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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, September 20, 2006

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 20, 2006

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, and we will be led by the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to express my gratitude, on behalf of the citizens of Prince Edward—Hastings, to Corporal Mathew Belear, a brave young soldier, and to his family.

Mathew, a member of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment, was serving his second deployment in Afghanistan when he was injured in a mortar attack during the recent Canadian-led Operation Medusa. I spoke with his mom, Demetra, earlier this week in Belleville. Thankfully, Mathew is home and well.

Just as we remember the courage and sacrifice of young soldiers like Mathew, let us too not forget their families. They suffer as well from stress, anxiety and sleepless nights, worrying about the safety of their young son or daughter.

Despite everything this family has been put through, Mathew's father Bob had this to say in the Belleville *Intelligencer* about the mission:

We should all show our support for the troops in Afghanistan no matter what our politics are, or whether or not we think Canadians should be there.

It is sentiment I could not agree with more strongly.

I have the utmost respect for what our troops are accomplishing. For the sacrifices they and their families make, we must say thanks.

CYCLE FOR SPIRIT

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 24, three young Canadians set off on bikes from Victoria, B.C. to raise money for children's charities. Steve Fidler of Vancouver, Adrian Pusiak of Toronto and Jeremy Cummings of St. John's are all employees of The Keg Steakhouse who finished their cross country "Cycle for Spirit" on August 4.

They started this journey with a fundraising goal of \$150,000 and finished their trek with a total of over \$184,000. One hundred per cent of funds raised will go to children's charities through The Keg Spirit Foundation, which has donated more than \$2 million to children's charities since its inception in 2001.

I had the pleasure of meeting these amazing young men as they came through Thunder Bay, and I congratulate them and their Keg co-workers across the country for supporting the many children's charities that will benefit from this adventure.

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[*Translation*]

ÉMILIE MONDOR

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on September 9, Émilie Mondor, a young athlete with dreams of going to the Olympic Games in Beijing, died in a car accident.

The Mascouche native began to make a name for herself in cross-country running nearly 10 years ago. In 2003, she became the first Canadian woman to run 5,000 metres in under 15 minutes. Over the past two years, she faced many challenges and even considered early retirement. Nevertheless, she went back to competition in April, and in July 2006, she announced her intention to focus on marathon running.

Émilie Mondor will continue to inspire us because of the endurance, courage and integrity she brought to her discipline.

On behalf of my Bloc Québécois colleagues, I would like to offer my sincere condolences to her family and friends.

Statements by Members

[English]

PAY EQUITY

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday my office received the government's response to a report from the status of women committee, which outlined the need for proactive pay equity legislation in Canada. The government is ignoring the committee's recommendations and is flat out stating that there will be no new pay equity legislation.

The need for this legislation is clear. In May 2004, after three years of research and consultation with over 200 stakeholder groups, the Department of Justice called for the government to replace the current complaints based model with proactive legislation.

The Liberals failed to act on this report, and now the Conservatives are also refusing to draft legislation.

With national women's organizations shutting down due to stalled funding, it is becoming clear that the Conservatives want to take Canada back 25 years. Women who have full time jobs still only earn 71¢ for every dollar earned by a man. This is clearly not equality. This is an embarrassment.

* * *

●(1410)

ATLANTIC CANADA

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at yesterday's historic vote on the softwood lumber agreement, I was shocked when members of the Liberal and NDP abandoned Atlantic Canada. We should expect no less in the future.

Look at the Liberal and the NDP record. Remember that the member for Halifax and the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore voted against our Canadian Forces in Afghanistan, thus supporting the human rights abuses of the Taliban and endangering our soldiers.

The same Liberal members who voted against softwood lumber yesterday were only a few months ago trying to sell a disastrous deal that would have caused Atlantic Canada to lose every gain we have made on softwood lumber in the past 30 years.

Continue to watch them when the fisheries capital gains exemption comes before the House. We will witness once again the Liberal and the NDP saying one thing and doing another.

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CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the current minority government is going to extremes in its efforts to turn the public service into a Conservative Party propaganda arm.

A long time federal government scientist was directed by the office of the Minister of Natural Resources to use the words "Canada's New Government" in all departmental communications, instead of the neutral "Government of Canada".

When the scientist refused, he was fired. He was ultimately reinstated in his non-paying post after the Conservatives were embarrassed by the media reports.

The fact remains that this little old minority government is simply pretending to be a brand new dictatorship.

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GREAT LAKES CANCER RIDE

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a rare and special opportunity when we as members of this place have the occasion to speak of achievements of great magnitude.

It is with admiration that I honour a constituent of Elgin—Middlesex—London who today completed a journey of a lifetime. Steve Darley of Malahide, Ontario ended a 3,066 kilometre Great Lakes Cancer Ride that saw him raise over \$35,000 for cancer research.

Steve was inspired by Lance Armstrong, but decided to make his ride truly Canadian and local. The bike trip saw Steve travel from Thunder Bay to Niagara Falls and concluded in Ottawa this morning, symbolically at the Terry Fox statue outside the Parliament Buildings. Mr. Darley was assisted by his friends and family along the way.

It is the efforts of people like Steve Darley who remind us all what defines us as Canadians. Thanks, Steve.

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[Translation]

LISE CÔTÉ

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to a pastoral worker in the Saint-Louis-de-France parish in Terrebonne.

For eight years, Ms. Lise Côté has been involved in various parish and community projects, bringing her legendary smile to the elderly and the infirm and spending countless hours organizing baptisms and weddings.

A born missionary, she trained five choirmasters now working with children at an institution run by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Haiti's Jérémie diocese. Thanks to a nutrition program supported by Terrebonne residents, they are also helping improve living conditions for many Haitian children.

Ms. Côté, on behalf of the entire community of Terrebonne—Blainville, I honour your devotion and thank you with all my heart.

* * *

DALAI LAMA

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on September 9, 2006, His Holiness the Dalai Lama became an honorary Canadian citizen in Vancouver. The Dalai Lama exemplifies peace and compassion, which he has always transmitted through his message of dialogue and non-violence.

Statements by Members

As a parliamentarian and Tibet supporter, I would like to congratulate His Holiness on this honour, which highlights his global contribution to peace, benevolence and mutual understanding among one another. I am extremely proud that the Dalai Lama is now, like me, a Canadian citizen. This also fills me with hope for a better future for our country and the rest of the world.

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[English]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were not impressed yesterday with the antics of the President of the Treasury Board.

The holier than thou minister was caught at the trough last spring, forking out a fat cheque to the Prime Minister's friend, Marie-Josée Lapointe, of all things for PR on his so-called accountability act.

Not to worry, Mr. Accountability told the House, the contract was cancelled. However, Canadians found out yesterday he did not quite bother to also cancel the cheque to the PM's friend, and paid her the \$13,000 anyway.

So long accountability, hello hypocrisy, with the added pleasure of another sermon from a minister under pressure.

Maybe today, instead of another arrogant lecture, the minister will cancel the cheque to the Prime Minister's friend and repay all the misgotten money to Canadian taxpayers.

* * *

• (1415)

MAYOR OF MORTLACH

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Major Ron Locke is the mayor of Mortlach, Saskatchewan, population 240. He cares about his community, but his commitment goes far beyond southwest Saskatchewan.

He is the commander of 734 Communication Squadron and the head of the Civil Military Cooperation detachment. He has served his country well and has just returned from seven months service in Afghanistan.

There are those who oppose our presence in Afghanistan, who are willing to allow the Taliban to return. However, Mr. Locke and his fellow soldiers have worked hard to make Afghanis' lives better. They have put their lives on the line to help rebuild a devastated country.

In their time there, they provided a water supply for the university, reconstructed schools, equipped hospitals, built roads and assisted the Afghani police.

I want to recognize Mr. Locke, but he asked me not to forget his colleagues, especially Captain Trevor Green, who continues to recover from injuries, and Lieutenant Bill Turner, who lost his life in the efforts of reconstruction.

A country is being rebuilt. The work is essential. Let us remember and acknowledge these modern day heroes.

HOUSING

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, victims of the leaky condo disaster in B.C.'s Lower Mainland have been waiting for years for leadership from the federal government to get to the bottom of this fiasco that has tens of thousands of victims, has cost billions of dollars and has negatively affected the health of many.

The cities of Coquitlam and Port Moody have both passed motions demanding that the federal government conduct a review into the role of CMHC in the leaky condo crisis, and I support this call.

The Prime Minister made a commitment during the election campaign to review this situation and said that he would consider compensation. The government has failed to deliver and the Minister of Human Resources has backed away from the Prime Minister's campaign commitments.

On behalf of leaky condo owners in New Westminster, Coquitlam, Port Moody and all affected communities, and on behalf of leaky housing co-ops, I call upon the Prime Minister to fulfill his election promise and call an inquiry into CMHC and its possible role in the thousand—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laval—Les Îles.

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[Translation]

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a journalist with *The Globe and Mail*, Jan Wong, wrote a particularly nasty article in last Saturday's paper. Ms. Wong's article suggests that the tragedies that took place at the École polytechnique, Concordia University and recently at Dawson College, all in Montreal, can be explained by the marginalization of anglophones and immigrants in Quebec as a result of that province's language laws. As a Canadian and a Quebecker, this type of ignorant, intolerant remark infuriates me.

Those acts of violence were committed by sick people. Quebec is no more and no less responsible for those individuals acts than any other society. Ms. Wong's reasoning is not based on any verifiable fact.

The Globe and Mail should be ashamed of publishing such nonsense.

I demand a public apology from the newspaper's management for all Quebeckers, particularly those who were affected by the recent tragedy at Dawson College.

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LITERACY

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, literacy groups are furious. The Minister of Human Resources and Social Development is asking them to carry out the third study in three years on literacy.

Oral Questions

The minister has stated that she is not very familiar with the previous studies and the solutions proposed. On February 21, 2006, the minister was questioned about this. Seven months later, she has not even deigned to look at these reports. Yet the solution is quite simple: fix the fiscal imbalance.

The minister must now go beyond the speech she gave on September 8 on the occasion of National Literacy Day. Literacy groups are fed up with having consultation after consultation and preparing report after report. Concrete action is needed.

Since Quebec has jurisdiction over education, the only concrete action that the minister can take is to immediately transfer the necessary amounts of money to Quebec so that the province can improve its programs.

* * *

• (1420)

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that Mr. Arar received his well-deserved resounding exoneration. Mr. Arar and his family were victims of severe systemic flaws.

The Prime Minister has said that he will not apologize to Mr. Arar but rather leave it to the courts. However, when Mr. Arar was first arrested in 2002 the Prime Minister had no hesitation in jumping to conclusions and repeating the unfounded accusations about Mr. Arar. He and his party not only believed the allegations against Mr. Arar but they also criticized the previous government for trying to get him released.

At that time the Prime Minister called Mr. Arar a suspected terrorist citing that the government was hitting the snooze button on security. The member for Calgary—Nose Hill at the time attacked the government for failing to pick up on Mr. Arar's quote, "al-Qaeda linked sooner".

It gets worse. The current Minister of Public Safety went further by calling for a public inquiry into why the government—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Essex.

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker,

Mirror, mirror on the wall,
Which party has no ethics at all?

Mirror, mirror thought, then declared,
"The last Liberal government from which we've been spared".

"But don't take my word", Mirror, mirror did speak,
"I'm only agreeing with what a Liberal report said last week".

Liberals admitted they set the ethics bar low,
Then rushed to see just how low Liberals could go.

Liberals let Dingwall have an illegal lobbying commission,
Then Liberals offered him handsome severance in addition;

Grants for a wharf to a Liberal's brother-in-law;
Frulla's home makeover without a Liberal pshaw.

Liberal appointees attending a Liberal convention;
Ethics lapses never Liberal bones of contention.

Millions granted by Liberals to family ships,
Only proves how far Liberal ethics have slipped.

Liberal fur coats bought on the taxpayer dime;
Ad scam Liberals should be charged and convicted of crimes.

Admitting they're ethically bankrupt is weak;
To their Liberal senators instead they must speak.

Stop dragging their unelected Liberal Senate feet.
Pass the accountability act now so there's no Liberal ethical repeat.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

POLITICAL FINANCING

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Official Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on June 30 the Prime Minister told reporters that all laws had been obeyed with regard to the \$1.7 million of donations to his party. Yesterday, the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada forcefully rejected the arguments put forward by the Prime Minister and his Conservative Party operatives.

In light of the evidence we have today, will the government now admit that the Prime Minister's statement that all laws were obeyed is totally inaccurate and totally indefensible in the House?

Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC): No, Mr. Speaker, we will not make such a false admission. What we will do is ask the Liberal Party why it is that it expects the taxpayers of Canada to subsidize its political conventions by using the tax credit to subsidize delegate fees for its party convention. That is not the practice of this party. We believe that delegates should pay their fees, not the taxpayers of Canada. That has been our consistent position.

If the Chief Electoral Officer decides to change his long-standing interpretation of the law, we of course will abide by the new interpretation, although we stand for the interests of taxpayers.

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Official Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe the parliamentary secretary can respond to this.

On June 30 the Prime Minister was also asked by reporters if the Conservative Party intended to turn over all documents requested by Elections Canada. The Prime Minister at the time said "we already have". Those were his words. Once again, the Prime Minister was contradicted by the Chief Electoral Officer who said that the Conservatives had not turned over the essential evidence he required, which are their convention books.

Why did the Prime Minister make misleading statements about Conservative Party donations and possible illegal fundraising practices that the parliamentary secretary cannot possibly defend in the House?

• (1425)

Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am advised that the Conservative Party has provided the Chief Electoral Officer and the Commissioner of Canada Elections with all the specific information that has been requested and it will continue to comply completely with both of those officers.

Let us be clear about what is at issue here. It is a long-standing practice of the Liberal Party which believes that tax dollars belong to the Liberal Party. That is why we had ad scam and innumerable scandals. That is why we have a Liberal Party that is once again insisting that taxpayers, through the political tax credit, subsidize the conventions of political parties. We do not operate like that because we believe that taxpayers should keep their hard-earned tax dollars.

[Translation]

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet this government, which talks non-stop about its programs in this House, flouts Canada's election laws day after day. The mastermind of this Conservative ploy, who is now under investigation, is today the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Ian Brodie.

How will the Prime Minister reprimand his chief of staff, who the chief electoral officer clearly indicated had come close to violating this country's election laws?

Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the statements by the Leader of the Opposition are totally false. The Conservative Party and all the officers of the Conservative Party have cooperated and worked with the Commissioner of Elections, and we will continue to do so.

The Leader of the Opposition wants to conceal the fact that the Liberal Party wants taxpayers to subsidize Liberal Party conventions through tax credits.

Our position is that our party's delegates must pay their own expenses, because we respect Canadian taxpayers.

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I learned early on that politicians live in glass houses and should always think twice before throwing a stone at an opponent. That is what the Conservative Party, which forms a minority government, is doing today.

How can the Prime Minister explain to Canadians that he does not seem to be complying with the Canada Elections Act with respect to contributions?

Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. We are complying with the Canada Elections Act, we have always complied with the Act, and we respect the interests of Canadian taxpayers.

That is why we decided long ago that Conservative delegates to party conventions would pay their own expenses as delegates, without being subsidized by taxpayers.

Oral Questions

But the Liberal Party is taking a stand. It wants taxpayers to underwrite the party's conventions. We do not agree with that.

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JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the last election campaign the Prime Minister boasted about wanting to lead a squeaky clean government.

This week, the minority government made its first judicial appointment in Quebec—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie.

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): The minority government's first judicial appointment in Quebec went to a former Conservative Party president.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Allow me to paraphrase a question asked by the hon. member for Calgary Southeast on October 26 last year. Why not implement a true reform of the judicial appointment process, unless the system is working very well for the new Conservative government?

Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, judicial appointments will be made by our government in a transparent manner based on candidates' qualifications. The Minister of Justice is doing a great job.

The difference is that we know, as the new Government of Canada, that we are not taking Canadian taxpayers' money for granted. We will run this government in a responsible and accountable manner.

* * *

• (1430)

MAHER ARAR INQUIRY

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Justice O'Connor's inquiry has clearly demonstrated that not only did the RCMP forward inaccurate information to the U.S. authorities on Maher Arar, which led to his being tortured in a Syrian prison for almost a year, but it also was relentless in ruining Mr. Arar's reputation and that of his family, whom the RCMP considered suspicious.

We realize that the Prime Minister will want to wait for the court's recommendations before determining how much Maher Arar will be compensated, but there is no reason why he could not make an official apology to Mr. Arar immediately. What is the Prime Minister waiting for?

Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. The government accepts all of Justice O'Connor's recommendations and we support the report.

Oral Questions

We understand that talks are currently being held between the government's lawyers and Mr. Arar's representatives with a view to reaching an agreement that is acceptable to Mr. Arar. Obviously, Mr. Arar was a victim of a gross injustice—which occurred under the former government—and I hope we will reach an agreement with him shortly.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, talks may be necessary to discuss the amount of compensation, but there is no need for talks to make an apology. That could be done this afternoon.

Likewise, since the government accepts all of the recommendations, will it file a complaint with the United States and Syria as Justice O'Connor's report recommends?

The Prime Minister could do so during his visit to the United States today and tomorrow. The former government filed a complaint with the government of Iran in the Zahra Kazemi case. Will this government follow suit in the Maher Arar case? I want to know.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will act on this matter relatively quickly, but with the necessary deliberation. We have just received, just a few days ago, a report over 800 pages long.

I hear the Liberals opposite asking us to make apologies. I wish to remind hon. Liberal members that this shameful incident occurred under the Liberal government. Perhaps they could start the apologies.

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in what is already being called the Arar affair, Justice O'Connor in no uncertain terms condemned the RCMP's reprehensible behaviour. He chastised agents who participated in the cover-up attempt. Given such troubling revelations, the Bloc Québécois feels that RCMP Commissioner Giuliano Zaccardelli should be called before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Will the government support the Bloc Québécois' demands and have Commissioner Zaccardelli appear before the committee?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): First of all, Mr. Speaker, the government will act on Justice O'Connor's recommendations, and a parliamentary committee may ask Commissioner Zaccardelli to appear. That is a good idea.

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I hope we will be able to agree on other things as well.

In a self-congratulatory internal memo, Zaccardelli, head honcho of the RCMP, applauded his staff's professionalism during the inquiry.

Does the Minister of Public Safety agree that individuals who, by their actions, knowingly misled members of the previous government, should be suspended until the RCMP Commissioner has appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to discuss the disciplinary measures he intends to recommend to the RCMP disciplinary committee?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we will act on all of the recommendations. Justice O'Connor made recommendations to improve RCMP procedures, and we will follow those recommendations.

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Justice O'Connor's report makes it clear that what happened to Maher Arar was totally unacceptable. First, he was described as being an Islamic extremist—he and his family—with possible terrorist links. Then we learn from the report that false information was transmitted to U.S. authorities completely in violation of the RCMP's own rules.

Justice O'Connor made it absolutely clear in his report that the Maher Arar family posed no threat whatsoever. Will the Prime Minister ensure that the name of that family and Dr. Monia Mazigh and their children are removed from the list of terrorists immediately so they can get—

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can report to the House that this action has already been taken by the Minister of Public Safety.

[Translation]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should apologize for the wrong that was done to Maher Arar and his family. That is obvious. The fact that he is still on the list despite the report is truly shameful. Thanks for the government's decision on this. The report also indicates that in deporting Mr. Arar to Syria, the United States violated its own law.

Will the Prime Minister demand an official apology from President Bush, on behalf of Maher Arar and Canada?

Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the NDP sincerely for his question, because clearly Mr. Arar suffered a great injustice at the hands of Canada's justice system and policing system. That is why we will be looking closely at the recommendations made recently by Mr. Justice O'Connor.

We just received his report, which is over 800 pages in length. I hope that all members will give the government a few days at least to examine and act on all the recommendations made by Mr. Justice O'Connor.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the rantings of the Treasury Board president, of which we are about to get another fine display, cannot cover up the fact that a fat cheque was cut to the Conservative Party for, of all things, PR on the so-called accountability act. This was called yesterday “a very high ethical bar”. A very high ethical bar? Not even Mike Harris would have believed he could limbo that low.

The minister said the buck stops with him. That \$13,000 is a lot of bucks and Canadians want every cent of it back. When will the minister ensure that every cent of this abuse is returned?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker—

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: It is obvious there is a lot of enthusiasm for the answer, but we have to be able to hear it. The President of the Treasury Board has the floor so we will have a little order, please.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, it is a little rich. Every day we get another lecture on ethics from the Liberal Party, a party whose own internal report says it has lost all credibility with the people of Canada. Those are not my words. Those are the words of an internal Liberal report released on September 10.

What I can say is that no political actors were involved in the awarding of this contract. The very moment it was brought to my attention, I ordered the contract terminated. No further work would be done nor charged to the taxpayer.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope the member is tethered, because he always gets very upset at the supplementaries.

I see it is still payday for the Conservative Party headquarters. The minister should table every page of the so-called work done on this two-week, \$13,000 contract that should never have been awarded. The only thing I can see that Canadians got for this expensive PR advice is a minister who refuses to answer questions.

When will the Treasury Board president repay every cent of the \$13,000 he slopped in the trough of a Conservative Party friend, Marie-Josée Lapointe?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would say to the member opposite that this is an individual I do not believe I have ever met. It is an individual for which no political actor had involvement in awarding the contract. I can say that we will be judged on how we deal with these challenges as they present themselves. The minute it came to my attention, it was immediately cancelled.

I do have a number of very interesting memos, though, from the previous government. I have a memo here from David Dingwall to the Hon. Ralph Goodale, saying that contracting undertaken by Agriculture Canada itself has been abused. When will the members opposite pay back the money they stole—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1440)

The Speaker: Order, please. I remind all hon. members that other hon. members must be referred to by their title or constituency name rather than by name. I think this may have escaped the memory of the President of the Treasury Board at that particular moment.

The hon. member for Mississauga—Brampton South.

* * *

LOBBYING

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board refuses to answer questions about Conservative insiders using their connections to benefit their clients. A long list of Conservative insiders, including Goldy Hyder and Bill Pristanski, are making money using their influence with the government. In fact, both have contributed to the minister's last election campaign.

Specifically, Mr. Pristanski was registered to lobby the Treasury Board. This conflict falls squarely on the shoulders of the Treasury Board president. When will his government stop allowing its friends to use their influence?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we were very clear in the last election campaign. We wanted to reform the Lobbyists Registration Act in a way that had never been done in Canadian history, to make it the most accountable and transparent in Canadian history, and in fact, one of the most transparent and accountable in the world.

We want to do two things. We want to ban anyone who has worked in a minister's office from lobbying for five years, including the minister himself or herself. We also want to make it the law that one has to record every single contact with a lobbyist. The lobbyists would have to do the same thing.

I say to the Liberal members opposite, why are they standing in the way of reforming our lobbyists registration system? Why are the Liberal members of the Senate not passing the federal accountability act?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clearly the President of the Treasury Board suffers from accountability deficit disorder. Yesterday the Treasury Board president admitted to a long list of mistakes he made when he served Mike Harris in Ontario, so why will he not admit today that allowing Conservative insiders to profit from their connections is wrong?

Not only is it wrong, but the Conservatives are breaking a key promise made in the Speech from the Throne. Why?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is this government whose first legislation was to table the federal accountability act, which would make the practice of lobbying more transparent, more accountable and more open to public scrutiny. It is the Liberal Party that at the committee tried to water it down, and now, as we speak, the Liberal Senate is seeking to delay this from passing into law.

Maybe while the member opposite is on his feet he could explain why the leader of the Liberal Party appointed a registered lobbyist to his own transition team, a current registered lobbyist working in the PMO. Who was he working for, the public interest or the private interests of his—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Ahuntsic.

* * *

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Women's Program, which is set to terminate on September 26, is still underway. The criteria are the same as in the past. Women's groups have been submitting their applications for weeks, not to say months. We are told that the public servants completed their portion of the work several weeks ago.

Oral Questions

Why has the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women left these applications unanswered, while groups such as the National Association of Women and the Law are being forced to close their doors, due to lack of funding?

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the real issue here is the need for real action for women and children.

Unlike the former Liberal government that studied and studied and consulted for years, we believe that we have to act now. We will act on protecting women against violence. We will ensure that children have safe homes to grow up in. We will help older women escape poverty. We will ensure that immigrant women are able to use their foreign credentials to contribute to Canadian society.

Our new government will act and make a difference in the lives of women.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMUNITY ACTION

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the previous government extended the supporting communities partnership initiative by one year. That extension will end on March 31, 2007. If something is not done right now, many services will be disrupted. Homelessness groups need recurrent funding to help people in crisis situations and to offer them lasting solutions.

Does the Prime Minister intend to continue funding for homelessness beyond March 31, 2007 and allocate envelopes—

• (1445)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

[English]

Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the House that at the conclusion of the last government there was an independent audit done by the secretariat to review all of the programs. They were evaluated based on their merit. A number of those programs were cut.

We are bringing forward programs that we believe will be accountable to Canadians. We will deliver results and not send money to Liberal Party insiders.

* * *

[Translation]

DEPARTMENT OF CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, several organizations submitted funding applications 11 months ago to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and are still waiting for an answer. They are desperate and some are living on credit or loans from members of their board of directors.

Does the minister agree that taking more than one year to provide confirmation of an annual grant is no longer a reasonable period of time but rather an excessive, even absurd amount of time?

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the House knows, this government got elected because it wanted to deliver accountability and value for taxpayers' dollars.

We are reviewing all the programs to ensure that we can deliver for Canadians the services and the direct help that people need. All of our programs are under review. We will ensure that funds are used to serve those they were intended to serve.

[Translation]

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that has nothing to do with my question.

Cultural and social groups are struggling. Short of money, women's advocacy groups have ceased operations; amounts earmarked for feature films have not risen in seven years; the present feature film policy is outdated; Quebec film and museums are underfunded; and the Copyright Act has been obsolete for ten years.

In view of the number of urgent issues accumulating, what is the minister waiting for to take action?

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members can appreciate, there has been so much waste and mismanagement that there was a review of all the programs Canadians deserve. We must also ensure that we are not going to just continue the survival of organizations, but that we are going to help those we are intending to help, not only women, children, our creators, filmmakers and producers. So much of that money was wasted and we want to ensure it is maximized to those who need it.

* * *

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Hon. Stephen Owen (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative minority government believes it is above the law. Members of the Prime Minister's political staff, including his director of communications, have illegally received the name of a reporter who filed a confidential access to information request. This is not only improper, it is against the law.

The Prime Minister has promised to get tough with people who break the law. Will he start with his own staff?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government takes very seriously privacy of information in legislation and the ability of anyone to ask for that information without their name being revealed.

I found out about the incident just today. I immediately asked my officials to look into the matter and to get all the details. I have been in touch with the commissioner's office and when I have all the details, I will immediately share those.

Oral Questions

I will work together with the commissioner's office to ensure that this legislation, which is good and proper, is upheld with the spirit and the letter of the law.

Hon. Stephen Owen (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his response. We look forward to that information and I thank him.

It is important to understand that the Prime Minister's director of communications, who illegally received the information identifying the reporter, is the very person who decides what reporters get to ask questions of the Prime Minister.

Even more important, did the Prime Minister also illegally receive this information?

• (1450)

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's new government takes the issue of the privacy of Canadians very, very seriously. We will first look into the facts and confirm that the facts are as they have been suggested, and if they are cause for concern.

Earlier this afternoon I spoke with the Privacy Commissioner, Jennifer Stoddart, and asked to sit down with her tomorrow to discuss this important issue.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this minority Conservative government is mocking our Canadian laws. Now we understand why journalists have to get their names in the Prime Minister's little black book before they can ask him any questions.

This morning, we found out that the Prime Minister's Director of Communications gets the names of people who make access to information requests.

Will the Prime Minister ask his Director of Communications to resign immediately?

[*English*]

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated that as soon as we received this information, we immediately gave clear instructions that we want all the details of this matter. I contacted the commissioner's office right away. The Treasury Board President has done the same.

This is a serious matter and we take these information items seriously, unlike the previous government, where it was always delay, delay, delay. We are on to these things right away.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's Director of Communications and other members of his staff got the name of an individual who made a Department of Public Safety access to information request.

Disclosing the name of a person requesting access to information is unacceptable. It is against the law. Does the minority Conservative government understand that? Will the Prime Minister finally send a clear message that the law must be obeyed?

Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously the law must be obeyed. That said, I can assure the members that I have just received confirmation that nobody on the Prime Minister's political staff asked for such information. The information was actually given to them.

The President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Public Safety will take steps to ensure that this does not happen again.

* * *

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has taken on the important role of tackling crime to make our communities safer places to raise our families. Many organizations that begged previous governments to stop the revolving door of our justice system are now applauding our government's initiatives.

Could the justice minister please explain some of the important steps the government is taking to ensure that people who commit serious crimes will serve serious time in jail?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week MADD Canada distributed a press release supporting Bill C-9, this government's initiative to eliminate house arrest for serious crime. The national president said:

In the case of violent crimes, where a person has been killed or seriously injured, conditional sentences such as house arrest and community service are totally inadequate.

I would like to join with MADD in calling upon opposition parties to support Bill C-9, and not play politics but to act expeditiously and pass this bill.

* * *

POLITICAL FINANCING

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the new Conservative Party is acting more and more like the old Conservative Party of the 1980s. It promised it would clean up election financing laws, yet its own actions make the Liberals look like Quakers when it comes to sleaze.

Will this new Conservative government force the old Conservative Party to release the books of its donations for its 2005 convention and come clean with these millions of dollars of illegal political donations?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the party will obviously comply with any requests from the Chief Electoral Officer. We will comply with any law.

The political leader of another political party did testify before the Senate committee, saying that advice was given that these delegate fees, these contributions to the party, were not attainable, so there have been inconsistent regulations. We think they should be cleaned up.

Oral Questions

We also think that the federal accountability act should be passed by the Liberal Senate. We think that campaign donations by corporations and unions should be banned. We should reduce the amount for individuals down to \$1,000 and the Liberal Senate said stop fighting—

• (1455)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard all kinds of sanctimonious bluster from the President of the Treasury Board over this already.

The fact is it was the NDP that filed the complaint with the elections commission on June 29. Three months later, the commission cannot get the Conservatives to cooperate and show their books, to open their political contribution books. I was shocked to learn the elections commissioner does not even have the authority to audit a political party's books.

The Conservatives turned down every amendment we put forward on election financing in Bill C-2. How can they stand here and say they are committed to openness and transparency if they will not cooperate with the elections commissioner?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we obviously believe in greater transparency in the donations to political parties. That is why we want to eliminate campaign contributions from corporations and unions. We want to lower it from \$5,000 down to \$1,000.

The member from the NDP will acknowledge one thing. In trying to reform Canada's election financing laws, we have one big obstacle, and the name of that obstacle is the Liberal Party of Canada.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, \$1.7 million for a Conservative convention went secretly unreported in 2005, and that is not all. More than 150 Conservatives gave their party the legal maximum that year before any convention fees, but some of them, including candidates, MPs and the Prime Minister, were also convention delegates. Their fees put them over the individual limit, so the party contravened the law and individual donors did too.

How will the government investigate the Chief Electoral Officer's obvious concerns?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will obviously cooperate completely with the Chief Electoral Officer. We will also work to reform Canada's finance system. We will also seek to bring greater clarity.

However, when it comes to greater clarity, maybe the member for Wascana could tell us why, on April 30, 2004, he took a \$67,000 flight on the Challenger by himself; then on August 9, another \$67,000 flight; on August 22, another \$67,000 flight; on January 29, another \$67,000—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Wascana.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we saw yesterday, the gutter becomes that hon. minister.

I refer to intimidation and retribution in the access to information process, improper contracts to Conservative insiders not cancelled or repaid as promised, lobbyists using Conservative connections as

stepping stones to private profit, and now countless failures to properly report political donations.

Will the government launch an independent forensic audit of all financing submissions to Elections Canada and all party conventions by the Reform Party, the Alliance Party and the Conservative Party of Canada?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is this government that wants to make lobbying more transparent and more accountable. The first piece of legislation that Canada's new government brought forward to Parliament was to require every single contact between a registered lobbyist and a public office holder to be made public and put on the Internet, and the Liberal Party has stalled it and held it up at every step of the way.

Maybe the member for Wascana could explain why David Dingwall wrote him as minister of agriculture and said that under his tenure, "Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada officials have demonstrated a pattern of non-compliance and avoidance" of Treasury Board policies when it accepts a contract. Maybe—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Honoré-Mercier.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when asked in June about the millions of dollars his party pocketed during the 2005 Conservative Party convention, the charming and smiling President of the Treasury Board said that these astronomical sums did not need to be declared.

Today, the director of Elections Canada confirmed what everyone already knows and that is that the Conservative Party breached the Canada Elections Act—not once, not twice, but 2,900 times, which is once for every Conservative Party delegate.

Will the Conservative government make amends and agree to respect the Act?

• (1500)

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us look at what the Liberal Party of Canada is doing. Not only did it finance its party directly, not only does it get cash from Elections Canada after an election, but now the Liberal Party of Canada is asking hard-working middle class families to dig into their pockets just a little bit deeper to fund the Liberal Party's own political operations and its own political conventions.

Those of us on this side of the House believe that Canadian families should not have to pay for partisan Liberal Party conventions, and that is the basis of this whole disagreement.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a nice guy. Let us be clear. The Conservatives got caught with their hands in the cookie jar. They got caught trying to do indirectly what they are not allowed to do directly. I am talking about close to \$2 million in secret contributions.

Will the government try to shed light on this scandal? Will it investigate the role played by Ian Brodie and Michael Donison? Will it ensure that such actions do not remain unpunished?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this was hardly something secret when it was shared by 2,900 Canadians from every single part of this country. It was hardly something secret when it was openly discussed at a Senate committee. That is the reality.

This party will obey every single election financing law, unlike the Liberal Party opposite that was forced to return over \$1 million that it stole from hard-working taxpayers. The member opposite should stand in his place and he should apologize for the egregious violation of the taxpayers' trust.

* * *

[Translation]

LOBBYISTS

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the matter of conservative lobbyists, the President of Treasury Board stated earlier this week, and I quote: "... I will say very clearly that not a single person who worked for any member of this government is operating as a lobbyist." This statement is not true.

Does the President of Treasury Board acknowledge that Kevin McIntosh, who was an advisor to the current Leader of the Government in the House of Commons until March 2006, is now Vice-President of the lobbying firm Fleishman-Hilliard, and that David Salvatore, who was the legislative assistant to the current Minister of Citizenship and Immigration until March 2006, is today working for Prospectus?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what I said earlier this week: no minister's assistant who has worked in a minister's office, on the government side, is working as a lobbyist.

I can also add that in the case of the three individuals mentioned by my Quebec colleague, I have a letter signed by Mr. Bernard J. Shapiro, Ethics Commissioner of Canada, clearly stating that these individuals did not hold government positions.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the President of Treasury Board can play with words as much as he likes but can he confirm that neither Kevin MacIntosh nor David Salvatore, two former Conservative advisors to the government, have not or been or are not now working to lobby the government?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I can say and what the Ethics Commissioner stated very clearly is that these two individuals worked for Parliament, but not for government. That is very important. It is very clearly stated that if you have access to the trust of cabinet ministers, if you have access to government information, if you have contacts with the government while working in a minister's office, you cannot be employed as a lobbyist for five years. This is one of the reasons for implementing Bill C-2 before looking for a better bill to—

Oral Questions

● (1505)

The Speaker: The hon. member for West Nova.

* * *

TRANSPORT

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

[English]

Bay Ferries Limited has announced that it will be closing the service between Digby and Saint John on October 31. This ferry is a vital link between Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, the United States and central Canadian markets.

The announcement is a devastating blow for the local economy, for the families, the students and businesses that depend on the service.

Since privatization of the service, economic conditions have changed in western Nova Scotia. The service is no longer financially viable. How will the federal ministry assume its responsibility and ensure the permanent survival of this vital transportation link?

[Translation]

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Indeed, as we know, the Government of Canada is already subsidizing that operation. It is subsidizing the ferries by paying for the wharves. I have been in touch with my colleague, the minister responsible for Atlantic regional development. I am also in discussion with other colleagues responsible for this file and we will be working very hard on the matter.

* * *

[English]

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for years our party has been advocating for compensation for all hepatitis C victims. The same cannot be said for the Liberals who even went so far as to vote against a motion to extend compensation to all victims.

Could the Minister of Health tell us what he has done to rectify this discrimination?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed I can report to the House that on July 25 of this year the Prime Minister was able to announce the compensation package for those infected with hepatitis C through the Canadian blood system.

It has been a long-standing and difficult issue and the terms of the compensation are more than \$1 billion. I can report to the House that, unlike the previous Liberal government which steadfastly refused to render justice for all the victims of tainted blood, this government has acted. We have acted with compassion. Our Prime Minister has delivered on our commitment to see justice done. We are proud on this side of the House to stand—

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need to know the opinion of the environment minister about a so-called scientist who is helping to raise cash for Victoria area Conservatives.

Dr. Tim Ball, a known climate change skeptic, has said that Kyoto was a political solution to a non-existent science problem.

Does the minister agree with Dr. Ball and Victoria Conservatives that climate change simply does not even exist?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is taking action on the environment. We take seriously the issues of climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, and pollution in our air.

We are a government of action and that is what Canadians want, after 13 years of a Liberal government that did nothing.

We will reduce smog, infant death, blindness, childhood asthma and lung cancer because of our actions. In a few short months the government introduced some tough new regulations to deal with mercury.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think the new government learned too many lessons from the old government. Repeating the same lines day in and day out does nothing to fight the effects of climate change.

Tim Ball thinks that global warming is actually good for Canada saying:

—in ways too numerous to list. Global warming? Let's hope so.

Climate change quacks and big oil lobbyists are the ones that the government is listening to. When is it going to start to listen to Canadians and do something about this issue?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is listening to Canadians. Every year thousands of Canadians die related to pollution in our air. The health of Canadians is important.

What did the Liberals do? They wasted Canadian money on foreign credits. The projects of today are brought to Canadians by a committed government. The money could have been used to retrofit cleaner buses with anti-pollution equipment.

* * *

● (1510)

[Translation]

MAHER ARAR

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in keeping with tradition, I have informed my fellow House leaders, and I think you will find that there is unanimous consent in this House to adopt this motion immediately:

That, in the opinion of this House, apologies should be presented to Maher Arar regarding the treatment he has been subjected to.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean have the unanimous consent of the House to introduce this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER

Hon. Joe Fontana (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I truly will miss Wednesdays around here.

Mr. Speaker, thank you so much for this opportunity to address the House. You will remember that 18 years ago some of us, including yourself, arrived here in the House. I must admit that you still have some of the black hair that you had when you came here in 1988. We might even have been a few inches taller than we are today.

However, as everyone in the House knows, I am a man of few words. I rise today to inform my colleagues, my constituents and all Canadians that I will be resigning my seat as a member of Parliament. This decision has not been an easy one, however, from time to time all of us have to decide what we want to do, where we want to be and how to serve.

As I reflect on this day in this incredible place I know everyone in this room knows and believes how privileged we are to sit in the highest court of the land and, each and every day, to do our very best even though there are differences between us. The fact is that there is one common interest and that is the common interest of Canada. I know this place looks the same as it did 18 years ago and it still brings this enormous responsibility to do the best that we possibly can.

I have always said that this is not a job, it is a calling. It is a calling by a number of people who wish us to serve. Therefore, I would hope that in the future this institution is given respect and that we give each other respect. Albeit the journalists and some people might think we are not up to par, the fact is that parliamentarians work hard each and every day, seven days a week, 24 hours a day for the betterment of their communities and their constituents and we ought to be very proud of that.

Routine Proceedings

I came here 18 years ago as a young city councillor from the city of London which happens to be, I believe, the epicentre of Canada. It is a great place. All members have been there and I invite them all to come back. However I came here 18 years because I wanted to speak for the ordinary person and the women who wake up each and every day and make the economy work by protecting their homes, their families and working really hard for their communities and their country; for small business entrepreneurs who, believe it or not, pay the freight for an awful lot of people and create all the jobs; and for the newcomers in our community because I was one. In 1954 my father and mother brought us here and gave me the privilege of living in this incredible country.

Lastly, I think we have all succeeded to ensure that cities and towns, rural and urban, are appreciated for their values, for their communities and for what happens in cities and communities. I know that our government and successive governments believe that cities and communities are where things happen, and I know that will continue.

All of the things that we do around here could never occur without the support of our families. They in fact are the true heroes in this place.

I want to thank my wife, Vicky, my sons, Hugo and Michael, and my daughter, Jennifer. While we do our work, our partners, our spouses, do the hard work of ensuring our families are safe and I pay tribute to them.

None of this would happen unless we were blessed with a whole bunch of friends, supporters and colleagues from all walks of life to ensure democracy happens. I thank each and every one of those friends, supporters and colleagues here and on the other side for the great amount of support and the fact that we have been able to work so well together over the past number of years. Without their support that would not happen.

• (1515)

I also would like to thank my London constituency staff. We all try to take the credit for the work that is done at our constituency level but I am sure all members believe as I do that without our staff nothing would happen. They, in fact, take the brunt of the good words and everything else. Over the past 18 years I have been blessed with some exceptional people in my London, Ontario office. I want to thank my staff: Michelle Barberi, Danelia Bolivar, Jennifer Buchanan, Cathy Edgerton, Bobbie Hampton, Kathleen Keating, Mary Ludy, Louisa Oats, Ingrid Pawley, Susan Pawlek, Lissa Regan, Lisa Scafe, Lidia Solovij and Doreen Vanderweddering.

In my Ottawa office I want to thank my staff: Katherine Abbott, Michael Cairns, Tom Chervinsky, Christina Dona, Andrea Fahel, Joey Galemberti, Genevieve Georget, Chantal Gobeil, Peter Graham, Sylvia Haines, Tony Hodgkinson, Kevin Langlands, Patrick LeBrun, Susan Lindsay, Meredith Logan, Paul McCarthy, Andrew McDermott, Gio Mingerelli, Martha Murray, Carl O'Brien, Krista Pawley, Kristy Pearson, Gray Picco, Jazmina Redzepi, Humaira Somra, Perry Tsergas and Chris White.

One might think that is a lot of people but that is because they all wanted to work for me.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention that I had the incredible opportunity of working for three former prime ministers: Mr. Turner, Mr. Chrétien and Mr. Martin.

We all know how tough a job it is not only to be parliamentarians but also to be leaders of parties and prime ministers. With regard to the present Prime Minister and even the former prime minister, Kim Campbell, whom I had the privilege of serving, I can say that it is an immense responsibility for leaders of all parties. We know how tough it is but in Canada they are respectful of one another.

When I came here many years ago I wanted to talk about housing and about the most vulnerable in our society. I wanted to talk about working men and women. I had the opportunity as both the minister of housing and labour to talk about employment standards, wage earner protection, the homeless and the very vulnerable in our society.

Each and every day in our communities there are people who want and need help. At the end of the day all they want is a helping hand. In Parliament, decisions must be made but decisions are complex and money must be spent. However, I hope and pray that each and every day that members continue their work that they will always think of the most vulnerable in our society because I know that is how we feel about the people in our communities.

I told the Prime Minister yesterday, when he came over to say that he had heard I was going some place, that I was not sure that he had heard the last of Joe Fontana. I told him that given the opportunity, hopefully by Londoners, that I would continue to press that cities and communities be an important part in this Parliament and that I would see him, hopefully, in another way and in another venue.

I have travelled the country and the world, as most members have, and I think all members would agree that we live in the most incredible country on the face of this world. I am sure that while our Canadian astronaut is going around and around and looking down at Canada he sees the incredible geography, but more important, he will know and understand that we built a country that other countries of the world want to be, where we have differences and where we respect one another and come together. When we think of the differences that bind us but also the common interest, the world looks to Canada to help it because it is a very troubled world.

The last thing I did as a member of Parliament was to be with the veterans on Saturday as they proclaimed Legion Week. I hope and pray again for the 100,000 veterans that have given their lives over the course of a century and a third that we have existed as a country that they have done it so that we can enjoy such a great country.

• (1520)

A country that allows a four year old immigrant boy to later become a member of Parliament and a minister is a country of incredible opportunity for all. That is what I hope and pray that everyone continues to do each and every day of their lives. God bless Canada.

Routine Proceedings

● (1525)

[Translation]

POINT OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is exquisitely ironic that when the government was in opposition, it often criticized the Ethics Commissioner. Now, the government seems to want to hide behind the Ethics Commissioner.

In response to one of the many questions he was asked, the President of the Treasury Board quoted a letter from the Ethics Commissioner, Mr. Shapiro. In my opinion, the Standing Orders are very clear: when a minister quotes a document in response to a question, he or she must table that document. I therefore invite the President of the Treasury Board to table the letter he quoted today.

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is quite correct. Public documents that are referred to can and should be tabled. Would the House give me the leniency to look into this? I will take this up with the minister. I am not quite sure I remember exactly what document was referred to, but I will take it up with him and get back to the House.

The Speaker: I thank the government House leader for his response. That is satisfactory.

[Translation]

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the statement by my colleague, the member for Laval—Les Îles, left us with the impression that this entire House was disgusted by Jan Wong's article in *The Globe and Mail*. I therefore seek the unanimous consent of this House to introduce the following motion:

That, in the opinion of the House, an apology be given to the people of Quebec for the offensive remarks of Ms. Jan Wong in a *Globe and Mail* article regarding the recent Dawson College tragedy.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Bourassa have the unanimous consent of the House to introduce the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

INDIAN SPECIFIC CLAIMS COMMISSION

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2004-05 annual report of the Indian Specific Claims Commission.

● (1530)

RCMP NATIONAL DNA DATA BANK

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, copies of the RCMP National DNA Data Bank annual report for 2005-06.

This report shows the positive impact that the data bank continues to have in linking DNA profiles to crime scenes and to convicted offenders. The data bank has now made over 5,800 matches between convicted offenders and crimes scenes and has also linked over 870 crimes scenes together. It is one of Canada's most powerful and most effective tools in criminal investigations.

I congratulate the technicians and all the personnel in our DNA data banks for their incredibly good work in bringing safety to our citizens and justice to those who do not respect the law.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER PRODUCTS EXPORT CHARGE ACT, 2006

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-24, An Act to impose a charge on the export of certain softwood lumber products to the United States and a charge on refunds of certain duty deposits paid to the United States, to authorize certain payments, to amend the Export and Import Permits Act and to amend other Acts as a consequence.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on the situation in Darfur.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage related to the Canadian Museums.

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STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among all political parties and I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the provisional Standing Orders, adopted by the House on February 18, 2005, remain in effect until Tuesday, November 21, 2006.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 66(2)(b), I would like to designate Thursday, September 21 for the purpose of concluding the debate on the motion to concur in the second report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

* * *

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by many citizens across the country.

The petitioners state that the protection of our environment is an obligation of all Canadians, that every Canadian government must commit themselves to preserve the viability of Canadians' way of life and that the Kyoto agreement is a fundamental step in protecting our environment and must be enforced.

The petitioners call upon Parliament not to renege on its commitment to the Kyoto protocol, and reaffirm its support protection of the environment.

•(1535)

AGE OF CONSENT

Mr. Lui Temelkovski (Oak Ridges—Markham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of tabling a petition from the good people of the riding of Oak Ridges—Markham on the issue of the age of consent.

TAXATION

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to present to the House today a petition from 130 senior citizens in Barrie, Ontario. The petitioners call upon the government to consider pension splitting for income.

I encourage any consideration in the reduction of tax on Canadians because they already face a deep burden.

AGE OF CONSENT

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present a petition from a number of constituents in my riding. The petitioners request the government to take all measures necessary to immediately raise the age of consent from 14 to 16 years of age.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to present this petition, which calls for Parliament to enact legislation which would recognize unborn children as separate

Routine Proceedings

victims of crime when they are injured or killed when a violent crime is committed against their mother.

I am delighted to do this on behalf of the petitioners.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to present two petitions to the House today, with a total of 61 names from people in my riding who support traditional marriage.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to be so kind as to call Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-5.

That a humble Address be presented to Her Excellency praying that she will cause to be laid before the House a copy of all correspondence between Professor Michael Coyle and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians regarding a fact-finding mission to the Six Nations Reserve to investigate land claims issues.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-5, in the name of the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, is acceptable to the government and the documents are tabled immediately.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to be so kind as to call Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-7.

That an Order of the House do issue for a copy of the document or documents referred to by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Mr. Kenney) in response to a question in the House by the Member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont on May 5, 2005.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-7, in the name of the hon. member for Richmond,, is acceptable to the government, subject to the usual reservations concerning confidential information, and the documents are tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Subject to the reservations or conditions expressed by the parliamentary secretary, is it the pleasure of the House that Notice of Motion No. P-7 be deemed to have been adopted?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

S.O. 52

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to be so kind as to call Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-1, in the name of the hon. member for Malpeque.

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all audits, evaluation reports or analysis of the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization Program (CAIS) program conducted by or for the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food from its inception until January 23, 2006.

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and request that the motion be transferred for debate.

The Speaker: The motion is transferred for debate.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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POINTS OF ORDER

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, may I direct the Chair's attention to today's notice paper where the hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam has given notice of a written question, Question No. 90, which actually is a notice not of one question, but rather of 47 questions.

Standing Order 39(4) limits the member to a maximum of four written questions at any one time. The conventions of the House, in my submission, do not permit a member to submit a series of questions under a general topic and to subdivide that question ad infinitum.

I respectfully suggest that questions addressed to the Government of Canada concerning the activities of other governments or armed forces of other governments are outside the administrative accountability of the government.

Finally, I suggest that Question No. 90 is out of order and I would ask the Speaker to so rule.

The Speaker: The Chair will take the hon. parliamentary secretary's point of order under advisement and return to the House in due course with a ruling in respect of this matter.

I note that many years ago, when the member for London North Centre was a new member, members could put as many questions as they wanted on the order paper. The rules were changed to restrict it to four and the questions got a lot longer.

I will look at the issue the hon. member has raised here, where there are 47 questions in one, but it is a practice that has been going on for some time, perhaps not with 47 questions, but with less. However, the hon. parliamentary secretary had other points in the

point of order, too, which I am quite prepared to consider. I will get back to the House in due course. I thank him for raising this issue.

* * *

• (1540)

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

MAHER ARAR INQUIRY

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate. I will now hear submissions from the member for Windsor—Tecumseh in respect of that matter.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I reported this request to your office pursuant to Standing Order 52(2) for your consideration in granting an emergency debate. As probably just about every Canadian knows, the O'Connor commission issued its report, which was tabled in the House on Monday afternoon of this week.

In response to that, we have two points that I think support my request for an emergency debate. One is the absolute outrage in the country, both immediate and continuous right up to the present, as to the way Mr. Arar himself and his family have been treated by police authorities in this country.

In response to a series of questions both on Tuesday and again today in the House, we keep hearing from the government that it is going to respond. It is quite obvious that it is delaying this. The Canadian people do not want it delayed. I believe it is the responsibility of the House and individual members of Parliament to speak out on this issue. The opportunity for them to do so with regard to the way Mr. Arar was treated, the way his family was treated, and how we should respond to that and how quickly, all of this is the proper substance of an emergency debate. We should pursue that.

The secondary point I raised in my letter to you, Mr. Speaker, was with regard to the need for immediate attention by the House of Commons in terms of giving advice to the government and expressing its opinion with regard to the other three individuals who were named in Mr. O'Connor's report, but who were not the subject of the mandate the Canadian government had given him when the commission was originally established. Those three are Mr. El Maati, Mr. Almalki and Mr. Nureddin. Again, in the report, Justice O'Connor makes recommendations that something needs to be done on this and their cases taken up.

In regard to that, it is in the nature of an immediate response that is required, the nature for which we should be having input from members of Parliament. That would lead, I would argue strenuously, you to conclude that it is a proper subject of an emergency debate with regard to those three individuals and the comments and recommendations that Justice O'Connor made with regard to them.

In totality, if I may summarize, I am not seeking an emergency debate on the entire report. The government's position is fair that it needs more time to consider all of the report, but with regard to these two issues, because of the outrage this has caused in the country and because of the demand within the country that we respond quickly on both of these issues, we should be having an emergency debate. I urge you strongly, Mr. Speaker, to grant it.

Government Orders

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh for his very able argument in respect of this matter. Certainly I am not in any way suggesting that the matter is not a serious one and something that is worthy of discussion. Of course we have witnessed considerable discussion on the matter in the House during question period for the last couple of days since that tabling of the report, and I am sure there will be more, but the difficulty the hon. member faces, I think, in making his argument is whether this is an emergency.

The report has been in preparation for a number of months, if not years. We have now received it and I am not convinced by the hon. member's argument that the tabling of the report has created an emergency that is worthy of being a subject of debate in the House on that basis. I would stress to him, as I did the other day in my ruling on the earlier request this week, that there are provisions in the Standing Orders for the House leaders to agree on a take note debate, which in my view would permit discussion on the subjects outlined by the hon. member. That is a matter that can be agreed to by the House leaders of the parties and carried on in this House at a time they choose.

I would invite the hon. member, rather than asking the Chair to declare this an emergency, to raise the matter there and see if he cannot arrange a debate through that medium rather than this one, which in my view is inappropriate in the circumstances, given, as I have said, my view that this report has not created an emergency in the country that ought to be dealt with in this way. I must therefore decline the hon. member's request and wish him well in raising the matter elsewhere.

* * *

● (1545)

VACANCY

LONDON NORTH CENTRE

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform this House that a vacancy has occurred in the House of Commons for the electoral district of London North Centre, in the province of Ontario, by reason of the resignation of the Hon. Joe Fontana.

[*Translation*]

Consequently, pursuant to section 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed today my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a new writ of election for the electoral district of London North Centre.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS[*English*]**CANADA TRANSPORTATION ACT**

The House resumed from September 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am indeed pleased to speak on Bill C-11. As others have stated, there is a lot in this bill that makes sense. In fact, it is the third time in the House for most of the contents of this bill. However, tucked within the bill is another huge loss, and this is new, a huge loss for the farm community.

The minority government opposite has taken to inserting in a lot of its press releases and so on, when it can, a quote called "the new government", but like so much of what this minority Conservative Party does, it is all about deception. There is nothing new in the bill except the one section that I mentioned, clause 43. What this does, quite simply, is trample on the rights of farmers. Let me repeat that: clause 43 tramples on the rights of farmers.

The new government, the new Conservative government, has cut a deal with the big railways and the big grain companies to tear down agreements that the previous government had entered into, agreements reached by the previous government that would have given a little bit of leverage to the grain producers and more control over their destiny as grain producers in terms of dealing with the railways. The issue really relates to the transfer of hopper cars to the Farmer Rail Car Coalition, a cross-section of groups across the west that would have had those railcars turned over to them to manage in the interests of the transportation system and in the interests of farmers.

The provisions of this bill, then, particularly clause 43, are really symbolic of the government's real priorities. With the implementation of these two provisions, the Conservative government has, along with its decision on May 4, sold out the farmers of western Canada and delivered an asset of incredible value, once again, to the railways.

The two provisions in question come out of the government's betrayal of western farmers and a renegeing on an agreement signed in good faith between the Farmer Rail Car Coalition and the Government of Canada. The agreement signed between the FRCC and the federal government in November 2005 would have seen the federal government hopper car fleet transferred to the Farmer Rail Car Coalition. The FRCC was committed to a payment of \$203 million for the cars and had ensured that the maintaining of the fleet could and would be done at a competitive rate far less than the unaccounted-for costs of the railways.

The third report of the Standing Committee on Transport, on February 14, 2005, provided one of the key reasons why there had been a lengthy delay between the announcement by the previous federal government to dispose of the hopper car fleet in 1996 and the agreement with the FRCC in November 2005. It stated that "the railways had a right of first refusal to acquire the cars that did not expire until the summer of 2002".

No action was possible until that arrangement lapsed. It was in a matter of months following that period that the federal government, in spite of less than enthusiastic support from within Transport Canada and continued railway opposition, had taken the final decision.

Government Orders

• (1550)

When it comes to Transport Canada, I have had the opportunity, in a previous life as President of the National Farmers Union, to deal with Transport Canada for some 30 years. Transport Canada has never failed in this country's history, in those 30 years at least, but to come down on the side of the railways as opposed to coming down on the side of the farmers. The previous minister of transport was willing to challenge Transport Canada and come up with a deal that worked for primary producers. The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities over here in the so-called new government is selling out those primary producers and catering to big rail in the process.

That is not what we expect from a new government. We expect a new government to stand up for those with less power in this country. This new government in that regard has failed miserably and has really betrayed the farm community in terms of that deal that was signed by the previous government.

Before getting into the specifics of the issue, I would like to speak about accountability, something the government pretends is of importance. The railways, since the issue of the possible transfer of the hopper car fleet, have maintained one consistent position: complete and total opposition to any transfer or sale of the cars to the FRCC. Yet, the railways have never once, even to the Canadian Transportation Agency according to testimony before the agriculture committee, provided their costs for maintaining the hopper car fleet which had been in their control since the 1970s.

For the benefit of those who are not knowledgeable about this issue to a great extent, I want people to understand that the past federal government purchased hopper cars for the railways which the Government of Canada owned and controlled to a certain extent to provide the rolling stock in order to provide the capacity to move the grain out of the western prairie region because the railways were not providing the rolling stock in fact to do it. That is why it was necessary. It is the cars we are really talking about in this particular instance. As I said, the railways really did not provide the costs of maintaining that hopper car fleet which had been in their control since the 1970s.

A Canadian Transportation Agency representative at the agriculture committee stated that even though the CTA made serious efforts to work with the railways, the agency found that “—the railways do not collect detailed information with respect to the maintenance of the hopper cars, which made the assignment or study more difficult—”. That was said at the agriculture committee on May 16, 2006.

The members of the new government, specifically those from rural western Canada, have failed to protect the interests of their constituents. At a minimum, they should be able to stand in the House and state that the decision of the government to renege on the deal with the FRCC is supported by one set of simple facts: namely, that the railways can maintain the fleet of hopper cars at a rate which matches that of the FRCC. They have not and they cannot do that.

On May 4 the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities stated that the government's decision would allegedly benefit the farmers of western Canada due to the \$2 per tonne rate

reduction. The news release of course issued by the minister indicated that the rate reduction of \$2 per tonne was a potential target. Really then, the \$2 per tonne is not real. It is just potential. It may happen. There is no assurance to the western farm community that this reduction will in fact be made.

• (1555)

In an interview, however, with *The Western Producer* on May 11, the same Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities stated that “the reduction in rates would likely fall in the \$1.50 to \$2 range”. So even the minister himself is not consistent in terms of what he is saying the potential reduction might be.

The claim by the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities that farmers would realize an annual saving of \$50 million is contradicted by his own news release and by his own statement to *The Western Producer*, but it is not unusual for the new government to be caught in contradictions. We have seen this from members in question period today. We see it every day. In fact, there is no industry which sees the contradictions as often as the agricultural industry.

During the election the Conservative leader left the impression that there was going to be immediate cash for farmers. Remember that last January and last spring? Did they get immediate cash for farmers? The Minister of Human Resources and Social Development says there was. There were moneys announced last November by the previous government and that is what is being paid out. There was less money in the budget than the previous government had paid out. There was no immediate cash for farmers from the government to this day other than what was announced by the previous government.

The minister may be talking about the options program but the options program is a blame the victim kind of program. Instead of compensating producers for low farm prices, Conservatives have come up with an options program for a farmer who has farmed for 40 years. Maybe HRDC is providing the skills development training program for farmers and they thought it was Agriculture Canada, but I can certainly see the bureaucrats of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada training a farmer who has farmed for 40 years to farm better. I can certainly see that because what the government is doing on the options program is blaming the victim. It is saying the farmer is losing money because his skills are poor. That is what the government is really saying.

May I remind the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development that the problem the farm community has is low commodity prices worldwide which are caused by subsidies by other countries around the world. Low commodity prices are what is wrong.

Just to sidetrack for a minute, the Minister of International Trade and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food had the opportunity to be in Australia today to meet with the Cairns Group, the group that Canada was an original founding member of, at which meeting the United States and the European Union were going to argue the point that we need a WTO agreement in which there would be better market access and reduced export subsidies and to argue the points that would benefit Canadian farmers. Where were these two ministers? Sitting in the House here today and neglecting their responsibility to the farm community of this country.

Government Orders

When it comes to agriculture, I could go through a list of six items, but I want to deal specifically with Bill C-11. The fact is the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the new government as a whole have failed miserably when it comes to dealing with the problems in the farm community.

The claim by the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities that farmers will realize an annual saving of \$50 million is contradicted by his own news release. This means that the Government of Canada cannot stand by the figure it initially proclaimed as going to farmers in terms of a rate reduction and for this reason alone, these provisions of the bill do not merit support.

• (1600)

However, the FRCC has been more than forthcoming with respect to its position with respect to the costs of maintaining the fleet for producers, and this position has been supported by the findings of the CTA in a submission to Transport Canada on March 29, 2005. That document makes absolutely clear that the two major railways, Canadian National and Canadian Pacific, have been actively and intentionally overcharging, in other words gouging, farmers for more than a decade, and the government continues to support that gouging.

Mr. Dean Allison: Who was in government?

Hon. Wayne Easter: The member opposite asks who was in government. We made an agreement with the FRCC to prevent that gouging and the new government over there broke that agreement, violated that trust with western farmers and basically sold out to the big railways.

I would like to take this opportunity to read from this report, which incidentally would not have become public if it had not been for a reporter with the *The Western Producer* who obtained and published the report. The following are extracts from the report, sent by Neil Thurston, director of the rail economics directorate of the CTA, to Helena Borges, executive director of rail policy at Transport Canada. The report was in response to a Transport Canada request to the CTA “regarding the Agency staff’s assessment of CN and CP’s expenditures for the maintenance of the Government hopper car fleet in 2004”.

Based on the railway information, the CTA determined that maintenance costs on the hopper car fleet dedicated to grain transportation was \$1,686 per car per year. Under the provisions of the revenue cap, the railways had been receiving \$4,329 per car per year in maintenance costs.

There are currently more than 12,000 federal government hopper cars in service in western Canada. Members can do the math: 12,000 cars, actual cost \$1,686, yet charging \$4,329. Western farmers have been overcharged to the tune of over \$30 million annually. The new government is going to allow those alleged overcharging costs to continue to go to the railways and continue to basically gouge farmers. The report I have referenced was tabled, reluctantly, by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

I would add that during the course of a meeting of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food on May 16, Mr. Sinclair Harrison, president of the FRCC, told the committee of additional

Transport Canada reports, held in confidence, that support the position the FRCC has held for a number of years. Mr. Harrison stated:

At our request, Transport Canada commissioned a company called QGI, a consulting firm specializing in car inspections, to inspect approximately 1,000 of the 12,000 federal government cars, which is a representative sample. In our opinion, the confidential report prepared by QGI confirms FRCC’s observation on the extent of programmed maintenance being deferred.

The dollar figure is in the report here and is in the hands of Transport Canada. Again, perhaps it should be released to this committee. The dollar figure put to the deficiencies in the cars, Transport Canada, and the FRCC agreed, was \$35 million worth of work that has not been performed on these cars but was paid for.

The service not provided was purchased from the railways.

• (1605)

The facts are that there was an agreement by the previous government that would have benefited the farm community. The new government came to power and broke that agreement, which is what section 43 of Bill C-11 does. The government has sold out western farmers again to the big railway companies. It has a lot to answer for.

As I said, most of the bill is not new. It has the good points brought forward by the previous government but section 43 is doing what—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Questions and comments. The hon. member for Vegreville—Wainwright.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Malpeque has more nerve than most people in the House of Commons. For him to make the complaints that he has made against our government, which has been in office only a few months, when he was a member of a government that totally destroyed the transportation system for farmers in this country and who did very little that was positive for farmers and more things that hurt farmers, for him to stand in the House and say the things that he has just said is shocking.

He was a member of Parliament when the Liberal government put through three changes that affected transportation and affected farmers in such a negative way. The first was the privatization of CN Rail. It was not the privatization issue itself that was the problem, that was the right thing to do, but at the time that was being done many of our members were at committee and they were calling for the government to bring more competition into the system and to make improvements that would actually benefit farmers. The Liberal government refused to do those things.

The second change was the new transportation act that his government brought in. The Canada Transportation Act had a few things that improved the system but when we called for changes that would bring competition into the system and which would reduce prices for western farmers, it refused to do those things. As a result, things became worse for farmers instead of better when the Liberal government had a real opportunity.

Third was the elimination of the Crow benefit. The Liberal government took \$800 million a year from western farmers and did nothing to improve the system. For the member to stand up and say the things that he said against our new government is shameful. The record of his government was atrocious and he should answer for that.

Government Orders

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that when we look at the record in terms of support for the farm community, the new government does not have a leg to stand on. It does not compare at all with the previous government in terms of the positive things that we did for the farm community.

When it had the opportunity to do something positive, such as lowering freight costs and giving the farm community more control over transportation, what does it do in Bill C-11? It inserted section 43 which basically destroys the agreement that was established by the previous government and FRCC to give them some control over the transportation sector.

I would ask the member to go back to my remarks. The fact is that the biggest payments in Canadian history to primary producers came from the previous government. Were they enough? No, they were not. However, in its new budget the government did not even meet that standard even though Agriculture Canada's own figures indicated incomes were 16% lower.

I would suggest that perhaps the member from Vegreville should go back and look at his own comments on the Crow benefit and he would find some strange and startling statements by himself in terms of that debate.

• (1610)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if we were to look in Roget's Thesaurus for undermining infrastructure and destroying tracks across this country the words Brian Mulroney would come up, but I do not want to go into the deep, dark past.

I would like to ask the member about the issue of the hopper cars. I sat on the agriculture committee when this plan was brought forward, a plan that was viable, that worked and that seemed to have support everywhere except from the Conservative members on the committee. I was quite naive at the time thinking we were all working together, but it seemed more like a conniving cabal to undermine the transfer of the hopper car fleet.

In fact, the only area where I saw the Conservatives do more to undermine a fair deal for farmers was when we were attempting to find out why the packers got away with such outrageous profits in the worst farming crisis in Canadian history. I think it would be fair to say that the Conservatives on that committee would have taken a bullet for the packers.

I am trying to understand why they have taken such a position to undermine farmers' needs, especially in western Canada. We can look at the Wheat Board as another example.

I am wondering to myself whether this is a conspiracy, ideology or myopia. I am not sure what it is that drives the Conservative agenda to undermine farmers when we are dealing with the packers, when we are dealing with the farmer coalition and when we are dealing with the need to protect the farmer operated Wheat Board.

I would like to ask the hon. member what he thinks about that.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Timmins—James Bay was a hard-working member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food when he was there and he

still remains very interested in the cause of primary producers in the country.

Simply put, he is right. What we saw in the agriculture committee a number of times when we were talking to the Farmer Rail Car Coalition, were the Conservative members on the committee, although I am not sure whether they were Alliance, Reform or CPC at that time but they are all one and the same, all from a neo-conservative party with neo-conservative ideas, being obstructionists in terms of giving farmers more power in terms of dealing with the railways.

It was a difficult issue because it was entrenched in the law that the railways did have a first right of refusal to acquire the cars and that did not expire until the summer of 2002. That moved the deadline back, although the intention of the previous government was announced to dispose of the fleet in 1996.

A simple answer to the question by the member for Timmins—James Bay is that the policies of the party opposite, the new government, are strictly based on ideology. That is what we are seeing with the new proposal it has now, which is to take marketing powers away from western producers by undermining the Canadian Wheat Board and taking the single desk authority away from the Canadian Wheat Board and doing it, if I might say, in violation of the Canadian Wheat Board Act itself.

• (1615)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier the member for Vegreville—Wainwright decided to try to denigrate the hon. member for Malpeque. I can only say that I cannot think of many members of Parliament who have worked so hard and championed the agriculture files and the plight of farmers in Canada and he should be congratulated for his service to the country.

It really is a problem for me to understand how the Conservatives could come in this way when it is their proposal for instance to basically abolish the Wheat Board and to basically permit direct sales that would benefit those who are closer to the U.S. border. It would not be representative of all farmers. Talk about hypocrisy.

I would like to ask the member if he would elaborate just a little on the importance of the Wheat Board to Canadian farmers.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, when I was parliamentary secretary to the minister of agriculture I had the opportunity to have consultations with the farm industry, based with primary producers themselves, looking at the issue of low farm incomes. There is no question that incomes are the lowest they have been in Canadian history.

While there are some who like to blame the farm community for that, our farmers are the most efficient and productive in the world, but the problem is other factors. I entitled my report, "Empowering Canadian Farmers in the Marketplace", which is what needs to happen to deal with the problem. We need to empower Canadian farmers in the marketplace.

The new government is doing two things that go in the opposite direction. First, it has taken power away from primary producers in terms of dealing with the railways through section 43 of Bill C-11 by cancelling the agreement with the FRCC.

Government Orders

Second, it is taking away the power of western grain farmers by undermining the single desk selling aspect of the Canadian Wheat Board. The minister announced a task force yesterday in which the government will try to achieve that objective without first giving farmers, the people who are under the Canadian Wheat Board, their democratic right, as stated under the act, to have a vote to determine which way they want to go.

The government is moving in the opposite direction by taking power away from farmers rather than empowering farmers as should be done.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the bill, a bill that has captivated the attention of government members who are taking copious notes and paying deep attention to the debate today. By not presenting speakers any more shows the profound lack of commitment the current government has toward a transportation strategy for this country, for the ability to actually address some of the transportation situations that are going on around our nation from coast to coast.

While most of Bill C-11 occupies what we call the administrative side of things, it is a bit of a housekeeping bill, which I am sure the government will call a progressive and aggressive form of legislation because there is nothing else going on when it comes to transportation, particularly when it comes to sustainable transportation.

I represent a riding in the northwest of British Columbia that relies very much on the rail system to move goods in and out of our communities, particularly processed goods and, increasingly, the entire nation relies on the Port of Prince Rupert. It is a terminus that is meant to be an alleviation of the pressures on the other west coast ports, in particular the Vancouver area ports which have been clogged for far too long, mostly due to government neglect and lack of planning both at the provincial legislature with the Liberals in Victoria, the previous government, and the present government seems to be taking up the charge just as slowly.

With no national public transportation strategy or planning of any kind, communities are left to struggle along as best they can attempting to alleviate the congestion in urban and, in many cases, rural communities.

I want to talk about the need for a strategy. If only the bill, in addressing some of the major aspects of transportation, had within it the opportunity to show what this so-called new government might present to Canadians as a vision for our transportation sector. Instead, it chose to allow that opportunity, like so many others to this point in this hopefully short mandate of a minority Parliament, to pass it by, the opportunity to actually invest in the places that the manufacturing sector has been calling out for, for too many years.

I would also like to talk briefly about Transport Canada and the role that it has played in my community and in communities across British Columbia in particular.

The Library of Parliament did a study for us earlier this year to assess what has happened in rail safety just in the province of British Columbia over the last number of years.

We have what some have called the diabolical sale of BC Rail to CN by the Liberals in Victoria, British Columbia, with little public input and few conditions upon that sale. We have now seen an absolutely dramatic increase in sometimes fatal accidents. These are not simply a slowdown of trains or an inability of shippers to get their product to market. Those things were going on and are going on even more so. What is even more drastic is that when a company comes in it is the responsibility of the government to hold that company and the transportation sector to account for its safety practices but the government has neglected its duties, as the previous government did. The present government is continuing that bad practice and it is putting the lives of people working on that rail at stake. We have seen a tragic loss of life in British Columbia.

We have seen increasing numbers of accidents month in and month out with ne'er a word from the transportation minister and not a murmur from the government at all about the concerns for what is happening in British Columbia along our rail system that, as I said, the entire country is now coming to rely upon, certainly if they want to ship anything to the Far East or to other countries and cannot get it through our currently congested ports. This is an absolute shirking of responsibility.

In researching the accidents, we looked at not only the negligence of the companies involved but of the Transportation Safety Board, again filled with appointments by a previous Liberal government who may or may not have had experience in the transportation sector but they all had at least one thing in common and that was a strong allegiance to a formerly misguided Liberal government.

Now we see the current government proposing appointments for this commission which speaks much to transparency but walks in the opposite direction. We have had no assurances to this point of what that process will look like.

● (1620)

Will it be an open and fair transparent process? Will the public have input? Will there be local community involvement in that commission, or will it simply be people who wrote the appropriate cheques prior to the last federal election and made good with the current bastions of power?

It is important to consider that many Canadians watching the debate will not realize that many of the goods being shipped by Canadian rail are somewhat innocuous in nature. There are parts, widgets and various things, but there is an increasing amount of hazardous materials being transported on the rail system as well. When we combine that reality with a deplorable record on safety, we start to create the perfect forum for not only ecological disaster, but also grave consequences for the communities in these regions. They rely on the ability to trust the government to do what it is meant to do, which is to protect the interests of the public, not the narrow interests of a CEO from Texas running a rail line, but the interests of the people who voted all of us into this place. To this point, the government has not shown a commitment to that.

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A rail shipment passes through my riding of Skeena once a month. It passes into a community through shipping, lands on our shores at Kitimat and travels up major waterways, which thousands of people rely on for food sustenance. Businesses absolutely depend on these river systems. These rail systems are now carrying some of the most noxious and hazardous goods we have. Has there been an environmental assessment of this process? Has anyone looked at what would happen if yet another CN car tipped off the tracks? Absolutely not. Has there been any public accounting for what it means to destroy a major tributary or to destroy a major river habitat for what could be years?

The substances contained in some of these tankers are used in the oil and gas sector in northern Alberta: condensates and various substances that are far more toxic than any oil spill could really be. Here we have a government that is hoping it can simply slap the blinkers on, as the last government did, and not account for proper protections. It holds the public trust in its hands.

Recently CN sent letters to the various volunteer, I stress the word "volunteer", fire departments up and down the rail line to notify them that if there were a major spill on this line, if a hazardous material spilled into a river or alongside a river, they were to hold the fort for a minimum of 12 hours. These fire departments survive and subsist on the many thousands of hours put together by these teams of dedicated people and the donations from our communities. After that point, CN might show up with a hazardous materials crew. It is an absolutely deplorable sense of responsibility.

This is a place where clearly, in the interests of the public, the government needs to step in and say, "We have licensed you to operate a rail system in this country, but we have not licensed you to play Russian roulette with the communities and ecosystems through which the rail systems pass".

Whether it is through a major urban centre or through the ecosystems and the environments upon which we rely, this company has decided, for the interests of profit and the maximization of that profit, to change the length of cars against Transportation Safety Board recommendations and to lower the amount of braking that these cars can do in some of the most mountainous areas of the world and the government has been silent, allowing this to go on and accidents have happened.

The trust that has been eroded has been dramatic. This goes across all partisan lines and interest groups. People no longer trust the regulators to regulate the industry because there have been accidents after accidents, spills into lakes and rivers near communities where people survive on the drinking water into which this toxic sludge is seeping. The government to this point has been quiet.

The bill does not speak to it. It does not address a need for an increased level of assurance and safety and a clamping down on those companies that refuse to listen to their workers and to the communities. They simply fire off missives every once in a while to tell volunteer fire departments that is it their responsibility, departments that do not have the training nor the equipment to handle a major hazardous spill. CN will relegate all of that responsibility to those communities. It is absolutely unacceptable by any standard and any stretch of the imagination.

• (1625)

The investigations that have come from Transport Canada have laid blame. We are still looking for answers, and I am sure the parliamentary secretary can answer this question. To our knowledge it has not levied any serious fines and reprobations for the company even when there has been loss of life and even when negligence has been proven in the maintenance of the rail system on various bridges, on the capacity of engines to break when going down these mountains. When there has been negligence at that level, what has the punishment been? It has been near to nothing.

The commission appointments that are called for in the legislation must be taken into the public realm. They must be given the clear light of day so communities can feel confident with the few people appointed, of which there are only five to my understanding. They are meant to oversee such a broad ranging mandate and must have the confidence of the public, those who use the rail system, work on the rail system or have a rail pass through their community or environment.

A second and critical point, which we are looking to the government to respond to since the last one did not, is on the required infrastructure developments, particularly for rails like the ones that pass through Skeena. After much browbeating, haggling and demanding the last government at the eleventh hour, it decided in its benevolence to fund in some small way the Port of Prince Rupert. Everyone in the industry and across the country who had anything to do with this issue had asked that the Port of Prince Rupert be given the capacity the country needs in order to ship its goods. The government finally showed up.

In showing up, the government neglected to talk about the other aspects of this deal. Overpasses need to be created. Safety regulations do not exist with regard to carrying double stacked cars through some of the most mountainous regions in the world. The government must step up to the plate. It must join with the citizens in the northwest, the people of Prince Rupert, who have staked much on this development. They want to become facilitators for the trade our country needs so much, in light of the disastrous so-called softwood lumber deal negotiated yesterday, which will rob the communities in my area of their ability to attract investment dollars to manufacture wood products any more.

We have a government that has somehow twisted itself into the perverse notion that self-imposing a tax on Canadian industry is the wise way to create wealth and generate prosperity and jobs, Canadian companies that are lawfully transporting materials across a border, which was supposedly open under a previous government's claims of free trade. If only we could have free trade with our American partners, instead of being dragged into court and being punished over and over again with illegal tariffs. At the end of the day, when we are on the edge of winning important court cases that would mean so much to the communities I represent, when victory is within our grasp, defeat is put in its place.

For the communities I represent, a major infusion of economic diversification dollars is needed if these communities will have any hope whatsoever. According to the forestry council of British Columbia, the effects of climate change ravage our forests with fires and pine beetle infestations and it is because of negligence. The previous governments and governments around the world have refused to act while some of the more progressive and noble ones have chosen to do the right thing and make something happen with climate change.

Due to that fact the communities got kicked in the head once. Now, after years of punishing duties and illegal tariffs, they are being kicked in the head again. They are being told that investment dollars have not been secured for the diversification they need. They are being told that companies wish to invest in Canada, to process some of our wood rather than just ship out raw logs and jobs to other countries. I can remember the slogan in the last election, standing up for Canada.

We are lying down in front of our American counterparts and saying, "Please don't kick us, we will kick ourselves". We'll pound away happily on ourselves for years to come. If you don't like the deal, by a simple whim and demand of your own decision decide that we are falsely supporting our exports again, you can pull out of this absolutely erroneous and silly deal".

For goodness sake, the communities of this region finally was able to cajole the previous government into supporting proper infrastructure and transportation investment. We need to move it to the second level if these communities have any hope of surviving whatsoever.

•(1630)

We saw it on the east coast when the fish stock started to collapse. There were calls from members of all parties for the government to step in after so much mismanagement and bad decision-making. The communities simply could not survive. It was just not a fair setting of the table. How can they compete? How can they survive if a government is enacting policies that go counter to the interests of the communities? They are not asking for help.

We conducted a study through the Library of Parliament last year and we asked simple questions. With respect to the federal riding of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, a very proud and hard-working riding, we asked people: Of all the tax money collected and then given back through program spending, what has the ratio been over the last decade? They were able to pull up information between 1995 and 2005. Revenue taken from Skeena was close to \$1.1 billion. The federal government has done very well off the mining, resource and forestry sectors in my riding. All transfer payments into the riding through the province was one-tenth that figure. It was 10:1 ratio of tax dollars out to tax dollars in.

The provinces are asking for fairness. Fiscal imbalance is an absolute joke with respect to the resource economies of our country. Canadians work hard, earn honest livings and pay their taxes. Industries pay their taxes, some of them better than others, but when the taxes are paid and when it is time to reinvest back into these communities, the federal government says that it has a lot of pressing needs such as a critical highway between Vancouver and Whistler

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that needs its immediate attention, or a conference centre that needs to be expanded, or a rail line somewhere else.

Communities ask for some sort of basic notion of investment, investment in the truest sense where tax dollars are collected from the public, invested into an area, returned back to the public coffers and increase economic growth. As if there had been a single economic study by the federal government before it started shovelling money into the VANOC. As if there was any concept of what a dollar was given and what dollars would be returned. The government believed the false promises of VANOC and the Gordon Campbell government as to what this thing would actually cost. So much for prudence. So much for true fiscal imbalance.

The government claims to listen to Canadians. The bill talks about noise, traffic congestion and the need to listen to Canadians. Here is an opportunity to listen to Canadians. This is an opportunity to finally get serious about a national public transportation plan, a strategy that would allow the country, as vast and broad as it is, to realize its full economic potential. This would allow those regions that have for so long contributed to the public coffers, that have so long supported the growth of our cities and enabled the folks, who push papers from one desk to another in those cities, to earn a living, the places that the hewers of wooden haulers of water, it has often been called, the places that generate wealth in the truest sense of the wealth of this nation, to receive wealth in return.

Here is an opportunity for the so-called new government to move away from such misaligned and inappropriate actions like those we saw in the former Mulroney government. We now see our current Prime Minister doing his best to emulate what it is to sell out, what it is to lay down. This is an opportunity for our country to grow, to prosper and to achieve the dreams of all Canadians.

The legislation needs a bit of work. We need some answers from the government. We ultimately need a plan and a strategy for the country and for regions like mine to prosper. It needs to come from this Parliament.

•(1635)

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member and I thought about my own constituency in north eastern Alberta. Somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$12 billion comes out of that area per year in taxes. I would like very much to bring that \$12 billion back to my constituency for infrastructure and transportation in the area.

We are one country and we must, as a country, bring ourselves together to support other areas that are not as well equipped as far as resources and other interests such as manufacturing et cetera are concerned. We are one country and we have to support each other. The argument that the member used was interesting, but we have to come to more logical conclusions. We have to support each other.

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I did have the opportunity as parliamentary secretary to travel in the Lower Mainland. In fact, I put some 3,000 kilometres on my vehicle travelling, looking at railroad crossings, highways, infrastructure and transportation initiatives taking place in that area. There is a need for some huge investment in the area, both from the province and we will see from the federal government. This government has already committed major dollars to the area in the way of the Pacific Gateway initiatives.

I would like to bring to the member's attention the fact that a report is being done by myself for the minister as far as what is taking place in that area and throughout Alberta. The minister and the government are very interested in having someone from the government on the ground looking at what is taking place, solving the problems and issues for Canadians. Our agenda is to solve the issues of Canadians.

I know the member expects miracles, as most Canadians do after 13 years of neglect by the Liberal government, but we have been sitting in the House for five months as government. I would ask the member to be patient and wait for us to do the job for Canadians in the best interests of Canadians.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, patience is indeed a virtue. It is a challenge only in the respect that this government now has been claiming to have been a government in waiting for some number of years.

When we take a quick gander over at the climate change file, I can remember standing in this place and the former environment critic for the Conservative Party was very knowledgeable on the issue. I asked him if he had a climate change plan ready. Of course he did. His party was the government in waiting.

The Conservatives shifted into government by the narrowest of margins and lo and behold there is no climate change plan whatsoever. It was a ruse, a farce. It was a misleading notion. It was a notion that in fact the government in waiting was a little more interested in those drive by smears that we watch back and forth and now the roles are reversed. It is quite amusing I am sure for some Canadians, mostly disappointing to watch, who were looking for earnest and honest debate. Patience is required, but we do not have a lot of it. We need the investment dollars now.

The Pacific Gateway is an excellent example. The parliamentary secretary referred to this \$560 million or some figure that is meant to be rolled out. We have asked for the commission or the committee or whatever form it takes that will be appointed by the government to be an open and public transparent process to allow committee members to be placed on that panel to decide where all of this money is going to be spent, to not be partisan, to not be concentrated in Vancouver, and to have a diversity of views.

We have yet to hear that commitment from the government that there will be anyone from the rural sectors and anyone from even outside the Lower Mainland. That type of accountability and transparency would show walking the talk.

• (1640)

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the official opposition critic for transport it is enlightening to hear an evolving NDP position on the bill.

I would like to go back to a theme the member raised and put a couple of questions to him. He did raise the question of transparency and accountability and then really took it quite hard to the government in terms of its accountability and appointments process. I have a hard time reconciling those comments with the activities over the past six months of his colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, who has been in large part the stalking horse and the apologist for this government on its Bill C-2, the federal accountability act.

I would like to remind the member about some of the wonderful appointments taken on by the previous government in the past, including the appointment, for example, of Stephen Lewis, for whom we fought tooth and nail to get appointed as Under-Secretary-General to the United Nations. There was the appointment of Ed Broadbent for seven years as the President and CEO of Rights and Democracy in Montreal and, of course, my very good friend Mike Harcourt, the former NDP premier of B.C. who was appointed on three separate occasions by the Liberal government to take on some very important public policy work.

My question for the member, now that he has raised a number of issues which I am looking to discern through to find out how we can improve the bill, is the environmental question. There is no greenhouse gas reference in this bill whatsoever. This is at a time when the government purportedly is in the process of devising some sort of new environmental plan or strategy. I guess it will go along with the theme of a new government, a new environmental policy. I am not sure where it is. It has been seven months, to correct the record. How does the member take the fact that under Bill C-11 there are no environmental measures, no greenhouse gas references and, clearly, no effort to deal with the environmental and climate change challenge?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is a former member of the environment committee who worked very hard in the previous government to see an actual climate change plan come to fruition with hard targets, auto emission standards and various things that were unfortunately not delivered.

Quickly, on the appointments process, I can also recall bringing before the committee one of the failed Liberal candidates who was appointed to the National Round Table on the Economy and the Environment. I entered the committee meeting with an open mind, asking the appointee some questions about the environment.

As it went round the table and question after question was simply not answered or there was no knowledge of the issue, this person who was meant to be taking over such a critical educational and core institution as the national round table was not up to the task.

We brought the motion back to the House that this person might not yet be appropriate for this and that the government should go out and find another one. The motion passed. The government ignored the will of the House stunningly.

In terms of greenhouse gases and this government's intentions, it would not know greenhouse gases if it was suffocating on them. There is no intention at the core and the fabric of this party to actually address climate change.

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In a couple of weeks we will see a so-called green plan that will try to blur the issue. The government will try to confuse Canadians about what is actually happening with respect to climate change. The proof is in the pudding, if there is any true determination to aggressively go after a real revision of our economy, we could take the energy sector. We have a government that purports to roll out a green plan in two weeks, but still coughs over \$1.5 billion or more per year to the oil and gas sector in the tar sands to retrieve more.

The most profitable companies in the country are receiving government largesse. They are receiving money from the taxpayers of Ontario, Quebec and Prince Edward Island. When all these people buy a candy bar, they are helping out EnCana make a little more profit. It is absolutely bizarre and hypocrisy to a profound level.

If the government wishes to do something about the environment, then the economy must be transformed. In order to do that the government simply cannot keep subsidizing the practices of the past.

• (1645)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have had the great opportunity to travel from one end of this country many, many times in my previous career. When one travels across the length of Canada, one realizes how spread out we are, how small our populations are, and how vast the distances are between them.

It has always struck me as absolutely bizarre that we do not have a national transportation strategy. On top of that, we have seen undermining of transportation policies. This is not strictly a partisan issue. The previous Liberal government undermined its commitments to regional airports causing problems for communities across this country.

When the Conservative government came into Ontario, it cut norOntair on the principle that the private sector could step up and fill the gaps that would allow for proper transportation into isolated regions. Nothing filled that gap. People are not being served.

We see more and more pressure on our highways. I live on highway 11 in northern Ontario which is the national transportation corridor. When anyone travels from Europe and sees this two-lane piece of moose pasture and they are told that is the Trans-Canada Highway, two lanes with rock cuts on either side and little crosses all along the way, that is the extent of our national corridor.

I would like to ask the hon. member why he thinks, in a country as vast as ours, we have not committed to infrastructure to maintain the ability to transport not just goods but people across this country?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Timmins speaks to the true heart of these decisions that get made. Time and time again when there are dollars to be spent, certainly it has been for no lack of money over the last decade, this country has increasingly been doing better and better. We have been in a boom for some time. The government had all sorts of dispensation to spend money.

The current government is looking at another surplus that by every news report seems to be growing. So in this overtaxed world, there is an opportunity to spend money and invest and truly invest. For the price of one of those more elaborate pieces of art at the Toronto International Airport that somehow was sloughed onto the taxpayers, decided by a previous government costing some billion dollars or

more at this airport, we could have had a thousand foot extension on a runway in northwestern British Columbia to allow a \$500 million mine to go ahead, producing all sorts of wealth not just for the region but for the entire country.

Instead, for political partisan reasons of these various committees and commissions that get appointed, decisions get made and money gets put into all sorts of silly little pet projects rather than where it is really needed in our infrastructure to make this country stronger.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak at second reading of Bill C-11. This bill is about 60 pages long and is one of those bills that we cannot read in isolation. We have to have the existing legislation there so we can follow the amendments. Unless the House is prepared to give me an extension of about two hours, I am not going to address the whole bill. I will address certain aspects of it.

We are talking about the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act. There are certainly many provisions of interest in this bill and they have been debated and discussed by hon. members through this debate, but I would like to look at a couple in particular.

Bill C-11 proposes that the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities be allowed to regulate the advertised pricing of airfare. This is an issue which is of great interest to Canadians, considering the recent history and volatility within the airline industry. It remains to be heard from the minister what his specific intentions are with regard to future airfare advertising regulations.

The whole question of regulations is kind of interesting to note for all hon. members. When we debate bills and vote at the various stages, we do so without the regulations, which do not come until after the legislation is passed, has gone through the Senate, received royal assent and is proclaimed. Then we get the regulations. There always has been this issue about whether or not there is this creeping problem where we have executive-made law, where the cabinet is enhancing what the insinuation of the legislation is through the regulations. It is the reason why we have the scrutiny of regulations committee, a joint Commons-Senate committee, to look at those regulations as they come through and to ensure that the regulations are authorized by the legislation.

I thought I would put that in because it is a very important aspect as it relates to this bill and it is incumbent upon the committee to do this. I am sure we will see this bill go to committee for review. We have to ensure that we get an indication from the government, from the minister, about the intent. What is the intent here? How can we, from an informed point of view, make decisions with regard to appropriate amendments to the legislation, if necessary?

The bill itself provides hints but no guarantees, and that is the issue. That is the problem with the regulations. Subsection 86.1(1) states:

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The Agency may, on the recommendation of the Minister, make regulations respecting advertising in all media, including on the Internet, of prices for air services within, or originating in, Canada.

Subsection 86.1(2) of the same clause suggests that the minister may require that prices should include all costs to the carrier and all charges, but it does so without limiting the generality of the minister's power to regulate under subsection 86.1(1). Again it is this uncertainty, as a consequence of having the details, and the devil always is in the details with regard to regulations.

Members may recall that the issue of airfare pricing attracted a great deal of attention a few years ago when airport improvement fees and security charges became prevalent throughout the airline industry. At that time, the Liberal government recognized that protecting consumers was of utmost importance. Much of the materials we find in Bill C-11 are the provisions of the amendments to the Canada Transportation Act, which have been presented in bills in prior Parliaments, but which did not proceed through the full legislative process due to the call of an election.

The provisions that are in question today were inherited from the previous legislation. There are too many situations right now, quite frankly, and what we are trying to address is that every day Canadians are faced with misleading and simply false information. That is the reality that we are faced with when we are trying to decide, as consumers, how to spend our hard-earned dollars.

The wide range of fees and taxes on airfare can be particularly confounding as well. Charges vary depending on which airport one is in, the airport of origin and the destination, then based on whether it is domestic or international. Even then, in some cases when a flight connects through certain particular airports rather than others, there are other complications, so the comparabilities from airline to airline are in some difficulty too.

• (1650)

Then, of course, we cannot forget the taxes. When all the charges, fees and taxes are summed up, the actual price of an airline ticket can be substantially above the base price, which is usually the advertised price. Let me repeat that. The base price, without all those add-ons, is the one that usually appears in the advertising. The consumers really get a surprise when they see the add-ons.

The right to set regulations could simplify these charges into a single tax-inclusive number, which when advertised by one airline would lend itself to comparison with other advertisements by other airlines. It is possible to take for granted the importance of advertising in our society. Market economies depend on competition. The competition itself depends on the ability of purchasers, in this case the Canadian consumers buying airline tickets, to distinguish between prices in a meaningful way.

I would go so far as to say that the efficiency cannot be properly encouraged in a market without clear pricing. That is the issue. We do not really have clear pricing, at least in the eyes of the consumer.

We must see prices clearly in order to choose based on price. Only when we choose based on price do we encourage businesses to offer a better deal. This is competition. That is the purpose of healthy competition. It is to ensure that there is fair pricing. Competitive pricing means that there is a win-win.

Clearly we are supportive of the principle of price advertising clarity. However, we do not know precisely what kind of price advertising regulations the minister intends to undertake. This is a problem and it is something that I encourage the committee to address exhaustively when it looks at this legislation.

Specific types of regulation can certainly have some unintended effects as well. Forcing airlines to disclose a certain amount of information in their advertising may in fact interfere with the message in unproductive ways or confuse the consumer. If we go a little too far we may find that people do not focus in on exactly the key elements of the pricing mechanism.

We have all seen the commercials for automobiles, which contain a great deal of detail. That is an example of listing all these little things. In fact, many Canadians would argue that they contain too much detail to be of much use. Calling on the airlines to display a similar level of detail may in fact not be where we want to go. I think this is another issue that the committee should address very carefully.

As we know, industries are thoroughly interconnected. I am not just talking about the airline industry. When we think about it, even the advertising industry is obviously affected. Depending on what our requirements are, certain modes of advertising are more desirable, more productive or effective than others, so that depending on what we do in this legislation may have some consequential impacts on other industries. We have to ask ourselves whether or not new regulations will cause one type of media to take a greater share of advertising dollars than another type. It could have any number of effects, all of which we can only speculate about.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities began his remarks by outlining some details. We will be required to do our jobs, but full disclosure in any event is certainly essential. We do not know what regulations the minister will be eventually bringing forward. It is going to be difficult for us to assess some of these finer points in terms of the impacts on the industry and related industries or linked industries.

This brings me to another important point. As parliamentarians, we obviously have a duty to consider legislation very carefully, but the government is understandably anxious to move forward with certain priorities. This is one that we cannot rush. This is one that we have to be very careful of. We know it has taken some time to get to this point yet again. When we start the House every day we say prayers and one of our pleas is that we make "good laws and wise decisions". That is always the case. Certainly we want to make sure that Bill C-11 ultimately makes the necessary amendments to make the Canada Transportation Act a better law.

• (1655)

Whether the bill is the size of Bill C-2, the accountability bill, which is five times the size of a normal piece of legislation, or whether it is like Bill C-3 on international tunnels and bridges, a very few pages, we cannot forget that when we give a bill our approval it eventually becomes law, with consequential effects for Canadians, whether we have had the foresight to see them.

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This bill in particular has some potential pitfalls that are going to call on those responsible for scrutinizing the bill at committee to do their very best, to engage the best possible witnesses, to try to foresee, to try to identify some of those pitfalls and to absolutely ensure that the legislation does not have unintended consequences.

In terms of Bill C-11, we are asking the government and the minister in particular to take the time to properly address the many questions that flow from the amendments it proposes. The Minister of Transport spoke about another provision in Bill C-11 that is of interest. He indicated that he intends to amend the Canada Transportation Act to create a mediation process for disputes concerning federal transportation matters that fall within the jurisdiction of the Canadian Transportation Agency.

This is very interesting. It is an evolution that was previously found in Bill C-44 in a prior Parliament. Proposed subsection 36.1(1) would require a unanimous agreement of the parties in order to proceed, but in those circumstances it would seem to be a very useful process.

Any time that we can provide for alternatives to litigation in the area of transport, we do a favour to the parties who are looking for win-win solutions. We would like to explore that as fully as possible as well. The process suggests a quicker timeline and would inevitably be cheaper than lawsuits. That usually is the case. Many of our legal friends in the chamber certainly remind us of that from time to time, although for the life of me it really makes me think of the softwood deal and some of the dynamics that have occurred there.

To go back to this bill, in February 2004 CTA chairwoman Marian Robson wrote that 95% of matters that had been referred to mediation by the agency were resolved to mutual satisfaction. We can see that the history is very good in this regard.

Entities that fall under the domain of the Canadian Transportation Agency are more than likely parties that have ongoing contractual relationships. By its very nature transportation infrastructure is not particularly fluid and there may not be many possible alternative commercial relationships. Quick, amicable resolutions free up resources and ultimately lead to better prices and better services for Canadians.

My colleagues and I are supportive of these measures and commend the minister for bringing back these elements of amendments from previous Liberal bills.

Finally, I would like to dwell very briefly on the issue of corporate governance. It is a subject matter that has attracted quite a bit of attention these days and the CTA is a very important agency. The agency is responsible for balancing divergent interests in a fair and open manner. It licenses air and rail carriers and resolves complaints between shippers and railways regarding rates and service. It approves proposed construction of railway lines. It even participates in international bilateral negotiations and administers bilateral agreements.

Eyebrows were raised in the House when the minister asserted that changes to the makeup of the Canadian Transportation Agency will provide for cost savings. I think people's eyebrows usually go up when governments say they are going to save—it is almost like

“show me”—but these are initiatives through which, if they are sound in terms of their operational impact, that is possible, and we certainly would like to see that.

It appears that the current board made up of seven part time members will be replaced by a board of five members in the full time employ of the CTA. These five members would be located here in the national capital region. The minister talks about efficiency of centralization, noting that more than one member must sign off on decisions the agency takes, and I would like to hear from the minister about how the agency will do its job better.

● (1700)

As we know, the bill is the third attempt to bring forward legislation on these particular matters. Let me say that Bill C-11 is made up of many, many amendments, some 60 pages of them. It was very difficult. I compliment all hon. members who took the opportunity to do the necessary work, the due diligence, to review the legislation so they could bring an informed debate to the House at second reading and so we could move the bill on through the legislative process with our eyes wide open with regard to the key elements that are of concern to parliamentarians and to consumers and the service providers as well.

An important part of our review was the statutory review of the Canada Transportation Act. I was very interested to hear the Minister of Transport, standing in his place earlier, mention that he would be tabling further amendments addressing the subject of rail shipping disputes. Certainly we have had a great deal of discussion on that. I know that the committee is going to be very cognizant of the concerns raised by all hon. members.

He talked further of consultations that are now complete and new conclusions that the Conservative minority government has drawn. I should note that Bill C-11 requires another statutory review of the Canada Transportation Act, something that makes a lot of sense given its primacy in an area, namely transportation, that is of broad importance to Canada and certainly to all Canadians.

As my hon. colleague from Ottawa South, the opposition critic for transport, has stated, we are looking forward to seeing the bill examined and revised as necessary at the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

● (1705)

Hon. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we all fully recognize that all of us on this side of the House are very interested in transportation, because transportation is the keystone of our economy. We certainly need changes in terms of the matters that the bill brings forward, but we also have to be concerned about the reviews, which apparently will be a report to Parliament once every three years and, second, a complete review of this change within the transportation system by a commissioner after an eight year period.

Government Orders

In Atlantic Canada, transportation is very, very important. I know that the minister responsible for transportation has to be concerned about some of the factors that have been affecting transportation, especially with the ferry between Digby, Nova Scotia and Saint John, New Brunswick. For those living there and doing business and wanting to travel to western Nova Scotia, that ferry has operated for many, many years. In fact, it gives our industries and our fishery groups in western Nova Scotia an opportunity to get their goods to the Boston market with efficiency and with the good transportation that people in the New England states would require. I hope we will look at that when this bill gets to committee.

As the previous speaker has indicated, we have to be concerned about air safety and the selling of air tickets and the good air traffic that we need for this country, but railways are important. I believe it is section 53 that talks about relationships with provincial railway companies. I would hope that if the minister is to regulate and bring forward regulations dealing with his connections with our provincial railway companies, the federal standards and the federal methods will be applied to the particular arrangements that might be made.

We want to see good legislation. We will work in committee to improve it. Hopefully, those users of our transportation sectors, those who may complain about being captive shippers or others who are concerned about matters relating to their industry, their region, their city or their province, will make their requests to appear to the committee. I know the committee will work in good faith to make sure that Bill C-11 reflects a high standard of legal documents and will provide a good transportation system to all Canadians.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Miramichi for highlighting yet again for the House and for Canadians the integration of our transportation network and the vital importance in terms of so many areas, whether it be efficient operations or safe operations. We have talked about the transportation of dangerous goods. The member for Malpeque did a wonderful job in laying out the issue of our wheat system, the hopper cars, the transfers and some of the other issues. The member for Miramichi kind of wrapped all this together.

We are talking about an integrated transportation system which is very vital to Canada. It is important that the committee be cognizant of the excellent summary he has made of the points to keep in mind as we move through the legislative process and hear from witnesses to make sure that we make the best possible laws for Canadians.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. colleague about the need to have a transportation vision. Rail is part of that, but so are air and roads.

I am particularly concerned about the fact that it was the Liberal government that decided to walk away from regional airports across this country, leaving many regions to scramble. After the SARS outbreak and the downturn in the economy, many carrier services particularly in northern Ontario stopped servicing smaller airports and they were no longer eligible for any kind of support.

I use the example of the Earlton Airport in Armstrong township, which is a class one facility. It is central in a region where there is a very large and growing mining exploration boom happening, but it needs an airport. Without an airport in that region, development will not happen. That airport is left on its own.

We have been working to find a new carrier, but the federal government under the Liberals said that it had no interest in maintaining these pieces of vital infrastructure. To me it is the same as walking away from the train system, saying that we are not going to maintain the trains or the roads.

How do we develop an economy that is vital for the rural regions of the north if we do not have a federal presence in areas that have been identified? I am not talking about every little puddle jump along the way, but areas where we can clearly identify the importance of maintaining some sort of regional transportation infrastructure. The government walked away on those decisions and the community simply cannot make up for the loss.

If we are going to maintain a country with an economy that is growing, particularly in the rural north, we need a transportation vision and we need the federal government at the table. I would ask the member if he does not believe at this time that the federal government should look again at that decision to walk away from regional airports in light of what has been discussed here today and maybe put forward plans to start rebuilding our federal commitments on regional development in transportation.

• (1710)

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I totally agree with the member. I understand and we all understand what happened in terms of the airline industry and the impact, some of the tragedies and the failures that have occurred within the airline industry. They negatively impacted on regional airports.

In Canada not only is the health care system a common bond of association but the transportation network links Canadians. When things happen such as what happened with Earlton Airport, we understand that is a negative in terms of linking Canadians together.

I hope the member will bring that same enthusiasm to the debate when we talk about Bill C-20, which the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities has on the order paper. If he thinks that the impact on regional airports in the recent past has been bad, I would encourage the member to have a close look at Bill C-20 to see the further serious damage that Bill C-20 is going to do to regional airports. We look forward to working with the NDP to make absolutely sure that Bill C-20 is a better piece of legislation than is being proposed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

I want to point out at the outset that the Bloc Québécois supports this bill in principle. Naturally, more in-depth consideration is advisable in order to grasp all aspects of the bill. Amendments will likely be necessary to improve it. But on the whole, as I said, the Bloc Québécois supports it in principle.

I want to make clear that my remarks will focus exclusively on the part of this bill dealing with railway noise, specifically clause 29. As we all know, the racket made by trains is a widespread problem. My riding of Drummond is unfortunately faced with such a problem.

Government Orders

Located close to Drummondville, the community of Saint-Germain de Grantham in particular is seriously affected throughout its jurisdiction. This is a rural community of nearly 4,000, with five railway crossings. The railway goes through it over a stretch of 8.5 kilometres, running alongside hundreds of homes.

Train whistles can be heard from one end of Saint-Germain de Grantham to the other at all hours of the day and night. There are engine noises, bells, squealing brakes, vibrations, smells, and the sounds of iron hitting iron. One can easily imagine what residents of that municipality must put up with. And because Saint-Germain de Grantham is in the middle of a boom, the problem is only getting worse. More and more residents are forced to endure this noise pollution.

Everyone recognizes that rail traffic is a necessity and that it contributed to the development of several municipalities. Everyone also acknowledges that rail safety is very important. However, the rights of those residents affected cannot be ignored. Solutions to this noise problem exist and must be brought forward. The quality of life of citizens must be considered in this debate. The interests of rail companies and the pursuit of economic development cannot be the only acceptable arguments. We cannot ask the people of Saint-Germain de Grantham, who are my main concern here, to pay such a high price.

What power do they have against the rail companies? The power to discuss and negotiate, but that may not be enough. When the power to make decisions lies only with the other party, abuses can occur.

Let us review how Saint-Germain de Grantham has attempted to deal with this problem.

In 1993, residents wrote to CN to complain about the noise. They received no response.

In 1994, the municipality requested that train whistling be eliminated, at least at night. In its response, CN said that each level crossing would have to be inspected.

In 1996, three level crossings were inspected, and it was found that constant warning time devices and barriers would have to be installed.

In 1997, these devices were installed at two level crossings.

In 1999, the municipality asked me to intervene on its behalf to have the devices installed on the third level crossing. The minister responsible at the time said that even though the crossing was near Saint-Germain's urban area, it was not considered a priority. At the same time, CN demanded a \$2,000 dollar report on the possibility of enacting a regulation to eliminate train whistling.

Work was done on the third level crossing a few years later.

In 2004, at the municipality's request, I wrote to CN asking what more Saint-Germain de Grantham had to do to put a stop to train whistling within municipal boundaries. A stakeholder meeting was arranged, and it turned out that improvements would have to be made to yet another level crossing to fulfill the requirements.

Steps were taken to get this done, but funding was delayed and still has not come through.

● (1715)

So, the municipality is waiting. In the meantime, the train is whistling away, and the people are suffering.

In fact, early in 2006, a citizen wrote the city council, reminding it that the people of Saint-Germain de Grantham have been asking for 13 years that trains stop whistling. We can only sympathize with their frustration and despair. "When can we hope to finally be free of noise pollution from trains when we sleep?", she asked the council.

In bringing up such representations, we realize that there really is not much the municipality of Saint-Germain de Grantham and its residents can do. What can one do against a giant like the CN?

They are also dependent on government decisions about grants, because this kind of work is very expensive. At the same time, it is important to point out that all this work is designed to enhance public safety, thus improving the railways' quality of service. Following the same logic, this work also has to help ensure that the quality of life of our fellow citizens is respected.

These people need a mechanism through which they can make themselves heard. They need a mechanism to increase their strength and add weight to their legitimate demands.

The provision contained in Bill C-11 which deals with railway noise is giving these people some hope. Clause 29 of the bill gives the Canada Transportation Agency the authority to investigate complaints about unreasonable noise, with a view to forcing railway companies to make changes to prevent unreasonable noise.

This clause gives the Canada Transportation Agency jurisdiction to weigh the need to allow railway companies to operate against the right of those living alongside railroads to quiet enjoyment. The agency will therefore be able to force rail transportation companies to make changes to limit the noise associated with their operations.

The municipality of Saint-Germain de Grantham has carried out all the work requested over the years. Major changes have been ordered over the past 13 years. After the work was completed, more was ordered.

These men and women are right to be angry today. They want their questions answered. This little game of delays and grant requests has to stop. The time has come to show them some respect. I hope that Bill C-11 will make that possible.

They have been patient enough. They have paid enough.

In 2005, l'Union des municipalités du Québec prepared a brief regarding Bill C-44, which was also introduced to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act.

The Union claimed that:

Railway companies under federal jurisdiction are not subject to any legislation governing damage caused by their activities. They are like aliens in our regions. This situation was confirmed in a December 2000 decision made by the Federal Court of Canada in Oakville, Ontario, which deprived the Canada Transportation Agency (CTA) of its power to make decisions concerning irritants, such as the noise arising from railway activities.

Private Members' Business

The Union des municipalités du Québec also pointed out the fact that a number of municipalities have failed to reach agreement with the railway companies and Transport Canada on the requirements for a no-whistle by-law. In this respect, the UMQ recommends that the CTA be given authority to examine any request to prohibit the use of train whistles within the limits of a municipality in the event that the municipality, railway company and Transport Canada fail to reach agreement concerning the requirements and conditions of a no-whistle by-law.

I wish to conclude by indicating that I am in favour of the principle of Bill C-11 as it will give citizens of Quebec and Canada some power in dealing with railway companies.

• (1720)

I am in favour of this bill because I want the citizens of Saint-Germain de Grantham, after 13 years of negotiating, searching for solutions and hard work, to be heard and to have their rights acknowledged.

I believe that it is our duty as parliamentarians to provide such legislation. It is our responsibility to meet the legitimate expectations of the residents in our ridings.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from the Bloc Québécois for her comments on Bill C-11.

I would like to ask her a specific question. The minority government has been saying for some months now—in fact, since it was elected—that it intends to present a new environmental plan for Canadians and to share this new approach. Apparently this is “Canada's New Government,” as we now see on the Internet.

The government has also cut funding for the Pacific Gateway in western Canada. The minority government is in the process of compromising our relations with China. It has come to a point where even the Ambassador of China refuses to attend official meetings with the government.

Could the hon. member help us understand the following? How can the government talk about new environmental strategies when there is no reference in the bill to greenhouse gases, no reference to an environmental strategy and no reference to the Kyoto protocol except in the preamble of the bill, which mentions the word “environment” just once?

Yesterday we heard the Minister of Transport tell Canadians that apparently Bill C-11 would have a rather positive impact on protecting the environment. I believe he was referring to the reduction of greenhouse gases.

Could the hon. member help us understand how it is possible for us, as parliamentarians, to reconcile what the government is saying with how the bill is currently worded?

• (1725)

Ms. Pauline Picard: Mr. Speaker, if my Liberal colleague had asked me whether this bill is enough, I would have answered obviously that the bill is not perfect.

I said that we supported the bill in principle. In my speech, I focused on the important issue affecting my constituents: the noise that trains make in my riding. Obviously, the bill is not perfect.

For example, the bill does not limit nuisances other than noise. We feel that the agency that will be created to resolve disputes related to complaints has enough credibility to be given broader jurisdiction and handle complaints about oil, gasoline and vibrations. I also think that the noise from train whistles, along with all the other noises I mentioned earlier, constitute what is called noise pollution.

I hope that the agency that the government wants to set up at the Transportation Agency will have teeth so that it can resolve these disputes.

[English]

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, air travel has been of great interest to many of our constituents across the country because it is something many Canadians engage in quite frequently and security is very important.

I would like to ask the hon. member about the future of the Air Travel Complaints Commission. These are trying times and I know it has been very difficult for the airline industry and for individuals to work in the post-9/11 era but it has also been difficult for travellers at times. They have had complaints, sometimes justified and sometimes not, but it is very important that these complaints be answered in an effective way and that an oversight mechanism that works in a functional way be there for them.

We know that changes will be taking place with respect to the Air Traffic Complaints Commission. Would the hon. member edify for us whether these changes will be useful or not and offer solutions to ensure this commission works well?

[Translation]

Ms. Pauline Picard: Mr. Speaker, I repeat what I said to my colleague who asked me a question earlier.

This bill is not perfect. Certainly we will still have to discuss some things. It will be sent to committee. Then it will be up to us to improve it, to make amendments and to put it to a vote in the House.

Obviously I hope that it will be as perfect as possible as regards both air and rail security.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House resumed from September 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-293, An Act respecting the provision of development assistance abroad, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-293 under private members' business.

[Translation]

Call in the members.

• (1800)

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

(Division No. 34)

YEAS

Members

Alhabra	Angus
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Barbot
Bélanger	Bell (Vancouver Island North)
Bell (North Vancouver)	Bellavance
Bennett	Bevilacqua
Bevington	Bigras
Black	Blaikie
Blais	Bonin
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brown (Oakville)	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brunelle	Byrne
Canman (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Cardin	Carrier
Chan	Chow
Christopherson	Coderre
Comartin	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cuzner	D'Amours
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Devolin
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dosanjh	Duceppe
Easter	Epp
Eyking	Faïlle
Gagnon	Gaudet
Godfrey	Godin
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Graham
Grewal	Guay
Guimond	Holland
Hubbard	Jennings
Julian	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keeper
Kotto	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laforest	Laframboise
Lapierre	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Loubier
Lunney	Lussier
MacAulay	Malhi
Malo	Maloney
Manning	Mark
Marleau	Marston
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Mayes
McCallum	McDonough
McGuinty	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McTeague
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Merasty	Minna
Mourani	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Nadeau
Nash	Neville
Ouellet	Owen
Pacetti	Patry
Perron	Peterson
Picard	Plamondon
Priddy	Ratansi
Redman	Robillard
Rota	Roy
Russell	Savage
Savoie	Scarpaleggia
Sgro	Siksay

Silva	Simard
St-Cyr	St-Hilaire
St. Amand	St. Denis
Steckle	Stoffer
Stronach	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Thompson (Wild Rose)	
Tonks	Valley
Vincent	Wappel
Wasylycia-Leis	Watson
Wilfert	Wilson
Zed— 159	

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Allen
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Baird	Batters
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Boucher
Breitkreuz	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casey	Casson
Chong	Clement
Cummins	Davidson
Day	Del Mastro
Doyle	Dykstra
Emerson	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gourde	Guergis
Hanger	Harris
Harvey	Hawn
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Hinton
Jaffer	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Komarnicki
Lake	Lauzon
Lemieux	Lukiwski
Lunn	MacKenzie
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Pallister
Paradis	Petit
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Richardson
Ritz	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shiplay
Skelton	Smith
Solberg	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Tilson
Toews	Trost
Turner	Tweed
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Yelich— 108

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Consequently, this bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Speaker's Ruling

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

* * *

CANADA LABOUR CODE

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on June 6, 2006 by the hon. member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean in relation to the need for a royal recommendation for Bill C-257, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers).

I would like to thank the hon. member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean for his very thorough presentation, as well as the hon. member for Vancouver East and the hon. government House leader for their contributions on this point. The Chair appreciates greatly the seriousness with which they have approached this matter.

The central issue relates to clause 2 of the bill, which would insert new provisions in section 94(2.1) of the Canada Labour Code allowing the minister to designate investigators who would have the power to verify and report on whether replacement workers were being employed during a strike or lockout.

The key question is whether the designation of these investigators constitutes an authorization for new spending for a distinct purpose. As part of its review of the bill in attempting to find an answer to this question, it is helpful for the Chair to determine whether new functions are being contemplated or whether the functions proposed are already foreseen as being part of the usual workload of existing personnel.

With regard to Bill C-257, the Chair has taken note of the points raised by the hon. members for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean and Vancouver East, namely that other sections of the Canada Labour Code contain provisions for inspectors, albeit not for investigators. Sections 248 to 251 describe the duties of inspectors who may inquire into employment in any industrial establishment, and in particular, matters relating to wages, hours of work, or conditions of employment.

• (1805)

[English]

Do the new provisions proposed in Bill C-257 alter the statutory functions of inspectors so significantly as to require a royal recommendation? The hon. members for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean and for Vancouver East made arguments to the contrary and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform did not contest those submissions.

[Translation]

Having heard arguments and reviewed the provisions of the parent act that describe the duties of inspectors, the Chair is prepared to conclude that the provisions in Bill C-257 which relate to the designation of investigators by the minister do not constitute an authorization for new spending for a distinct purpose. The functions which are already being performed by inspectors would appear to be reasonably similar to the functions envisaged by Bill C-257.

Therefore, I am prepared to conclude that Bill C-257—in its present form—may continue to be considered by the House of Commons without the need for a royal recommendation.

[English]

As the hon. member for Vancouver East has rightly pointed out, Bill C-295, standing in the name of the hon. member for Vancouver Island North, is very similar in nature to Bill C-257 and indeed contains provisions that are identical, particularly with regard to the work to be performed by investigators.

Accordingly, I am prepared to indicate to the House immediately that Bill C-295 does not require a royal recommendation.

[Translation]

As members can appreciate, the determination as to what legislative initiatives require a royal recommendation can be a highly complex exercise. At the outset, the Chair wishes to dispel any notion that there is one set of rules on the royal recommendation for majority government situations and another for minority government situations. The preoccupations of the Chair concerning the royal recommendation may seem to be new, but are well grounded in constitutional principles and will continue to exist regardless of the composition of the House.

[English]

As I indicated in my statement to the House on May 31, 2006, the reforms adopted in 2003, the coming into force of which has coincided with the minority situation that has since prevailed, have resulted in more private member's bills being votable, thereby increasing the number of bills with the potential to reach the third reading stage.

In addition, as members have only one opportunity to sponsor an item over the course of a Parliament, the Chair has sought to provide members with ample opportunity to address possible procedural issues in relation to their bills. For these reasons, a number of new practices have been instituted.

• (1810)

[Translation]

Where it seems likely that a bill may need a royal recommendation, the member who has requested to have it drafted will be informed of that fact by the legislative counsel responsible for drafting the bill. A table officer will also send a letter to advise the member that the bill may require a royal recommendation.

The Chair relies on our clerks and on our legislative counsel to make a first determination on what may appear to infringe on this financial initiative of the Crown. Of course, our clerks and legislative counsel are wise in these matters but they are not omniscient. That is why the Chair alerts members when, *prima facie*, a provision appears to contain a new authority to spend. Members are then expected to rise and explain precisely what these initiatives entail, so that a final judgment may be made.

Private Members' Business

[English]

To reiterate what I indicated on May 31, I would welcome any suggestions from the House, the House leaders or the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, on how to improve this process related to the royal recommendation.

[Translation]

In the meantime, to conclude, Bill C-257, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers), and Bill C-295 which has the same title, may proceed as they stand, neither requiring a royal recommendation.

Once again, I thank all hon. members for their patience in dealing with this complicated issue.

[English]

It being 6:12 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

HERITAGE HUNTING, TRAPPING AND FISHING PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC) moved that Bill C-222, An Act to recognize and protect Canada's hunting, trapping and fishing heritage, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a great honour to rise this evening to speak to Bill C-222. There is no question that this is a heritage bill. Bill C-222 is an act to recognize and protect Canada's hunting, trapping and fishing heritage. I will be brief so that we can hear from as many members of the House as possible.

Canada prides itself on Canadian heritage. We are proud of our culture, our history and our roots. From a historical perspective, hunting and fishing have always been part of aboriginal life in Canada, going back to before the arrival of the European settlers. This right is protected in the Constitution of Canada. In no way does Bill C-222 affect their charter rights.

The first settlers relied on hunting, fishing and trapping for their survival. For over 300 years since their arrival Canadians have enjoyed the practice of hunting, fishing and trapping and continue to do so to this very day. Millions of Canadians fish and hunt. Most of us either are involved in those activities ourselves or we know someone who is involved, our neighbours, our families, our friends. That is why those activities should continue to be heritage activities.

Today hunting, fishing and trapping contribute over \$5 billion to our economy annually. There is no doubt that hunting, fishing and trapping are part of Canada's heritage and history.

The intent of Bill C-222 is to make a statement about hunting, fishing and trapping, to acknowledge their history and to protect their future as legitimate activities. That is the bill's main purpose, to acknowledge their history from cultural, historic and heritage perspectives, and also to protect their future as legitimate activities.

There are three clauses in the bill. It is a very short bill. I know that clause 3 intrudes into provincial jurisdiction. That is why I

would recommend that we remove that particular clause from Bill C-222.

British Columbia, Ontario and a number of other provinces have legislation in place for the protection of hunting, fishing and trapping. The House of Commons needs to follow the same road that some provinces have already done so.

I would recommend to the committee that clauses 1, 2 and 3 be replaced by one clause: That a person has a right to hunt, fish and trap in accordance with the law. I say again, that it is to be in accordance with the law. This right is conditional; it is not absolute. That is the key difference. That same clause is actually found in the B.C. legislation.

The easiest way to succeed is to keep this bill very simple and to make Bill C-222 a one-line bill. Bill C-222 has very broad support across the country. Literally millions of Canadians would like to see the bill succeed. This bill is supported in principle by the all-party outdoor caucus, which is made up of members from all sides of this House.

I look forward to hearing from other members of the House.

● (1815)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for bringing this bill forward. It is very important. In my riding, hunting is not only a pastime, but many indigenous people and other Yukoners depend on hunting for a large part of their diets. Fishing is a very great pastime. Hunting is a big impetus to our economy. Outfitters bring in people from around the world who pay for the opportunity to hunt and fish. Of course trapping, as the member said, is part of our heritage. It was an activity of the indigenous people long before Europeans settled our area.

These activities are all very important to us. As co-chair of the outdoor caucus, I can say that this type of heritage is very important to Canadians.

These activities at the moment are legal in Canada. What would the actual effect of this bill be?

Mr. Inky Mark: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately at the federal level there is no protection for the legal activity of hunting, fishing and trapping, irrespective that some provinces already have legislation to ensure that it is a conditional right of their provincial citizens.

By making this statement, by passing a one clause bill, as I said in my comments, what we really need to do is acknowledge that in the past it has been part of our history, culture and heritage and to ensure that in the future these activities are protected. We never know what could come down the road in terms of how society changes. Somewhere along the line someone could say that we have to put an end to all these activities. In a democratic society it is always possible that may occur.

We must make a cultural statement to ensure that these activities remain legitimate and that we support these legitimate activities to ensure that in the future these activities will continue.

Private Members' Business

• (1820)

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Manitoba for bringing this bill forward. It is certainly a bill that I was very proud and happy to second. It is something that is long overdue.

As my colleague from the Yukon mentioned, with respect to hunting, fishing and trapping, there are very few ridings, of course taking away the large urban centres, that this bill does not affect in some way. As has already been mentioned, aboriginal people, the first nations, the Inuit, rely on hunting, fishing and trapping for their sustenance. Other people right across the country from coast to coast rely on those activities, particularly fishing, to make a living. This is a great way to recognize it.

How important would this be to our first nations, our aboriginal, our Inuit people? I would like the member to dwell on that aspect.

Mr. Inky Mark: Mr. Speaker, this bill would actually increase the protection of the charter rights of the aboriginal community. The bill recognizes the constitutional rights accorded to the aboriginal community for hunting and fishing. As we know, it is a charter right. To give the rest of Canadians a conditional right to be legitimately involved in these activities would be an enhancement of the aboriginal rights. It means that all of us in this country take part in these legitimate activities. It would make it more difficult for a federal or provincial government down the road to try to legislate away these cultural activities.

Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in the debate on Bill C-222. As the proponent has clearly indicated, it is a bill to recognize that recreational hunting and fishing have played an important role in Canada's social, cultural and economic heritage and indeed are very much intertwined in the history of our country. Those activities are a mainstay of tourism in ridings like my own in northern Ontario, whether it is recreational hunting, trapping, fishing or angling, as some know it. I commend the member for bringing the bill forward. It gives us a chance to consider what it is to have a right to hunt and fish.

I certainly do not disagree that everyone who is willing to obey the laws of the province or jurisdiction relevant to where they are hunting or fishing, has a right to legally participate in fishing and hunting and other outdoor recreational pursuits.

When I first saw the bill I wondered whether it was actually necessary, because it is within the right of citizens now, and of course tourists and visitors from other countries if they get the right permit, to hunt and fish. I was not really sure what additional guarantees a bill like this might actually provide. However, I will, at the end of my presentation and future vote on the bill, agree to send it to committee, because I think it is worthy of further investigation and further study. It certainly has my support in that vein, but I will ask the question later on as well to my colleagues when it goes to committee, what new authorities does a citizen have as a result of a bill such as this?

My colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, the proponent of the bill, has said that he thought it might—and maybe I misunderstood him, but he will get the chance to clarify. He is aware that it does not change the Constitution. It does not provide a

constitutional right to hunt and fish. It would be in law. He thought that maybe this would somehow guarantee something for hunters and sports fishers in the future. He is correct, but he also said that a future government could change this or any other law, so it is no permanent guarantee. That relates to my concern about what new authority does an individual citizen have with the bill.

All that being said, I certainly support the intent. I am a member—I hope a paid-up member; I am not sure yet—of the all-party outdoor caucus. I certainly appreciate the chairman's efforts to bring us all together, those of us who wish to express our non-partisan support for the outdoor pursuits that relate to hunting, fishing and trapping. Trapping, by the way, is still very, very important to my area of northern Ontario. A week does not go by that I do not bump into constituents who, in the off season if they are seasonal workers, in the winter season, are not involved in trapping.

I would like to raise a few points that will no doubt come up in committee if the House agrees that the bill should go to committee. Where does the federal jurisdiction in all of this overlap, if it indeed does, with the provincial jurisdiction? For example, in Ontario, the province for my riding of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, it is governed by the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act of 1997 and no doubt other related acts.

• (1825)

Our party does support the right of citizens to hunt and fish. All of this, of course, and nobody would disagree. I suspect we must always do this out of respect for the environment and private property. For example, on Manitoulin Island, which is a large tourist draw during deer hunting season, private property is where people do their hunting. Hunters there are accustomed to getting permission from property owners. Property owners' rights are important as well. Also, where we are dealing with first nations and their territories, of course, we must respect that as well.

I want to be careful that we do not intrude on provincial jurisdiction. We may sometimes, at the federal level, covet responsibilities that long ago were handed over to the provinces. An example is education. We would all love to have something to say about national standards in education.

I do not know if we will ever have authority over that concern without some kind of an agreement with the provinces. This might lead us to have to come to terms with some kind of intraprovincial and interprovincial concern vis-à-vis the federal government.

The bill suggests that the federal government has jurisdiction over inland fisheries. In my riding, which borders Lake Superior and Lake Huron, there are large fisheries. There are countries in the world that do not have fishing waters as big as the inland waters of Lake Huron, Lake Superior and the other Great Lakes. Clearly, it is the province of Ontario that has jurisdiction, shared of course with the U.S. states that border on the U.S. side.

All that said, this is worthy of further study. I am only guessing, but I would be very surprised if the House did not agree that it should go to committee.

Private Members' Business

When I travel through my large riding, which is 110,000 square kilometres by the way, and the meetings that I have had with the local angler and hunters clubs, with local tourist operators, those who run the local ATV clubs or the snowmobile clubs, these are folks who in the main in one season or another are also involved in hunting and fishing.

The degree of respect that these people bring to the environment through their clubs and organizations and as individual hunters and fishers, whether they are aboriginal hunters and fishers or whether they are non-aboriginal hunters and fishers, would be a revelation to our urban cousins to realize that they hunt and fish responsibly. Yes, there is the occasional abuser, but that is unfortunately a fact of life. It does not matter what sphere is examined.

The vast majority of those who participate in sport angling, hunting and trapping are extremely responsible. I think it is important by making a declaration either through this bill or some other mechanism, whatever the conclusion of the committee of parliament is, the fact that we express that we value not only the tourism industry in the communities that depend on these sports, but that we value the attitude that these clubs and organizations and individuals bring to the outdoors, bring to all the volunteers that work to restock fish in the lakes. This is voluntary work. There may be a little bit of provincial money in a hatchery investment or in planting fish stocks, but there is a lot of volunteer work that goes on in replanting fish in our lakes.

When it comes to hunting, how many cases have we seen where species that have disappeared from a region are brought back in, whether it is turkeys or elk, and I know there is a debate in some areas about elk, but I use it as an example. I think that through some mechanism, either this one or another, it would be appropriate to recognize the importance of hunting and fishing to our past, to our present and to our future.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-222 introduced by the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette in Manitoba, under private members' business. I am pleased, first, because I am the new Bloc Québécois natural resources critic and, second, as you surely know, I plunged into this bill quite enthusiastically.

I would like to remind the House of the essence of Bill C-222, An Act to recognize and protect Canada's hunting, trapping and fishing heritage. What I essentially got from this bill is that the act of hunting, trapping or fishing is a heritage act for the people of Canada and Quebec. This right should not be subject to any legislative restriction that could prevent its being exercised.

From the outset, I want to remind hon. members that the Bloc Québécois recognizes that the activities of hunting, trapping and fishing have a significant economic impact in Quebec and Canada and that these activities are part of the lifestyle in a number of communities. I want to point out that over 800,000 Quebecers are fishing enthusiasts and over 400,000 are also hunting enthusiasts, just to show that these activities are deeply rooted in Quebec.

I want to inform the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette that this is probably why, in Quebec, the right to hunt, trap and fish is already regulated by the government.

Over 20 years ago, Quebec's National Assembly passed a resolution with a view to concluding agreements with those first nations who so desired, in order to allow them to exercise their right to hunt, fish and take part in wildlife management. More than 20 agreements of this kind have been signed between the aboriginal communities and the Government of Quebec over the past 7 years.

I would also like to point out to the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette that hunting and trapping are clearly under provincial jurisdiction, and that fishing, which is under federal jurisdiction, falls under the powers delegated to the Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune du Québec by the federal government. I would also remind him that successive governments in Quebec, dating back to Maurice Duplessis, have been granted the power to manage fishing.

If we take a closer look at what is set out in Bill C-222, we have reason to be concerned. I would like to quote clause 2:

2. (1) It is declared that there exists and shall continue to exist in Canada the right to fish...

(2) No law of Canada shall be construed or applied so as to deprive a person of the right declared in subsection (1).

Constitutionally speaking, it makes sense to question the validity of Bill C-222. Certainly, we, the Bloc Québécois, are convinced that this bill in its current form aims to limit Quebec's powers to regulate its hunting, fishing and trapping activities.

We also wonder about the implications of such a bill on other legislation. I even wonder if this bill will allow the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette to do indirectly what he has not yet been able to do directly. We are referring to firearms regulations, among others. If we limit governments' power to regulate hunting, fishing and trapping activities, does it not create a loophole that will lead to limits concerning firearms regulations?

Something else that comes to mind is the Act to amend the Criminal Code (cruelty to animals). Did the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette not oppose that bill, suggesting that it restricted rights regarding trapping activities? Will Bill C-222 not also limit the scope of that act?

We must ask the question. This bill also presents other problems. Its objective, according to the website of the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, is to allow all Canadians to engage in hunting and fishing activities, while protected from any legislation that may prohibit them in the future.

This bill poses many problems for us because we believe that Quebec hunting, fishing and trapping regulations have done a good job of protecting Quebec's fish and wildlife heritage in many ways.

• (1835)

Take yellow perch, for example, a freshwater sport and commercial fish.

Private Members' Business

A significant drop in the yellow perch population in domestic Quebec waters, such as lac Saint-Pierre and lac Saint-François, led to Quebec regulations that provided better management of this fishery resource by buying back commercial fishing licences, for example.

In terms of hunting, there has been a significant decline in moose herds. Quebec government consultations with hunting associations and clubs resulted in solutions that would protect the herds while permitting moose hunting to continue. In certain areas, hunting associations have decided to hold a lottery to decide which hunters would be allowed to hunt female moose. Other areas of Quebec have decided to place a two-year moratorium on this hunt, thus giving the moose population a chance to grow. Yet other areas have chosen to hunt female moose in alternate years.

These two examples demonstrate the importance of regulating hunting and fishing in order to preserve and protect Quebec's wildlife heritage.

Given that hunting, fishing and trapping are already regulated by the Government of Quebec; that agreements have already been entered into with many native communities with respect to their hunting, fishing and trapping rights; that the constitutionality of this bill is at the very least doubtful; and given that, in our opinion, this bill has significant and troublesome implications for other legislation, the Bloc Québécois will oppose this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to speak tonight to the bill of the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette because it does speak to something that is very important in my riding of Timmins—James Bay, a riding that I am told is larger than the United Kingdom. Much of that is land based and the people are actively involved in the long time heritage activities of hunting and fishing.

I guess I will not be telling tales out of school, but after the 2004 election our leader took me aside and asked me what the biggest issues in my riding were during the federal election. I said that they were slot sizes for fish, the spring bear hunt and moose tags. Perhaps we ran a different campaign back home than the national campaign.

The reason these issues resonate back home is because they speak to people who feel that they are being increasingly separated from their ability to use their land. When policies are brought in that separate people from long time land activities, there is a sense of deep-seated alienation.

When people I met door to door started talking to me about wildlife policy at the provincial level, what they were saying was that they felt they had less ability to speak to the very issues that they and their grandparents have dealt with during their whole lives. The idea of recognizing the important heritage value of what our people on the land do is a fundamental priority that we have to make as politicians.

I have some questions about the efficacy of this particular bill. I know it is a short bill but I am concerned about the word “right” because of how it will be interpreted. Regardless of what we do or whatever our intent is in the bill, people will definitely be looking at the legal implications of proclaiming a right. I want to pose a few

questions around that because in order to go forward with protecting our heritage values we must look at these issues closely.

I am not speaking today in my capacity as the heritage critic but as the member of Parliament for Timmins—James Bay because I have not been able to clarify for my own party how the issue of a right proclaimed at the federal level will work itself out in any kind of legislation.

As I said, there is a deep-seated sense of frustration by people who use the land and I again see the need to show some clarity. A perfect example in my riding is the cancellation of the spring bear hunt in 1999 where the Conservative government at that time made an arbitrary decision, without consultation, to pull the plug on the hunt because it was unpopular in urban centres. That decision was made after the spring bear hunt plans had already been made by the outfitters from across the north. People had already received deposits and had already spent the deposits buying supplies. In what was a case of cold political calculation, those people were left out to dry and it caused economic devastation across the isolated communities of the north that depended on the bear hunt.

The bear hunt was not something in which many local people partook. This was a hunt in which the American tourists participated but it was a crucial element in our economy. Was there a right that people should have been able to exercise to defend themselves? Perhaps. But is a right proclaimed by the federal government enough to protect provincial citizens because we are talking about policies that belong within the provincial jurisdiction?

Are we trying to proclaim a right that we can offer people at the federal level to supersede provincial legislation? Are we offering them a way of dealing with provincial legislation or are we simply reaffirming the right that already exists, which is the right of any citizen, for example, in Ontario, to get a fishing or hunting licence and go in for either the moose tag lottery or fishing.

Boy oh boy, I have been standing for almost three minutes and I have not spoken about the moose tag lottery. In terms of Orwellian drama, we cannot find anything more absurd in Ontario than the moose tag lottery. It seems that year after year northern hunters put in their money, buy their licences and go on the expectation that some day, maybe not in their lifetime but maybe in their grandchildren's lifetime, one of them will actually get a moose tag. Nobody ever wins so it is very much like the characters in Orwell. One wonders where all these moose tags go.

This brings us back to land use issues. What we are seeing in a province of nine million people is that everyone has the right to go into the moose tag lottery. It seems to be a very bizarre and Kafkaesque decision process of who gets to draw.

Private Members' Business

•(1840)

The question is, do the families who live in the north have a right to go to their provincial member and say they should be able to hunt at least once a decade? Do they have the right to say that a tag should come up for a hunting party? The problem then is whose rights take priority, because tags are set aside right across the province so any urban resident has the same right as a rural resident.

The bill talks about our heritage, the history of people who live off the land, who live off hunting for sustenance. Does the right to hunt for sustenance take priority over the right of an urban person to hunt for sport? For that matter, does the right to sell tags to outfitters to bring a commercial interest in hunting into the economy take priority above people who still can legitimately claim they hunt for food?

We have various questions about how these rights should be determined. I know it seems fairly complex on what seems to me to be a very straightforward and simple bill, but the question of rights and hunting will come up many times and we have to define this.

As a federal member, even though hunting is not within my jurisdiction, I still am very active on these issues. During the next constituency break another moose tag meeting will be held with members of our hunting population. They are very frustrated by the fact that the provincial government does not listen with respect to wildlife management policies. The provincial member and I have been regularly holding meetings with our hunters to come up with proactive alternatives. For example, the Quebec model is far superior to the Ontario model in terms of allowing for hunting tags.

After a group has managed to get a hunting tag, should that group not fall to the bottom of the next set of lotteries so that people can at least be guaranteed access? We are talking about access when we are talking about a heritage right. It is the right of the citizens of a region to access their own resources. They believe they have the right to access those resources. It is a conditional right at the provincial level because of the increasing pressure we are seeing on the land base. We have to be very clear about this.

We are seeing more desire for people to get out under various circumstances, some to restrict access for certain groups. In Ontario with nine million people plus who potentially want to hunt or fish, there is major pressure on the land base and on our animal herds and fish stocks. It is a very difficult situation. I know that some of the most unpopular people in northern Ontario tend to be the conservation officers and the natural resources people who have to balance competing interests. We are dealing with pressures on the land base, and we all want to maintain viable herds and viable fish stocks well into the 21st century.

How do these rights start to work themselves out? We still need to discuss this to find a way that we as a federal house can establish the heritage value, but also ensure that we are not leading ourselves or provincial jurisdictions into competing claims in court.

The issue of courts is where major areas in terms of hunting rights have already been thought out. We know about the section 35 rights in the Constitution, but those rights have never been clarified. What has happened is that they have had to be fought in the courts, decision after decision. I had a wonderful 20 minute dissertation here

on the Powley and Blair decisions that I was about to wow the House with, but I see my time has run out.

As someone who lives on the land and usually has bears in my yard about once or twice a week thanks to our failed bear policies, I am very interested in where we are going with this. It needs to be said again and again that people on the land have a great respect for the land. Hunters and fishers have a deep abiding love for our natural terrain and will do what they can to defend it.

I would like to end with the great northern proverb that little boys who learn to hunt, trap and fish do not grow up to mug old ladies.

•(1845)

Mr. Rob Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been extremely interesting to listen to debate this evening on this private member's bill, an act respecting fishing, trapping and hunting heritage in Canada. I have listened with great interest to comments from members from all sides of the House. I want to state from the outset that we on this side fully support the legitimate rights of outdoors people who hunt, fish and trap, individuals who, as part of their Canadian heritage, partake in these very legitimate activities.

I want to clarify a few things and explain in a little more detail the role of the federal Parliament in our country. We have, as we know, two jurisdictions in Canada. There are actually three if we include municipal, but there are the provincial and federal levels. The Conservative Party of Canada has been very keen on respecting those different areas of jurisdiction between the federal and provincial levels.

I need to point out that the Parliament of Canada, as an institution, does not have the power to enact legislation in relation to hunting and trapping directly. These are matters that fall under the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories, and federal legislation may deal with them only incidentally.

It was very interesting to hear the comments from all sides of the House. There are a lot of issues out there. Even in my own riding of Fundy Royal in New Brunswick, I hear from hunters, fishers and people who are interested in pursuing their sport, interested in passing on a heritage and legacy to their children. Many of the individuals I talk to, for example, enjoy hunting and will talk about how they used to hunt with their fathers and grandfathers, and would like to pass that on to their sons and daughters.

In today's society and the world that we live in that is becoming increasingly difficult. We heard some examples of that tonight. Bill C-222 touches on this issue, but I need to remind us as legislators that we also must respect the federal and provincial levels in our country.

Private Members' Business

I want to take as an example the Species at Risk Act. The objective of that act is in no way to manage the hunting and fishing of the species in which it relates. On the contrary, the purpose of that act is to provide the greatest possible protection for species that are threatened with extinction and it, therefore, prohibits killing, harassing, capturing or harming members of certain species of animals for example. That act, however, deals with hunting and trapping activities only incidentally and endeavours to respect the fact that, as we all know, people have to go to their provincial departments in order to obtain hunting licences. That is because it is only within the provincial jurisdiction.

Obviously, the federal government has the full authority that it needs to manage activities that take place on federal land. For example, the management of activities that take place in a national park, including hunting and trapping activities, is a matter of federal jurisdiction, but this bill before us would not apply solely to land under federal jurisdiction.

I am aware of course that hunting and trapping are activities that are an inherent part of many Canadians' lives. They are a part of our Canadian culture and Canada's national heritage. This is a point that I commend the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette for making. His bill has brought forward debate on this issue and it has actually been encouraging to hear members state their support for the legitimate rights of Canadians that take part in these activities.

• (1850)

However, we know that of course the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette is also acting with the best of intentions. Again I commend him on that, because this is a well-intentioned bill and it is one whose objective we certainly support.

However, the House is not always the ideal forum for discussion of issues relating to provincial jurisdiction. As I stated, hunting and trapping do fall under the jurisdiction of the individual provinces and territories.

On questions relating to fishing, the situation is much more complex than it is on hunting and trapping. To begin, I would like to point out that in the bill the first whereas in the preamble states, "Whereas legislation governing inland fisheries is within the jurisdiction of the federal government...". While that statement is not entirely incorrect, it is also not entirely accurate. I will explain what I mean.

The federal Parliament has exclusive jurisdiction over matters that relate to fishing in tidal waters. Freshwater fishing is a matter in relation to which jurisdiction is shared by the federal government and the provinces. In non-tidal waters, the federal jurisdiction over conservation and protection of fish authorizes the federal government to impose measures such as setting of fishing seasons, opening and closing of fishing seasons, setting total allowable quotas, size limits of fish that may be caught, gear requirements, et cetera. Most of these measures are most efficiently implemented when imposed by licence conditions.

The provincial jurisdiction authorizes the provinces, as owners of the land where the fisheries take place, to decide who might fish, what fishing privileges are conferred and what fees must be paid. Put simply, the federal government has jurisdiction to set the fishing

rules in inland waters, by analogy setting the size of the pie, while provinces have the right to decide who gets to fish and for how much fish, by analogy who gets a piece of the pie and how large that pie will be.

That is the legal theory on the respective jurisdiction of the federal government and of the provinces with respect to inland fisheries, but aside from the theory, I am afraid that from a practical point of view the bill would have implications that may not have been envisaged.

As I said earlier, certain fish conservation and protection measures have been imposed and implemented by way of licence conditions. This is entirely appropriate given that fish conservation and protection measures must be adapted to the specific fishery for which the licence is issued. In other words, the trout fishery in region A, for example, will call for conservation and protection measures that are different from those imposed on the walleye fishery in region B.

Another example is that the species of fish that may be caught, limits on the size of the fish that may be taken and kept, and the fishing gear that may be used may all be included as licence conditions. Those matters may fall under the federal jurisdiction, so in addition to obtaining a licence from the province, a freshwater fisher should therefore, in theory, obtain a second federal fishing licence which will include conditions that must be placed on the licence to provide for fish conservation and protection.

To avoid this situation, there are administrative agreements between the federal government and the provinces under which the federal aspect of freshwater fisheries management has been delegated to the provinces. What that means in practice is that freshwater fishing is essentially managed by the provinces.

The bill would plainly have an impact on the management of freshwater fisheries and on the existing administrative agreements that govern that subject. Obviously we know that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has been involved in fisheries management for a very long time. We have a new minister responsible for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans who I feel is doing a great job and Parliament has granted the minister broad discretionary authority to manage the fisheries.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette for the effort he put into preparing this bill. I want to thank him for the interest he has shown in fishing, hunting and trapping, which are all important to Canada and to Canadians. No one on this side of the House would argue that this is an important part of our heritage. In light of what I have said here tonight, though, it is impossible for the government to support the bill as introduced by the member.

• (1855)

As a member of Parliament for a rural riding, I support the rights of people to fish, hunt and trap as they have done for many years. However, we also have to respect that these rights fall under provincial jurisdiction.

• (1900)

Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also rise today to speak to C-222. I want to thank the members for their comments earlier on this evening.

Private Members' Business

I believe I understand the intent of the bill. Like many others who have spoken, I also have some concerns. I want to thank the member for Fundy Royal for the clarification on many points and for his speech.

I would like to take some time to honour those who live off the land by way of hunting, fishing and trapping. These are an integral part of the lives of people in northern Saskatchewan and definitely a part of our identity back home.

I have many cherished memories of growing up in Pelican Narrows. Hunting, fishing and trapping were always an important part of my family's life as well as our community's life. I was taught many skills that allowed myself and many others to learn how to live off the land.

I had an opportunity to take part in student exchange trips to northern Quebec and Ungava Bay and to the Queen Charlotte Islands and Massett in particular. I was able to participate in the traditional pursuits of the Inuit and the Haida people. I have got to know, quite well, how important these pursuits are and how strong the aboriginal peoples' connection is to the land.

I agree that the economic benefits of hunting, fishing and trapping are very real. Many people are employed in hunting, fishing and trapping directly or indirectly, whether they are supplying goods and services that are important to these pursuits. These traditional activities are part of the economic subsistence for many northern people and communities.

Tourism also brings wealth and opportunity. As members have said, many people travel into the beautiful and pristine country in the north to participate in hunting, fishing and other activities, which greatly contribute to the fabric of our country.

However, I have concerns with the text of the bill and how the bill could potentially impinge upon hard won aboriginal rights and treaties in unintended ways. It perhaps does not address many concerns and challenges to hunters, fishers and trappers as well.

Trapping, fishing, and hunting is central to the aboriginal people and their way of life. It is part of their culture and their identity. It is an inherent right and their traditional way of life. Treaties have enshrined this, holding land use as a foundational part of those sacred agreements.

This is why, as other members have mentioned, section 35 is enshrined in the Constitution, to acknowledge our rights and affirm them. However, protecting these rights and having governments acknowledge these rights have been a hard ongoing battle. Many Supreme Court decisions, such as Sparrow and Powley, which celebrated its third anniversary coincidentally yesterday, need to be more fully appreciated and understood by the members of the House. Those court decisions define these rights and suggest a framework for the government to utilize in implementing these rights.

Negotiations have been ongoing as well with new treaties and land use agreements being concluded recently and many still ongoing.

Declaring hunting, fishing and trapping as a right, without due consideration to aboriginal rights, could have an adverse effect on these sensitive negotiations and sorting out land use issues.

I also would like to remind my colleagues of the trilogy of cases that affirmed the duty to consult with aboriginal people when developing policies or legislation that affect their inherent rights: Haida Nation, Taku River and Mikisew Cree specifically.

Aboriginal people must be consulted in order to understand their concerns and to avoid impinging on their rights. There is a legal obligation of the government to consult and accommodate, within reasonable parameters, the concerns raised by aboriginal people when issues are raised for discussion, such as what we are talking about today. In fact, I ask the government to review these decisions and employ its very useful recommendations in all the decisions it undertakes when it discusses aboriginal issues.

● (1905)

Discussing these concerns reminds me of when I attended the Churchill River gathering in the reserve community of Stanley Mission this summer. Stanley Mission is a great community, steeped in history, with a proud tradition of protecting its first nation's identity, culture and language.

The gathering honoured and celebrated a traditional way of life that has remained strong and proud for countless centuries. The main message of this gathering was for all levels of government to understand that first nation Métis people wanted to become an integral part of the socio-economic fabric of our country and that the inherent rights of aboriginal people must be respected and more clearly understood.

However, many concerns about the proud livelihood still exist and must be addressed. For instance, many trappers, hunters and fishers have concerns about setting up programs to help them create new markets, concerns with policies such as, in a Saskatchewan context, what they call the let it burn policy. Most of all, there are concerns about a lack of consultation with people affected by industry and resource development.

I want to summarize the concerns I have with respect to Bill C-222.

First, we must understand that there is a legal obligation to consult with aboriginal people prior to introducing legislation that may affect their rights as they are recognized today through various court decisions, through the charter and through the Constitution.

Second, we must also look at preventing a future conflict of laws scenario. Some of them were mentioned by the member for Fundy Royal. It is unclear to me how the provinces in the natural resources transfer agreement may be impacted, which one would supercede the other. Thanks to the member previous, we begin to get an understanding of that.

As well, we need to look at self-government agreements that have been negotiated and the co-management that occurs over resources and land areas throughout the country. For example, the member previous talked about the Freshwater Fish Marketing Act and the right to fish and how that will impact.

The third concern I have is with regard to conservation efforts. What do we say to people if they say they have a right to hunt, when we are talking about issues of conservation of a certain species, whether it is fishing or fur-bearing animals?

Private Members' Business

I applaud the spirit of the bill and the way it commemorates a great profession and a great activity throughout this great country. However, I ask the member to consider these concerns and to work to ensure that the real pressing issues, which we have talked about this evening, are met. I look forward to the discussion that the bill may have in committee in the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss this bill this evening. I would like to thank the member who introduced it for giving us a chance to raise some questions about outdoor activities.

As you know, the member for Yorkton—Melville set up the Outdoors caucus, and I think his initiative deserves to be mentioned. It is just a first step, but the caucus is a good place to discuss issues related to hunting, fishing, trapping and other outdoor activities. I think this is a good forum for discussing federal government initiatives, for recommending action and for hearing what stakeholders have to say.

Speaking of stakeholders, I attended the Quebec trappers' conference held last winter in Rivière-du-Loup in my riding. The chair of the meeting, Mr. Dumond, put a lot of time into making it a big success. I had the opportunity to go to the grassroots, meet the people and talk about various issues. One thing stood out: trappers, hunters and fishers do not want more regulations or complications.

Despite the noble intentions behind it, the bill before us ultimately complicates our interpretation of jurisdiction, legislation and rights as they apply to the activities covered by the bill. Its adoption would truly be frowned upon if it made life more difficult for the hunters, fishers and other people who make a living from this industry.

In Quebec alone, for example, there are reportedly 408,000 hunters and 813,000 recreational fishers. In addition, every fisher apparently spends an average of \$1,287 a year, and every hunter, \$756 a year. These activities create 3,222 jobs, representing \$87 million. They therefore need to be promoted.

We need to target government actions to allow better access and to stimulate economic activity. This is one of my goals, but it is not reflected in the content of the bill that is before us. The intent of the bill—to recognize Canada's heritage—is good, but its potential repercussions complicate matters.

As a Bloc Québécois member of Parliament for a rural riding, I will oppose this proposal. This adds to the arguments of the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry, the new Bloc Québécois natural resources critic. She explained our position quite well and provided the reasons why the Bloc Québécois will vote against this motion. I simply want to add a bit of my personal experience and what I think to be sure that everyone here understands the importance of not passing such a bill.

This bill would limit the power of the federal and provincial governments to regulate hunting and fishing. It could even be used to challenge the firearms regulation, the Cruelty to Animals Act. It would have a ripple effect on other bills. I support the parliamentary secretary's position: this is an intrusion on a provincial responsibility. On March 20, 1985, Quebec's National Assembly—

● (1910)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I must inform him that the time for debate has expired.

It being 7:12 p.m., the House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:12 p.m.)

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