order to understand the hope that such a discovery—even the rumour of it—can arouse, one must understand the reality of life with multiple sclerosis. The clock is ticking for these people. Their health could deteriorate anytime.

In response to pressure from patients, many doctors, neurologists and Dr. Zamboni himself recommended caution because the research involved only clinical trials. The MS Society also expressed doubts about the procedure and called for further research.

The main criticisms are that the technique is new, that the criteria require further confirmation, that the importance of the human element in carrying out the technique must be established and that it is important for these observations to be confirmed by other groups with larger numbers of patients with the disease.

This discovery was the focus of several sessions of the Health Subcommittee on Neurological Disease.

*Government Orders*

Every year, the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada holds meetings on the Hill to let parliamentarians know what the organization wants from the government. They were the committee's first witnesses.

The session dealt with issues that went beyond CCSVI. Then further sessions focused only on that aspect. For the past several weeks, several experts have testified, but people with MS have also delivered very emotional and hopeful testimony.

One critical player was conspicuous by its absence: Health Canada. Not a single Health Canada representative appeared before the committee, despite the fact that many of the witnesses were turning to the department. Members will surely agree that the situation is disturbing. I spoke to members of the subcommittee about this on May 11. I said:

Patients, a doctor and specialists have told us that we should focus on treating CCSVI. Others have said that the current state of science is not advanced enough to do that. Both sides are turning to Health Canada.

However, no Health Canada representatives could join us today to explain why the treatment is not currently offered.

• (1955)

Showing a complete lack of sensitivity, the department finally sent an email last Thursday to the clerk of the committee. I want to read it so that everyone can get a good idea of the challenges with this issue:

Decisions regarding new treatment procedures are medical questions that fall under the jurisdiction of provincial and territorial governments and administrations, health care professionals and health care institutions.

The federal government supports health research, which includes clinical research aimed at discovering and assessing new diagnostic treatment procedures. It does not make decisions or offer opinions on the relevance of new treatments that could be integrated into the provincial and territorial health care systems, and does not suggest any conditions that should be set. Questions regarding accessibility, delivery and funding of clinical services should be addressed to the appropriate health care authorities and professionals at the provincial and territorial levels.

It is of course rather disappointing for many people who are listening to the debate tonight to hear that response from Health Canada. However, that is exactly what it should be saying, given the existing constitutional framework. It is not up to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health or to the Government of Canada to determine whether this treatment should be made available to patients.

So why are people who want to receive a diagnosis and treatment putting so much hope in an answer—hopefully positive—from this Parliament?

Is it because this Parliament—with the exception of the Bloc Québécois, which has always clearly stated that Quebec and the provinces have exclusive jurisdiction over health—has been inconsistent in its decision-making and is encroaching on this area of jurisdiction, sometimes using its so-called “spending power” and sometimes saying that if the provinces do not like it, they can take the matter to court?

Is it because Health Canada also uses this modus operandi, which, I would remind the House, is inconsistent, while taking its time in stating its intentions regarding this issue?

Is it also because the Subcommittee on Neurological Disease of the Standing Committee on Health scheduled a series of meetings

without clearly defining its mandate and without assessing the repercussions of its work? We are not working in isolation. As parliamentarians, we must avoid disappointing people unnecessarily.

And so I am calling on the chair of the Standing Committee on Health to ensure that our work is more clearly defined in the future. I just hope that these brave and determined men and women—at a point where many have undergone or will undergo this surgical procedure overseas—who have come to speak with us will not feel that it was a waste of their time. I figure, and this is but a small consolation if there can be any at all, that these testimonies, including the one Dr. Zamboni will give tomorrow morning, are public and that the health professionals who will be making this decision can refer to them.

Perhaps there is still a solution at the federal level: research. For the Bloc Québécois, research is one of the most promising routes and it must be funded. Because of that, we are asking the federal government to substantially increase the budgets allocated to various research chairs in Quebec universities. That would allow for clinical teams to be established quickly and they could submit their application for the necessary funding.

What is more, in its response, Health Canada recognized the importance of health research, including clinical research, in establishing innovative procedures.

To conclude, in light of the context in which we are evolving, we invite those who have taken a stand during the debate to present their arguments to stakeholders in Quebec and the provinces. It is the provinces and only the provinces that can authorize this treatment. It is not up to us, and it would be disrespectful of people and of institutions to pretend otherwise.

• (2000)

[English]

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech and for his good work on the health committee.

I was wondering if he could give us his opinion in the area of research. CIHR has been funding a great deal of research on MS and to date it has funded \$45 million in research on MS specifically. This new CCSVI is promising. I worked as a chiropractor for two decades and my patients who had this devastating disease were constantly looking for new hope and new treatments.

Could the hon. member comment on how the system works? In order to receive CIHR funds, researchers must apply and have their research rated excellent by a panel of peer reviewers. However, CIHR has not yet received applications in this area. The money is on the table but it has not received any applications as yet.

Could the hon. member comment on the procedure and how it should go forward, and whether he agrees with what we are doing at this time?



*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** Madam Chair, I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health for his question. It is true that when we hear the testimony, we realize how urgent this situation is. We met with witnesses and people suffering from MS who believed their condition could deteriorate rapidly. Action is urgently needed, and research is therefore urgently needed.

But it is clear to the Bloc Québécois that research funding should be allocated primarily to universities under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. That is how we would like research to be focused.

My colleague will recall that when the CIHR was created, we had some concerns about respect for jurisdictions. I hope that these jurisdictions will be respected when research funding is allocated. My colleague was quite right when he said this research will have to be done quickly.

I was also glad to hear the minister say that research funding will be released very soon.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Madam Chair, like most members, I have received hundreds of communications from people and one just this past week from Mr. Yuri Korfschinsk who repeated the argument of the member for Etobicoke North about MS patients being discriminated against in terms of getting this treatment simply because they have MS and are at risk.

It was interesting that in his letter he says that the decisions to deny this treatment have resulted primarily based on the advice of MS neurologists, which is very strange to me. Their position was that the relationship between MS and CCSVI must be fully researched and documented before CCSVI can be treated in people with MS.

I wonder if the member is aware of whether neurologists have the requisite expertise to make that assessment and whether in fact they should be the authors of health care policy regarding CCSVI.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** Madam Chair, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

I will say it again, and Health Canada was very clear in its response: it is not up to this Parliament to determine whether or not treatment can be made available. It is up to the scientific community and particularly the provinces and territories, because they are responsible for providing the public with quality health care.

● (2005)

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Madam Chair, that was very interesting.

My Conservative colleague mentioned that he was a chiropractor and that the services he offered to his patients with multiple sclerosis could help some of them in the meantime. That is how we see this treatment for multiple sclerosis.

Could my colleague tell us what he heard in committee from the people who have had the treatment? Can he describe the difference

from before and after the treatment, based on testimony from Mrs. Webb, Mr. Garvie and, in particular, Rebecca Cooney?

**Mr. Luc Malo:** Madam Chair, my colleague is quite right. We heard very moving, very personal testimony at subcommittee from witnesses who told us about the helplessness they felt and how they regained control of their lives following treatment. As I was saying earlier, this testimony has been compiled in the committee records. So the people who are responsible for deciding whether this treatment will be administered, that is, those responsible in the provinces and territories, can certainly refer to those records when making their decision.

As I was saying earlier, in the context of our deliberations, we must not give the impression that this decision will be made here. That is not the case. And if our questions and our speeches give the opposite impression, this might create expectations that we cannot fulfill as federal parliamentarians.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Chair, I would like to thank my colleague opposite for his comments. He is certainly a valuable member of the health committee, and I have enjoyed working with him for several years now.

During his comments, he made the statement that any news, or even a rumour, gives immeasurable hope to those who are suffering from this disease. I could not agree more.

It certainly is a devastating disease. I think that many of us in this chamber tonight have family members or very close friends who have MS. I have a niece and a first cousin who both suffer from MS. To see the devastation it causes not only to their lives but to their families' lives is certainly not something that any of us want to see.

With respect to some of the comments that have been made here tonight, I know that Dr. Zamboni has said that the results of his pilot study warrant further research. The Alberta health ministry has said that further independent and controlled studies are required to prove, discount, or better understand Dr. Zamboni's study results. In Ontario, the Health Technology Advisory Committee has stated that preliminary evidence does not permit them to make any recommendations. They regard the treatment as experimental at this time. The MS Society is calling for more research—

**The Deputy Chair:** Order. I must give the hon. member equal time to respond. There is only one minute left. I apologize. The hon. member for Verchères—Les Patriotes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** Madam Chair, my colleague did not have enough time to ask me her question. It seems silly to answer a question that has not been asked. However, she made reference to Dr. Zamboni. Tomorrow in the subcommittee we will have the opportunity hear Dr. Zamboni, who may shed new light on his study and his findings. For now, everything we know about Dr. Zamboni we read in the literature. I am anxious to hear his testimony tomorrow.

Again, my colleague is right to say that notwithstanding all our debates and our speeches, we know that life is not easy for people with multiple sclerosis.

*Government Orders*

• (2010)

[English]

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP):** Madam Chair, for the past few weeks, the Subcommittee on Neurological Disease within the health committee has been hearing testimony from doctors and patients regarding the treatment of chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, also known as CCSVI, as a method for treating multiple sclerosis.

According to a report from the MS Society of Canada, MS is a terrible disease that affects more than 50,000 Canadians. Currently, treatment for MS is largely drug-based and focuses on lessening the severity of symptoms. However, a new method, developed by Dr. Paolo Zamboni, has the potential to improve the lives of those suffering from MS.

In June 2009, Dr. Zamboni, an Italian doctor, published a finding about a possible link between vascular blockages in the veins responsible for draining blood from the brain and MS. He agrees that additional research is still needed, and so do we. It is evident that the research and testimony heard at committee amounts to a promising start. Just last week, the MS societies in North America announced the launch of CCSVI research project funding.

CCSVI is a disorder that causes blockages that reduce blood flow in the veins near the central nervous system. Canadians with MS are asking for the right to diagnosis and treatment. People not suffering from MS can gain access to both treatment and diagnosis for vascular blockages. Patients with MS are being discriminated against, because their vascular abnormalities occur in the brain, and they suffer from MS.

Canadians are currently looking outside of the country and are paying astronomical amounts of money to gain treatment in one of the 47 countries that recognize CCSVI. I have heard that the wait time to obtain this treatment in Poland is over three years and that a number of those on the waiting list are Canadian citizens.

Though research is not developed enough to conclude that CCSVI causes MS, the evidence of a connection between the two diagnoses is incredibly compelling. The procedure used to treat CCSVI, angioplasty, is not a new or experimental procedure. The procedure takes a matter of hours, and the patients are only under local anesthesia, making it fairly low risk.

It is also more cost-efficient than the drug treatments currently prescribed for MS patients. A witness in committee cited that in Canada, angioplasty costs only \$1,500. The current costs to the health care system for medication for MS patients ranges from \$25,000 to \$40,000 a year. This does not take into account additional costs, such as assisted living services. If angioplasty as a treatment for CCSVI is successful, even in a few cases, the potential in savings for the health care system will be substantial, and MS sufferers may be well on the way to enjoying a better quality of life.

I was recently contacted by a woman suffering from MS who wanted to inform me of the continued injustices perpetrated against those with a diagnosis like hers. The test to diagnose CCSVI is a Doppler scan MRI, which was previously performed at the Montreal Neurological Hospital at the MS clinic. She called to inform me that there was a sign in the window of the clinic stating that they would

no longer administer these tests, as directed by the college of physicians of Quebec. She has attempted to contact the hospital to hear their justification for the termination of the program but has received no response.

Why are we denying Canadian citizens the right to diagnosis? This is especially baffling to me, as the test used to diagnose CCSVI has been described as even less invasive than the procedure used to cure it. It is a scan, similar to an ultrasound. Dr. Sandy McDonald testified at committee that to the best of his knowledge, the test presents no risk.

Denying Canadians the right to determine whether they suffer from the disease seems especially extreme. I cannot fathom the cause behind this decision. Even if ties between MS and CCSVI are minimal, we are denying treatment to those suffering from CCSVI because they suffer from MS.

• (2015)

If it can be proven that patients have a vascular abnormality, why are highly trained doctors prohibited from fixing the diagnosed problem? If a patient has blocked veins, and treating this could improve blood flow, why should a doctor be prohibited from curing this disorder, even if it has little to no effect on MS?

Research into the ties between CCSVI and MS should be continued, but why must research and treatment be mutually exclusive?

I hope to see research on this topic continue, but it is my sincere wish that the research subjects not be a few hand-picked individuals chosen because the symptoms of their MS meet specific criteria. Angioplasty is a low-risk procedure, when performed by an experienced hand, with a great deal of medical precedent. Rather, the treatment should be offered to all who are diagnosed with CCSVI, and research should be done on these cases.

The procedure has the potential to change the fate of those suffering from MS. Though the results are not yet conclusive, we as Canadians should not shy away from the potential of medical innovation. The point of medical research is to improve the quality of life for those who suffer from diseases. If this procedure is considered relatively safe, why should those suffering from MS now be forced to wait for additional tests if the new innovation could benefit them immediately?

I urge the government to support innovation in medicine and to make strides toward better treatment for those who suffer from MS.

MS affects patients in different ways, but for many, the future holds decreasing motor capabilities that will eventually lead to a wheelchair and the inability to perform basic daily tasks for themselves. Individuals who suffer from MS also have higher suicide rates than the rest of the population.

*Government Orders*

Though the procedure is not spoken of as a cure, the potential to give those suffering from MS a few healthy months or years should be held with high importance. By providing coverage to those seeking to determine whether they have CCSVI and to those looking to obtain the necessary procedure to cure it, there is the potential to improve thousands of Canadian lives.

The difficulties experienced by MS sufferers when attempting to obtain this treatment are especially troubling when one considers that Canadians have one of the world's highest rates of MS diagnosis. Every day, three more people in Canada are diagnosed with the disease. This is not an insignificant part of the population. This is a large group made up predominantly of women in their prime, whose lives and potential societal contributions are being stunted by this harrowing disease. If the potential to improve the lives of these individuals exists, assisting them in obtaining treatment is the responsible and compassionate thing to do.

I am sure that my colleague, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, will make further comments on this issue a little later on, and I urge the chamber to support his motion, M-535, and to support medical research on the subject.

MS is a disease without a cure, and any reprieve from pain and suffering that can be gained through Dr. Zamboni's treatment is worth investigating. I look forward to hearing Dr. Zamboni's testimony in committee tomorrow. I hope that this chamber will grant sufferers of MS the ability to improve their quality of life.

I have been contacted by a number of my constituents, Lynn Gagnon in Elliot Lake, Dave McDowell in Elliot Lake, and Lisa in Manitowaning, Manitoulin Island, who have all indicated that any opportunity to try something that may assist them in relieving some of the symptoms or that may give them a better quality of life, whether it is for two months or two years or 10 years, is better than none, so they would appreciate the opportunity to be able to be part of the study and the treatment at the same time.

● (2020)

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Madam Chair, I certainly appreciated the comments I just heard, and I appreciated the comments I heard a little earlier from the Bloc member.

Certainly, the chamber acknowledges the importance of research and moving forward in a very rapid way in terms of ensuring that we have some appropriate research done. The member heard very clearly from the Bloc, and we certainly know, that the Canada Health Act requires provincial and territorial health insurance plans to provide medically necessary hospital and physician services. We also have the responsibility the provinces have in terms of determining what they cover and what they are going to do.

Has the member talked to the province in which she lives about what it is doing and where it is going to move this issue forward?

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Madam Chair, I can tell the member that we are in the process of touching base on everything we can with regard to this issue. As the member knows, we have heard on numerous occasions from witnesses how important and positive an impact this has had on patients.

Again, let me go back to Steve Garvie. As the member will recall, Mr. Garvie came before us and explained that he was a quadriplegic, basically. He could not wash himself. He could not feed himself. He was living in a long-term care facility or assisted living. When he came to the committee he was walking. He was able to drink and feed himself. It was quite emotional when he explained to us that he had to rely on someone else to wash him and how degrading that was for him. The fact that he is able to have that privacy now and he is independent really spoke highly of the procedure.

Let us talk about Mrs. Cooney. Mrs. Cooney first appeared at committee in a wheelchair. After the procedure, just a few weeks later when she came back to committee she was walking.

It is about ensuring that people have access to treatment but they are still part of the study. We are not denying the fact that there needs to be a study, but we are saying allow people the treatment and do the study while they are getting the treatment. It should not be about picking and choosing who is going to be in the study.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Madam Chair, it is unconscionable to be fighting over jurisdiction. I will repeat that the federal government has a role to play and that it needs to take leadership.

I wonder if the hon. member could comment on whether it is fair that the liberation treatment, a simple surgery that sends a tiny balloon to a clogged jugular vein, is unavailable in Canada where it is considered experimental by health officials. Provincial health care plans will not fund it. Doctors will not perform it. This means patients are left in limbo. As a result they are forced to go to private clinics in Poland, Kuwait and India, paying upwards of \$10,000. Is that fair?

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Madam Chair, the member is absolutely correct. Why should people go bankrupt to obtain a treatment that they could normally have here? What is unconscionable is that the treatment was available here and people were actually starting to get the treatment as soon as a diagnosis was received but all of a sudden people could not get it in Canada any more.

We are pushing to ensure that people are part of the study. We do not disagree that there needs to be more research. Let them be part of the study, but also allow them to get the treatment. There are doctors here who can provide that treatment. There are doctors here who can do the diagnosis. Why should people go abroad? It would be much cheaper for people to get the treatment here. If there is an improvement in their health, whether it is just in their circulation or whether they are able to get out of their wheelchair and walk, why is it that they cannot get the treatment here?

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Chair, I would be very interested in knowing how many patients Dr. Zamboni and others have treated at this point and what the results have been. What is the efficacy of the treatment so far? Has anyone died as a result of this treatment?

● (2025)

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq:** Yes.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** The minister said yes. Has anyone been worse off as a result of this treatment? That would cause some pause if it is a very risky treatment.

*Government Orders*

I am sure there is some issue here with insurance companies because we cannot go very far in life without dealing with insurance companies. Certainly the hospitals and doctors have to answer to their malpractice insurers and this procedure would probably have to be approved by them.

I would like to know from someone here in the debate how many people have been treated, how many people have benefited, and how many people have had an adverse reaction or died. That would give us a better idea of where things are going. Ultimately, if the government does not get its act together in Canada, people are going to do what they are doing. They are simply going to get the procedure elsewhere.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Madam Chair, that is a very important question. I am aware of two instances where there was a problem. One was that a stent was inserted and the stent was dislodged. It had nothing to do with the procedure that Dr. Sandy McDonald or Dr. Zamboni refers to. They do not use stents. The other problem had something to do with a blood clot. The family assured the doctor and the medical community that there were other underlying medical circumstances with the patient himself.

It is about having the right tools and procedure in place. Dr. Sandy McDonald certainly indicated that to us in committee.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Madam Chair, I want to correct some of the statements that have been made this evening.

The government has been taking a leadership role. As a matter of fact, the MS Society announced seven new studies between Canada and the United States and four of those studies are actually taking place in Canada.

I am very hopeful that this therapy does work. However, there have been a lot of experts weighing in on the issue. I would like to quote from the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee, which stated:

The initial reports on intravascular interventions to remove blockages in cranial veins in MS patients are encouraging. There are however, several key areas for investigation.

As well, the MS societies in Canada and the U.S. have called the early findings surrounding CCSVI exciting and intriguing, but have said that more research is needed to firmly establish the link between blocked neck veins and MS symptoms. They have cautioned patients against seeking untested treatments, urging them not to discontinue conventional treatments for their disease.

Is the member suggesting that the government dismiss expert opinions such as those expressed by OHTAC and the MS Society?

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Madam Chair, I do not think we need to dismiss the information. We need to consider the benefits to the patients and to allow them to make the proper choice, the choice they want to make with regard to treatment.

A few minutes ago a colleague wanted to know how many people are actually requesting this. Dr. McDonald himself is getting 300 calls a day. People want the choice. They want to be able to make an informed decision. They have been reading everything they can on this issue. They are willing to take the chance to improve the quality of life they currently have.

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC):** Madam Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to speak in this take note debate on MS.

Let me say first how encouraging it is to have a health minister who is so passionate about MS research and the neurosciences. I will use my time today to highlight how our federal government is leading on neurosciences, and how the debate on MS CCSVI treatment is so desperately needed to occur, not in the House of Commons, but in the provincial legislatures across Canada.

I have had the tremendous benefit to know an incredible lady by the name of Jeanette Elliott, who runs the MS Society of Simcoe County. She is probably the most enthusiastic, passionate and steadfast volunteer one will ever meet. She has taught me a fair bit about MS. I am an eager supporter of my local MS branch because Jeanette's enthusiasm is certainly contagious. One cannot meet her and not want to help out. We are actually planning several fundraising events this summer that include a boat cruise, a volleyball tournament and dragon boat races on Kempenfelt Bay.

We have tremendous support for MS in Barrie because we recognize that MS is a devastating condition. It affects young adults in their prime, causing disability and distress. Jeanette tells me Canada is thought to have one of the highest rates of MS in the world. The total cost for health care and lost productivity associated with MS in Canada is estimated to be a staggering \$950 million.

The government recognizes the importance of better understanding of neurological conditions such as MS and how they affect Canadians. Reliable information is the basis for effective programs and policies that will meet the needs of people with MS, their families and caregivers.

One year ago Jeanette Elliott began a petition at Barrie City Hall calling for federal investment to support a national study in neurological disorders. A mere six months later, in June 2009, Jeanette joined me at the MaRS centre to watch our health minister announce an investment of \$15 million over four years to support a national study on neurological diseases. This study will fill gaps in information on the extent of neurological diseases and their impact on Canadians and is being co-led by the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Neurological Health Charities of Canada.

The Neurological Health Charities of Canada is a collective of 18 charities, including the MS Society, coming together to improve the quality of life for all persons with chronic brain disorders and their caregivers. In the planning of this national study, the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Neurological Health Charities have worked closely with the neurological community to identify the community's needs and priority areas for study. This included a wide-reaching public consultation with more than 3,000 people affected by neurological disorders.

*Government Orders*

Through this national population study on neurological conditions, we will learn more about Canadians living with neurological disorders such as MS, and how neurological conditions affect Canadians. The outcomes of this study will be of great value in guiding policy and program planning around neurological disorders.

As has been mentioned by others this evening, this government has been a big supporter of neurological sciences. In 2008-09, \$120 million was invested for neurological disorders and \$5.3 million was invested for MS. As the minister mentioned, the CIHR is eager to see applications on this CCSVI treatment.

Speaking specifically about MS, I am fascinated by the possibilities with the CCSVI treatment. I come from the beautiful city of Barrie, which is home to one of Canada's leading doctors, and a good friend of mine, Dr. Sandy McDonald, who I suggested speak before the neurological disorders subcommittee. Sandy is a brilliant cardiovascular surgeon and is known locally as the local saint. He was using his own funds, with no legal protection and tremendous exposure to help patients with MS. Let me tell the House about two of his patients, two individuals from my home area of Simcoe country.

Lianne Webb, a 48-year-old woman from Hillsdale, started suffering severe migraine headaches in her mid-twenties. She began to lose control of her right arm and leg. She struggled daily with chronic bouts of fatigue. Ms. Webb was diagnosed with MS in 1992. After 18 long years of living with this disease that had so profoundly affected her and her family, she went to see Dr. McDonald.

Through imaging, Dr. McDonald saw the blockages in Lianne's jugular and diagnosed her as having CCSVI. He treated her with a balloon angioplasty on February 11 of this year. Lianne described the procedure as simple, painless and only lasting a few hours, including recovery time. She said that she no longer has symptoms, her fatigue is gone and she has stopped taking the medication. She is working full time. She golfs and walks the course. She rides horseback at least twice a week. She finds it hard to sit down and relax because she cannot wait to try so many new things. Lianne has her life back.

• (2030)

Steven Garvie, a 53-year-old man, was diagnosed with secondary progressive MS about 10 years ago. Steve was unable to walk without the use of an aid, a rollator or an electric wheelchair. He was living in supportive housing for the physically disabled and was attended to by caregivers every day. They helped him shower, cooked his supper and fed him. They did his dishes and washed him up after he was done.

The agony of Steve's daily life was almost too much to bear. He was constantly haunted by the thoughts of what this disease was putting his three daughters through. He took antidepressants, and admitted to our committee that he tried to commit suicide. Steve had almost given up. That is until he saw Dr. McDonald. Steve has CCSVI, and on January 29 of this year he was treated with a balloon angioplasty. Steve testified that the feeling in his left hand came back while he was on the table following a 45-minute procedure. He lifted his leg moments later.

Steve says that he went into the procedure with the hope of just stopping the progression. He was not prepared for the results. Steve

was proud to tell us that he has no need for caregivers anymore. He left his housing unit three months ago. He washes for himself, cooks his own dinner and cleans up after. Steve has his life back.

I realize that there is some disagreement in Canada about the safety of the CCSVI treatment between neurological doctors and vascular doctors, but if we have learned one thing from Dr. Sandy McDonald, it is that this treatment provides hope and should be looked at by provincial health ministers across Canada.

Canadians want their provincial health ministers to look into this. Dr. Sandy McDonald says that his office continues to receive 1,000 requests a week for this service. He is at a loss to understand why the provincial governments will not allow this inexpensive and simple procedure.

The provincial ministry of health shut down the ability of the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie to provide this treatment. It is not the federal government that has the power to stop treatment. It is not the federal government that authorizes treatment. It is indeed the respective provincial governments.

The member for Oshawa referenced the Ontario government's health technology advisory committee report of May 2010, a month ago, the government of Mr. McGuinty, in which the committee said that this was experimental, that it was not ready.

What I cannot imagine is why some members would try to mislead patients about the source. I apologize if I am restating the obvious but I am a bit perplexed and disappointed to see people send n petitions to the health minister of Canada to allow MS CCSVI treatment when it is the respective provincial governments that provide the technology advisory committee and governs the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

The research arm of health care is funded by the federal government but the administrative decisions and treatment are done by provincial governments. Our health minister is doing her job with passion and vigour. She is supporting research. She has taken a leadership role on neurological disorders, both domestically and internationally, whether it is the investments that have been put into CIHR, the conference she is preparing for this summer of top researchers and academics, or whether it is her leadership on the international scene. Our health minister has been a leader on this front.

It is high time we had a debate like this in provincial legislatures across Canada.

I would like to read a letter into the record from Pat Farrell, one of my constituents from Barrie. It was written to Premier McGuinty. Is that not a surprise, he has addressed it to the province?

I am writing you out of desperation from my family to help my ailing wife Barbara.

She requires an emergency vascular angioplasty that has been denied for unknown reasons.

My wife, Barbara is currently in RVH suffering from MS. She has been denied this procedure...that has the potential to alleviate some or possibly all of her symptoms.

This was a treatment that she was scheduled to have performed. Several people have had this procedure performed and have improved, all at RVH. We got excited and had hope.

Unexpectedly, days before the treatment, it was cancelled....

*Government Orders*

Some in the media falsely portrayed this as a complete cure.

He realizes that this is not a complete cure but he says that it would help relieve his wife's symptoms. They are both aware there are some risks but they accept the risks. They just cannot understand why the provincial government would tell the hospital in Barrie that it is not permitted. They cannot understand why the provincial health technology advisory committee would say that it is too experimental. It is not the Canadian health technology advisory committee. It is a provincial committee.

It breaks my heart to know that this treatment is not available for Mr. Farrell's wife but he recognizes that we need provincial leadership on this file to match the federal leadership we are seeing in research.

I hope tonight's debate on MS has been informative for those on the roles of each level of government and the urgent need we have for provincial governments to actively engage this health challenge with the same zeal that we are doing so federally.

● (2035)

I know some members across the aisle actually have a relationship with the Premier of Ontario and the health minister who comes from, if I recall, the same region as some members. Maybe they can have a conversation and encourage them to have the technology advisory committee review this.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I am glad the member recognizes the dire need for this treatment. I am, however, quite surprised to hear the member opposite talk so strongly and passionately about the need for this important diagnostic treatment and yet not give any leadership to this role.

He says that it is a provincial issue and that there is nothing for the federal government to do. I disagree strongly with the member opposite when he says that there is no leadership role for the federal government in this area.

We can talk about H1N1 on which the federal government showed leadership in driving this across the country. We would clap for the government if it would show the same perspective toward this very important treatment for multiple sclerosis. Not only that, I am surprised the member is not standing up and calling on the government to do just that.

● (2040)

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Madam Chair, I am glad the member, who hails from the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, is suggesting that the province forget about its role in the administration of health care but I am not sure Premier Williams would appreciate that.

However, it is very clear that there are technology advisory committees at the provincial level. If the federal Minister of Health were to send an order to the provinces telling them to deliver this treatment tomorrow, they would not have to listen. The federal government has no power to order treatment. Treatment in the administration of health care is done at the provincial level.

What I cannot understand is why the members opposite do not use their influence in their home provinces to bring this forward. We are

having a debate in the House of Commons tonight. Why does she not encourage a debate at Queen's Park? How can she stand by and allow Mr. McGuinty's technology advisory committee to allow this? It is shutting down the treatment at RVH and it should not be permitted.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Madam Chair, we talk about research and the needs of the patients but we are here not only to push the envelope on what needs to happen for people with MS, but, more important, for people with CCSVI. Whether they have MS or not, they should have access to diagnosis and treatment.

We know how important research is, and we do not disagree that it needs to get done, but we are here to ask that it be done in conjunction with treatment and that there be no discrimination as to who gets it.

Does he not agree that the \$1.6 billion that were invested in the G8 and G20, especially the \$1.9 million with respect to the fake lake and the props to go with it, would have been better invested in more research for MS in order to ensure we have a study that includes treatment and study for everybody?

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Madam Chair, it is great that we saw the budget for CIHR increase by \$60 million this year. It is also encouraging to hear from the health minister tonight that the CIHR is eager to receive applications and is eager to see investments in this research. We did not hear the health minister tonight say that she did not want see applications or research. She was saying that she would love to see them. This is good news. We are seeing leadership at the federal level.

My point is that there is silence from some people on the provincial level and it is hypocritical for people to attack the federal government when they are silent when it comes to their friends at Queen's Park. It is wrong, misleading and disingenuous.

**Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Madam Chair, I want us to take a deep breath and realize that we are here to represent all Canadians. This is not supposed to be a partisan issue. This is for all our constituents. We all have family and loved ones who have been stricken with this disease, as well as members in the gallery and people watching at home.

One of my best friends, Georg Eichhorst, is in his early fifties now and living in a home. I had a constituent who had the treatment and it is miraculous. It is healing. It is helpful for some and we want to find hope for these people and give them access to this treatment.

I thank my hon. colleague from Barrie for starting this neurological subcommittee and initiating the discussion here. He continues to show his leadership in the community. One of my constituents in Kelowna went to Barrie last month and had the scan done but he cannot get the treatment. It is very frustrating. Nobody wants to stand in the way of hope.

Does my hon. colleague know why this is happening in Canada?

*Government Orders*

• (2045)

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Madam Chair, it is great to hear that his constituents went to Barrie to see Sandy McDonald. It is unfortunate, however, that the treatment is no longer being permitted. The most obvious reason that the treatment has been discontinued is the report that was issued by the Ontario health technology advisory committee. It is disconcerting when it treats it as experimental but I imagine that is the reason the Ontario government took this step.

I am not sure what other provincial governments are doing, but all we can hope for is that the federal leadership in encouraging research will prod provinces along.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Madam Chair, Dr. Sandy McDonald, a cardiovascular surgeon in Barrie, Ontario, has seen the benefits of CCSVI treatment first-hand. He has performed six balloon angioplasties, pro bono, on MS patients this year. One of his patients was able to give up his walker. A teenage boy could walk up and down stairs for the first time in years.

The member speaks very sincerely and makes the argument for CCSVI. The member knows that Dr. McDonald came here asking for federal leadership. How can the government abdicate federal responsibility?

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Madam Chair, the reason I suggested that Dr. McDonald come here to speak is that I thought it would be informative and that it would help raise the discussion on this topic. I suggested that his input would be very valuable for the House of Commons to hear. Also, because of the silence in provincial legislatures, I had hoped this discussion would prod the provinces along. There is only so much the federal government can do in research. We can only hope this will light a candle in provincial legislatures.

What I cannot comprehend is that with all these petitions and all these letters that the member for Etobicoke North is embarking upon, why is there not one letter being addressed to the Premier of Ontario?

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Madam Chair, since I started on the health committee, I certainly know that my colleague has an incredible enthusiasm for both neurological disease and the neurological subcommittee. I know there is a whole group in this House that has a great passion for that subject.

I, unfortunately, have not been part of that subcommittee, so I am wondering if the member could share with me a little bit about the dynamics in terms of Dr. McDonald. He was able to do the procedures for awhile and now he can no longer do them at all. Could the member perhaps share the dynamics again because I did not hear that clearly?

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Madam Chair, from what I understand, the treatments were stopped about a month ago. RVH obviously cannot be in breach of provincial policy and it had to inform Dr. McDonald that the treatment was no longer permitted.

Obviously, for those of us in Barrie who celebrate Dr. McDonald's work, it was disappointing, which is why I am stressing so enthusiastically tonight that we need to see a change in that provincial policy. I hope the Ontario health technology advisory

committee will review this further. We have seen that everyone here on both sides are excited and I think there is a non-partisan interest in this issue. What I am saying is that we need to see that same non-partisan embracing of the treatment aspect of this on provincial levels.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Madam Chair, I want to refer to a question that was asked by my colleague regarding Dr. Sandy McDonald. Why does the member think there is more caution coming from the MS Society on this issue?

Dr. McDonald said:

I'm a vascular surgeon. I'm trained to treat venous and arterial anomalies. When I see a venous or arterial anomaly that I think I can treat with relative ease at very low risk, at very low cost, I think I should probably be allowed to treat it.

Does he not agree with Dr. McDonald's comment that it comes down to what he said? It is a bit like waiting for an electrical permit to fix a plumbing problem. It makes no sense.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Madam Chair, I agree with Dr. McDonald but I would also agree with what MPP Aileen Carroll said, the provincial Liberal member of Parliament, a former federal MP. She wrote a letter last week imploring her premier, Dalton McGuinty, to allow treatment. She said that this was not a federal issue. She said that it was up to the province to endorse treatment.

The member may want to ignore a former colleague but that is a member of the provincial Liberal caucus saying that it is their job to look into treatment. It is our job to lead on research. If they do not want to listen to me, they should listen to Aileen Carroll.

• (2050)

**Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I am pleased to take part in tonight's debate made possible by my colleague, the member for Etobicoke North, who has lived this disease through friends, family members, and through the thousands and thousands of emails she has received. Emails that were directed to the federal government in fact to the federal Minister of Health. These emails are from Canadians who are suffering from MS and who want some relief from this debilitating disease.

Tonight we are here to speak about the need for treatments to be available to people who are living with multiple sclerosis in this country. I am pleased to join my colleague in advocating for the tens of thousands of multiple sclerosis patients who are calling on the Conservative government to invest in MS research, diagnosis and treatment, and to immediately convene a meeting of provincial and territorial health ministers to discuss a national approach to funding MS and other diseases of the brain.

This is an issue that requires leadership and if, as some colleagues in the House are saying, the provinces are not moving on this issue then there should be some leadership in terms of a national strategy to bring together provincial and territorial health ministers. There needs to be some action on this file and if there is a sense that something is not happening, then there is an obligation on the part of the federal government to make it happen.

*Government Orders*

In particular, we need to look at MS and its potential cause, CCSVI, as requested by the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada. As with any research concerning health care, there has been both controversy and interest regarding the CCSVI hypothesis and the liberation procedure. I do appreciate that numerous questions remain; however, it would seem to me from what I have read and from what I have heard from MS patients that there is growing support for the liberation procedure for MS patients who have blocked veins in their necks. It is certainly something that Canada should be looking at to assist MS patients.

The Liberal opposition has asked the health minister to convene a meeting of the provinces and territories to discuss MS issues. These issues are urgent to MS patients and their families. The Liberal opposition has also called upon the Conservative government to enable individuals living with MS to be imaged for venous malformations and treated if required. We believe there is a moral obligation to offer all MS patients the imaging necessary to identify a venous malformation and access to the treatment that could possibly stop the progression of this disease.

Currently, between 55,000 and 75,000 Canadians are living with MS and the MS Society of Canada has called on the Conservative government to provide \$10 million for research into multiple sclerosis. It is really important that we put a personal face on this disease.

I will do that by referencing the representation that I have had from a couple of my constituents in the riding of Random—Burin—St. George's in Newfoundland and Labrador. Let me speak about my constituent, Perry Goodyear, who lives in Grand Bank, Newfoundland, and is one of the thousands of Canadians living with MS. Perry lives with primary progressive MS. He has breathing difficulties and he lives in constant pain. He desperately wants to get the ultrasound done to determine if something can be done to support him in his battle against MS. Perry wrote to me and I will share his comments with the House this evening.

In his letter Perry said, "I'm not getting the answers I want. Why can anybody get this ultrasound done, but we as MS patients are being denied. Are we not human or just looked down on as different people. I'm finding it hard to cope with that. I'm discriminated against as a person. I can get this scan as a non MS patient. I'm having breathing problems, can't swallow food right, (and in) constant pain. Now the government won't cover my LDN pill under my drug card because it's made from scratch at a pharmacy. My feet are purple - this pill helped with circulation and pain. Now I can't have it. What's next for me? I'm reaching out in pure pain. Just give me the scan. After that I'll know if I've got a chance to slow this rapid condition. It's not easy hearing your 13-year-old daughter asking if you will die without this surgery".

● (2055)

Perry just wants to know if there is something that can be done for him and other MS patients. Anyone who has ever faced an illness knows how important knowledge is. It is that knowledge that gives people and their families the hope and the strength to persevere.

Friends of Perry have also written in support of him and his family, friends who watch him suffer on a daily basis with this debilitating disease. All they are talking about is the need to access a

treatment that will make a difference in the lives of Perry and his family, and will recognize that he has every right to live a quality of life that most of us as Canadians take for granted.

We are asking the health minister for her support to make the research into this liberation procedure which may alleviate a potential cause of MS a priority, to take a leadership role, to help the thousands of Canadians who are suffering with this debilitating disease.

We know that liberation treatment centres are developing around the world, including Poland, Scotland and the United States. Recently, Kuwait became the first country in the world to offer the liberation procedure to all of its MS patients who have blocked veins in their necks.

Canada, with one of the highest rates of MS in the world, should be a leader in research and procedures to assist MS patients. However, this has not been the case.

Currently, Canadian doctors do not scan MS patients for venous malformations. MS patients who have had the liberation procedure, which opens up these narrowed veins, reported improvement in brain fuzziness and circulation, and over time a marked improvement in the quality of life, something that the majority of Canadians take for granted.

I can only imagine what it must be like to be living with MS and knowing that treatment may be possible, but that the federal government is unwilling to take a stand in the fight against this horrible disease

If the Conservative government cannot be compelled by logic and compassion to take a leadership role in finding a cure for MS, perhaps it will be motivated by the economic sensibility of such action.

As I said, Canada has one of the highest rates of MS in the world. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information the estimated total cost of MS to the Canadian economy is \$1 billion, more than that devoted to all infectious diseases combined. In Canada five drug therapies are approved for the treatment of some forms of MS. The cost of these therapies range from about \$20,000 to \$40,000 per year per patient and symptom management drugs can cost up to \$10,000 per year. It has been estimated that a scan and liberation treatment in a public hospital setting would cost between \$5,000 and \$6,000.

I wish share with the House a story from another one of my constituents. I think it is important to do this to put a personal face on this issue. Raymond Grandy of Harbour Breton in Newfoundland and Labrador, is another Canadian living with MS. Raymond is living with the challenges of this debilitating disease.



*Government Orders*

He writes, "I have watched so many people on television and the Internet choose the Liberation treatment and feel better after the fact. I just want to be able to take the chance on getting it done without costing me a barrel of money that I don't have. Right now, I see a treatment that is not attainable in my situation because along with my deteriorating health, I just simply cannot afford to go out of the country seeing that I get a disability cheque each month of \$834.95 and my medications cost me \$206.00 monthly. Please take the time to read this letter and please let Dr. Zamboni explain everything that the doctors in Canada need to know so that they can help us with MS.

● (2100)

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Madam Chair, I am sure that every person in this chamber tonight and those who are not here with us are concerned about the issue of MS. All of us have relatives or neighbours who have suffered with the disease. But it is also important that we focus on the research that is necessary.

Nova Scotia Minister of Health Maureen MacDonald met with the people who have MS in Halifax. She said:

We still don't know what the risks or the evidence are of the treatment. At this stage, it would be premature to have kind of a mass testing process for a treatment that is still unproven.

Does the hon. member agree or disagree with this colleague from eastern Canada?

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Madam Chair, the issue is not whether I agree or disagree with my colleague from eastern Canada. I listen to MS patients who are contacting me and telling me that they want access to this treatment. They know the research needs to go on, but they also think they should have access to the treatment that has proven to be effective.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Madam Chair, based on the information that we heard from the witnesses and the doctors who came to committee, I am just wondering if the member believes that if those patients have access to the treatment now that this would take away from the study.

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Absolutely not, Madam Chair. It is important that MS patients have access to the treatment which has proven to be effective. I know from speaking with MS patients who have been reading on the Internet, have been watching what has been happening, listening and following this issue on television, that they want and expect to have the same right to health care so that they can have a quality of life that most of us take for granted.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, tonight we heard the minister start off by saying we are going to have lots of discussions with CIHR and we are going to have lots of funding for research. The real issue is not a CIHR issue. It is a government policy issue in terms of helping people who need help. They are being discriminated against because they are considered high risk. Private clinics cannot provide the services even if the patients are prepared to pay for them. This takes federal intervention. This House has voted on at least two occasions for a national strategy on MS and the minister has not even mentioned it.

Does the member believe that the evidence is already here that MS patients are at high risk of developing CCSVI, and that treatment as well as research can coexist? A government that simply stands here

and delivers cases of platitudes, and says it is provincial jurisdiction, is a government that is really doing nothing.

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Mr. Chair, it is imperative that both treatment and research coexist. It is really important.

I do not have the medical expertise as some others who have been speaking during the debate tonight, but I do know that Canada is recognized the world over for its publicly funded medical system. We must protect accessibility and universality.

Let us stop discriminating against MS patients. Let us not leave MS patients like Perry and Randy to struggle alone. The government must bring in a national approach to fighting and curing multiple sclerosis.

● (2105)

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Chair, my colleague talked about leadership in her speech. I want to commend the Minister of Health for her leadership. I do not know if the member is aware of this, and I know she would not purposely mislead the House, but CIHR has already funded \$45 million to date for MS research. The MS Society announced just last week seven new studies and four of them are actually being done in Canada. Over \$120 million is available and it is ready to receive any research proposals from the community.

The member has been talking about access to treatment. We know both of them are necessary. Does my colleague know if any of her Liberal colleagues have actually been in touch with the provincial ministers who are in charge jurisdictionally of the treatment? Does she know if any of her colleagues have actually done that if this is so important to her?

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Mr. Chair, again, here is an example of a colleague, the member of the government, who is abdicating its responsibility. It is about leadership. If there are issues within the provinces, then let us get the Minister of Health to bring together her provincial and territorial counterparts and let us deal with it, rather than the government saying that the provinces are not dealing with it so therefore it is not its responsibility. Let us convene a meeting of all ministers of health and let us put an end to this issue.

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC):** Mr. Chair, in terms of federal leadership and in terms of more research, the health minister said, "all applications possible, please apply". On convening a conference, the best academics and researchers, the brightest minds in the country, are gathering this summer.

However, what I cannot believe is how, in light of this federal leadership, the member failed to answer the question of my colleague. Have she taken the time, even two minutes, to write a letter to her premier, Danny Williams, to say that she believes the Newfoundland technical advisory committee should say this treatment merits a look at? Has she written Danny Williams to say that she wants the Newfoundland College of Physicians and Surgeons to say that physicians are allowed to do this? Or are you simply here to make statements? Are you simply here to ask questions instead of actually helping your constituents?

*Government Orders*

**The Chair:** Order, please. I will take this opportunity to remind all hon. members to address their comments through the Chair, not directly at our colleagues.

The hon. member for Random—Burin—St. George's.

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Mr. Chair, I watched that charade over there and listened to the comments that came from the member who is a part of a government. The government should take some leadership. It recognizes there is an issue here, but is not prepared to act on it. This is not about what provinces and territories are doing. This is about leadership and the recognition that we need to do everything we can to help our MS patients access treatment and do so while there is ongoing research.

Let the Minister of Health convene a meeting of all her provincial and territorial ministers and then we will find out what the provinces are doing. However, let us have some leadership from the federal government on this issue so our MS patients can lead a quality of life that we take for granted in our country.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP):** Mr. Chair, one of the witnesses we heard from, Ms. Rebecca Cooney, talked about the problems with studies and the ability of patients to access those studies. For example, in her condition, she also suffers from Crohn's disease.

Does my colleague understand or does she know and does she agree with me that if patients have other conditions that will automatically oust them out of any study and the ability to even access that study?

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Mr. Chair, yes, I am aware, and that is a serious issue for, particularly, MS patients. It is important that they have this opportunity. However, when they are left to the, I guess, whims of whatever happens in a particular study and then they are unable to access a particular treatment because of another side effect, then that is a serious issue. I do agree with her. We need to do everything we can to ensure MS patients can access the treatment they so desperately need.

• (2110)

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I welcome the opportunity to speak about multiple sclerosis tonight and how new research can help bring new hope to patients.

As we know, MS is a devastating diagnosis and unpredictable illness. It often strikes young people who may lose the ability to move and speak as the illness takes its course. Canada has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis in the world. Every day three more people in Canada are diagnosed with MS.

My riding of southern Alberta has one of highest incidence of MS in the world. In fact, in the neighbourhood where my children grew up, three young ladies, within six houses of each other, were all diagnosed with MS at about the same time in their lives.

It is the prevalence of this illness in Canada and the debilitation that it can cause which leads us all to hope for a cure. I do not stand here today speaking from merely a theoretical standpoint. I am personally determined to see us find a treatment for MS. A few years ago, my daughter was diagnosed with MS.

Since that time, my wife has been a member of the local MS Society board. I have been involved in red carnation day on Parliament Hill. Over the last five years "Team Casson", supported by numerous unselfish people, has raised \$92,000 through the MS Society Enerflex MS Walk.

I do not say this to brag. I say it because it leads into the fact that individual Canadians on the ground are doing what they can to find a cure for MS, just as the Government of Canada is. We have invested through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research over \$45 million to date on MS research. It is through investments in research and innovation that our best hopes lie in improving treatments and some day finding a cure.

In part, due to these investments, the last few years have seen great advancements in MS research. Our knowledge of what causes MS, how it develops and how it progresses is growing, but many questions remain unanswered. The Canadian research community is working tirelessly to answer many of these questions.

For example, researchers are working to solve what is considered one of the great medical mysteries of neurological diseases: how does myelin, which is responsible for protecting and insulating nerves, become damaged and lose its protective effect?

CIHR-funded researcher Peter Stys from the University of Calgary has been working on this question and has discovered that myelin can chemically communicate with the surrounding nerve fibres. Dr. Stys and his research team reported that damage from a stroke could be avoided by blocking the myelin receptors. Many researchers are looking at these receptors as potential targets for MS therapies. This is very promising work, indeed.

Another example is the work of another CIHR-funded researcher, Dr. Sam Weiss, again from the University of Calgary, whose discovery of neural stem cells and their ability to stimulate neural development through our lifetime is the foundation upon which much research on neurological diseases, including MS, is taking place. The implication of Dr. Weiss' research is that recovery of motor, visual and cognitive functions is possible.

Yet another promising example is the work of Canadian MS researchers who networked right across the country, spanning from the Hospital for Sick Kids in Toronto to the University of British Columbia. These CIHR-funded researchers are trying to harness the growing power of skin cells to repair cells in the nervous system.

The first thing I was told when my daughter was diagnosed was that MS was a lesion on the brain that caused an interruption in the signals from the brain. These researchers are looking at an ability to repair the cells in the nervous system. The goal of this research is to some day make brain and nerve damage reversible. Imagine if that happened. It is something MS patients desperately need.

*Government Orders*

I also want to mention the good work being done in my home town at the Canadian Centre for Behavioural Neuroscience at the University of Lethbridge. Researchers there are striving to understand the basic structure and function of brain circuitry.

This is providing insights into the most fundamental properties of brain function, which may help decipher the causes of many disorders, including stroke, Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis. Scientists such as Dr. Bryan Kolb, Dr. Ian Wishaw and Dr. Gerlinde Metz are conducting research that looks at how the brain regenerates function and circuitry using stem cells, psychoactive drugs and other therapeutic interventions. Dr. Bryan Kolb, a long-time friend, was the first person I called.

● (2115)

The importance of establishing a robust health research community, ready to respond to a myriad of questions across disciplines, cannot be overstated. This is because often researchers are looking for answers on one disease and end up advancing our knowledge on another.

For example, Dr. Bruce Pike and Dr. Douglas Arnold of McGill University are studying Alzheimer's disease, and receive CIHR funding to advance functional magnetic resonance imaging research. This work will help to comprehensively and quantitatively assess tissue damage in MS patients, thereby improving our understanding of the disease and the evaluation of the new therapies.

The above are only a few examples of the ways in which research funding through CIHR is leading to discoveries that will help us help people living with MS. Indeed the research funded by the Government of Canada is changing people's lives. Investments in a wide range of research, including over \$120 million in the larger area of neurosciences research in 2008-09 alone, are having an impact. A further \$38 million in stem cell research has been invested for researchers to pursue potentially useful therapies for the treatment of disease, such as multiple sclerosis.

Further, it is worth noting that the CIHR has made chronic diseases, of which MS is one of the top research priorities in its new 2009 strategic plan. All of these investments are building on our overall understanding of MS. I am hopeful that these investments and the discoveries that they lead to will advance our understanding of MS and allow for the development of safe and effective treatments.

As for the new vascular treatment making headlines worldwide, I join all Canadians on all sides of the House in the hope that this new approach proves to be safe and effective, but I need to see some sound evidence before adding it to the body of knowledge on MS.

I want to mention my daughter's doctor in Edmonton, Dr. Mary Lou Myles. She takes all of this information that comes forward, takes all the spin and all the misinformation out of it, and sends out information updates to her patients. I read these on occasion. I appreciate the fact that she approaches this in that way. She understands the potential is there, but she is very cautious about how to proceed.

To this end, the Minister of Health has asked Dr. Alain Beaudet, president of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to provide her with advice on how to further advance research in this important

area. The CIHR has been consulting with the research community and is collaborating with the MS Society of Canada to identify priorities for MS research.

In keeping with this great tradition of guiding Canada's research agenda, the CIHR is helping to steer a course that will answer the pressing questions still left unanswered regarding MS. In keeping with this tradition, it is doing so in a manner that foster excellence in the Canadian research community.

I am confident the CIHR will use its expertise and vast networks to support the great scientific minds in improving our understanding of MS and reducing the suffering of MS patients.

My family and I, along with many Canadians, are excited about the possibilities of this new treatment. We sincerely hope we find an effective cure for this debilitating disease. I encourage the pertinent researchers in Canada to work with the CIHR, to work with the MS Society and with our Minister of Health, and apply for the funding that has been made available to do the good work that is needed in the research so we can end MS.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, the Minister of Health started off talking mostly about the CIHR as well.

The member will know that the CIHR is not accountable and is not reportable to Parliament, other than an annual report. Its predecessor organization, the medical research council, was replaced by the CIHR because it had become set in its ways and the old boys network had its own pet projects and was not prepared to move forward.

The issue for the member to address is why the Conservative members are only talking about research down the road? Why has not one of them talked about treatment? MS patients are at high risk of CCSVI. That disqualifies them from treatment, even from private clinics.

How does that give people hope, when it is available to others who may have that? How does it give them hope if they are denied, saying it is a provincial responsibility and we will depend on the CIHR to come up with some interesting research projects and maybe a generation from now we might be able to show that this kind of treatment is okay for MS patients?

How can the member rationalize his position of no treatment, no help for people with MS?

● (2120)

**Mr. Rick Casson:** Mr. Chair, I can put a personal touch on this. If I am going to recommend that my daughter takes a treatment of some kind, I want to make damned sure it will not kill her, cripple her or make her worse.

*[Disturbance in the gallery]*

**Mr. Rick Casson:** That is unfortunate.

That is unfortunate because I say that with all sincerity.

*Government Orders*

I want this research to be done, and I want it done right. When the time comes, I will advise her and help her get that procedure.

There has been a couple of incidents where people have been damaged, but out of how many? This procedure is available in 47 countries, as somebody said earlier, so why is it not available in Canada?

I truly believe, and I say it having this in my family, that research needs to be done and we have to be very cautious, but when it is proven, let us quickly deal with the 50,000, 60,000 or 70,000 people in this country who have MS. But let us not, for one second, give false hope to those that this procedure cannot help. That is where the testing comes in, where the MRI procedure has to come in, and that is why the diagnosis has to be exactly right.

We have to make sure we do not tell people that this will help them when it will not. We have to make sure that those who can be helped will be helped, but we have to continue with the research so those who cannot be cured by this process from Italy, and there are many, still have hope for the future. A large percentage of the people who are affected by MS are not helped by this new process and they need that research for their own well-being.

**The Chair:** I will remind our visitors who are here tonight that they are not to interrupt the proceedings in any way so as to interfere with the members' questions, comments or speeches.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I want to refer to some testimony that we heard in committee. The question was asked to Dr. Sandy MacDonald, who had treated six patients:

Have there been any complications? And what have you learned from the treatment that you have engaged in so far?

The response was:

There have been no complications to treatment. I will give you a really nice example. A 23-year-old kid can't feel his left arm or left leg. He gets an angioplasty done and he gets feeling back in his leg and his arm. He is living in a house with an elevator because he can't go up and down the stairs. A week later he tells his mom and dad he's moving out of the house and into the apartment with his girlfriend because he doesn't have MS any more. The procedure works. We have to allow patients to have the procedure.

That is what he indicated.

Based on what we have talked about with Steve Garvie, Mrs. Cooney, does the member agree that we need immediate funding, more funding for this research, and that it should be done in conjunction with treatment?

Could the hon. member elaborate a bit on what this would mean for the health care system, given the fact that people are now able to live a more productive life after the procedure, and how much is being saved in the medical field by the fact that they may be coming out of long-term care or assisted living?

**Mr. Rick Casson:** Mr. Chair, to get back to the point I made that seemed to draw some laughs from some corners, which I find so very, very unfortunate—and to have the member opposite cheerleading that reinforces my opinion of him—the fact remains that this process will help people. It has helped some people. But it has

caused some problems and we do not know all the details on it. It will not be the cure-all for everybody.

If my daughter were in a wheelchair, which she is not, but if she were, or I was, I would be looking at every possibility for a better future for me and for my family.

If this is the answer, then let us make damned sure it is. Let us make sure that when it is offered there is a complete understanding that it will not help everybody. It will help some, and hopefully it will bring them right back to normal.

Some of the other research, how to regenerate brain cells, how to get motor rhythms back, all of these things are the type of research that will help a lot more people in the long run.

Let us continue with our research. Let us use the investments that have been made for the betterment of all of us.

• (2125)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Chair, it was not just recently, since the breakthrough research from Dr. Zamboni has come forth, but for many years our colleague from Lethbridge has been trudging forth, raising money for MS. As a father, we know there is nothing he would not do to save his daughter and spare her pain.

I understand that in addition to Ontario, his home province of Alberta does not fund this either. As a father of a daughter who is suffering from this disease, where is he deriving his hope, and how is it that he can overcome the temptation to try a procedure that might end her suffering?

**Mr. Rick Casson:** Mr. Chair, that is a great question, and I appreciate that, but whether there are provincial or federal jurisdictional issues, I think we need to be aware of them and we also need to need to work on them.

At the same time that I wrote a letter to our health minister many months ago when this issue first came forward, I also wrote a letter to the health minister of Alberta. I got responses. Do I have issues with some of the responses? Sure I do, and I have talked to our federal health minister about those issues many times. We have raised it at every opportunity, and I am becoming more satisfied with the answers I am hearing. With respect to why some of this is not happening where it needs to, we are going to have to work with that.

One thing I am proud of is that over the last number of years this government has continued to put money into research for the neurosciences, and it has continued to fund the provinces through the Canada Health Act. We have not cut that funding; we have flagged it for a percentage increase every year. So when the decision is made to move forward, the provinces will have the resources, the time and the money to be able to do that.

It is a long and complicated process, and a lot of MS sufferers do not have that kind of time. We will be keeping the pressure on to make sure things are done right but that they are done as fast as they possibly can be.

*Government Orders*

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, it is important to understand that the federal government must take federal leadership. The federal government is responsible for the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is neither efficient nor fair nor consistent with charter values for the Government of Canada to tolerate a limbo in which MS sufferers are simply told to wait the years it will take for those studies and in the meantime to put up with their discriminatory disqualification from a straightforward treatment of a diagnosable vascular condition.

**Mr. Rick Casson:** Mr. Chair, that question fits into the other things I have said. We are going to move forward on this issue. It may take more time than some people want, particularly me. I do not want to see it take any longer than necessary because this disease does move forward. One thing I will say is that we will keep the pressure on to move this forward as fast and as responsibly as possible.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank those who spurred this debate, the member for Etobicoke North as well as the minister, who have helped to put this on the table this evening. It means a great deal to me.

As the member for Lethbridge said, for some of us this is extremely personal. It is not about constituents. It is not about friends. It is about family. In my case it is about my father who died of MS. Although the MS Society will say people do not die of MS, my father is no longer with us today because MS killed him. They can say it was cardiac failure from complications from pneumonia and everything else he went through in his life, but my father is dead because of MS. He would have seen me stand in the House on my first day if he had not died of MS the year before.

It means a great deal to me to do this. It means a great deal to me when I hear the member for Barrie talk passionately about what we can do. But then he asks whether we have written to our provincial health minister. I would suggest to the member that perhaps we should write a letter and have all 308 of us sign it, send it to every health minister across this land, and state that we ought to look at what we can do for those who suffer from this disease.

We cannot know what it is like unless we live with it. My colleague and friend from Lethbridge knows that.

We cannot know what is like to have a father fall because he wants the dignity to go to the bathroom on his own. My father fell behind the door and squealed in agony because I had to open the door and squeeze him between the door and the wall to get in to help him get to his walker. People cannot know that unless they do it, unless they live with it. People cannot know the toll it takes on one's mother as she is providing his care every day of his life.

The member for Lethbridge and I understand that because we have lived with it. We know what it is like for families to watch that person go through agony, to watch their dignity be stolen from them. I watched the person I knew and looked up to as a father look to me as his father, 20 years before it should have happened, because he no longer had the ability to carry on.

As a school boy, my father went to work at the age of 14 in a shipyard in Belfast. He worked his entire life, and at the age of 57 he was diagnosed with MS. It was later in life than most MS sufferers,

but unfortunately he got the worst case, which is called progressive MS. In fact it was rampant. He never had a break. He also suffered the aggravated pain in his legs, to the point where he was on morphine every day until the end of his life.

He said to me years after he was diagnosed that someone dealt the cards and he had to play the hand. He came to terms with his suffering. I do not know how. I watched him day in and day out in agony, when he could not eat. When he did eat he was ill because he could not keep the food in his stomach anymore. His sphincter valve had reversed itself, and as the food went down it came back up. That is the life that MS sufferers lead. That is why they look to us and say help. They put their hand out to us and say help because their life does not get better.

Regardless of the drugs they are given, most physicians do not know what to do. In a lot of cases they do not know someone has MS. They say the person is asymptomatic, until an MRI finally shows they have the clouding in the brain. The doctors say "oh, by the way, you have MS". A lot of specialists throw their hands in the air and say they will do the best they can to try to manage a patient's life. Those are the cards that are dealt, as my Dad used to call them.

What does it mean when we see a treatment and its potential? I agree with my colleague from Lethbridge that this treatment would never have worked for my father. For most of the folks who have rampant progressive MS, this would not work.

My father is not with me today. I am not asking for him, but I know he would want me to ask for all those others, who like him have suffered, especially young people who see older folks and know that is where they are going.

● (2130)

They are going to be in wheelchairs. They are going to be in long-term care facilities. They are going to be in places where, at the end of the day, what will it mean to the quality of their lives and the dignity of their lives? It will be taken away from them.

This is not a cure-all. If it were, I think every member of this House would rush out and sign up for it. We all know that it is not a cure-all. However, what it is indeed is an opportunity for those who potentially could be spared some of the symptoms, perhaps even for a period of time.

I like to say that my mother is small in stature—my mother is four feet eleven inches—but she is the wildest little Scotswoman one ever saw. She was a giant when it came to advocating for my father. She would go after the MS Society day in and day out and say, "Have you seen this, have you seen that, did you know about this report, did you know about this new study?", and nine times out of ten, they said no. My mother, at the age of 62, learned how to use the Internet, and she became his advocate as well as his caregiver.

Unfortunately for MS sufferers, it is their families who advocate for them. That is why we see the push we see today when it comes to a specific treatment. It is because they advocate so passionately for them, because they know that their suffering is all too real. As I said earlier, we have to live with it and have to have someone who is dear to us, who we see day in and day out, to know what it really is like.

*Government Orders*

I know that many of my colleagues here this evening have spoken quite eloquently and passionately about constituents who call, and that is all too real. There are those of us in this House who have family members now, and hopefully will for a long period of time to come, who will hopefully get well in the future. I can only hope for that for my colleague from Lethbridge for his daughter.

There are those of us who have lost loved ones because of this disease. We can divide the line any way we want. We are not going to get into a constitutional crisis over MS, whether it be provincial or federal. We are not about to get into that kind of debate here. However, at the end of the day, whatever power we have, whether that be moral suasion only, we do a disservice, I do a disservice to my father, we do a disservice to MS sufferers and their families, if we do not take that mantle up, if we do not take that challenge and go forward. We desert them. The life is being taken from them now. Let us not desert them any more.

The medical community for a long time deserted MS sufferers, because it did not know what to do. The medical community is now coming back to MS patients saying that it knows what it did and that it has to find things to help. They have looked at all kinds and manners of treatment. You name it, my father tried it, whether it be bee sting serum or something else. My mother learned how to give injections to him when she got to be nearly 70. She figured it out. Let me tell members, people do not get the personal and home care that is needed when they are MS sufferers. It is just not there. They will be told to go to a long-term facility and will be put on a waiting list. Heaven forbid, though, that they actually want to stay at home with their life partners, as my father did.

I used to say to my mother, “Mom, you're a heck of a stubborn lady”, and she said, “Yes, I married him in sickness and in health, and I intend to keep him,” and she did. I can tell members that she kept him until the day he died. He died in his own bed, in his bedroom, because that is where he wanted to die. He chose his moment to go. He knew that he had no more time. He knew that he had no more energy to fight. He knew that this was the end. He decided to go back to his house and his family. It did not make it easier for us to be there with him when he went, but it made it his decision. Ultimately, the only dignity he ended up with at the end of his life was choosing the day he died, when he said “No more. No more treatment. No more interventions. I don't want to be intubated. I don't want any of it. Take me home.”

I took him home from the hospital, and he died in three weeks. That was his choosing. That was the last actual act of dignity he got to perform in the last 20 years of his life. MS robbed my parents of the retirement life they had planned for 40 years. It took it away from them. It takes it away from young people, as well.

A lot of folks say that my dad was lucky. He got to live until he was old. He got it later in life. The unfortunate part is that there are a lot of young folks in this country and across this world who do not have the luxury to live that long. So, I implore—

● (2135)

**The Chair:** I am going to have to stop the member there, because the time has expired. To be fair to other colleagues, I will have to stop the member.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

● (2140)

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Chair, the member told a story that touched us all. I think we can all relate, through family, friends, or others, to the story the member told. That is the story we certainly want to hear.

We have a doctor who is very well respected in Kamloops. He wrote a significant article in the newspaper, because this is so prevalent among the MS sufferers in our community. In the article, he talked about the disease in a way people could understand. He talked about the promise of the treatment and said that he is optimistic. However, he also added caution. He is really worried. We have processes in place to approve of treatments and to move treatments into the mainstream.

Yes, let us move as fast as we can, but let us not give up on appropriately ensuring that what we are doing is safe and that we are doing something that is really positive for health and safety.

We heard earlier from my colleague. His doctor was giving his patients a similar message. Perhaps the member could reflect on those doctors who express that bit of concern that yes, we need to move fast, but we have to make sure that we have a good process.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Chair, I appreciate the question.

I think everyone agrees. I do not think that there is any MS sufferer out there who says that they wish to be a human guinea pig for something that is experimental.

The problem most MS sufferers have is that there is no cure. This one particular aspect is not being purported to be a cure either. What they are saying is that it looks as if it has a reasonable prospect of helping to alleviate symptoms.

Dr. Zamboni has not said that he found the magic bullet that cured MS. If that were the case, they would be lined up around the block and around the country to get at him and those who can do the procedure.

Yes, one needs to be able to make sure that it is good science. The difference with this particular procedure is that the procedure is done to alleviate different types of symptoms for other diseases, such as different types of blockages. Therefore, it is not new in the sense that it is radically different from something that is done somewhere else. That is the difference with this. That is why people have latched onto it so quickly. It is not just the results that people have seen in some patients. What they see is that it is easier to do in the sense that it is not a complicated procedure.

All surgeries have risks. Let us be abundantly clear about that. If you get an anesthetic, there is a risk involved in getting the anesthetic.

I thank the member for the question.

We need to go quickly but scientifically.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for sharing something so deeply personal with us.

*Government Orders*

I think he will appreciate one email I received. It states:

I'm a child of an MS victim and I am writing this to you, to ask you if you have enough compassion to legalize a saving treatment.

My dad has had MS for about 13 years and since his diagnosis, nothing has been the same. He has not been able to do all the things he has wanted to do with us and when he has tried to accomplish EVERYTHING, he lies in his bed, in extreme pain. The worst part of it all is that I have to watch, knowing there is nothing I can do. But from the results on CCSVI treatment, I think maybe I can. Maybe if I write this letter on behalf of me and my younger brother and sister, we'll at least know that we could have contributed to a difference.

I want the member to know that there are people who have primary and secondary MS who are getting symptom relief from devastating MS. There are no medications for primary or secondary MS. Even though drugs exist for relapsing remitting, the efficacy is about one-third, or 33%. Should we not be undertaking the research now, which is the responsibility of the federal government, by giving people diagnosis and treatment and then following with the research?

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Chair, I certainly understand what that young boy was saying when he wrote a letter about his father. I could have been him years ago, writing as well, if this had been around at the time.

As I said earlier, we will do anything to help them. When it is a family member, we will do whatever it takes to help, because we feel helpless. We watch as these people suffer day in and day out. Every day gets worse, and we cannot raise a hand to help. One needs to live it to feel it, to know what it is like not to be able to help. It is the most powerless feeling in the world to watch a father or another loved one suffer and know that you cannot help. In agony, I watched my father's legs bounce like jumping jacks for an hour uncontrollably, because no medication would stop them. I held them with my hands and pushed his feet to the floor to try to help. My arms simply bounced. That is how powerless I felt. That is how much it means to do what we need to do to help them.

• (2145)

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I greatly appreciate the member sharing that personal story.

As I mentioned before, I have some friends, Dave and Carla, in Elliot Lake. I know what they been living through for quite some time. Dave wants nothing more than to at least have some relief. If this procedure could get him out of his wheelchair or at least get him to move his hands so that he could hold his six-year-old son, because he has never been able to hold his son, that would be very powerful for them.

What about Lynn and John Gagnon, in Elliot Lake? Lynn owns a hairdressing shop there. All she wants is be able to get up and go to work, just like everybody else, and tend to her clients and not feel so tired.

There are Lisa and Rob from Manitowaning, who just want to get on with their lives.

MS has a devastating impact.

We have heard over and over again tonight that this is a provincial issue with regard to access. What can the federal government actually do? We've heard this with regard to the HST and the federal

government passing the buck to the provinces after it instituted something in the budget to pass the HST. The Conservatives kept saying that it was the provinces.

What can the federal government do?

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Chair, in reviewing the material at the subcommittee on neurological disease, Dr. Ewart Mark Haacke talked about the federal government making a commitment as far as putting a centre of excellence together. He suggested that even if the government started with one that saw 500 patients, that would amount to 500 MS studies that could actually be looked at. If the government put five centres across the country, that would total 2,500 patients. If the government put 1,000 in each one, that would be 5,000. If it actually worked, and the efficacy was proven, the following year they could put 2,000 through each place, and that would amount to 10,000 people.

As I said earlier, in an exchange with the member for Lethbridge, this particular procedure will not fix all cases. MS sufferers know that. This procedure will not fix all of them, but it can fix some. If it fixes one, then it is well worth doing.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I have a question for my colleague. Let us put federal and provincial partisanship aside.

In Quebec, the incidence of multiple sclerosis is as high as that of fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, lupus and Crohn's disease. However, the Collège des médecins du Québec, through its President and CEO, Dr. Yves Lamontagne, says that we must be very careful. It says this is just theory for now and before going any further and giving everyone the green light, we must wait four or five months. Dr. Zamboni's surgery has not yet been proven.

Does my colleague approve of the decision made not by the political parties, but by the President and CEO of the Collège des médecins du Québec?

[*English*]

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Chair, I have to admit that I did not quite catch the entire question. I apologize to my colleague for that. I was trying to blow my nose, believe it or not, and maybe gain a little bit of composure.

Let me reiterate what I said earlier. I think we have the ability in the House to come together, stand up for MS sufferers and tell them that we believe we can help them. The easiest way to do that would be, as the member for Barrie suggested, to write a letter to provincial ministers and for all of us to sign it.

• (2150)

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Chair, we are all here tonight to speak about a very important subject that affects the lives of many Canadians and many people around the world. Before I get into what I have to say, a lot of people here tonight are very passionate about this. Some have tried to politicize this and I would remind members on all sides of the House that we get nowhere in doing that. This is not a subject to politicize and I think we should all respect that.

*Government Orders*

Multiple sclerosis has touched my immediate family, as it has the member for Lethbridge and the member for Welland, and the families of many of my constituents. Canada is known to be a very high risk area for MS. My sister Marylou has MS. Many other people with MS in Canada are counting on all of us here to do as much as possible as quickly as possible to find treatments and eventually a cure.

Multiple sclerosis is a disease that randomly attacks the central nervous system, affecting the control a person has over his or her body. Symptoms may range from numbness to blindness to paralysis.

I want to thank the minister for her attention to this health issue and this take note debate. I have had a very good working relationship with the minister, who has always been attentive to the issue of MS and sensitive to the concerns of MS patients. She does understand how debilitating and devastating neurological diseases can be for those affected.

In 2008-09, we invested \$120 million for neurological diseases, including \$5.3 million for MS alone, through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. In fact, since 2001, we have invested over \$45 million in MS research. Today, however, I want to talk a little about chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, also known as CCSVI for short, and how it looks promising as a possible new treatment for MS.

I know that the minister and the government recognize that the findings of Dr. Zamboni provide great hope for Canadians suffering with MS. Patients like my sister, my friends and neighbours, including Tammy Graver, Mandy Maisonneuve and Dianne Hepburn, just to name a few, and other Canadians see this new treatment as a great chance to improve their health and as something worth trying as soon as possible. It has given them a level of hope they have not had in years. Let us all work together to bring that hope to fruition.

We all know that provincial and territorial governments make decisions on matters related to the administration and delivery of health services, including decisions regarding the treatment and diagnosis of CCSVI. However, we also know that both levels of government have a role here. Rather than politicize this issue, as I said earlier, let us have all parties, all of us here tonight, work together for the benefit of all MS sufferers.

I want to remind Health Canada and the national MS Society, for which I have great respect, that they need to play a leadership role to fast-track the necessary research and approval process so that Canadian patients can get access to this promising treatment as soon as possible. I want to take this opportunity to ensure that the provinces, if they are listening, know that I fully support embracing this new treatment as rapidly as possible and as safely as possible and devoting some health care and research dollars toward it.

They need to ensure that MS patients have the access to the diagnostics and MRIs that are required to determine what course of treatments can best help them. Research plays an important role in confirming and validating new scientific findings and Health Canada and the MS Society need to do all they can to help the provinces and territories determine implications for treatment.

That is why the minister has asked Dr. Alain Beaudet, president of the CIHR, to provide advice to the government on how to advance research in this important area. The CIHR is consulting with the research community and will be convening, in collaboration with the MS Society of Canada, an international meeting of top scientists to identify research priorities for Canada and accelerate research and innovation on MS.

I know the minister will continue to work with the MS Society and the CIHR to encourage researchers to apply for funding in order to further the research for CCSVI and MS. No other government has committed as much as ours has for neurological diseases, including MS. We do not have a cure yet, but we will. I feel very strongly about that.

• (2155)

We need to get the provinces and Health Canada to move faster because people's lives hang in the balance. The better treatments for MS we can get our patients access to, the better their lives will be.

I want to tell everyone a little more about what CCSVI is and where we are at on it. I want to let everyone know the decision to fund the research in Canada was spurred by the overwhelming interest in the results of a recent study by Italian vascular surgeon, Dr. Paolo Zamboni, a professor of medicine at the University of Ferrara in Italy.

Dr. Zamboni has suggested that CCSVI could be a cause of MS and reported that a procedure to alleviate it has reduced the symptoms in people who suffer from multiple sclerosis.

On that note, my sister is about to get the test in Barrie, Ontario to see if she can have this treatment. It is just one part of the process. We wish her well in that.

The MS Society describes CCSVI as a hypothetical disruption of blood flow in which the venous system is not able to efficiently remove blood from the central nervous system, resulting in increased pressure in the veins of the brain and spinal cord, which in turn results in damage to those areas.

Dr. Zamboni has revived the idea that this disruption in blood flow and drainage is present in people with MS and has devised an experimental procedure that involves removing the blockage in the veins that carry blood to and from the brain.

So far, he has performed the angioplasty-like surgery on 120 MS patients, including his wife whose multiple sclerosis provoked his interest in tackling the disease.

There has clearly been a great deal of work done in Italy on this new treatment, and it is key that we move more quickly to make these new treatments and research available to those it may help. In short, we must accept the progress achieved by Dr. Zamboni.



*Government Orders*

I think the MS Society and our health departments have been a little too cautious, with all due respect, with a take-it-slow approach, but we should respect the medical expertise in Europe that has developed this treatment and evaluate it as quickly as possible.

I want to thank the minister for the funding she has made available so far. I firmly believe we should continue to fund MS research as a high priority and fast-track the CCSVI treatment research.

I want to encourage medical researchers to pursue new treatments for MS and make use of the research dollars the minister has made available. Early treatment of MS is important, as it is in any disease, and access to proven therapies should not be restricted by where a person with MS happens to live.

According to Dr. Joel Oger, a neurologist at UBC and one of the co-authors of a consensus statement on the use of MS therapies, there is increasing evidence that damage to nerve fibres occurs early in MS, and it is important that all people with active disease be treated as early as possible. New information about how MS causes damage within the central nervous system is making early treatment all the more important.

One of the main problems MS patients face is an overly bureaucratic system that places too much decision-making authority on what treatments should be covered under our health care system with the panels of doctors, bureaucracies, provincial governments and possibly with insurance companies that may be involved.

At this point where we do not have a cure and only a limited number of effective treatments available for MS, some of the real decision-making power should be with the patients and their own personal attending physicians about what treatments they should be able to use to combat this debilitating and deadly disease.

We need to free up our physicians and their patients in these circumstances to try new treatments like CCSVI. Doctors who have criticized CCSVI should be more open-minded about possible new treatments and withhold their judgment until results can be confirmed or duplicated.

In fact, I am very disappointed in the comments by some doctors who have basically discarded Dr. Zamboni's treatment as bogus or without merit. They should put their pride aside and admit that there are possibly other ways to treat MS patients than the methods they have become accustomed to. In other words, they should keep an open mind about other possible procedures like CCSVI.

The MS Society of Canada has made arguments through its consensus statement that all current approved drug treatment should be offered to all people with MS who could benefit from treatment, and to ask provincial governments and third party payers to expand their criteria for drug cost reimbursement.

I must say I am also a little disappointed the MS Society has not yet taken an even broader approach to include more new treatment options that have shown promise, like CCSVI, and encourage the provinces to allow individual patients and doctors more freedom to choose their course of treatment.

● (2200)

In conclusion, I once again want to thank the minister for her attention to MS. On behalf of my sister, family and friends, I thank everybody who has participated in the debate tonight.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for his moving speech and for having the courage to say that the federal government has a role. I extend my best wishes to his sister and family.

I want Canadians living with this disease to have their voice in Parliament tonight. Another letter states in part:

I was diagnosed with MS exactly 14 years ago, and am at the point where I pretty much require round-the-clock care. No medications help me, but I take several for symptom relief. My medical care and Home Care needs are a burden on tax payers, and at the young age...I think about suicide often because living like this is hell. A simple vascular procedure that is done regularly for people with other medical conditions is being denied to me.... This fact makes me cry every day, especially when I hear from people who have received the treatment so far...how well they are doing, and improving daily.

What will the member commit to doing to ask his government to help move this procedure, the diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI along? A few years ago a drug that has now been removed was fast-tracked. What will he commit to do to help move this along and also to get the \$10 million requested for research? The diagnosis and treatment have to occur together with the research.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for her obviously strong interest in this subject tonight.

Being here tonight, including the member across the way and other members, to talk about this shows a commitment. This is a new procedure. Whatever happens at the end of this, we all want the same thing. We want a safe procedure. However, I made it clear that I would like to give credit to the research that is done and not reinvent the wheel. We need to use it.

I am not naive enough to think that we can snap our fingers and this will all be over tomorrow. We need to do research to add to the research that has been done in other countries. As I said, some doctors may have been a little premature in their decisions. I found it disappointing and I know my sister did as well. Basically, they were writing off some of the research and I do not think we should do that. We need to do research. It has given a lot of hope and we need to further that.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Chair, the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound gave a very good presentation. While I agree with him, I have to point out that I see a big difference between how the government reacted to the H1N1 situation versus how it has reacted to the situation with respect to MS.

*Government Orders*

If I recall, the health minister got representatives of all the provinces in a room and they worked out a plan to vaccinate the population of Canada. They did the advertising. They had it all planned out and it worked very well, I thought. The same sort of approach should be done here. We have known about Dr. Zamboni's treatment probably for a year.

I would encourage the members opposite, including the member who just spoke, to get the minister moving. She should be active with the provincial ministers of health. Let us get some action.

I was a provincial member in Manitoba for 23 years and I realize the importance of the provinces. They do not all act in concert with one another, but I think the MS Society and MS activists should be working very heavily on the provinces because that is where they are going to get action. We here have to get the group together to get the job done.

• (2205)

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Mr. Chair, it is a good point which has been echoed many times tonight on this side of the House and by the member again, that talking to the provinces is a big part of this, but our minister's record on health issues, whether it is H1N1 or others, speaks for itself. She is working on that and we all know that in federal-provincial issues, they do not always go as quickly and smoothly as we would all like them to.

He is a member from there. I was not aware of that before, so he is well aware of the complications there, but that does not mean that we sit back, throw our hands up, and say it is over. We have to keep at it and I feel very confident that our health minister will be doing that.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for all his work bringing this issue forward. He talks about the different roles of government. He mentions the Minister of Health. I know her and I know that she feels that the facts are very important.

He talked about the relationship of his sister with the doctor and of the importance of that doctor-patient relationship.

I have heard some comments over and over again tonight that are simply untrue. I think everybody in this House agrees that the federal government does have a role. As a matter of fact, as he mentioned in his own speech, we have \$5.3 million. We were asked for \$10 million, but the Minister of Health actually said there is more money on the table. She is just waiting to receive requests so that this research can be done because that is what is really important here. It is about respect for the patient. It is about respect for people and families that are involved with this devastating disease. The Minister of Health has a firm commitment and a leadership role in developing and working with the research community to get those facts out.

I wanted the member to comment because he has had a personal experience in his family. How important is it that we are working at the federal government level for that research so that doctors and patients can have the facts?

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Mr. Chair, I thank the parliamentary secretary certainly for his work on the file.

If there is one thing that we have found out tonight, which I feel very confident about, it is the commitment we just heard that the

minister is waiting. There is not necessarily a cap on the money that is out there. We all know that more dollars going into research should expedite the process, and I think we would all agree that that is a good thing.

He talked about my sister and the kind of hope that this kind of debate can have for her and anybody else with this disease. I know first-hand how this plays on her and my brother-in-law and their daughter. I know how it plays on her six siblings, of which I am one, and we just all have to do everything we can to help with that.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I greatly appreciate the comments that the hon. member made. Obviously, his sister is open-minded and if she could access this, she certainly would.

The issue here is with regard to the studies. There are only going to be about 40 to 50 studies done a year and it takes a very long time. Meanwhile, people's lives are being lost. Dr. Sandy McDonald did indicate that he sees this as a plumbing problem. This procedure has been done for years for the same type of problem, but because a person has MS, they are being denied, so what he is saying is that we do not wait for the electrician to fix the plumbing.

Does the member not agree that we should be treating CCSVI differently, as a separate illness from MS?

• (2210)

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Mr. Chair, CCSVI is a treatment, not a disease, so the member is kind of confusing the two issues. It is a treatment procedure, as she well knows, that has been used in Europe and it appears to have great potential. I personally believe, and I do not think I am being over hopeful, that down the road it has great potential to be common practice, but at the same time, I want to ensure that whether it is my sister or a neighbour or a friend, whatever procedure they get to help their MS is safe.

Again, the key to that is research and expediting that process as quickly as possible.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, around Christmas time I received a phone call from a friend of mine, Kent Kirkpatrick. Kent is the chief administrative officer for the city of Ottawa and he has MS. I came to know him before I became an MP and he has done very well as chief administrative officer for the city of Ottawa with fairly serious responsibilities. He is a very intelligent and serious fellow. He was calling to arrange a meeting with Mr. Katz, another MS patient, who wanted to meet with me and perhaps two or three other people. We arranged that meeting early in January.

*Government Orders*

Mr. Katz introduced me to a doctor who is a Fellow at McMaster. He is an American but he is a Fellow at McMaster. He introduced me to this notion, which I admit was fairly new to me, this chronic cerebral spinal venous insufficiency and the possible treatment of it which is basically angioplasty that Dr. Zamboni had done in Italy. The results of some treatments had been released a couple of months before in November. I must admit to being impressed with that information, but what impressed me most was the feeling of hope expressed by the four or five folks I was meeting with. They were afflicted with MS, but the feeling of hope was so obvious in their voices, their body posture and in their eyes. I resolved to try to find out more about this to see where it was headed because it was new to me.

With some effort from my colleagues, in February we had a round table on neurological diseases that my colleague from Etobicoke North helped organize. I talked to her and my colleague from St. Paul's to get a sense of where this was going. After reading a bit I discovered there was some fairly blatant tensions in the MS Society between the traditional approach taken to treating MS and the people who thought that the treatment applied to CCSVI could be a solution to at the very least alleviate some of the symptoms.

I gather from what I have heard here tonight that it is fairly well accepted, if not fully scientifically yet, branded, but a fairly accepted hypothesis with some growing anecdotal evidence that it does indeed provide alleviation of symptoms and some hope. So much so, that two constituents paid \$10,000 each to go to Poland to have it done. They are back and are feeling quite better, so this just feeds on itself. We now have a situation where the tension has grown beyond the MS Society. We have seen it a bit here in the House tonight, but it has also grown in the medical society.

I read today a letter to the editor of *Maclean's* magazine, June 21 edition. It is from Dr. Bradley Dibble, a cardiologist in Barrie, Ontario. He writes, "The resistance to CCSVI treatment for MS from the neurological community surprises me because they aren't even consistent when it comes to this kind of problem. As a cardiologist I am asked by neurologists on a daily basis to investigate patients with unexplained strokes to see if they have a small hole in their heart called the patent foramen ovale, PFO, and if I find one to have it closed with an invasive procedure. This is despite the fact that there are no clinical trials to show us that this is the right thing to do for these patients. There does appear to be a slightly higher incidence of PFO in unexplained strokes although they are present in about 25% of everyone on the planet and some observational information showing that this reasonably safe and not too costly invasive procedure appears helpful. To me, this sounds a lot like CCSVI, an association that has identified the procedure that can address the abnormality and some early observations that suggest a benefit. My neurology colleagues need to start moving forward and offer this procedure to MS patients and see how they respond".

● (2215)

I think that pretty well sums up the debate that I am hearing here tonight.

I do not like to participate, and I will not, in any blame game. I am here to try to make things progress, make things better for my fellow citizens, those of Ottawa—Vanier and beyond.

Yes, there is some movement on the research side and I applaud that. It is the way to go. And that is definitely a responsibility of the federal authorities. But it does not stop there. There are also other authorities. One should never underestimate the power to convene. I was on the government side, at one time. I was in the cabinet and the power to convene is a very potent force. I would encourage the Minister of Health to use that power to convene.

There is a convention being called for the summer. That is fine. But there is also the power to convene federal-provincial meetings and those can be quite successful in provoking things to happen. It seems to me that is the stage we are at, so there might be a usefulness to having a federal-provincial meeting on that. I would certainly encourage the minister to consider that. I think it would be highly desirable. It is highly desirable on the part of the 55,000 to 75,000 Canadians who suffer from MS and who would love to be able to see if indeed, through a diagnostic, the CCSVI treatment, the angioplasty, could help alleviate their symptoms. I think we owe them that. We owe them the benefit of exploring whether or not we should be doing that, and quickly.

There seems to be a consensus tonight that there is a parallel track here between the research and the scientific affirmation of what is CCSVI vis-à-vis MS. Is it a cause, or is it a side effect, and can indeed angioplasty really alleviate the symptoms? It seems to be able to. We all know angioplasty is a fairly established procedure in this country. It is done regularly to tens of thousands of patients who have heart surgery. It is not as though we are inventing angioplasty here. It is done. It is a common thing.

So, if indeed, performing angioplasty on a venal insufficiency for people who suffer from MS can alleviate those symptoms, for heaven's sake, let us get there.

I accept the comments that we should be pressuring provincial colleagues as well. I have talked to my provincial counterpart and I will do so again. I will even formalize it in letters if need be because that is where we are at. We have a responsibility to our fellow citizens. We have over 50,000 people who suffer from MS in this country. They have a ray of hope projected for the first time in a long time.

They need to know whether or not, through a diagnostic, they have CCSVI and therefore could be afforded a treatment which is not, by all accounts, something that we would be reinventing here. I appreciate the comments from my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound that we should not be reinventing the wheel. Well, angioplasty exists. We do not need to reinvent it. However, we need to apply it if, indeed, it can alleviate the symptoms that MS sufferers are experiencing.

I would hope that the government, through goodwill, and my colleagues from all opposition parties, through goodwill, could come together on this and cause something positive to happen for our fellow Canadians who suffer from this awful disease.

*Government Orders*

• (2220)

**Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC):** Mr. Chair, I come from a province that has one of the highest instances of MS in the country. At least at one time we were awarded that title. I think it probably still holds true because in my own community there is a high incidence of it.

Referring to the point the member had made about the fact that he was in government and in cabinet, he would understand why the minister would want to work with the provinces a little more closely.

In my province of Saskatchewan, where the incidence is high, there will be a lot of pressure on our minister of health to address this issue. The minister, Don McMorris, said that this treatment had created a lot of excitement but added that more work needed to be done to prove its efficacy.

Many of the experts, scientists and provincial ministers of health have testified that although the experimental treatment offers much hope, more research and technique needs to be done.

The minister is working as quickly as she can with the provincial ministers, but I think the member would want to advise us to work closely with the provincial ministers and not circumvent what might be necessary as far as more research and identifying whether this research works. Would the member agree with that?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I am not too sure of the question, Mr. Chair. If it is a matter of working co-operatively with the provincial authorities, absolutely. There are jurisdictions and we have to respect them. However, the fact that the administration of health is essentially a provincial jurisdiction does not detract from the fact that federal-provincial co-operation is everywhere. The Canada Health Act speaks to that.

There are insured procedures for instance and I believe angioplasty is one of them. Therefore, why is it being offered to some patients who have a venal insufficiency related to their heart, but not offered to patients who have MS and they have a venal insufficiency related to MS. Is there a discrimination here? Could it even be a case that we could end up in front of the tribunal?

Those are the types of debate I believe must be addressed in federal-provincial relations. Whether it is through a federal-provincial conference, or a meeting of ministers of health, or of the deputies or the heads of whatever departments on that, therein lies the power to convene and the usefulness of that power.

If the Minister of Health of Canada says that we have a situation where we have 75,000 Canadians who have seen a ray of hope and now expect us to do something about it and that they should get together and see what they can do, I think they would applaud her.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, there were some thoughts I heard earlier that need to be addressed.

First, this is a real condition. CCSVI refers to narrowed veins. It is recognized by 47 countries. We know how to diagnose and treat it. We know that between 80% and 97% of MS patients have this condition. We know that 1,000 people have been diagnosed and treated around the world. I am so encouraged tonight to hear that there seems to be consensus on all sides of the House that we need to move forward.

I want to point out that right now there is no research with a treatment arm being undertaken in Canada.

The question I have for my hon. colleague is this. Canadians today are having CCSVI treated in Bulgaria. Why do they have to travel to Europe when the facilities for treatment are available in Canada?

• (2225)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Chair, this is the essence of the take note debate we are having tonight, so those listening, and certainly the Minister of Health of Canada, but hopefully ministers of health and officials in departments of health across the country, realize there is a real situation that needs to be addressed quickly.

There are people who will not wait. If one has a degenerative disease that progresses and sometimes progresses rapidly, one does not want to wait for four years for the results to test something that has already been demonstrated, in a limited number granted, to seem to work and knowing also the procedure that makes it work is an established and usual and not that costly procedure.

If people need to spend \$10,000 to get themselves to Bulgaria or to Poland in order to have the procedure done, instead of waiting for four years, I understand those people. I also understand that we as parliamentarians, whether here or in provincial assemblies, have a responsibility toward our fellow citizens and we had better get on with it.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, NDP):** Mr. Chair, the member is bang on. We do have to get a move on and we do have to ensure people have access to the procedure. Again, the procedure is angioplasty. I will correct my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CCSVI is the illness, is the disease and I am well aware of that.

When I looked at the testimony of Dr. Sandy McDonald, he indicated that the angioplasty procedure had been done since 1984. This is not a new procedure. It is not like a new drug where we have to do a double-blinded study. We know that the procedure works to unplug these veins. We are saying that CCSVI is the illness and yes, people with MS seem to have that illness, but we should still be treating CCSVI.

Maybe my colleague could speak a little more on the need to ensure that process takes place as soon as possible.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** It is as simple as that, Mr. Chair. Let us get on with it. After tonight, the government will take notes. I would hope that the minister would see to it that there a usefulness to bringing her provincial counterparts together, or their representatives, to address this on a national basis very quickly. It is important we do so and that we been seen to do so. That is part of our responsibility as elected representatives. If it involves, as it has been suggested, that we do the same by pushing on our old provincial colleagues, I am quite prepared to do that as well.

Our fellow citizens who have MS and who have seen this ray of hope expect no less from us, and we should do no less for them.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for Ottawa—Vanier for his balanced comments tonight. I appreciate his recognition of the leadership we have seen on research by our health minister, even in the midst of recession, of increases to CIHR.

I want to know his perspectives on whether there should be a federal role in the technical advisory committees for provincial health ministries and whether he believes there should be a national role. He talked about the role of convening. The Minister of Health is showing that with the conference. Having the top academics and researchers at provincial levels, academic levels involved in that conference will really probe this discussion.

In terms of authorization of treatment, I am curious whether the hon. member would support the perspectives of Aileen Carroll, for example, one of his former colleagues in cabinet. She suggests that the Ontario government should immediately authorize that treatment. Does he believe that is the case and should there be a federal role in the technical advisory committee?

• (2230)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Chair, I certainly do support Aileen, my colleague and friend. I am glad that she has stepped up and has written to her minister of health, and perhaps her premier as well, to get the Ontario government on side. There are no problems there.

The beauty of a federation is that we have 10 provincial partners and three territorial partners. Not all of them will do things the same and not all of them will come to the same conclusions. There will be best practices.

The power of convening, which I have talked about, rests in the fact that these 10 or 13 players can be brought together and learn from each other, bounce ideas and practices off each other, all of this to the benefit of our fellow citizens. In that sense, the responsibility of the Government of Canada goes beyond just the research. It goes into ensuring that the federation works for the benefit of its citizens, Canadians.

**Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I am proud to stand this evening to contribute and participate in this important discussion about multiple sclerosis.

I want to thank all my colleagues from all sides of the House for participating in this important discussion this evening, for contributing their very thoughtful comments and, in many cases, their personal stories. I also want to thank the Minister of Health for initiating this take note debate and for her leadership on this file.

I know multiple sclerosis is a devastating disease and that it has a major impact on those who suffer from MS, as well as their families.

My wife, Annette, was diagnosed with MS 10 years ago. Although she is more fortunate than many because she is still able to work part-time, she, however, must still deal every day with the very real symptoms of pain and fatigue. Like many with relapsing-remitting MS, some days are better than others. On days when her pain or fatigue is more pronounced, it takes a real effort for her to climb through the day.

Our health care system is a point of pride for Canadians. In fact, it helps to define us. It is a partnership that helps Canadians maintain

and improve their health, making our country's population among the healthiest in the world. In collaboration with the provincial and territorial governments, we are giving Canadians, including those living with MS, access to the best possible health care.

The organization of Canada's health care system is set out by the Canadian Constitution. All governments share the responsibility for the health of Canadians and collaborate to ensure that Canada's health care system is strong and vibrant.

The Constitution gives the provincial and territorial governments primary responsibility, as we know, for the administration and delivery of health care services in their respective jurisdictions. They set their own priorities and decide which services and treatments to provide and fund, based on sound research and in consultation with key players and experts.

The federal government plays various roles in this health care partnership. Tonight I would like to speak to three aspects that are of particular relevance to Canadians living with MS: first, funding through the Canada health transfer; second, the administration of the Canada Health Act; and third, scientific research. Let us look at each of these three areas in more detail.

To begin with, the federal government provides significant funding to the provinces and territories through the Canada health transfer to enable them to provide health care services to Canadians. The Canada health transfer is a crucial part of the Canadian health care system. In order for our health care system to be effective and for the needs of those living with MS to be served, there must be significant financial investment.

The Canada health transfer is one of the largest major transfers from the federal government to the provinces and territories. As requested by the provinces and territories, this government is providing long-term predictable funding for health care to ensure that all Canadians have access to excellent health care services.

The funding provided by the federal government in support of the provision of health services in Canada for 2010-11 will reach \$25.4 billion, a very substantial amount. This amount will grow 6% annually until 2014, when it will reach over \$30 billion.

In supporting the health care systems of the provinces and territories, the Government of Canada helps facilitate the on the ground delivery of health care services to Canadians, including those living with MS.

• (2235)

Next, the Government of Canada plays a crucial role in administering the Canada Health Act, ensuring that all Canadians have access to a robust, publicly-funded, universal health care system. This act was passed in the House in 1984 and even today, more than 25 years later, Canadians continue to attach vital importance to each of its five principles. These five principles: universality, accessibility, comprehensiveness, portability and public administration, form the basis of our national health care system.

*Government Orders*

In addition to fulfilling its other roles in health care, the Government of Canada is committed to upholding the principles of the Canada Health Act and the values that have inspired Canada's single-payer, publicly-financed health care system.

Finally, through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, or the CIHR, the Government of Canada supports research that contributes to the body of knowledge about health services and treatments in our health care system. By funding research studies, the Government of Canada is ensuring that the evidence base is there to make decisions about the effectiveness and efficacy of various treatment options. This research is especially important when the quality of life of Canadians is at stake, as it is with people living with MS.

As is appropriate, the federal government will continue to fund MS research so that the provinces and territories can make informed decisions that will benefit Canadians. Indeed, the Government of Canada's role in supporting health research is particularly evident when considering MS and other neurological diseases. In 2008 and 2009, investments in neurosciences research totalled over \$120 million. So far, through the Canadian Institutes for Health Research, the Government of Canada has invested over \$45 million into MS research. Through investments like these and continuing support for research in this very important area, our government is working to find safe and effective treatments for MS.

While this funding is important, we must also have the flexibility and adaptability to pursue new and innovative options. In my riding of Kitchener—Waterloo, innovation is a central theme. From our post-secondary institutions to our cutting-edge high tech companies, research is part of our local culture.

However, the value lies not in research for its own sake but in our ability to apply that research for the betterment of society. Just as technological research leads to innovative new products and methods to increase productivity and grow our economy, the goal of medical research is ultimately to improve the health and quality of life of all Canadians. We would do well to remember that core responsibility.

We must ensure that the right investments are made in science and innovation and that research focuses on the right priorities at the right time.

Around the world, scientists, doctors and MS patients have witnessed the promise of chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency treatments, or CCSVI. This is the right time to focus our efforts on the potential of this procedure which appears to be one of the most hopeful and positive developments to occur in the treatment of MS.

While health policies must clearly be based on sound science, we need to strike the right balance between research and treatment and between science and compassion.

Let us move forward with our collaborative partners from across the country and around the world and provide MS patients with the information they need to support their decisions for treatment. They deserve nothing less.

• (2240)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Chair, the fact is that there was no action plan mentioned at all in the

member's speech. I think people watching television and those in the gallery tonight want an action plan from the government. They want to hear that the minister will take an aggressive stance and position, call the provincial ministers to a meeting and establish a plan to proceed, not let this whole issue carry on for another six months or year, which is what will happen.

We will be having this debate a year from now with all kinds of excuses from the minister and the government as to why they could not do this or that. If they could run a successful H1N1 program, show some direction and get the job done with the provinces, why can they not do the same thing with MS?

**Mr. Peter Braid:** Mr. Chair, indeed, there is an action plan. We are, of course, having this very important discussion this evening. The Minister of Health has indicated that she will be convening a meeting of leading scientists and researchers, not only from across Canada but from around the world to advance and fast-track this important process and procedure.

The Minister of Health has also indicated that there is funding available for research in this important area and that groups need to apply.

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for Kitchener—Waterloo for his intervention and, indeed, all members who participated in this take note debate tonight. I think it was done, for the most part, with respect and passion. Everyone is willing to ensure that we find a solution, not just a treatment but the cure to MS.

I appreciate the situations that so many members have, including the member for Kitchener—Waterloo and the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, who have immediate family members who are impacted by multiple sclerosis. I have an aunt, some very close friends and a cousin who suffer from MS and I know they are hopeful that CCSVI will be all that it has been made out to be.

The member alluded to the need to ensure that the treatment is effective and that we do our diligence in an expedited manner to do that research. I want him to comment on the hope that is out there with patients.

I know his own personal experience is an emotional case. He said that his wife can still work part time. Could he talk about what she hopes and what other patients are hoping will be accomplished with the new research and the leadership that is being shown by the Minister of Health to get all provinces co-operating so that we can get this implemented across the country from coast to coast to coast?

**Mr. Peter Braid:** Mr. Chair, it is clear from the attention that CCSVI treatment has received in the media, from the debate this evening and from the interventions by my colleagues on all sides of the House that this treatment does provide hope. It has provided more hope than I have seen in the 10 years that I have been familiar with this disease.

That is why we do need to move and why the Minister of Health has committed to mobilizing resources. That is why we are having this discussion tonight and that is why we need to continue to apply pressure, both federally and provincially, to ensure that we continue to make progress in this very important area.

*Government Orders*

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, the money for CIHR must be allocated to research that includes a treatment arm. Again, the MS Society has asked for \$10 million. It would be terrific to hear that the \$10 million is coming, but again, it must include a treatment arm.

The MS societies in Canada and the U.S. did not give any money to studies with a treatment arm of the \$2.4 million announced last week. How will we know if it is effective if we do not have a treatment arm? We are encouraged that there will be this conference. I would like to know if Dr. Zamboni has been invited from Italy.

• (2245)

**Mr. Peter Braid:** Mr. Chair, I am not aware of whether Dr. Zamboni has been invited to participate in this important meeting in a few weeks' time. I understand the importance of providing treatment options as we advance this important discussion. Clearly, because of the hope that exists around this new treatment, Canadians are counting on us to make progress as quickly as we possibly can, which is why we need to mobilize resources. We need to gather the best and most capable minds and we need to work collaboratively with our provincial counterparts to advance this very important issue.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Chair, the member for Kitchener—Waterloo mentioned the importance of facts. At the end of the night, one of the things I would like to see achieved is misinformation put aside because we are all on the same team here.

We have heard that \$5.2 million are already on the table and that over \$10 million are on the table if researchers want to submit applications for research.

There are things out there called levels of evidence. We have heard Canada being compared to Bulgaria. I am proud to say that there is a different level of evidence between Canada and western democracies. People and patients expect it. I believe Dr. Zamboni has only done about 121 patients. I would love to see research on some treatments. Angioplasty has been mentioned. It has been done for over 20 years but it is a brand new procedure for veins. There is so much more that we need to know.

With the Minister of Health taking this leadership role in getting the facts so that provinces know which treatments they should be funding, insurance companies and patients would be aware of the facts, how important is it to have those levels of evidence and the facts out there so patients and doctors can make these decisions?

**Mr. Peter Braid:** Mr. Chair, as I mentioned in my remarks, it is important for us to find a balance between research and treatment and between science and compassion. It is important that we know the facts. It is important that we advance our research in this area as quickly as we possibly can so that those facts can be known.

As I indicated in a previous response, people who suffer from MS are counting on all of us to move as quickly as we possibly can. This government and all governments also have a responsibility to all citizens to ensure that treatments are safe and effective. We need to find the right balance between those two very important public policy goals and proceed down this track as quickly as we possibly can.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for saying that we need to get there as quickly as possible. One hundred patients have had the treatment in Bulgaria and they have all had improvement in their symptoms. Their disability score has improved by 1.5 points on average.

We need a compassionate route to treatment for patients who have no other options. It is really important to point out that this is not a new procedure for veins. Venoplasty is done for venous stenosis in dialysis patients all the time and it has been done for several years. If a patient had a venous problem in the liver or the leg it would be diagnosed and treated. We know how to do this.

We do have to move this along as quickly as possible—

• (2250)

**The Chair:** I must stop the member there because her time has expired. I will allow the member for Kitchener—Waterloo a very brief moment to respond before I go on to the next speaker.

**Mr. Peter Braid:** Mr. Chair, I am aware that venous treatments for other conditions for other parts of the body are well established. We need to continue to keep that in mind, as does the medical establishment, as we continue to push this important public policy issue along as quickly as we possibly can.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Chair, members from all four corners of this House have referenced members of their families and friends who are victims of multiple sclerosis, and I am no exception. I am speaking in memory tonight of Julie Serle and the Lillos family.

She was my cousin. She was born in 1949. In her mid-twenties, after starting a successful career as a master teacher for the Vancouver School Board, she became ill with multiple sclerosis. She never plateaued at any time. Very quickly over the subsequent 10 years, she lost her motor control and her ability to work, although her colleagues helped her for a time, as there was not access to the classroom, by carrying her up her classroom to teach her students. She was a phenomenal teacher.

She eventually had to give up teaching and ended her days in a convalescent home. At that point she was blind and speechless. I remember visiting her in the final stages, as did members of my family and the Lillos family throughout her illness. She died in October 1985.

Every member who has spoken tonight has referenced loved ones, family members and friends who have been victims of multiple sclerosis. I have no doubt in the sincerity of anyone who has spoken tonight. There is no doubt that we are talking about an epidemic, an illness that kills and one that afflicts 75,000 Canadians as we speak. It is nothing less than a crisis. That is the fundamental issue we are trying to grapple with and deal with. Seventy-five thousand Canadians are living through a crisis, an emergency situation. As parliamentarians, we have the responsibility to go in with all means possible and with all due diligence and assist those 75,000 Canadians and their families.

*Government Orders*

If there were a flood or a fire tonight, none of us would say that we will put in partial funding and partially address the issue, that we will try to provide some funding in order to quell the fire, in order to save the homes from the flood. The Canadian tradition has been that we go in with all means possible. We resolve the crisis. We provide the resources necessary to get the job done.

That is what we have to do in the case of MS sufferers. Given the breakthrough, the potential around angioplasty as a treatment for CCSVI and the correlation between CCSVI and multiple sclerosis, I believe we have the responsibility to move forward as quickly as possible, to fast-track funding and ensure that while we are doing it in the most professional way possible, we leave no stone unturned to resolve this crisis.

The reality is that because of the amplitude of this crisis, there are Canadians tonight who are flying out to eastern Europe, to Poland and Bulgaria, because they cannot get that treatment here at home. If that does not show the size and scope of the impacts that multiple sclerosis sufferers and their families are having to deal with, I do not know what does.

We have a crisis on our hands. We need resources now. Although I have been listening attentively, as we all have, I must say that I do not believe the government is addressing the issue as quickly as possible and with the resources that are needed at this time in order to go through the stages, to ensure the treatment is available, to ensure that the due diligence is performed. It has to be done in such a way, fast-tracked so that Canada can turn from being one of the countries in the world with the highest rate of MS to the country in the world that provides the greatest support for victims of multiple sclerosis.

● (2255)

We have to do that immediately. I do not accept the idea that the resources are not available, that we have to accept partial funding and that partial funding is adequate. We have seen the amount of money and resources that are being allocated for the G8 and G20 summits.

What people are talking about, the MS sufferers who cannot be in the House tonight, in terms of funding and fast-tracking is half of 1% of what we are providing in the G20 in Toronto, so the resources are there very clearly. When we talk about the money that is allocated to corporate tax cuts, the hours that we have spent tonight debating this important question that members from all parties have spoken to and all members have spoken with sincerity and conviction, the amount of money that we provide in corporate tax cuts just over this four hour period that we have had the debate, would address that need for fast-tracking of funding. The funding is very clearly there; it is just being allocated in the wrong place and it needs to be allocated to provide that support to MS sufferers.

Those who are victims of MS cannot be in the House tonight, but we have all been receiving the letters that talk about the size and scope of this crisis and the importance of dealing with it with full resources, with full funding immediately. I wanted to read a few of the letters that I have received from right across the country. We have received letters from Newfoundland, Ontario, Quebec, the Prairies, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia. I want to read briefly some of the letters I have received.

One letter is from Domingos Fernandez who lives in Inwood, Ontario. He talked about his symptoms and said, "Before all this happened with MS, I was a short-order cook, a cab driver and a general labourer. Now having MS I am forced to rely on an Ontario disability support as an income. It is very hard. I used to be able to cook, bathe and dress myself. None of this I can do now".

We heard from Tesha Rushton of Calgary, Alberta, who said very simply, "What we are asking for is justice. We are asking to be treated as equals, not as untouchables. We are asking for help".

These are the voices that all of us are hearing from MS sufferers and their families and supporters across the country. These are letters that we must respond to. We have to respond tonight with that allocation of resources that addresses the crisis. Nothing less will do. All members are speaking with conviction. We seem to have unanimous agreement tonight that this is a crisis that must be met with the resources that Canadians traditionally provide. To address crises we provide the resources necessary. That has not happened yet. It has to happen following this debate.

If we are to properly address the memories of those who died from MS and those who are suffering now and those who may suffer if we do not move to put in place the best treatment programs and the best supports possible, if we do not do that, then tonight's debate does not have the impact that MS sufferers and their families across the country would like to see. They hope to see this issue addressed substantively and fully. That is what we have to have coming out of the debate this evening.

In closing, I want to mention the motion that we put before the House, which states:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should take immediate action to: (a) accelerate a greater and broader participation of multiple sclerosis (MS) sufferers in pilot testing and treatment programs by providing fast-track funding for surveillance, research and dissemination of findings, including providing urgent prescreening imaging services of MS sufferers; (b) work with the provinces and territories through the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health to obtain advice and evidence-based information about the effectiveness of chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency treatment without delay; and (c) take a leading role, on the basis of this evidence, in encouraging the swift adoption of the procedure in territories and provinces.

That is what I think all members of Parliament, those particularly who have members of their family or close friends who have suffered from MS would want to see happen.

● (2300)

Let us, coming out of this debate, put in place that funding, pass this type of support and direction to the government. Let us ensure that the government does by all means necessary and with the appropriate due diligence bring new hope to those who suffer from MS across this country. Nothing less will do. Their voices have spoken through all of us tonight. We must meet the challenge. We must provide the support so that Canada leads the world in addressing MS and providing support and therapies for MS sufferers.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for Burnaby—New Westminster for his speech. I do want to correct him, though. The resources are available. Actually, there is more money available than the take-up for research.



*Government Orders*

With that, I would like to ask him a question with regard to the research in his own community. According to UBC's MRI Research Centre, in order to determine whether CCSVI is beneficial, treated patients would need to be followed over time. In addition to proving that the treatment is safe, there are important questions that need to be asked. First, does the treatment improve symptoms such as fatigue in memory and how long does it last? Second, does the treatment stop MS over time? Third, how does the treatment of CCSVI affect iron deposits in the brain?

A treatment for CCSVI requires vigorous testing and research to prove it is safe and beneficial for Canadians suffering with MS.

I would ask the member, does he think that this is logical, or does the member disagree with the advice from UBC's MRI Research Centre?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Chair, I will start with the issue of funding. The funding that is being allocated is less than what has been requested, and the parliamentary secretary is aware of that. I will say again, with respect, that I disagree with the parliamentary secretary, but very clearly the requests have come in, the funding has not been provided to the extent that the requests have come in and very clearly asked the government for that. The government has to provide more funding to fast-track this. I simply do not accept the parliamentary secretary's idea that somehow adequate funding is being provided.

This is a crisis. The size and scope is extremely important. It has to be addressed and the funding has to be provided. Partial funding simply does not cut it. A number of hon. members have made that very clear tonight.

Do I disagree with the professional due diligence approach? Not at all, but treatment has to be done simultaneously, as the research continues and is broadened and deepened on this issue.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, just some points of clarification again. We do venoplasty of jugular veins when a dialysis catheter causes a stenosis, so we have done this prior to this work.

With respect to the meeting that the government is planning, I would request that it needs to bring in experts on CCSVI. If it brings in neurologists with no experience or knowledge on venous disease, we will have no benefit. The money needs to be spent by those with a fundamental knowledge of CCSVI.

Right now, there are less than ten Zamboni-trained technicians in Canada. I would just like to stress that Canada has a chance to be a true leader in this country if we take action now, if we get diagnosis and treatment for people living with this disease and we give this \$10 million that the MS Society has asked for.

• (2305)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for Etobicoke North for her question and for her work. She has been a very strong advocate for MS sufferers, and that has to be underlined.

She is absolutely right not only on the funding question, but also on the idea that the conference actually approaches to move things

forward on CCSVI. It cannot be a debate about whether or not to move forward. It has to be a debate around how to move forward, how to move forward as quickly as possible, ensuring due diligence. I used the analogy of a flood or a fire. Professionals do not simply go in to quell the fire or to staunch the flood. The professionals come in, determine by which method they will move by all means possible and as quickly as possible, and then they work to address the crisis.

This conference must be seen as a crisis management conference and must move forward as quickly as possible. I certainly share her comments, that Canada has to lead the world on MS research and treatment. We have to lead the world. That has to be our objective.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Chair, it seems to me that the more I listen to the debate here, the more the government is actually losing ground. It has lost ground vis-à-vis the provinces over the last year.

It seems to me that we should be taking the member for Etobicoke North and putting her in charge of the program because I think she has a better potential for getting the premiers and the health ministers across the country on side and getting a program.

I mentioned before that on H1N1, the government had a plan. It got the provinces together, albeit not all of the provinces were on the same page but the government got them together and the program was delivered in a timely fashion.

The government should be able to do the same thing here. It is just incapable of getting the job done.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for Elmwood—Transcona for his comments. He has been a very strong advocate on this issue, as well.

I think if one takes the idea that this is not a crisis and needs to be addressed in the longer term, perhaps the government members would be justified in saying that the government has provided some funding, so that is all right.

However, we are not talking about some kind of research that is not addressing a chronic and serious health crisis. This is a chronic and serious health crisis, as the member for Elmwood—Transcona just mentioned. It is not something that one has to, or should, provide half-measures.

We must be moving forward with all haste, ensuring due diligence that this type of treatment and research requires. I believe there has to be a fine balance, but the government has to put in more resources, has to address it as a crisis, and has to assure Canadians, MS sufferers and their families that it is doing everything possible to address this as rapidly as possible.

**The Chair:** It being 11:09 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 53(1), the committee will rise and I will leave the chair.

(Government Business No. 5 reported)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:09 p.m.)



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